

CHAPTER 4. LABORATORY SECURITY

4.1 LOCKS AND KEY DISTRIBUTION

4.1.1 All ingress/egress points to the laboratory will have operable locks. These entries must be locked at all time when not under the direct supervision of staff. The laboratory will be secured during vacant hours by an intrusion alarm.

4.1.2 Access to the laboratory will be limited to authorized personnel. The distribution of keys for the laboratory, personal lockers, rooms, or other evidence storage areas must be maintained by the laboratory manager. Security codes, and alarm actuators will be limited to authorized personnel only and records of their distribution will also be kept by the laboratory manager.

4.1.3 The keys for the drug standard cabinet will be limited to authorized personnel and a record of their distribution will be kept by the laboratory manager.

4.2 **LABORATORY VISITORS** - Persons entering the area of the laboratory where evidence is being analyzed and who are not employees of Forensic Services must sign the visitors' logbook and be accompanied by a staff member. The logbook entry should reflect the staff member accompanying the guest, the date, times of arrival and departure, and the reason for the visit.

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CHAPTER 5. HANDLING CASEWORK

- 5.1 CASEWORK DOCUMENTATION** – The records kept on each case should be extensive enough to enable an independent examiner in the field to determine how testing and observations were conducted. An independent examiner should be able to reconstruct the reasoning that formulated any opinions stated in the report.
- 5.1.1 The notes should contain an adequate description of the evidence container, the evidence, the condition of seals, and date the evidence was opened.
- 5.1.2 The laboratory will maintain examination and administrative documentation regarding a particular case in a case file. Examination documentation includes such things as references to procedures followed, tests conducted, standards and controls used, diagrams, instrumental printouts, photographs, observations, and results of examinations. The laboratory case file must include all examination documentation generated in that laboratory. Instrumental charts or graphs that are run in batches may be centrally stored. Instrumental parameters should also be documented either in the case file or in a central location. Examples of administrative documentation include records of case-related conversations, receipts, description of evidence packaging and seals, and other pertinent documentation. Administrative documentation that is generated by the laboratory regarding a case should also be stored in the case file.
- 5.1.3 All notes and supporting documents must have the laboratory case number, and have criminalist/examiner initials. If examination documentation is prepared by someone other than the person who will interpret the finding, reports, and/or testifies concerning the finding, then both individuals must initial each page of the documentation. Page numbers must be present on all documentation and the total number of pages must be reflected on the first page, with the date being documented throughout. When both sides of the paper are used, each side is considered as a page and will be initialed and numbered accordingly. Handwritten notes and observation must be in ink. Diagrams or tracings may be in colored or standard pencils. Any corrections to notes must be made by an initialed single strikeout. Nothing in the handwritten information should be obliterated or erased.
- 5.1.4 A report's conclusion is based on the results of the analysis. This conclusion should be fair, accurate, and complete. A complete conclusion should express strengths and/or weaknesses of the analysis.
- 5.1.5 Each case that is received will be assigned a unique case designation. This unique identifier may be determined by a computerized information system. The unique case designator can be in either alphanumeric form and/or bar code form. The unique case designator will be assigned to all evidence associated with the

case and to all documentation generated as part of this case including the laboratory case file.

5.2 CASEWORK REVIEW – Casework review has three roles. The first is to ensure the conclusion(s) expressed in the report is justified by the analysis performed. The second is to ensure the reports issued by Forensic Services are editorially correct. The third is to ensure the criminalist/examiner is following established casework documentation guidelines and procedures.

5.2.1 A reviewer must ensure that the details of all tests and observations are described in the notes.

5.2.2 Technical review is the “Review of notes, data and other documents which form the basis for a scientific conclusions.” (Glossary, ASDLD/LAB manual, April 2001) Evidence of technical review must be attached to, or present in the case file if performed. The signature or initials of the technical reviewer and the date of review in the case file will document technical review. At least 20% of all cases (including positive results, negative results, and non-conclusions) must be technically reviewed. All DNA cases must be technically reviewed. “The reviewer must have sufficient knowledge of the discipline to verify compliance with the laboratory’s technical procedures and that the conclusions reached are supported by the examination documentation.” (ASDLD/LAB manual, April 2001, pg. 43)

5.2.3 Prior to the time the report is released by the laboratory, all reports must be administratively reviewed (a procedure used to check for consistency with laboratory procedure and for editorial correctness).

5.2.4 When errors or omissions in casework are noted, the criminalist/examiner has the obligation to ensure that an incorrect report does not leave the laboratory. However, if an incorrect report is released, an amended report will be issued.

5.3 RELEASING CASE RESULTS TO AUTHORIZED INDIVIDUALS ONLY

5.3.1 When giving laboratory results to telephone callers, extreme caution must be exercised. If the caller is authorized to receive the results, then the following procedures must be followed:

5.3.1.1 If the voice of the caller is recognized, then the results may be given out.

5.3.1.2 If a caller’s voice is unfamiliar, politely break the conversation and return the call using a phone number known to belong to the agency employing the individual.

5.3.2 Reports regarding evidence submitted by the public defender in a criminal proceeding should be given the same privilege as evidence submitted by a police agency and a prosecutor. The results should only be released tot the public

defender on his investigation. The prosecutor can obtain the results only with the permission of the public defender through a valid discovery, or a court order (I.C. 19-861).

- 5.3.3 Upon request, the criminalist/examiner has the obligation to discuss his/her findings, interpret the conclusions, and state the strengths and weaknesses of his/her examination on evidence with the prosecutor and the defense attorney. The criminalist/examiner should not discuss examination with an attorney until such has demonstrated that he/she is entitled to the results or that the attorney has obtained the results through legitimate means and the concerned prosecutor/public defender has been advised, in advance, of the discussion.

5.4 CASE RECORD STORAGE & SECURITY

- 5.4.1 All current case files will be stored in a secure area maintained by Forensic Services. As case files get older and become inactive, they may be transferred to a secondary storage location with limited access. The potential for damage to the files by fire, water, heat, and humidity should be minimized as much as feasible. All homicide files will be stored separately and not transferred to a secondary location for storage

- 5.5 **DESTROYING DOCUMENTS** – Occasionally a document must be destroyed that has confidential or sensitive information present. These documents should be destroyed in such a manner that information cannot be acquired. Documents, records, or files containing sensitive information can be burned or shredded.

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