



Idaho State Police

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To: Idaho Chiefs, Sheriffs, and Prosecutors
From: Matthew Gamette, ISPFS Forensic Services Laboratory System Director
Subject: Cold Case Help--Molecular Genealogy Resources
Date: July 28, 2021

The Idaho State Police Forensic Services Laboratory (ISPFS) is extremely excited to announce that we have secured a Bureau of Justice Assistance grant to fund genetic genealogy testing and searching of unsolved Idaho cases. The cases we are starting with are unsolved homicide, sexual assault, and missing person/identified remains cases. Idaho is the first state in the country to take the state-wide approach for this technology. Instead of each law enforcement (LE) agency having to negotiate their own contract, pricing, and quality control with a private lab and genealogist, ISPFS has done that at the state level through the Idaho Department of Purchasing. In addition, by ISPFS securing federal grant funding, we can offer these services to local, county, and state agencies at no cost to the local LE agency. In order to facilitate this, ISPFS has formed a State Genetic Genealogy Investigation team consisting of laboratory personnel, an Idaho State Police investigator/detective, and a representative from the Rocky Mountain Information Network (RMIN) to identify cases eligible for testing under this grant. Once a case is identified as eligible, the team is reaching out to the local law enforcement agency and prosecutor to bring them onto the team for that case. The state team is a resource for local LE. Idaho now has a formal contract with Othram Laboratories (a prominent leader in forensic genealogy) to conduct the genealogy testing and forensic genealogy searching. ISPFS is ensuring that Othram follows accepted laboratory processes and procedures, and complies with the United States DOJ interim policy on Forensic Genetic Genealogy DNA Analysis and Searching.

ISPFS has already searched our records for cases we know would be eligible under this program. We have started contacting individual Idaho law enforcement entities and prosecutors on approximately 15 of those cases. The law enforcement entity and prosecuting attorney are being asked to confirm certain case criteria and sign an MOU that they will investigate this case if the molecular genealogy technique generates investigative leads, that they will follow DOJ policy for investigating these cases, and that they will take all appropriate prosecution actions as an outcome of the investigation.

We want to be very clear that the local or county law enforcement agency will retain jurisdiction and responsibility for the case. The state team is in place to identify cases, coordinate with local entities, provide investigation resources (if requested), safeguard that the molecular genealogy technology and techniques are being appropriately used in Idaho, and ensure that all necessary resources are reliable and available at no cost to local LE for use of this technique. ISPFS is committed to ensuring that the lab science and genealogy work is robust, that the evidence is treated appropriately by the contract lab and in a way that allows for appropriate prosecution, and that the contract with the private lab and federal funding are spent appropriately. If more funding resources are needed to support this effort, ISPFS will obtain those resources in support of all Idaho law enforcement. ISPFS is also evaluating offering these services in Idaho if the need is demonstrated from this project.

We are accepting requests to work other cases that have not been identified by our team. If you have those cases, please reach out to our appointed project lead on this effort Ms. Rylene Nowlin. She can be reached at 208-884-7148 or Rylene.Nowlin@isp.idaho.gov. All cases accepted into this program are subject to an MOU.

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