

AMERICAN BOARD OF CRIMINALISTICS

Promoting Excellence Through Certification

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

ABC Spring 2024 Newsletter President's Message

Hello, my name is Shawn West and I am the new President of the American Board of Criminalistics. I have been serving on the Board of Directors since 2018. I became certified in 2005 and have been working in the forensic science field for over 22 years. I am the Membership Director for the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. Since being selected to the board of the ABC, I have served in several roles of the executive board. I have been the Secretary and the Vice President and now I am excited to take on the role as the President.

Certification has changed a lot since I became certified in 2005. Many of you may remember the days of the General Knowledge exam and then taking an additional exam or exams in a specialty. Over the years, we have received lots of feedback about the process for recertification and the relevance of the past exams. As your President, I will continue to listen to your feedback and continue to move this organization forward.

Over the past several years, the ABC has developed new exams and achieved ANAB accreditation under the ISO/IEC 17024:2012 standard for the Biological Evidence Screening, Forensic DNA, and Foundational Knowledge exams. We will continue to seek accreditation for future exams as well as continue to be innovative. Many steps to be innovative that have already taken place include transitioning to a more digital format. You likely noticed this during the submission of your annual paperwork. We know that this is a change for some but hope that you find it to be easier to complete this annual task. A notable next step is to develop electronic testing. This will vastly improve the ability for future certificants to take the exams. We are also targeting later this year to begin field testing the new Seized Drug exam.

The Board of Directors met earlier this year to set our sights on the future and help with the transition to a new Registrar. I want to take a moment to thank Mike and Debbie Healy for their many years of service to the ABC. I also want to thank Gretchen Lajoie for taking on the additional role of the Registrar and continuing as our Accreditation Manager. Gretchen is a key player in the accreditation and the innovative advancement of the ABC.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

[President's message](#)

[Communications and
Marketing Committee
Update](#)

[Recertification Update](#)

[Upcoming Meetings with
ABC Examinations](#)

[Examination Committee
Update](#)

[Accreditation Manager
Update](#)

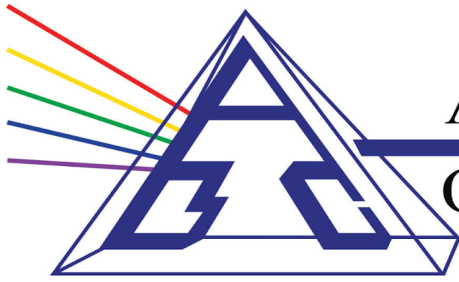
[Why I Wanted to Become
Certified](#)

[Appeals Committee
Update](#)

[Question Database
Manager Update](#)

[Message from the ABC
Registrar](#)

[ABC - About Us](#)



AMERICAN BOARD OF CRIMINALISTICS

President's Message Continued

I also want to take a moment to thank all of the volunteers that give so much of their time to this organization. It is their hard work and dedication to certification and the ABC that makes this organization continue to be a success.

I hope everyone has a safe and prosperous 2024.

Respectfully,

Shawn K. West, ABC-GKE
President

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING COMMITTEE UPDATE

Happy Spring everyone!

We hope the new season finds everyone well! Your Communications and Marketing team has been hard at work on this newsletter! I would like to give a special shoutout to Erin Tracy and Laurie Thonesen for their time and effort in putting these newsletters together.

I want to thank the certificants who replied to our request for "Why you became certified" and our "Weird and Wild Tales from the Forensic Lab" email. You'll see entries from each below. Feel free to keep those emails coming and we'll keep using your stories in upcoming newsletters.

You'll see we added information regarding fall regional and national meetings to the newsletter. We'll do the same in the fall for

RECERTIFICATION UPDATE

Hello ABC Certificants,

The Recertification Committee continues to evaluate and improve the recertification process on a yearly basis.

For this newsletter, I would like to highlight course preapprovals. As you fill out your packets, please check the pre-approval of courses through the ABC website, and if a course does not appear on the list, please fill out the pre-approval request. This helps move the process along more quickly.

The Committee is working to increase efficiency in the review process so that the packets are completed sooner. Making sure that courses are pre-approved will help expedite these reviews. Additionally, the committee members will continue to reach out to certificants regarding missing or insufficient documentation. In order to avoid losing points, please respond with the requested documentation in two weeks or less. We hope that this process will benefit certificants by allowing them



AMERICAN BOARD OF CRIMINALISTICS

Communication Update Continued

next spring's meetings. This was a suggestion put forth by a certificant and we incorporated it into the newsletter. If there is anything else you would like to see, please let us know.

As always, if you have any ideas or suggestions for the committee, please feel free to send them to us at communications@criminalistics.com.



<https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRv3yAeFtQZywDg2hl1-3XRP0yXSFuMecuHPUbzIYpj9B2BBGU&s>

Recertification Update Continued

to correct mistakes made during the submission of the recertification packets.

A huge **Thank You to Danielle Hankinson**, our former ABC President and current Vice President, who has served as the Recertification Liaison to the ABC Board of Directors. I really appreciate all of the support in the transition.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding recertification.

Respectfully,

Alice Hilker, MFS, ABC-GKE, ABC-MB

UPCOMING MEETINGS WITH ABC EXAMINATIONS

Midwestern Association of Forensic Scientists Annual Meeting

- September 8-13, 2024 - Kansas City, MO

Southwestern Association of Forensic Scientists Annual Meeting

- October 6-10, 2024 - Little Rock, AR

Northeastern Association of Forensic Scientists Annual Meeting

- October 21-25, 2024 - Atlantic City, NJ



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Biological Criminalistics

- Biological examination including kinship DNA analysis
- Biological examination including Y-STR analysis

Forensic Document Examination

- Physical documents
- Signature analysis

Digital Forensics

- Digital media e.g. hard drive

Chemical Criminalistics

- Glass
- Paint
- Ignitable fluid residue

Fingerprint Examination

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EXAMINATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

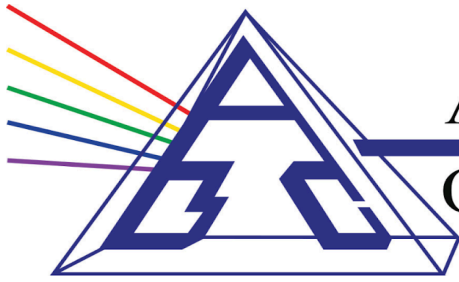
Spring 2024 Update from the Examination Committee – Audra Curry Yovanovich, Chair

Happy spring everyone! Here in Indianapolis we are finally seeing some warmer weather and clearer skies. We're also preparing for the solar eclipse. This will be the first time in 200 years that Indianapolis has been in the path of totality. Fortunately for you, the Exam Committee moves more quickly than celestial events and you won't have to wait 200 years for the new Seized Drug Analysis (SDA) Exam! Let's review a quick flow chart of exam development!



You are here!!

The SDA Certifying Examination Management Group (CEMG) is hard at work writing new, relevant questions for the exam. Once all new questions have been written and reviewed, Tanna Brown (the SDA Coordinator and Vice Chair of the Examination Committee) will compile the field test. It's always important to field test more questions than you actually need on the final version of the exam.



AMERICAN BOARD OF CRIMINALISTICS

Examination Committee Update Continued

We know that not every question is going to perform in the way we expect, so we build in extras so that only the BEST items are scored. If you want to learn more about any of the steps listed above, please look back at past newsletters where I break down each step of the exam development process.

The field test of the SDA exam will be released in 2024, so keep your eyes peeled for opportunities to take this exam in the near future!

ACCREDITATION MANAGER UPDATE

This time last year I was announcing that we had attained ISO/IEC 17024:2012 accreditation for our Biological Evidence Screening and Forensic DNA certification programs. This year I can announce that we have added Foundational Knowledge to our menu of accredited certification programs. In November we had our first surveillance assessment in combination with our scope extension assessment. I am proud to say that we had no findings in that process. Our success in accreditation would not be possible without the work of all our volunteers. It cannot be understated how critical they are to our successes.

In 2024, I will continue to work on maintaining our accreditation. Additionally, I hope to spend some time this summer on some improvement projects. I would like to do a thorough review of our website. It has been some time since we have conducted more than routine maintenance on it. Additionally, it is time for us to do a thorough review of our recertification process. Each year, we do a de-brief to and improve aspects of the process, but there are still clearly areas for us to improve. If you have specific comments or suggestions for improvement for either the website or the recertification process, please feel free to complete the [Customer Satisfaction Survey](#) or e-mail me directly (abcregistrar@criminalistics.com).

Also, for this upcoming year we will continue to work towards implementing electronic examinations. Our hope is that this transition to electronic testing will reduce our costs, improve our examination security, and improve accessibility to our applicants. Much of the process will be similar to our current test offering process, however the delivery mechanism will be electronic. We will continue to update the website as we get closer to implementation. We will be sure to provide adequate notice before this transition.

Sincerely,
Gretchen DH Lajoie
Registrar/Accreditation Manager



AMERICAN BOARD OF CRIMINALISTICS

WHY I WANTED TO BECOME CERTIFIED

Certification is a voluntary process of peer review by which a practitioner is recognized as having attained the professional qualifications necessary to practice in one or more disciplines of criminalistics.

Why I wanted to become certified:

I had been in forensics 22 years before taking the ABC exam. I had absolutely NO intention of ever taking this exam.....like ever. I always had a viable excuse – too expensive, I don't have the study materials, lab director didn't support it, etc. Then one day we had an employee that wanted to take the exam and she solicited others who worked here in all disciplines to see if we had enough participation to "host" the examination at our facility. Well, there were enough participants and none of my excuses held up any longer. It was being held at our lab (for free), our lab director supported the examination and she paid for each of us (so no cost to anyone), we had all the study materials (the co-worker solicited others who had study materials on the list) and she got analysts from all our disciplines to give weekly presentations! We even studied together as a group!

So, I did not pass the first go-around. I ended up taking it a second time and passing. It took 22 years but I took the plunge only b/c all of my obstacles were removed. I had no excuse not to take it.

Kimberlie A. Ross, ABC-DA
Forensic Chemist, Sr.
USPIS – National Forensic Laboratory

Why I wanted to become certified:

In 2010, Texas was discussing licensing/certification for all forensic analysts in the state. They did not have a plan for this at the time, but I knew of the ABC program so I took the test to get a certification. Flash forward: Texas now has a licensing program. The ABC exam was much more comprehensive and reflective of the knowledge we need to do our jobs. I hold both an ABC certification (Molecular Biology) and a Texas license. I continue to keep my ABC certification because I am more proud to hold that than the Texas license, and I worked harder to get it!

Vanessa Nelson, PhD, ABC-MB
Biology Program Coordinator
DPS Crime Lab



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We would like to spotlight our emeritus members and all of our certificants. If you would like to tell your ABC story and why certification was important to you, please email us at the following email: communications@criminalistics.com.

WEIRD AND WILD TALES FROM THE FORENSIC LAB

Here is what I would consider a weird tale you could possibly use. Two weeks ago, I received and confirmed bufotenine. Bufotenine hasn't been seen at this lab, Houston Forensic Science Center, - Houston, TX, in over 20 years. The sample was suspected black tar heroin. At first appearance, it did look like black tar heroin but had a more crystalline structure, similar to a resin, when sampling. The sample gave a nice purple with Van Urk's and a green-brown in the Marquis spot test. It was confirmed with GC-MS and a standard was run for reference. It just goes to show that although it is rare to receive, Bufotenine is still out there.

Regards,
Michael Salazar
Forensic Analyst IV- Seized Drugs
Houston Forensic Science Center

I was on the stand in Arizona testifying. When the defense attorney got up to question me, he had only two questions:

1. Ms. Ross, did you fly out here yesterday to be here today to testify in this case? My answer was, "yes sir".
2. Ms. Ross, are you flying back tomorrow? My answer was, "yes sir".

He then told the judge, "I have no further questions, your honor."

Kimberlie A. Ross, ABC-DA
Forensic Chemist, Sr.
USPIS – National Forensic Laboratory



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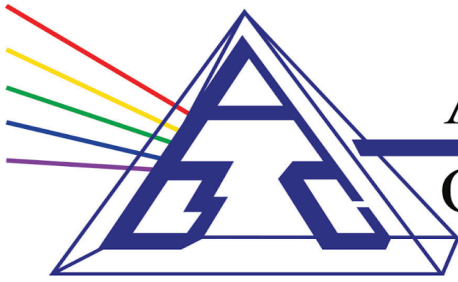
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APPEALS COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Appeals Committee of the ABC Board of Directors received just 5 appeals in 2023! With each passing year, the number of appeals continues to decrease, thanks to the combined efforts of the Registrar's Office, the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), and the Recertification Committee. The goal of the Appeals Committee is to carefully review each certificant's appeal and make a determination as to whether the appeal shall be granted based on the information provided and by applying the established policies and procedures of the American Board of Criminalistics, consulting with the Board as needed.

In 2023, the most common type of appeal was a request for an exam re-score. The right to a re-score is given to all candidates who fail an examination. When an appeal for an examination re-score is received, the Registrar's Office reviews the examination booklet to ensure it is complete and without printing errors. The Appeals Chair then re-scores the exam by hand. The score is then compared to the exam cut score provided by the Examination Committee Chair to determine if that score results in a pass or fail and the appellante is notified of the final results.

Please look closely as points from the 2023 recertification cycle become available for viewing. If for any reason, you believe the points awarded are not reflective of the points earned, please file your appeal in a timely fashion so the appeals committee can evaluate all appeals efficiently. The Appeals Committee will continue to evaluate any new appeals in a judicious manner and note any significant issues that may be remedied by new recommendations to the Board.

Please see the [website](#) for further instructions on filing an appeal and do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Erin Tracy – Chair



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QUESTION DATABASE MANAGER UPDATE

In my last update I spent time reflecting on individuals of the class of '93. Interestingly, Mike Healy recently bestowed on me some old records before his journey into retirement. These documents were prepared by a member of that class, Ed Rhodes, and cover some of the earliest events of the ABC in its fledgling years. One of those documents was a first edition of our Recertification points submission, recording Ed's "professional development" for the year 1993. I thought it would be fun to compare documents from an era of fax machines, dial-up internet service via modem, and clunky analog cellular phones to the most recent edition.

In building the Table below, I have used some editorial manipulation to try to keep alignment of similar topics. There have been changes, both subtle and major, to the scheme for reporting over the decades, but to my amazement most of the foundation for reporting points for recertification are the same then as now. Enjoy the journey.

...Oh, and in case you're wondering, Ed reported a total of 35 points for 1993!

1993 Recertification Point Structure	2023 Recertification Point Structure
<p><u>Professional Involvement</u> Forensic Casework (2pts/year)</p> <p>Forensic Organization Membership (1/year) Elected Officer / Committee Chair (2/year) Professional Meetings (2/day)</p>	<p><u>Professional Involvement</u> Forensic Casework (2pts/year) Forensic Teaching (2pts/year) Forensic Organization Membership (1/year) Elected Officer / Committee Chair (2/year)</p> <p>Committee Member (Including ABC) (1/year) Participation in SWG, TWG, OSAC (3/year) * Elected Officer/Chair in SWG, TWG, OSAC (2/year) *</p> <p>External Audit/Inspection/Assessment (2/day) *</p>
<p><u>Forensic Skill Building Activities</u></p> <p>Training Received (Workshop, Seminar) (3/day) †</p> <p>Successful Completion of College Coursework (5/credit hour) †</p> <p>Panel Discussion/Plenary Discussion (5/discussion) †</p> <p>Technical Paper / Poster at Scientific Meeting (10/paper) †</p> <p>Technical Paper Publication Peer Reviewed Article (15/paper) † Non-technical Review (5/paper) † Technical Review of Paper (5/paper) † Editorial Review (10/publication) †</p>	<p><u>Forensic Skill Building Activities</u></p> <p>Internal Technical Audit (1/day) †</p> <p>Workshop, Seminar, Registered Meeting Attendance (3/day) †</p> <p>Successful Completion of College Coursework (5/credit hour) †</p> <p>Panel Discussion/Plenary Discussion (2/discussion) †</p> <p>Technical Paper / Poster at Scientific Meeting Author (5/presentation) † Non-author Presenter (2/presentation) †</p> <p>Technical Paper Publication Peer Reviewed Article (15/paper) † Non-technical Review (3/paper) † Technical Review of Paper or Thesis (5/paper) †</p>



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Book Chapter Authorship (20/chapter) †
Book Authorship/Editing (40/book) †

Technical Training (conducting Workshop/Seminar)
(5/full day) †
Training Examiner in Specialty Area (5/each year of
training) §

Professional Support (reference collection, etc.)
(2/year) §

Book Chapter Authorship (20/chapter) †
Book Editing (20/book) †
Technical Training Presentation (1/presentation) †
Conducting Workshop/Seminar (5/full day) †

Training Examiner (5/40 hours of training) †

Primary Instructor of Forensic Science Course
(5/credit hour) †

*Points can be claimed for Professional Involvement, Forensic Skill Building, or Specialty

†Points can be claimed for Forensic Skill Building or Specialty

§Points only offered in Specialty area

Dave Stockwell

Ed Rhodes Scholarship Information

In memory of Edward Rhodes, a pioneer in forensic education and certification, the American Board of Criminalistics, Inc. is offering a complimentary examination sitting for one (1) representative from each of the following organizations per calendar year:

AAFS
ASCLD
ASTM E-30
CAC
MAAFS
MAFS
NEAFS
SAFS
SWAFS

Examinations can be taken at any offering during the year.

Candidates should fill out the Application Form found on the website and submit it to their Organization's Board of Directors for consideration.

The Application Fee (\$75) is the responsibility of the candidate.



AMERICAN BOARD OF CRIMINALISTICS

MESSAGE FROM THE ABC REGISTRAR

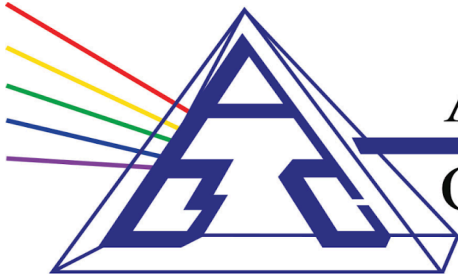
2024 looks to be a significant year of transition. I now have nearly four months under my belt as Registrar. I am starting to get my legs under me, but I still have so much more to learn and figure out. Mike and Debbie left me with a lot of great instructions (and big shoes to fill), and now I need to get to work sorting out how to best work in this role. We continue working to improve our efficiency and digital record-keeping. This includes rebuilding the Registrar's Database and integration with the Members Database that currently exists on our website. A local company here in Maine is doing this rebuild for us. I appreciate everyone's patience during this transition. The Members Side is fully functional, however at times it may go down for maintenance. When you try to log on, you will see a note that the database is being worked on. If you see the fields to enter your Username and Password, you should be able to access it. When the developer takes the database down, they also remove the username and password entry fields. Complete shutdowns are generally relatively quick. To help us improve the database, I am asking everyone to log into your account to make sure contact information is correct. We are trying to standardize the business addresses, and therefore do not want home addresses in that field (unless your home address is the location of your home business). I am relying heavily on e-mail for communications, so it is critical that your e-mail address is correct. If you have issues logging into your account, please email me. Please note that your username is your certificate number, not your e-mail address.

Most of you have already submitted your signed [Rules of Professional Conduct](#) and your [Annual Maintenance Fees](#). If you have not, you have until June 1 to do so. After June 1, your certification will be suspended. We will not accept Professional Development Reports after June 1 and you will not be able to claim points earned in 2023. Please note that if you or your agency paid your Maintenance Fees before the March 1 deadline, but you did not submit your Rules or your packet until after March 1, you will be required to submit the late fee of \$50. The packet review process will begin this spring. This is performed by a team of volunteers. I will send out an email blast after that review is complete. Once you receive that email, PLEASE log in and check your points to ensure that you have received everything that you anticipated. If you wait until the next submission year, it may be too late to file an appeal or make corrections.

One additional significant change that is on the horizon is the transition to digital certificates. We intend to issue certificates digitally, via email beginning July 1. If you wish to have a paper certificate, you are able to purchase one by initiating a [Certificate Replacement Request](#).

We have a busy spring ahead with our FSAT (Forensic Science Assessment Test) and a number of certification offerings. If your agency wishes to host an offering, please visit our [Host an Exam](#) page to find out what the requirements are. We need requests at least 4 months in advance in order to adequately prepare.

Sincerely,
Gretchen DH Lajoie - Registrar



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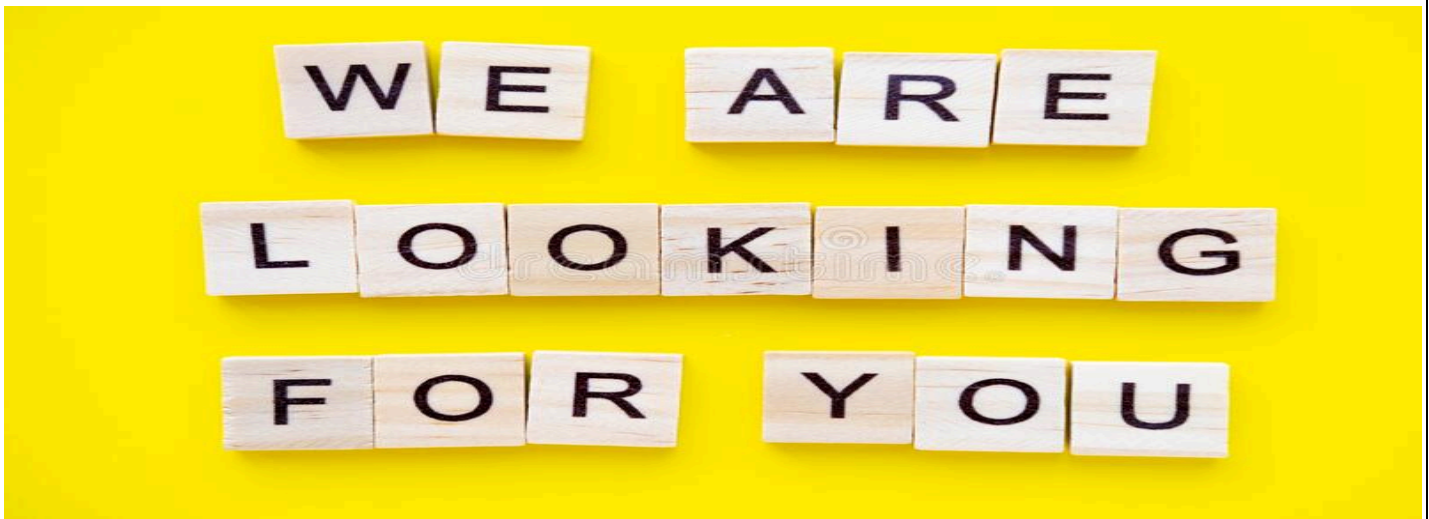
As of March 29, 2024 the ABC has lost contact with the following individuals:

Regina Ngozi Johnson
Erin L. F. Miranda
Beverly A. White
Gavin M. Yuasa
Michelle Kristen Gordon
Katlyn Jo Finzen

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR ALL CERTIFICANTS:

**Please contact the ABC Registrar if you need to resign your certification.
Please review the information on the ABC website
regarding Emeritus status; you might qualify.**

ABC Registrar
abcregistrar@criminalistics.com
P. O. Box 418
Gardiner, ME 04345



<https://thumbs.dreamstime.com/b/words-looking-you-yellow-background-job-board-human-resource-management-recruitment-hiring-concept-183786418.jpg>



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ABC - ABOUT US

Officers of the Board of Directors

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Shawn West

Vice President
Danielle Hankinson

Secretary
Jennifer Remy

Treasurer
Angelica Noyola

Directors for Member Organizations (9)

AAFS Criminalistics Section
Shawn West (President)

ASCLD
Jason Linder

ASTM-E30
Jennifer Remy (Secretary)

CAC
Alice Hilker

MAFS
Danielle Hankinson (Vice President)

MAAFS
Catherine Savage

NEAFS
Peter Diaczuk

SAFS
Erin Tracy

SWAFS
Angelica Noyola (Treasurer)



AMERICAN BOARD OF CRIMINALISTICS

At-Large Directors (3)

Dave Koppenhaver - Supported by MAFS
Term Expires - Feb. 2027

Rebecca Williams - Supported by MAFS
Term Expires - Feb. 2025

Stacy Guess
Term Expires - Feb. 2026

Public Member - Vacant

Individuals Assisting the ABC

Jenna Crawford
Recertification Committee Co-Chair

Amy Brodeur
Recertification Committee Co-Chair

Sara Roper
Technology Advisor

Ralph Ristenbatt III
FSAT Committee Chair

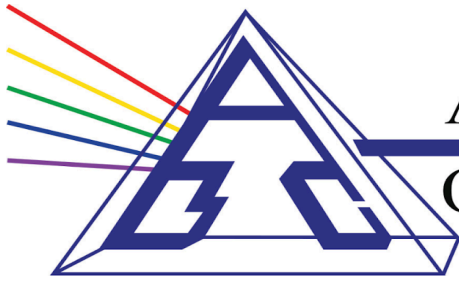
Julie Sikorsky
Credentials Committee Chair

Task Group - Leads

Recertification Task Group - Chair Gretchen Lajoie

FSAT Task Group - Chair Alice Hilker

Electronic Testing Task Group - Chair Alice Hilker



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Committees

Examination Committee

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Charles Cline

Esmeraldo Gorecho III

Stephanie Lambert

Michelle Madrid

Tanna Brown (Vice-Chair)

Amy Duhaime

Tammy Jergovich

Ruth Damaso Neely

Amy Reynolds

Quality Assurance Committee - Chair Stacy Guess

Credentials Committee - Liaison Catherine Savage

Recertification Committee - Liaison Alice Hilker

Appeals Committee - Chair Erin Tracy

Exam Committee - Liaison David Koppenhaver

Ed Rhodes Scholarship - Coordinator Catherine Savage

Ethics Committee - Chair Stacy Guess

Communications and Marketing Committee - Chair Catherine Savage

Contractors

Registrar - Gretchen Lajoie (Certificate Preparer)

Accreditation Manager - Gretchen Lajoie

Question Database Manager - David Stockwell