



## Criminalistics Section - 2016

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### **B212 National Institute of Justice's (NIJ's) "Using DNA Technology to Identify the Missing" Program: An Update**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the NIJ's funding for solving missing persons and unidentified human remains cases. Attendees will also receive data on the impact of the program to date.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by educating the community about an NIJ funding program that their agencies may not be aware of as well as the impact this program has had on solving cases.

The NIJ is the research, development, and evaluation branch of the Department of Justice. NIJ is the federal government's lead agency for forensic science research and development as well as for the administration of programs that facilitate training, improve laboratory efficiency, and reduce backlogs. The mission of the NIJ's Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences is to improve the quality and practice of forensic science through innovative solutions that support research and development, testing and evaluation, technology, information exchange, and the development of training resources for the criminal justice community. Through the research, development, testing, and evaluation process, the NIJ provides direct support to crime laboratories and law enforcement agencies to increase their capacity to process high-volume cases and provide needed training in new technologies.

Based on a survey published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2007, it is estimated that approximately 4,000 sets of unidentified human remains are found every year, 1,000 of which remain unidentified after one year. In addition, on any given day, there are approximately 100,000 people reported missing. Since 2003, the NIJ has initiated programs dedicated to assisting state and local law enforcement agencies and crime laboratories in solving missing persons cases and identifying human remains. In April 2005 at a national strategy meeting sponsored by the NIJ, former Deputy Attorney General James B. Comey spoke about the lack of uniformity in multiple Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) databases. As a result of the meeting, he directed the NIJ and the FBI to establish a national task force to assess existing databases and identify how to better encourage, facilitate, and achieve greater use of these databases. This task force recommended the creation of a new database which became the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs).

This presentation will discuss the NIJ's "Using DNA to Identify the Missing" program, its goals and objectives, and show success stories associated with the program. The funding amounts, number of awards, and performance metrics, including number of samples tested, profiles developed, profiles uploaded to the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), and DNA hits will all be presented. Successful project designs and several cases in which identifications have been made will be discussed. In 2007, the NIJ released NamUs to the public. The system is composed of three individual databases: a missing persons database, an unidentified remains database, and an unclaimed persons database. This presentation will also discuss some brief updates on the NamUs system, including future plans for the system.

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#### **Missing Persons, NIJ, DNA**