



Jurisprudence Section - 2013

E8 NSTC Subcommittee on Forensic Science Process and Path Forward for U.S. Crime Laboratories: A Voluntary, Consensus, Based Approach

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn of the final recommendations of the Subcommittee on Forensic Science for ongoing improvements of forensic science, learned about a new federal Executive Branch initiative and discussed potential strategies for uniform implementation of the recommendations.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by stressing how implementation strategies for the recommendations and the new federal initiative may dramatically affect forensic science laboratories, experts, accreditation and certification bodies, and standards development. The implementation strategies for the Subcommittee's recommendations and the new federal initiative may have a dramatic effect on forensic science service providers, experts, accreditation and certification bodies, and standards development methodologies. The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Report, "*Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*," called for change and significant improvement in the forensic sciences. The Federal government, the courts, law enforcement, and the forensic science enterprise as a whole have worked diligently to develop a meaningful response to the NAS report. The culture of enhanced scientific, quality, and integrity continues to evolve and improve. The question is how will forensic scientists embrace it?

In 2009, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, under the auspices of the National Science and Technology Council, established the Subcommittee on Forensic Science (SoFS). The SoFS's primary mission was to assess practical challenges and make recommendations associated with the findings of the NAS Report. Over the last three years, SoFS actively pursued the investigation and analysis of critical issues which can inform a coordinated and meaningful advancement of the concepts enunciated in the NAS Report through the SoFS five interagency working groups composed of Federal, state, and local laboratory representatives, academics, lawyers, judges, researchers, and law enforcement officials. The SoFS's detailed and comprehensive exploration has broadened the breadth of foundational knowledge and situational awareness, thereby informing a meaningful framework for moving forward. Now that the SoFS has published its recommendations, its successor entity is ready to provide sustainable leadership and direction to coordinate uniform implementation within the United States.

This presentation will discuss implementation strategies for the specific recommendations issued by the SoFS that may affect many forensic science service providers in the U.S. Foremost is a voluntary, consensus-based approach through a federal coordination body. Other strategies also exist; however, such as federal legislation, state legislation, state forensic science commissions that range in authority from advisory to regulatory, and uniform state laws created through a consortium of state governments. The vehicles for and challenges and alternatives to widespread, uniform implementation will be explored by the panel. Strategies for implementation and enforcement must be considered to promote quality and ensure the scientific integrity of forensic science. This panel will discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with implementing SoFS recommendations. Issues such as accreditation, certification, education, proficiency testing (and proficiency test providers), scientific working groups, vocabulary, report writing, uniform code of ethics, medicolegal death investigators and other matters will be discussed. Consideration will also be given to the role of the federal and state governments in supporting implementation of the recommendations, the role of discipline-specific working groups in forensic science standards development, the role of accreditation and certification bodies in enforcing the recommendations, and the role of each forensic science service provider in ensuring the continual improvement of forensic science in the United States.

Recommendations, Subcommittee, Federal Initiative