

Standard for Training on Testimony for Forensic Biology



WHAT IS AN AAFS STANDARD FACTSHEET?

The AAFS produces clear, concise, and easy-to-understand factsheets to summarize the contents of technical and professional forensic science standards on the OSAC Registry. They are not intended to provide an interpretation for any portion of a published standard.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STANDARD?

Testifying in court is necessary for many forensic biology practitioners. This standard provides requirements for the minimum training on scientific and legal principles to prepare them for providing testimony.

This standard builds on the foundational DNA analysis training program provided in ANSI/ASB 022, 1st Ed., 2019, which is indispensable for the application of this standard. Specifically, this standard mandates that FSSPs meet competency testing (section 4.3) and conformance (section 5) requirements.

While this standard covers ethical obligations related to testimony, it is intended to supplement, not supplant, general ethics training.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

This standard provides forensic science service providers (FSSPs) with a clear and uniform pathway for training on testimony in the forensic biology discipline. It creates consistency in the topics covered, including the evaluation of competency and the documentation of training.

This framework for quality training prepares forensic biology practitioners to deliver consistent, understandable, and accurate testimony in legal proceedings.



HOW IS THIS STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

FSSPs use this standard to train forensic science practitioners to deliver court testimony. Its key elements include knowledge-based and practical training and competency testing.

This standard requires practitioners to attain an understanding of fundamental principles of forensic biology testimony, relevant terminology, legal concepts, courtroom procedures, admissibility of scientific evidence, relevant case law, and ethical obligations. The knowledge-based training section of the standard also mandates a review of FSSP policies related to testimony, previous case transcripts or recordings, and assigned literature, as well as a demonstrated understanding of human factors and their potential impact.

Practical training requires trainees to observe live testimony or review recordings to familiarize themselves with different types of legal proceedings. The standard requires oral exercises, which include clearly presenting scientific evidence and addressing questions competently in both direct and cross-examinations.

Successful completion of competency testing, including a mock trial, is required to assess the trainees' grasp of the theoretical and practical aspects of forensic testimony.