

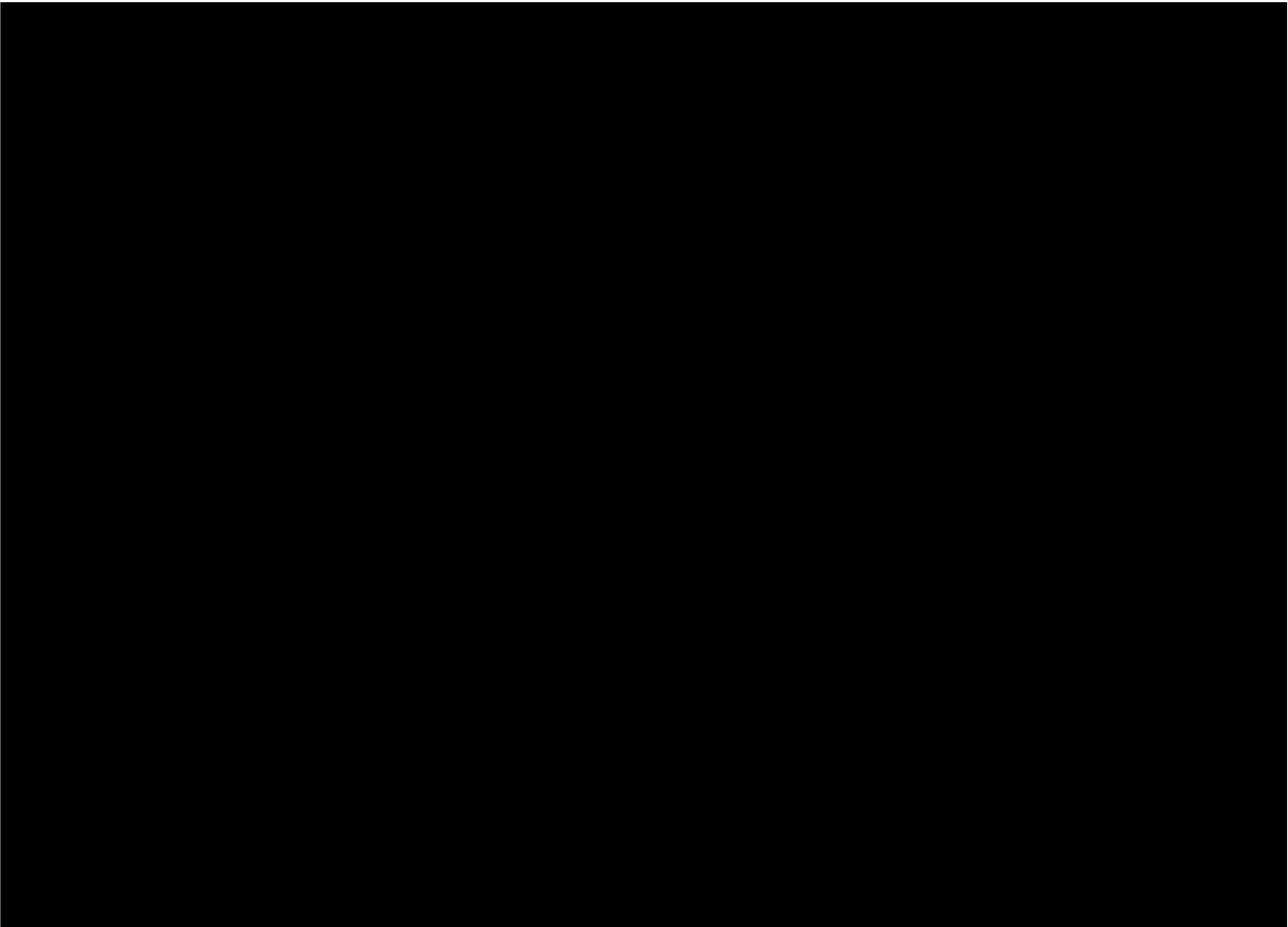
A “GOLD STANDARD” CRIME LAB MODEL

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The reality

- Forensic science is a highly complex entity. We can call it messy as there are few operational standards.
- It reminds me of herding cats.



Considerations:

- Is there a perfect crime lab model and what might it look like? Can “one size fit all?”
- Simple answer: probably not!
- Scores of models exist. You would be hard pressed to point to an exemplary model that is generic and can work in all settings.
- Another issue is where should a lab reside in a government organization – police, prosecution, medical examiner, or elsewhere?
- Who should or should there be an oversight authority?

- Does the crime lab offer an appropriate level of service?
- What is an appropriate level of service?
 - That depends on who you ask. Different customers want different things.
- Who decides on lab priorities? Is it just a case of “squeaky wheel management?”

With apologies to Dante's Devine Comedy:



The Keys to an Effective Crime Lab

- No matter how good the lab director is, if the agency head (Chief of Police, Sheriff, D.A., Attorney General, ...) is unaware or worse simply doesn't care about the laboratory's operation, all is pretty much lost.
- And, if the lab director is not engaged in local, state and federal politics and policies concerning forensic science, chances are the agency head will be oblivious about the lab under her/his command until the "stuff" hits the fan.
- **NO GOOD DEED GOES UNPUNISHED!** Faced with underachieving, problem employees, managers need to get rid of them, as quickly as they can. **DOCUMENT YOUR EFFORTS IN WRITING!**

Let's talk about the elephant in the room!



External Oversight

- When considering all of the bad press crime lab stories in the last few years it's clear something is needed.
- Government best practices and accreditation go part of the distance but there needs to be something else.
- Oversight is not a malevolent concept.
- Transparency and answering to an external authority may be the best way to address these challenges. Saying they are not really problems will not make them go away.

- Finally, as will all complex issues, the “devil is in the details!” What external oversight actually turns out to be will have to be sorted out.

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"I'm here about the details."

So, is there a “gold standard” lab?

- Well, kind of:

If a forensic science lab provides quality and timely service, is transparent to users and the public, can effectively deal with errors and mistakes, that is as close to a gold standard, in my opinion, as we can manage.

Thank you!