



*American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors,
Laboratory Accreditation Board
International Association for Identification
Society of Forensic Toxicologists/
American Board of Forensic Toxicology
National Association of Medical Examiners
International Association of Forensic Nurses*

Accreditation of Entities Providing Forensic Science Services

Accreditation is a formal process by which an impartial organization (accrediting body) reviews a provider's policies and procedures to ensure the entity is conducting its operations in a manner consistent with national or international standards. Accreditation applies to agencies, not individual practitioners.

Laboratory accreditation gives customers and stakeholders confidence in the casework performed, comprehensive documentation, constructive communication, improved record keeping, better transparency and consistency, and a high accountability to an external authority. In the end, forensic science service providers will have a standardized, efficient system devoted to quality with increased accountability.

Currently, DNA is the only forensic science discipline required to be accredited in order to receive federal grants or participate in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) per the DNA Identification Act of 1994.

History of Forensic Laboratory Accreditation

Accreditation in the forensic sciences is not new, some examples are:

- In 1974, the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) began offering accreditation to medical examiner offices.
- In 1982, the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB) began offering accreditation to crime laboratories and initiated a transition to the international standard ISO/IEC 17025 in 2004.
- In 1989, the College of American Pathologists (CAP) began offering accreditation in Forensic Urine Drug Testing.
- In 1996, the American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT) began offering accreditation in Forensic Toxicology.
- In 2001, Forensic Quality Services (FQS) began offering accreditation to crime laboratories based on ISO/IEC 17025.

Current Status of Accreditation of Forensic Science Service Providers

CFSO member organizations currently providing accreditation to forensic science service providers are as follows:

ASCLD/LAB (<http://www.ascl-d-lab.org/>)

ASCLD/LAB is the largest provider of accreditation services to the forensic community. 402 crime laboratories are accredited by ASCLD/LAB as of November 11, 2013. The list of ASCLD/LAB accredited laboratories includes 194 state laboratories, 1325 local agency laboratories, 31 federal laboratories, 19 international (outside the United States) laboratories and 26 private laboratories.

The ASCLD/LAB-*International* program is based on ISO/IEC 17025. ISO standards are internationally recognized standards. ISO, the International Organization for Standardization (<http://www.iso.org>), develops standards for many different sectors such as pharmaceutical, medical and environmental laboratories to ensure quality of service provided. ISO was founded in 1947 and currently publishes more than 19,500 International Standards. In addition to the ISO/IEC 17025 standard, ASCLD/LAB has added supplemental forensic science specific requirements.

NAME (<http://thename.org>)

NAME originally promulgated Accreditation Standards in 1974 to improve the quality of medicolegal death investigation in this country. NAME has accredited 75 medicolegal death investigation systems which service approximately one-third of the nation's population. The accreditation standards represent minimal levels of function for an adequate medicolegal death investigation system. NAME accreditation is an endorsement by NAME that the office or system provides an adequate environment for a medical examiner in which to practice his or her profession and provides reasonable assurances that the office or system properly serves its jurisdiction.

ABFT (<http://abft.org/>)

ABFT currently accredits 33 laboratories including two from Canada. All laboratories provide services in postmortem forensic toxicology and may also service police agencies with driving under the influence of alcohol and other drugs, drug facilitated crimes, and parole/probation testing. Accreditation standards focus on the requirements of forensic toxicology testing

Although CFSO has referenced the aforementioned accrediting bodies, it is currently unknown how many non-accredited forensic science service providers exist.