



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

Realignment of the Office of Investigative Forensic Science (OIFS)

- OIFS is currently under NIJ, but needs to be realigned as a program office under OJP to provide national leadership and coordination on forensic science.
- Forensic science has become more important and complex and requires a broad, national approach, coordinating research, workforce and laboratory enhancement, development of new technology, and applying data from a tri-annual Needs Assessment study.

Medical Examiner Workforce Development

- Medical examiners and coroners (ME/Cs) support the justice systems and public health, and are overwhelmed by the opioid epidemic and COVID-19. ME/Cs require forensic pathologists (FPs).
- The US has c. 500 – 750 practicing Board-certified FPs, but 1500 – 2000 are necessary.
- Federal resources and legislation can assist ME/Cs by funding forensic pathology fellowship training programs, recruitment, death investigator training, and accreditation of ME/C offices.

Congressional Operational Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices

- Initially authorized under the Justice for All Act, this provision ensures evaluation of nation's forensic science service providers for sufficient and consistent funding and strategic planning.
- Must be reauthorized for an every three year review to ensure DOJ is addressing national workforce development needs, quality assurance, turnaround times, provider capacity, and tech transfer.

Important Grants and Programs

- Robust funding for the Coverdell grant is essential for all forensic disciplines in the United States. CEBR and SAKI funding is critical for addressing sexual assault kits and biological evidence. Increased access for forensic providers to Byrne-JAG funding and increased funds to address ME/C issues is vital.
- The NIJ Forensic Technology Center of Excellence (FTCoE) must continue to provide help with the working groups, accreditation initiatives, technology transfer education, and other indispensable services.

National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (“NamUs”)

- NamUs facilitates identification of unidentified decedents and missing persons. It is a data repository and provides direct forensic services. Medical examiner/coroner offices, forensic laboratories, and law enforcement depend on NamUs to identify decedents, close cases, and serve the interests of justice.
- NamUs should receive consistent, dedicated, Congressionally authorized funding.

NIJ State and Local Practitioner Working Groups

- CFSO has worked to establish groups that coordinate local and state forensic practitioners with DOJ. These groups must continue and others added for the advancement of forensics and coordination with DOJ.
- The Forensic Laboratory Needs-Technology Working Group (FLN-TWG) is a group of state and local practitioners and leaders to advise DOJ on forensic technology needs and implementation strategy.
- The Forensic Science-Technical Working Group (FS-TWG) uses local and state practitioners to identify, discuss, and prioritize operational and research needs and requirements.
- The Medico-legal Death Investigation Working Group (MDI-DATA-WG) uses local and state practitioners to discuss standardized death reporting and current and needed data sharing network development.

Standard Development Organizations (SDO)

- SDO's are non-profit organizations that take NIST OSAC work products and develop consensus-based national standards with public comment and input. Standards advance reliable forensic science.
- SDO's will require federal government financial support through competitive grants to provide the standards free of charge to practitioners, courts, litigants, and the public. Government entities like practitioners cannot afford to pay for the standards and the OIFS must enhance the distribution of standards and encourage their use to increase the validity and reliability of forensic science.

Opioid and Emerging Drug Issues

- Forensic providers are overwhelmed with identifying, classifying, and reporting emerging drugs. Equipment, personnel, training, and method development are needed to stay ahead of the crisis.
- Legislation, control policies from DOJ agencies, and coordinated strategy are needed to address the issues.

Introductory training and CE for traditional lab disciplines

- Increased workforce development help from DOJ agencies is needed to decrease training times and burdens of training new practitioners in local and state labs, especially in the areas of firearms and trace evidence.