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### **B204 What Can We Learn From the Coverdell Grants? Data Mining the Coverdell Grants to Assess Their Impact on the Forensic Community**

*Luther S. Schaeffer, MSc\*, Office of Investigative and Forensic Science, NIJ, Office of Justice Programs, 810 7th Street, NW, Rm 6271, Washington, DC 20531*

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand, through the analysis of the data collected from the Coverdell awardees, that much can be learned about the contribution of the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program (the Coverdell program) to the greater forensic science community.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing an evaluation of the Coverdell program.

The Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Improvement Act (NFSIA) became Public Law 106-561 on December 21, 2000. This Act authorized grants to states to improve the quality, timeliness, and credibility of forensic science services for criminal justice purposes. Beginning in 2002, the Coverdell program has been perennially offered through the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and is relied upon by many forensic laboratories and organizations throughout the United States and its territories. Coverdell grants may be used to eliminate a backlog in the analysis of forensic evidence, to purchase instrumentation and/or equipment, and to train and employ personnel in forensic science laboratories and medical examiner/coroner offices. As of 2014, more than \$184,000,000 has been awarded for more than 1,000 awards. Broadly, this evaluation will include a review of data collected by the NIJ through the life of the program to elucidate the impact the grants have made throughout the forensic science community. Trends studied include: (1) determining whether the Coverdell grant program has supported the implementation of new technologies by analyzing what trends existed in purchases (e.g., did any major shifts in equipment occur that might demonstrate a discipline-wide shift to a new technology and has it contributed to establishing new technologies in the field?); and, (2) if there were measureable effects on laboratory backlogs (i.e., has the program reduced the evidence backlog in the forensic laboratories and/or has the turn-around time decreased?).

To conduct this retrospective study, a sampling of the final budgets for completed Coverdell projects will be examined to determine if and what equipment was purchased. A review of the supplies purchased in relation to technology (not typical laboratory consumables) and relevant Contracts/Consultants (e.g., services related to evaluating or validating new technologies) will also be completed. Reviews will be conducted of the budget narratives to track the discipline(s)/forensic unit(s) for which those purchases were made, as well as the training purchased for laboratory staff. Additional metrics considered will be whether the Coverdell grants were used to pay overtime or hire new laboratory staff; the relevant dates in relation to the program, such as the initial award date, project starting date, and project completion date; and lastly, the source of the funds — whether they were formula or competitive grants.

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**Paul Coverdell, Backlog, NIJ**