



## Jurisprudence Section - 2015

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### F9 The National Commission on Forensic Science: Status Update

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the activities of the National Commission on Forensic Science during the past year.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing an update on the progress made by the National Commission on Forensic Science throughout its first year.

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 entitled, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*. In response to the NAS Report, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) announced an interagency initiative to enhance forensic science which specified the establishment of a National Commission on Forensic Science (NCFS) and the development of “Guidance Groups” now termed Scientific Area Committees (SACs).

DOJ and NIST announced the membership in January 2014 and have since held five meetings in Washington, DC, (February 2014, May 2014, August 2014, October 2014, and January 2015). From more than 300 applicants, 37 individuals were selected to achieve a diversity of experiences, including: forensic science service providers; research scientists and academicians; prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges; law enforcement; victim advocates; and other relevant stakeholders. The Commission is led by Co-Chairs Mr. James Cole, Deputy Attorney General, and Dr. Willie May, NIST Director and Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology. Nelson Santos, Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Office of Forensic Sciences at the Drug Enforcement Administration and Dr. John Butler, Special Assistant to the Director for Forensic Science, serve as the DOJ and NIST Vice-Chairs, respectively. The NCFS has seven subcommittees on the following issues: (1) Accreditation and Proficiency Testing; (2) Reporting and Testimony; (3) Scientific Inquiry and Research; (4) Training on Science and Law; (5) Interim Solutions; (6) Medicolegal Death Investigation; and, (7) Human Factors. All NCFS meetings are open to the public and materials are available at <http://www.justice.gov/ncfs>.

NIST developed the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) to administer and coordinate support for the discipline-specific SACs (see <http://www.nist.gov/forensics/osac.cfm>). In September 2013, NIST issued a Notice of Inquiry (NOI) in the Federal Register to obtain national and international input on the establishment and structure of governance models. Eighty-two submissions were received in response to the NOI. The OSAC is designed to provide uniform administration for development, promulgation, and adoption of documentary standards in the forensic science community.

While NCFS is a DOJ advisory group to enact policies, OSAC will be an on-going community effort to improve forensic practices through developing documentary standards that can be used by accrediting bodies in future audits of forensic laboratories. This presentation will review progress made with NCFS. OSAC progress will be the subject of a separate presentation.

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#### National Commission, NAS Report, Federal Advisory Committee