



### **E99 The Arizona Forensic Science Academy: A Model Program for Delivering Forensic Science Education to Criminal Justice Practitioners**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand a national model for delivering a training and education program designed to inform criminal justice practitioners about forensic science, including foundational and introductory topics for officers of the court and advanced technical lectures for scientific experts. Attendees will also be provided with a model that can be easily implemented within their own jurisdictions to advance the practice of forensic science by all criminal justice practitioners.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating a successful program that has consistently delivered training and education about forensic science to the criminal justice community in the state of Arizona since 2011. As acknowledged by the National Forensic Science Commission, training related to the technical aspects of forensic science in both criminal and civil courts is necessary and an essential component of advancing forensic science.<sup>1</sup> Sharing lessons learned and model curricula enables others to adopt similar programs and establish best practices for forensic science training and education programs for all criminal justice practitioners.

The Arizona Forensic Science Academy was established by the Forensic Science Advisory Committee of the Arizona Attorney General's Office in response to a recommendation in *Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*, a 2009 National Research Council Report, to provide forensic science training to legal professionals.<sup>2</sup> The Academy was designed to increase criminal justice practitioners' understanding of forensic principles, scientific methodologies, and evidentiary concerns. Courses in the Academy are taught by scientific and medical experts and provide practical and technical training to prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges. The experts who have facilitated training in the Academy span the spectrum from both locally and nationally recognized experts from academia, crime labs, medical professionals, law enforcement, defense experts, private industry, judges, and attorneys.

In addition to the classes delivered to officers of the court, the Academy also provides specialized training for forensic scientists and other technical experts. Four primary training programs have been developed for criminal justice practitioners: (1) a Basic Academy; (2) an Advanced Academy; (3) a "3-D" (Domestic Violence, Drugs, and DUI) Academy; and, (4) a Forensic Science Lecture Series. Since the Academy's inception in 2011, more than 1,000 criminal justice professionals received more than 10,000 hours of continuing education. The newest program to be delivered is a dedicated two-day symposium for judges from the limited, general, and appellate jurisdictions. Topics identified for inclusion in the symposium include evidentiary issues, crime lab policies and practices, forensic biology/DNA, Driving Under the Influence (DUI) issues and forensics, medical-legal death investigation, controlled substances, data recovery from cell phones, Global Positioning System (GPS) evidence, digital photography/video, forensic neuroscience issues, accident reconstruction, toxicology, child physical and sexual abuse, and pattern evidence.

A unique aspect of this program is the collaboration between various criminal justice stakeholders to deliver training programs to practitioners — regardless of their role in the criminal justice system. In the past, this type of training was offered exclusively to prosecutors or defense attorneys and it was rare for prosecutors and defense



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attorneys to attend the same training event. The collaborative nature of the Arizona Forensic Science Academy's training programs resulted in improved relationships between the various stakeholders, a greater understanding of forensic science principles in the Arizona criminal justice community, and increased access by trial attorneys to the resources available to them in the crime labs and from technical experts in the state of Arizona.

### Reference(s):

1. National Commission on Forensic Science. (2015, December 8). *Work Products Adopted by the Commission*. Retrieved from The U.S. Department of Justice: National Commission on Forensic Science: <https://www.justice.gov/ncfs/file/818206/download>.
  2. The National Research Council: Committee on Science, Technology, and Law. (2009). *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*. Washington, DC: The National Academies of Science.
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### Forensic Science Training, Officers of the Court, Model Program