



F17 The Implementation of Rapid DNA: Prevent Tomorrow's Victim

Frederick Harran, MS, Bensalem Township Police Department, Bensalem, PA 19020*

Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will understand how a law enforcement agency can utilize DNA technology locally to develop investigative leads while maintaining a forensic standard for testing.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing valuable data information on how a law enforcement agency can adopt new technologies and apply them to their operations properly.

The Bensalem Township Police Department (Bensalem, PA) will introduce their program that created a local DNA database through partnership with an accredited laboratory and the use of Rapid DNA technology to develop real-time investigative information. Bensalem was the first police department in the country to utilize a Rapid DNA instrument in conjunction with its well-established local DNA database.

Through an introduction that includes a background of the community, this presentation will outline Bensalem's approach to solving cases, and more importantly preventing crime. This presentation will review actual case examples to demonstrate the impact of the program on multiple crime types. Additionally, goals in the development of the program itself and how that has evolved over time will be discussed.

Best practices for implementing and using the technology to maximize the impact on the judicial system will be discussed. Over the course of almost ten years of the program, Bensalem has regularly introduced new, cutting edge technology to help support their mission of improving public safety. As a result, Bensalem has had to regularly introduce and change operational procedures and training programs to ensure their program meets standards expected by the courts. Their program has also grown regionally, and, as a result, Bensalem has regularly engaged with neighboring departments to support their implementation and ensure the integrity of the program is maintained. Both the quality and the impact of the program are regularly monitored.

The development of the local DNA database has included various stakeholders, all with various levels of buy-in and expectations. This included internal buy-in through multiple divisions within the police department, such as the criminal investigations division, the narcotics division, and patrol officers. Outside of the organization, it was important to involve the prosecutors and local government as well as the community. Without complete buy-in, risk for misuse or lack of quality could occur.

The results of the program have generated a significant reduction in local crime, including reducing burglary crime by more than 40% in the first year of the program alone. The public-private partnership has enabled this technology to be quickly adopted while having a significant, positive impact on the community. The program has also had a positive return-on-investment as well when compared to other solutions to reduce and prevent crime, with the annual investment in the technology being far less than the cost to put a senior patrol officer on the street.

Overall, attendees will understand how advanced DNA technology can be used successfully while meeting quality standards to maintain DNA as the gold standard for forensic investigations.

DNA, Rapid DNA, Database