



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FORENSIC SCIENCES
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The American Academy of Forensic Sciences Approves Position Statement in Response to the National Academy of Sciences' "Forensic Needs" Report

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO – On September 2, 2009, the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) approved a formal AAFS Position Statement in response to the National Academy of Sciences report *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward* (NAS Report). After extensive consideration, discussion, and drafting, the Board unanimously voted to support the recommendations of the NAS Report, while adopting seven Principles to guide forensic science in the United States. Finally, the Board adopted three specific Actions to guide the AAFS in contributing to the strengthening of the forensic sciences.

With these Principles and Actions, AAFS intends to influence the efforts of legislators, administrators, and other policymakers necessary to directing and funding what needs to be done in order to accomplish the overall goals and the specific recommendations of the NAS Report.

AAFS looks forward to working with other professional organizations, governmental agencies, and, indeed, all entities committed to the improvement of the forensic science system.

AAFS POSITION STATEMENT

The American Academy of Forensic Sciences supports the recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences report *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*¹ (NAS Report).

¹ *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*, Committee on Identifying the Needs of the Forensic Sciences Community: Committee on Applied and Theoretical Statistics, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences, 2009.

From among the various views and recommendations espoused, we particularly emphasize, endorse and promote the following principles:

1. All forensic science disciplines must have a strong scientific foundation.
2. All forensic science laboratories should be accredited.
3. All forensic scientists should be certified.
4. Forensic science terminology should be standardized.
5. Forensic scientists should be assiduously held to Codes of Ethics.
6. Existing forensic science professional entities should participate in governmental oversight of the field.
7. Attorneys and judges who work with forensic scientists and forensic science evidence should have a strong awareness and knowledge of the scientific method and forensic science disciplines.

To promote these principles, we propose the following actions by the AAFS:

1. Whenever a credible concern is brought to the Board of Directors of the AAFS regarding the scientific basis of a forensic science technique, the President will charge the President-elect to chair, and the appropriate section chair to co-chair a committee to assess if the challenge is legitimate. The committee shall consult with members of the relevant section(s), other professional organizations, and certifying bodies recognized by the Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board (FSAB). The committee shall also receive input from any interested parties concerning any underlying studies relevant to the question of the scientific validity of the forensic science technique. The President-elect shall report the findings of the committee to the Board of Directors. The Board shall vote on the appropriate action in response to the findings of the committee, including, where appropriate, issuance of a public statement describing the findings and reporting to any relevant certifying, accrediting or governmental oversight entities.
2. The Board of Directors shall assess whether the Academy can contribute to the standardization of terminology in the forensic science disciplines and in making definitions of the terminology readily accessible to the public.
3. The Board of Directors shall assist in improving the knowledge of attorneys and judges with respect to forensic science and scientific evidence by developing a curriculum covering all forensic science disciplines, with entries at varying levels of proficiency, through the cooperative efforts of professional organizations of forensic science practitioners and attorneys.

The American Academy of Forensic Sciences is a multi-disciplinary professional organization that provides leadership to advance science and its application to the legal system. The objectives of the Academy are to promote education, foster research, improve practice, and encourage collaboration in the forensic sciences. For more information on the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, visit www.aafs.org.