



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

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## **The Forensic Science Community Needs \$1 Billion Dollars Annually**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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The CFSO applauds the Department of Justice for the immense undertaking and completion of the *Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices* Report to Congress. Over the past twenty years forensic science has and continues to evolve, becoming more reliable and discriminating. Its use to fight crime and exonerate those who are innocent has expanded tremendously. Forensic science is now routinely used in the courtroom and is expected by jurors. The nation's front-line forensic practitioners continually struggle to keep up with the ever-increasing demand for services. The CFSO is pleased that Congress included this needs assessment in their 2016 Justice for All Reauthorization Act. This was the first attempt in determining the approximate cost to meet the current demand for services and the related costs of testimony by forensic service providers from public laboratories while ensuring valid and reliable results.

CFSO Chair Matthew Gamette stated, "As I remarked in testimony before Congress this year, we need the continued support of the federal government to fund efforts to increase forensic laboratory and medical examiner capacity, capability, and training. Forensic Science Service Providers have significantly decreased backlogs, addressed turnaround times, and advanced forensic science when the resources are available for them to do so. The needs assessment provides

a remarkable opportunity for the federal government to make the investment necessary for forensic services in the United States to lead the world. Making this investment now will ensure that the needs of the criminal justice system are met, that the correct people are held responsible for their crimes, and that victims of crime are able to see justice in their cases."

The Department of Justice spent the last two years meeting with the various forensic science organizations, key forensic science service providers, and related stakeholders to determine the state of the forensic community, and what resources are needed to keep up with the growing demand for forensic examinations.

The report concludes there is not sufficient funding to process the ever-increasing amounts of forensic evidence. It states that the state, county, local and tribal crime laboratories including medical examiner/coroner offices have a \$640 million deficit for normal operations, but the increase of current opioid expenditures adds another \$270 million to that cost.

“Not only are additional federal funds necessary to provide sufficient forensic scientist staff, support personnel and equipment to meet the needs of current caseloads,” said ASCLD President Brooke Arnone. “Due to the significant increase in complexity and scope of forensic services requested and required, funds are also needed to develop the capacity to evaluate and implement new procedures that will be critical to advancing forensic science into the future.”

The report further states that sufficient and consistent funding for practitioner training for recent graduates and experienced analysts is imperative. The American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) agrees wholeheartedly with the report that education across the spectrum of experience among forensic scientists is extremely important to the quality of forensic science examinations. The AAFS reflects that principle in one of its major objectives, according to Dr. Zeno J. Geradts, AAFS President; that is to promote education for and research in the forensic sciences. “The AAFS expresses its appreciation to Congress and DOJ/NIJ for this report,” said Dr. Geradts.

In addition, the report states that supplementing the training of forensic scientists with continuing education and development in order to maintain mandated proficiencies, practitioner certifications, and facility accreditations is essential. The International Association for Identification (IAI) would like to thank the DOJ for its efforts and stands in complete support of the its report *Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices*. As an organization representing more than 7,000 members, many of our members who conduct examinations, are certified in their respective discipline, and are in need of continuing education to maintain their certifications. In addition, there are forensic science service providers that are in need of, or are in the process of, getting their respective agency accredited. The recommended funding dedicated in the area of accreditation and training will go a long way in fulfilling that need. In achieving this end, it will assure all stakeholders, along with the citizenry it serves, that they can have faith and confidence in the lab results.

The US has only 400-500 board-certified forensic pathologists (BCFPs) practicing full-time, but it is estimated that the country needs as many as 2,000 in state, county, city, and tribal medical examiner/coroner (ME/C) offices. This critical and chronic shortage of BCFPs requires immediate attention to workforce development strategies. National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) President Jonathan L. Arden, MD stated, “NAME supports the report analysis and conclusions regarding Medical Examiners and Coroners. This thorough report details critical staffing issues with board certified forensic pathologists and trained and certified death investigators. Funding for infrastructure, training, continuing education, and IT resources are critical to create equity in both the availability and quality of medicolegal death investigation services across the country.” The increased workload imposed by the recent drug crisis has made the BCFP shortage even more acute. Nationally, the shortage and uneven distribution of BCFPs affects public health, public safety and justice systems.

The rapidly emerging and evolving synthetic drugs have also significantly burdened this nation’s forensic toxicology laboratories,” said ABFT President Bruce Goldberger. Laboratories play a vital role in the assessment of drug intoxication in drugged driving and death investigations, and have been tasked with responding to an increase in workload as well as the development of new methods for the analysis of synthetic drugs.

“All forensic disciplines stand to benefit from ongoing efforts to improve reliability, consistency, and accountability in forensic assessment techniques,” said American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law President William J. Newman, M.D.

Finally, there is a real need for a robust research and development program. The Report stated that for science to advance,” there must be continuous research, innovation, and the development of new methods, practices and equipment,” but unfortunately needed research by practitioners and research partnerships is hindered by a lack of dedicated federal grant funding.

Formed in 2000, the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (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; American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law; National Association of Medical Examiners; and Society of Forensic Toxicologists - American Board of Forensic Toxicology. These professional organizations together represent more than 21,000 forensic science professionals across the United States.

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