



**AMERICAN SOCIETY OF  
CRIME LABORATORY DIRECTORS, INC.**

**139 A Technology Drive Garner, NC 27529**

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June 20, 2016

Attn: Accreditation and Proficiency Testing

The American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors represents more than 600 members of crime laboratory directors and forensic science managers dedicated to providing excellence in forensic science through leadership and innovation. The membership represents both private and public institutions from all 50 states in the U.S. and eighteen countries from across the globe. Our mission is to promote the effectiveness of crime laboratory leaders throughout the world by facilitating communication among members, sharing critical information, providing relevant training, promoting crime laboratory accreditation, and encouraging scientific and managerial excellence in the global forensic science community.

ASCLD is dedicated to advancing forensic science through a multitude of initiatives including the National Commission on Forensic Science. The efforts of the Commission are important and have significant implications for the entire criminal justice community. As a result, the ASCLD Board of Directors offers the following comments, recommendations, and impact statements for consideration by the sub-committee on the views document "*Certification of Forensic Science Practitioners*".

ASCLD remains ready to be a continuing resource to assist the Commission and the Department of Justice in the development of these important work products for the forensic science community so that a broader based acceptance and implementation of these products may be realized.

Regards,

ASCLD Board of Directors



# The American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors

**"Excellence Through Leadership in Forensic Science Management"**

## ASCLD Board Comments

### ***Views of the Commission: Certification of Forensic Science Practitioners***

The ASCLD Board of Directors supports the certification of forensic science professionals. Certification programs in conjunction with laboratory accreditation ensure a robust quality system that encompasses the technical, quality assurance, and managerial aspects of forensic science service providers.

The ASCLD Board of Directors generally supports the Views of the Commission on the certification of forensic science practitioners, but has concerns about the inherent barriers to industry wide certification for both agencies and individuals. The Commission's Views document provides views for both the forensic science agency and for the forensic science practitioner.

### Commission Views for the Agency:

- The ASCLD Board of Directors believes the first view is not specific and requires clarification. The Commission sites that agencies need to determine who should be certified based on, "...job responsibilities and the availability of certification programs." Based on this statement, it appears that exemptions or exceptions can be made depending on whether the individual performs testing. Many laboratories employ technicians that participate and perform testing, but they do not offer expert witness testimony. Additionally, many of the professional staff including quality managers, supervisors, program managers, and directors no longer perform routine testing of evidence.

The ASCLD Board of Directors recommends that the Commission clarify this view to incorporate the acceptance that some positions within a forensic science agency may not require certification especially for those positions which do not routinely participate in testing of evidence. Specifically, technicians in which certification programs do not exist, a state or local agency certification program would meet the intent of the Commission's view.



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- The ASCLD Board of Directors has members whose agencies have either deployed mandatory certification programs for forensic science practitioners within their agencies or have worked to develop a transition process towards that end-goal. Many challenges have been encountered by these agencies, and the ASCLD Board of Directors believes the Commission attempts to address these in Appendix D of the Views document *Accreditation and Recognition of Forensic Science Certification Bodies* (National Commission on Forensic Science, 2016).

The ASCLD Board of Directors recommends that Appendix D from the Views document *Accreditation and Recognition of Forensic Science Certification Bodies* (National Commission on Forensic Science, 2016) be included with the Commission Views document on the *Certification of Forensic Science Professionals* (National Commission on Forensic Science, 2016). Additionally, the certification programs need to be geared towards entry level examiners if certification is required for independent casework. Enhanced levels of certification can be added to the programs which demonstrate advanced levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

- Finally, the ASCLD Board of Directors has to acknowledge the immense financial impact this requirement will have on both agencies and individuals. Due to the significant economic crises in recent U.S. history, budgets have never been more distressed, and all entities are being asked to do more with less. Additionally, the forensic science industry is almost wholly funded by the public and is dependent on the governmental budgeting process and subject to political influences/priorities.

This reality ensures a very limited availability of money for these types of activities. Without a dedicated funding source to assist agencies and individuals to pursue the certification process and for certification bodies to become accredited or a legislated requirement for the industry, there will be limited progress towards industry wide adoption of mandatory certification. Once certified, agency resources, policies, and agreements will be required to meet and keep certifications, as well as deal with the personnel implications if an individual fails to maintain certification.



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## Commission Views for the Forensic Science Practitioner:

- The Commission recommends that practitioners become certified within five years of the implementation of this document and within one year of eligibility or as required by the certifying body (National Commission on Forensic Science, 2016). While this is a noble timeline for adoption, it is unrealistic as it will be limited by costs, HR requirements, workload demands, local political priorities, etc. The ASCLD Board of Directors recommends that the timeline be amended to state that implementation should occur five years after the certifying bodies meet the recommendations made by the Commission in the Views document titled, *Accreditation and Recognition of Forensic Science Certification Bodies* (National Commission on Forensic Science, 2016). Until the certifying bodies have increased consistency across the programs, are all accredited, and preparatory programs are developed to assist practitioners and agencies preparing for certification, adherence to the stated timeline will not occur.

## References

- National Commission on Forensic Science. (2016, June 6). *Views of the Commission on Accreditation and Recognition of Forensic Science Accreditation Bodies*. Retrieved from US Department of Justice: <https://www.justice.gov/ncfs/draft-work-products-open-public-comment>
- National Commission on Forensic Science. (2016, June 6). *Views of the Commission on Certification of Forensic Science Practitioners*. Retrieved from US Department of Justice: <https://www.justice.gov/ncfs/draft-work-products-open-public-comment>