



F2 Interdisciplinary Document Toolkit for Forensic Odontological Investigation

Glori Enzor, DDS, 3220 S Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34239; Barry E. Lipton, DDS, 11200 Seminole Boulevard, Ste 108, Largo, FL 33778; and Terrence P. Thomas*, 2331 Phillips Road, Tallahassee, FL 32308*

After attending this presentation, attendees will further appreciate the advantages of incorporating a methodical checklist approach to investigations and will understand the unique role of the forensic odontologist in the execution of the specialized expertise search warrant.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing a comprehensive toolkit encompassing all the documentation necessary for a complete and methodical forensic odontological investigation, including shell forms adaptable to individual jurisdictions and situations.

Forensic odontologists are often called upon to assist law enforcement with the collection, documentation, and evaluation of physical evidence in patterned injury and bitemark cases. Individual detectives may have limited experience working a case involving a forensic odontologist and may be unsure as to what materials can be evaluated or what evidence can be collected. A checklist of records that can be useful to the forensic odontologist includes all crime scene evidence, medical reports, and more. This checklist will not only provide the odontologist with all the evidence available in a case, but will also be a ready reference for both law enforcement regarding what was provided and for the odontologist in preparing a report.

Law enforcement personnel unfamiliar with forensic odontology may also have limited experience in drafting a complete search warrant to obtain dental evidence. There exists a general search warrant, explaining the affiant's probable cause and the items to be seized, such as in the recovery of stolen property, sex crimes, homicides, and arrest warrants.¹ There are further specialized expertise "shell" warrants utilizing the specific language of the case, such as fraud (forensic accounting) and computer crimes (information technology).

However, to date there does not exist a specialized expertise shell warrant for forensic odontology, utilizing specific dental and forensic terminology and enumerating specific evidence to be collected, such as dental impressions and bite exemplars. This toolkit provides a specialized expertise shell Application and Affidavit for Forensic Dental Search Warrant, which can be adapted and individualized to comply with the requirements of different jurisdictions. This warrant takes into account the unique position of the forensic odontologist, since normally law enforcement holds the only authority to execute the warrant, collecting and documenting the evidence; in this singular situation, it is the forensic odontologist who collects, documents, and interprets the evidence.

The vast majority of forensic odontologists are also engaged in the practice of dentistry, where there are numerous patient examination forms to complete. It is understood that a complete and thorough examination is best made when each step is undertaken in the same methodical way each time, ensuring no detail is overlooked.^{2,3} This toolkit provides a forensic evaluation checklist, enumerating all evidence to be collected in a thorough investigation. This form guides the odontologist in the systematic collection of evidence and delineates and documents those items collected as a ready reference.

Sometimes records are obtained from an individual on a voluntary basis and without the compulsion of a search warrant or court order. To explain the process of evidence collection to the individual subject and to protect the forensic odontologist who collects such evidence, an Informed Consent for Examination form is supplied in this toolkit.

To define the obligations of both the forensic odontologist and the agency requesting his/her services, a Professional Services Agreement is offered in this toolkit.

Conclusion: By standardizing a systematic approach to information and evidence gathering, both law enforcement and the forensic odontologist can help ensure thoroughness, continuity, and consistency in every case. Each form is intended to be a customizable "shell" to adapt to differences in jurisdictions, situations, and personal preference.

References:

1. Herschaft, E., et al, editors. *Manual of Forensic Odontology*. 4th edition. Impress Printing and Graphics, 2007.
2. Senn, D., et al, editors. *Forensic Dentistry*. 2nd edition. CRC Press, 2010.
3. *Brachlow v. State*, 2005 WL 1750725, Florida 4th DCA.

Forensic Odontology, Expertise Search Warrant, Documentation