



International Association for Identification

The International Association for Identification (IAI) appreciates the extraordinary efforts undertaken by the U.S. Department of Justice to conduct a needs assessment of the U.S. forensic science community. The report titled, *Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices* (<https://www.justice.gov/olp/page/file/1228306/download>) was the result of a mandate in the Justice for All Reauthorization Act of 2016. Although there have been efforts put forward in the past such as the National Academy of Sciences Report (the 2009 NAS Report), this report is the first comprehensive evaluation of the needs of the entire forensic science community to include the medical examiner/coroner offices in the United States.

This report was undertaken by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) under the auspices of DOJ. While it considers previous reports, this report assessed the needs of the forensic community through listening sessions that involved practitioners from the federal, state, county, tribal and local level as well as input from the broad community of stakeholders such as law enforcement, attorneys and investigators. Among the areas discussed and evaluated were; personnel needs both current and anticipated, workloads and backlogs, training and education needs, processes for accreditation and certification, research needs, physical laboratory needs, human factors and other factors that affect reliability and accuracy. The report addresses present and prospective new technologies and methodologies along with the challenges associated with the implementation of new technologies and methodologies.

The IAI applauds the recognition and attention this report brings to the specific challenges and needs of the physical evidence and crime scene disciplines. The advent of DNA has brought amazing new tools to the ability to solve crimes, however it has inadvertently taken attention and resources away from the all-important need for laboratories to remain able to perform analysis on all types of evidence to ensure, through a multidisciplinary approach, that the most efficient, effective and thorough forensic course is taken in each case.

This Report to Congress also highlights the specialized training needs that forensic disciplines such as Latent Print Examiners require (3 years as opposed to 1 year for a drug analyst), and the high stress and pressure that physical evidence analysts such as crime scene examiners may experience. These types of needs require attention and additional funding and should be considered when resources are allocated to forensic service providers.

Based upon a 2017 analysis, it was estimated that an additional \$640 million¹ was needed annually to cover the then costs of the then current caseloads. The IAI supports this key finding and considers this an excellent beginning in managing the ever-increasing demand for services that forensic service providers are faced with daily. The importance of education, training, certification and accreditation are well documented in this report, and provides ample specific directions that Congress may take to further support the portion of the forensic science community that includes latent print, crime scene, and other physical evidence services. The IAI would also like to take this opportunity to thank members of Congress for their continued support over

¹ *Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices*, <https://www.justice.gov/olp/page/file/1228306/download>, 2019, Page 3

the years in championing various programs such as Coverdell, which makes funding available to the forensic science provider community. In addition, we would like to express our gratitude to Congress in acknowledging the need for this assessment.

In closing, the IAI would again like to express our profound gratitude to those individuals who made this study possible along with members of Congress, who supported this effort. The IAI urges its membership make use of this report as they seek support from their various political subdivisions. The IAI anticipates this will be the first in a continuing collaborative effort with the Department of Justice along with all concerned stakeholders where we may periodically assess the state of forensic services in the U.S. It will be through these continued efforts that we can assure our judicial system and those we serve that our examinations will be conducted in a timely manner and our conclusions will be expressed accurately and reliably in an unbiased manner ensuring justice is carried out fairly before the courts.

The IAI is the oldest forensic organization in the United States with a membership of over 7,000 representing practitioners from several forensic disciplines and provides professional training and certifications for the forensic science community. For further information on the IAI please visit the <https://www.theiai.org/>