



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON FORENSIC SCIENCE

NIST
National Institute of
Standards and Technology
U.S. Department of Commerce

Recommendation to the Attorney General Documentation, Case Record and Report Contents

Subcommittee
Reporting and Testimony
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Final

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Recommendations

The National Commission on Forensic Science (NCFS) recommends that the Attorney General have Department of Justice Forensic Science Service Providers (FSSPs) develop and maintain written policies for documenting the examination, testing and interpretation of evidence and for reporting results, interpretations and conclusions that are consistent with the following requirements:

1. Records should be created contemporaneous with the examination of evidence and the technical review that, along with the FSSPs quality management system documents relating to the forensic work performed, would allow another analyst or scientist, with proper training and experience, to understand and evaluate all the work performed, and independently analyze and interpret the data and draw conclusions.
2. Providing all of the documentation encompassed by recommendation 1 in a single report in every case is impractical. Instead, if not in the report, the documentation described herein must be maintained in a case record.¹ Generic documentation such as Standard Operating Procedures and definitions must either be a part of the case record or be easily accessible (e.g., posted on a website, available on request).²
3. Reports should clearly state: the purpose of the examination or testing; the method and materials used; a description or summary of the data or results; any conclusions derived from

¹ A case record is all administrative records, examination records, any other applicable technical records or communications, whether electronic or hard copy, generated or received by a FSSP or FMSP, pertaining to a particular case.

² See Recommendation on Transparency of Quality Management System Documents adopted March 22, 2016.

those data or results; any discordant results or conclusions; the estimated uncertainty and variability; and possible sources of error and limitations in the method, data, and conclusions.

4. Every report should state that the report does not contain all of the documentation associated with the work performed and that to understand and evaluate all the work performed, and independently analyze and interpret the data and draw conclusions requires a review of the case record.
5. The case record should be organized and made available in a manner consistent with the discovery recommendations of the National Commission on Forensic Science.

Background

The National Commission on Forensic Science has previously expressed its views on standards for documentation, case records and report contents for forensic testing, and developed the above recommendations to give effect to those views within the Department of Justice.