



### **D56 Forensic Science Training Task Force: Recommendations for Training and Continuing Education**

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The goals of this presentation are to provide the forensic science community with information on more effective and efficient ways to train new hires and to help identify the gap between education, training, and continuing education.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing attendees information regarding the creation of recommendations on ways to effectively and efficiently train new hires in forensic science agencies.

Training and continuing education was identified as a significant area of need within the forensic science community in several studies including the National Institute of Justice's (NIJ) *Forensic Sciences: Review of Status and Needs* (1999), the Technical Working Group on Education's (TWGED's) *Education and Training in Forensic Science: A Guide for Forensic Science Laboratories, Educational Institutions, and Students* (2004), and the *180-day Study Report: Status and Needs of United States Crime Laboratories* (2004). The 2009 release of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Report, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*, also addressed the issue of training and continuing education for all working forensic scientists. The NAS Report states that continuing education is "critical for all personnel working in crime laboratories as well as those in other forensic science disciplines..." The Report also states that "training should move beyond apprentice-like transmittal of practices to education based on scientifically valid principles...but there are no uniform recommendations on the content of training in the forensic science disciplines."

The Training Task Force, an initiative sponsored by the NIJ's cooperative agreement with West Virginia University, was created to develop and provide recommendations on what is needed to train new hires and to help identify the gap between education, training, and continuing education in forensic science. The creation of the Task Force was in line with the identified needs in the forensic science community that are being observed across the United States. The goal of forensic science agencies is to secure scientists who are skilled forensic professionals. It is important for scientists to be trained to competency to perform their assigned duties in a consistent manner from agency to agency, while keeping costs to a minimum. The task force included a variety of forensic professionals from different laboratories from both local and state agencies throughout the country. Professionals include laboratory directors, training coordinators, educators, and supervisors who are familiar with the importance of training new hires while keeping in mind the importance of cost effectiveness. The Task Force determined that training needs to be consistent between agencies so retention becomes less of an issue for those that have excellent training programs. The Task Force also identified gaps between formal education, training, and continuing education. Identifying these gaps will better the forensic community as a whole as training and continuing education programs can be more focused on the scientists' needs.

The goal of the Training Task Force was to draft recommendations and suggestions to the forensic community regarding training of new employees. Suggestions will include topics on how to make laboratory training programs more efficient by building on the educational background and current knowledge of the entry-level scientist who graduated from an accredited forensic science program. Since there are now standards of forensic science education at these accredited institutions, agencies can further support the programs while using the education as a benchmark. Building off the current knowledge of the new hire eliminates retraining in topics where competency has previously been demonstrated. For example, if two new employees are hired into the agency, one with several years of experience and the other right out of school, building off the current knowledge of the new employee will eliminate the time it takes to train the new hire with experience to competency.

#### **Continuing Education, Training, NAS Report**