



Jurisprudence Section - 2015

F12 Got Forensic Science Standards? — How the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) Activities *COULD* Impact the Courtroom...

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand how the efforts of more than 600 subject-matter experts (volunteers) appointed to the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) and others could impact laboratory protocols, accreditation efforts, and testimony in forensic science.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by educating attendees on the processes employed by the OSAC to identify, foster the development of, and formally approve forensic science standards through publication on the OSAC Registration of Approved Standards and Registry of Approved Guidelines. These standards development efforts will ultimately affect methods employed in forensic science laboratories, standards used during the accreditation process, report writing, and testimony offered by experts.

As the forensic science community is aware, the development of a quality infrastructure for forensic science was a key component of some of the reforms anticipated in the 2009 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Report, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*. In response to the Report, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the United States Department of Justice signed a bilateral agency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in March 2013 which specified the establishment of “Guidance Groups,” now termed Scientific Area Committees (SACs). NIST created the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) model to promulgate NIST’s responsibility to administer and coordinate support for the SACs and subcommittees that represent specific forensic science disciplines.

The consensus-based documentary standards and guidelines approved for posting on the OSAC Registry of Approved Standards and Registry of Approved Guidelines will be considered: (1) by laboratories as standard methods for specific analyses; (2) as potential discipline-specific standards for consideration by accrediting bodies offering accreditation services in the forensic industry; and, (3) by officers of the court when evaluating processes employed and testimony given by forensic science experts.

The OSAC design employs the essential requirements of developing consensus-based standards which include openness, transparency, balance of interest, due process, and an appeals process that ensures each stakeholder’s viewpoints are properly considered. In addition, the OSAC infrastructure will bring a uniform standards recognition platform to the community, enhance scientific rigor, and increase communication among forensic scientists, research scientists, academicians, statisticians, attorneys, managers, and quality assurance specialists. The OSAC structure currently consists of a Forensic Science Standards Board, three resource committees, five scientific area committees, and 23 subcommittees.

Standards, OSAC, Testimony