

B58 Establishing a Regional DNA Database

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will: (1) be familiar with the structure of a regional DNA database, (2) learn the challenges faced while implementing a regional DNA database, and (3) realize the importance of communication between local DNA databases.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing information on the implementation of a regional DNA database. The successes and challenges experienced during the deployment will be reviewed to assist other agencies in establishing additional regional databases, thereby enhancing communication among jurisdictions and maximizing the potential for case associations.

The Delaware Valley Investigative DNA Database (DVIDD) provides a regional DNA database for legally obtained DNA profiles, processed in either an accredited laboratory or through a validated Rapid DNA system. The DVIDD enhances collaboration in the region, establishes crime trends, and identifies persons of interest in criminal investigations.

The establishment of the DVIDD does not diminish the value of participation in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). All participants have been informed that CODIS is the primary and most robust source of DNA searching in the country, and whenever possible, samples should be processed for inclusion in CODIS. Currently, the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD) is a CODIS-participating laboratory within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and maintains a local DNA database though CODIS. The counties surrounding Philadelphia successfully maintain their own local DNA databases for crimes that are not entered into CODIS due to various procedural and resource constraints. Prior to the establishment of the DVIDD, these databases operated as standalone investigative tools despite the close proximity of the investigating agencies.

The DVIDD is structured as a non-CODIS DNA database to serve as a complementary tool for the regional partners to utilize the legally obtained and properly processed profiles that otherwise would not be searched against each other. As designed, profiles from the PPD local DNA database and local DNA databases of other participating members are routinely exported to the DVIDD. The PPD maintains operational custody and Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) oversight of the DVIDD. Following a case association, the PPD reports the information to the appropriate agencies and advises on any confirmatory processes that may be needed.

The deployment of the DVIDD included stakeholder meetings and formal agreements between the county agencies to participate in the program. In these planning stages, the overall concept of the database was established, defining the roles and responsibilities of each agency. The implementation phase included developing profile acceptance criteria, search rules, and communications and reporting procedures. Following the deployment, a review of the successes and challenges experienced during the project was conducted to determine best practices that could aid in the establishment of regional databases in other jurisdictions.

Regional, DNA, Database