



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

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Interoperability of ABIS—CFSO Position

The Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO) represents over 20,000 forensic science and forensic medicine practitioners. CFSO advocates to the federal government and the United States Congress on behalf of these practitioners and seven of the largest forensic science member organizations in the world.

Problem:

Automated Biometric Identification Systems (ABIS) have been in use since the mid-1980s, electronically searching fingerprint and other biometric records for criminal suspect identification, criminal history reporting, forensic investigations, and civil background checks. Most ABIS systems in the U.S. take advantage of hierarchical record-sharing networks, where fingerprint records flow up from city, county, and state agencies, ultimately to the FBI Next Generation Identification (NGI) system. However, some jurisdictions do not participate in this hierarchical system while others who do participate do not submit all their fingerprint records, resulting in some states and localities having records not found in NGI. Systems at the state level and below, for the most part, cannot perform searches in neighboring jurisdictions, potentially allowing a subject of interest to go unidentified, risking public safety.

Goal:

To resolve the interoperability problem in the United States by providing a nationally mandated minimum interoperability standard among ABIS systems to ensure reliability, quality/suitability, timeliness, and accuracy of inquiries, and by providing federal grants to state, county, and local agencies to implement cross-jurisdictional ABIS searching and information retrieval, thereby increasing stakeholder confidence in ABIS.

Recommendations:

CFSO encourages the federal government to assist in remedying the interoperability issue in the following ways:

- Providing federal grants and other financial assistance to state, county, and local agencies to implement cross-jurisdictional ABIS searching and information retrieval.
- Requiring ABIS systems purchased with federal funding to be interoperable using mandated national minimum technical and quality standards.
- Performing a feasibility study for a nationwide “Biometric Exchange Server” that would allow states to leverage a single technical interface for a search with any other states that wish to participate. The study should address:
 - Types of cases appropriate for use of ABIS
 - Cross-jurisdictional issues, such as privacy laws and their impacts
 - Technical interface and response specifications
 - Security policies
 - Governance
 - Cost-benefit analysis.