



Criminalistics Section – 2006

B60 An Informal Survey of Personnel Status in Forensic Science Laboratories

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn the range of personnel status (sworn, civilian, or mixed) among forensic science laboratories in the U.S.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by providing a better understanding of why laboratories may retain sworn personnel or prefer civilian personnel.

Organizational culture is the personality of the organization. It is the emergent result of the continuing negotiations about values, meanings and proprieties between the members of that organization and with its environment. What is valued, the dominant leadership style, the language and symbols, the procedures and routines, and the definitions of success that characterizes an organization are all a part of an organization's culture. Scientists, police, and lawyers have struggled to design the juridical intersection where law and science cross paths. The success of forensic science in the 21st century largely depends on the participants' proper understanding of the crossroads at which science and the law meet.

An informal survey of local, regional, state, and Federal forensic science laboratories was carried out to determine which laboratories' personnel were sworn officers, civilian scientists, or had a mix of the two. Forty eight laboratories in 29 states and the Federal system responded. Twenty four were state laboratories, 13 were county or regional laboratories, and 7 were city laboratories. Of the responding laboratories, 28 (59.6%) had civilian personnel, 15 (31.9%) had a mix of sworn and civilian personnel, and only 4 (8.5%) had all sworn personnel.

	State	County	City	Fed
Civilian	14	7	4	3
Mixed	8	4	3	0
Sworn	2	2	0	0

In the states with mixed personnel status, the sworn personnel were typically the Director and specific supervisors, such as Crime Scene or Evidence/Property. Several of the mixed states were in the process of converting to all-civilian status, largely as part of incentives to assign more sworn personnel to active street duty and as a cost savings.

Succession planning is a crucial managerial process but it can become difficult when it crosses boundaries between personnel categories. Employee retention in mixed status laboratories also requires a clear view to what motivates employees of both categories.

Personnel, Staffing, Forensic Science Laboratories