

(3) *Departures Based on Circumstances Present to a Degree not Adequately Taken into Consideration.*—

A departure may be warranted in an exceptional case, even though the circumstance that forms the basis for the departure is taken into consideration in determining the guideline range, if the court determines that such circumstance is present in the offense to a degree substantially in excess of, or substantially below, that which ordinarily is involved in that kind of offense.

(4) *Departures Based on not Ordinarily Relevant Offender Characteristics and Other Circumstances.*—An offender characteristic or other circumstance identified in Chapter Five, Part H (Offender Characteristics) or elsewhere in the guidelines as not ordinarily relevant in determining whether a departure is warranted may be relevant to this determination only if such offender characteristic or other circumstance is present to an exceptional degree.

(b) *Downward Departures in Child Crimes and Sexual Offenses.*—Under 18 U.S.C. 3553(b)(2)(A)(ii), the sentencing court may impose a sentence below the range established by the applicable guidelines only if the court finds that there exists a mitigating circumstance of a kind, or to a degree, that—

(1) Has been affirmatively and specifically identified as a permissible ground of downward departure in the sentencing guidelines or policy statements issued under section 994(a) of title 28, United States Code, taking account of any amendments to such sentencing guidelines or policy statements by act of Congress;

(2) Has not adequately been taken into consideration by the Sentencing Commission in formulating the guidelines; and

(3) Should result in a sentence different from that described.

The grounds enumerated in this Part K of Chapter Five are the sole grounds that have been affirmatively and specifically identified as a permissible ground of downward departure in these sentencing guidelines and policy statements. Thus, notwithstanding any other reference to authority to depart downward elsewhere in this Sentencing Manual, a ground of downward departure has not been affirmatively and specifically identified as a permissible ground of downward departure within the meaning of section 3553(b)(2) unless it is expressly enumerated in this Part K as a ground upon which a downward departure may be granted.

(c) *Limitation on Departures Based on Multiple Circumstances.*—The court may depart from the applicable guideline range based on a combination of two or more offender characteristics or other circumstances, none of which independently is sufficient to provide a basis for departure, only if—

(1) Such offender characteristics or other circumstances, taken together, make the case an exceptional one; and

(2) Each such offender characteristic or other circumstance is—

(A) present to a substantial degree; and

(B) identified in the guidelines as a permissible ground for departure, even if such offender characteristic or other circumstance is not ordinarily relevant to a determination of whether a departure is warranted.

(d) *Prohibited Departures.*—Notwithstanding subsections (a) and (b) of this policy statement, or any other provision in the guidelines, the court may not depart from the applicable guideline range based on any of the following circumstances:

(1) Any circumstance specifically prohibited as a ground for departure in §§ 5H1.10 (Race, Sex, National Origin, Creed, Religion, and Socio-Economic Status), 5H1.12 (Lack of Guidance as a Youth and Similar Circumstances), the third and last sentences of 5H1.4 (Physical Condition, Including Drug or Alcohol Dependence or Abuse; Gambling Addiction), the last sentence of 5K2.12 (Coercion and Duress), and 5K2.19 (Post-Sentencing Rehabilitative Efforts).

(2) The defendant's acceptance of responsibility for the offense, which may be taken into account only under 3E1.1 (Acceptance of Responsibility).

(3) The defendant's aggravating or mitigating role in the offense, which may be taken into account only under § 3B1.1 (Aggravating Role) or § 3B1.2 (Mitigating Role), respectively.

(4) The defendant's decision, in and of itself, to plead guilty to the offense or to enter a plea agreement with respect to the offense (*i.e.*, a departure may not be based merely on the fact that the defendant decided to plead guilty or to enter into a plea agreement, but a departure may be based on justifiable, non-prohibited reasons as part of a sentence that is recommended, or agreed to, in the plea agreement and accepted by the court. *See* § 6B1.2 (Standards for Acceptance of Plea Agreement).

(5) The defendant's fulfillment of restitution obligations only to the extent required by law including the guidelines (*i.e.*, a departure may not be

based on unexceptional efforts to remedy the harm caused by the offense).

(6) Any other circumstance specifically prohibited as a ground for departure in the guidelines.

(e) *Requirement of Specific Written Reasons for Departure.*—If the court departs from the applicable guideline range, it shall state, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3553(c), its specific reasons for departure in open court at the time of sentencing and, with limited exception in the case of statements received in camera, shall state those reasons with specificity in the written judgment and commitment order.

Commentary

Application Notes:

1. *Definitions.*—For purposes of this policy statement:

'Circumstance' includes, as appropriate, an offender characteristic or any other offense factor.

'Depart', 'departure', 'downward departure', and 'upward departure' have the meaning given those terms in Application Note 1 of the Commentary to § 1B1.1 (Application Instructions).

2. Scope of this Policy Statement.—

(A) *Departures Covered by this Policy Statement.*—This policy statement covers departures from the applicable guideline range based on offense characteristics or offender characteristics of a kind, or to a degree, not adequately taken into consideration in determining that range. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 3553(b).

Subsection (a) of this policy statement applies to upward departures in all cases covered by the guidelines and to downward departures in all such cases except for downward departures in child crimes and sexual offenses.

Subsection (b) of this policy statement applies only to downward departures in child crimes and sexual offenses.

(B) *Departures Covered by Other Guidelines.*—This policy statement does not cover the following departures, which are addressed elsewhere in the guidelines: (i) Departures based on the defendant's criminal history (*see* Chapter Four (Criminal History and Criminal Livelihood), particularly § 4A1.3 (Departures Based on Inadequacy of Criminal History Category)); (ii) departures based on the defendant's substantial assistance to the authorities (*see* § 5K1.1 (Substantial Assistance to Authorities)); and (iii) departures based on early disposition programs (*see* § 5K3.1 (Early Disposition Programs)).

3. *Kinds and Expected Frequency of Departures under Subsection (a).*—As set forth in subsection (a), there generally are two kinds of departures