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### **E89 Understanding Familial DNA Searching: Policies and Practices in the United States**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the current landscape of practices related to familial DNA searching in the United States.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing a comprehensive and systematic portrait of familial DNA searching in order to inform policy and practice. The field will be better equipped with the critical information needed to navigate the complexities related to this emerging practice.

Familial DNA searching is a forensic technique used to locate potential suspects through the identification of their family members' DNA in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). It has been used most extensively in the United Kingdom, but in recent years United States jurisdictions have expressed growing interest in adopting the practice. Proponents of familial DNA searching have cited its potential to facilitate the identification and conviction of suspects, prevent crime, resolve cold cases, exonerate wrongfully convicted individuals, and improve public safety; however, its use also raises important constitutional, ethical, and practical considerations for forensic scientists, criminal justice stakeholders, and policymakers.

Much of the information available regarding familial DNA searching currently stems from anecdotal accounts of its successes and scholarly critiques of the various constitutional, ethical, and practical concerns posed by legal scholars, advocacy groups, and criminal justice stakeholders; however, there has been little research on its use and perceptions about the practice in the field. With support from the National Institute of Justice, ICF International is conducting a mixed-methods study to produce a national portrait of familial DNA searching policies, practices, and legislation.

The study's multiple components include: (1) hosting expert roundtables of stakeholders representing diverse fields of expertise and perspectives related to familial DNA searching; (2) performing a literature review on familial DNA searching and related practices; (3) performing a legislative and administrative policy review on familial DNA searching and related practices; (4) administering a national survey of CODIS crime laboratories; (5) conducting intensive case studies in four states with varying practices related to familial DNA searching; and, (6) creating a cost-benefit framework to help guide jurisdictions in weighing their options regarding the use of familial DNA searching.

This study will present results from the National Survey of CODIS Laboratories and legislative/administrative policy reviews, including the extent of familial DNA searching among laboratories, policies and legislation guiding its use, diversity in specific practices, attitudes toward familial DNA searching and related practices, and challenges in conducting familial DNA searches. Implications for policy, practice, and future research will be discussed.

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#### **Familial, DNA, CODIS**