



### **D79 Standard Guidelines for Field Investigation Drug Officer (FIDO) Program**

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Attendees will learn about an existing successful model, as well as standardized guidelines for implementation, operation, and continuing support of Field Investigation Drug Officer (FIDO) program.

Successful implementation of the FIDO program will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by having the potential to streamline the adjudication process, enabling the reduction of backlogged drug investigations and the efficient use of resources.

The efficiency of the entire criminal justice system is impacted by the overwhelming caseload of drug investigations. As a result, many cases fail to be prosecuted in a reasonable time frame or are dismissed due to a lack of timely sample analysis.

Straightforward possession drug cases comprise a significant percentage of those investigations. Handling the cases at the investigative level has the potential to streamline the adjudication process, enabling the reduction of backlogged investigations and the efficient use of resources.

Based on the evaluation of an existing model, operated by the Phoenix Police Department, the effective implementation of a Field Investigation Drug Officer (FIDO) program affords certified officers the capability of providing a preliminary identification of the most commonly encountered drugs of abuse. The benefits include immediate investigative information without the need for extensive laboratory analysis as well as facilitation of case adjudication in the preliminary phase. The results of the field-test factor into obtaining a plea agreement. However, cases proceeding to trial are submitted for complete analysis at the laboratory. The successful program in Phoenix has demonstrated a positive impact on the regional criminal justice system with cost savings and increased efficiency at all levels.

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ), in partnership with its National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Centers (NLECTC) and Forensic Resource Network (FRN), has addressed this issue. A focus group consisting of representatives from the law enforcement, forensic science, corrections, legal, and judicial communities was established to facilitate development and deployment of the FIDO program.

Following focus group discussions, the program was designed with sufficient flexibility to enable adaptation based on agency-specific needs and resources and to accommodate future technologies. The program is comprised of a comprehensive training program and quality assurance system that provides law enforcement personnel with the resources necessary to perform preliminary identification of controlled substances.

Deriving the maximum benefit from the FIDO program will require the full cooperation and participation of all members of the criminal justice community. The potential reward of this collaboration will be a significant increase in the efficiency of the system and an enhanced capacity to process drug-related cases.

#### **Case Backlog Reduction, Drug Testing, Resource Allocation**