



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

Forensic Service Providers Support Attorney General Sessions Forensic Initiative

By Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations
April 14, 2017

Washington, DC – The Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO) representing an estimated 21,000 forensic practitioners at federal, state, county, tribal, and local levels support the Attorney General and the Department of Justice creating a new Forensic Science Initiative. The CFSO supports the inclusion of forensic sciences in the Task Force on Crime Reduction and Public Safety, the continuation of a Senior Forensic Advisor at DOJ, and the proposed needs assessment concerning the requirements to make our laboratories and medical examiner offices more operationally efficient and effective. As the Attorney General noted, it is important to have sound science applied to our criminal investigations to bring to justice the guilty, to vindicate the innocent, and to instill a continuing confidence in the stakeholder community it serves.

The CFSO has been pleased by the level of attention paid to forensic science through the creation of the National Commission on Forensic Science (NCFS), the interagency working groups of the Subcommittee on Forensic Science, and the various studies conducted over the last several years. However, it is now time to take the next steps and implement many of the recommendations they have produced. It is critical to determine what is needed for forensic science service providers to advance forensic science in the United States. For example:

- Ninety-five percent (95%) of the forensic work in this country is accomplished by state, county, tribal, and local forensic science service providers. These laboratories and medical examiners offices are overworked, understaffed, under equipped, and in many instances suffer from severe backlogs in DNA and non-DNA cases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Center for Health Statistics reported a 248% increase in drug poisoning deaths attributed to heroin between 2010 and 2014. This increase is causing near catastrophic impacts on crime scene investigators, medical examiners, toxicologists and crime laboratories. These cases alone cause a domino effect on other forensic disciplines as resources in many instances are fixed and are already spread too thin to meet the varied needs of the criminal justice system.
- The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2013) noted 285,000 individuals were reported victims of sexual violence. Studies have concluded that exams performed by a forensic nurse trained in collecting and preserving forensic evidence yielded better physical and mental health, better evidence collection, and more cases going to

court. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a 2016 report titled “Sexual Assault: Information on Training, Funding and the Availability of Forensic Examiners,” noting a lack of forensic nurses on the front lines, with limited stakeholder support.

- The importance of accreditation for all forensic labs and medical examiner offices cannot be overstated. While 99% of state labs are accredited, many of the smaller operations are not. The most frequent obstacle to accreditation is the cost. The Maryland Medical Examiner’s office spent \$54 million on facility needs to meet accreditation requirements. It costs most laboratories tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars each year in positions, training, and quality assurance measures to meet all the stringent quality and management criteria to maintain accreditation.

It is time to give the forensic science community a voice that is commensurate with its ever-expanding role in the criminal justice, judicial, and health care systems and a means by which an agenda is developed and implemented for forensic services across the United States. The implementation of the Attorney General’s initiative would be a nationally coordinated effort, ensuring standards of services to all citizens in the most efficient and effective manner. The CFSO supports the Attorney General’s Forensic Science Initiative and the continuation and codification of the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC), ensuring not only its existence, but continued appropriations commensurate with its work. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) should remain the administering agency with support from DOJ and DOJ affiliated agencies.

“The CFSO looks forward to working with Attorney General Sessions to advance forensic science in our country,” stated the Chairman of the CFSO Matthew Gamette.

About the CFSO (<http://www.thecfso.org/>)

Formed in 2000, CFSO is an association of six forensic science professional organizations: American Academy of Forensic Sciences; American Society of Crime Lab Directors; International Association for Identification; International Association of Forensic Nurses; National Association of Medical Examiners; and Society of Forensic Toxicologists - American Board of Forensic Toxicology.

The mission of the CFSO is to speak with a single forensic science voice in matters of mutual interest to its member organizations, to influence public policy at the national level and to make a compelling case for greater federal funding for public crime laboratories and medical examiner offices. The primary focus of the CFSO is local, state and national policymakers, as well as the United States Congress.

Contact:

Matthew Gamette
Chair, CFSO
Idaho State Police Forensic Services
208.884.7217