



**Department of Forensic Sciences  
Science Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
January 17, 2020**

The Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) Science Advisory Board (SAB) meeting was called to order by Board Chairman Peter Marone at 9:09 a.m. Roll call of Board members present, in addition to the Board Chairman, included: Mr. John P. Jones II, Dr. Jeanne Jordan, Dr. LaKeisha McClary, Ms. Danielle O’Neill and Mr. Robert Thompson. Board members Marla Carroll and Dr. Michael Pentella participated in the meeting via WebEx conferencing. A quorum was established to conduct board business. Minutes from the October 18, 2019, meeting were presented and read.

Board member Thompson recommended that the record reflect Board Member O’Neill having enlisted Mr. Brad Jenkins of the Virginia Department of Forensic Science and Dr. Daniele Podini of the George Washington University to assist with the Board’s review of the Forensic Biology SOPs.

**Motion to Approve Minutes:** Board Member Jordan

**Seconded:** Board Member O’Neill

**Motion to Approve Minutes Passed**

DFS Director Dr. Jenifer Smith recognized and welcomed newly appointed board member Dr. LaKeisha McClary. An update of recent staff changes at the department was announced that included the resignation of Forensic Science Laboratory Director Karen Wiggins, Mr. Abdel Maliky’s appointment as Senior Deputy Director and Mr. Todd Smith, who will serve as acting general counsel during the department’s search and selection process. While the department also continues the search and selection for naming a new quality manager, Mr. Maliky reported that no complaints were received during FY20 Q1. There were 9 quality corrective action requests opened during this period.

Acting General Counsel (AGC) Todd Smith reports that in fiscal year 2019, the United States Attorney’s Office (USAO) began receiving discovery orders from judges that included QCARS. The USAO was encouraged to resist these motions and they did. Despite the USAO’s resistance, the orders continued. Therefore, DFS assumed responsibility for QCAR sorting and matching employees with corresponding QCARS, a course contrary to the preferred anonymity component of the department’s quality system. DFS will deliver all completed QCARS in DFS’s possession, in an Optical Character Recognition format, to the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and the USAO in Q2 FY20, and going forward will deliver QCARS to the OAG and USAO as they are completed. The USAO is expected to make internal arrangements for the method by which QCARS are to be received and processed. Once the procedure has been established, DFS will discontinue having to sort QCARS, as the OAG or the USAO is expected to adopt the responsibility.

A Giglio review, conducted in Q1 FY20, by Acting General Counsel (AGC) Todd Smith, found that the former DFS General Counsel’s policy was narrower than ideal. Therefore, the AGC performed a



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new Giglio search in response to new requests received and where information not previously disclosed was discovered, the AGC has made special disclosure to the requesting prosecutorial authority. This process will continue until every testifying employee has been subjected to a Giglio review under the current AGC's broader policy.

Dr. Jenifer Smith, DFS Director, reported the Forensic Intelligence Unit (FIU) having received and processed 4,194 stakeholder requests during fiscal year 2019. There were 268 fewer requests the previous year. During the same period, the Latent Fingerprint Unit (LFU) received for analysis and comparison 2,724 requests and 2,016 evidence processing requests. With the exception of the Forensic Biology Unit (FBU/DNA), where there is primarily a 90-day turnaround for cases, units have completed 98% to 100% of major and homicide case requests within 60 days. However, the average processing time of 297 sexual assault kits received by FBU was 68 days.

Launched in December 2018, the Physical Evidence Recovery Kit Tracking Database was created for survivors of sexual assault. The database is designed to allow survivors the ability to track their sexual assault kit (SAK/used to collect evidence during sexual assault forensic exam) and includes a measure that allows the District to verify compliance with the Sexual Assault Victims Rights Act (SAVRAA) that stipulates a 90-day SAK testing requirement. Improvements were made to the database in 2019 and November 26, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser signed the bill which is slated for congressional review before becoming law.

The Digital Evidence Unit has implemented new data storage and has acquired the capability to unlock iPhones and Androids and to extract event data from vehicles with the expansion of Crash Data Recovery Technology.

The recovery trend of ghost guns has shown a substantial increase from 3 guns seized in 2017 to 116 collections in 2019.

The Crime Scene Sciences Division (CSSD) processed more than 500 crime scenes in 2019, and the Central Evidence Unit received more than 70,000 evidence items during this period, 3000 items more than received during the previous year. CSSD assisted the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) in rendering more than 13,000 firearms safe from old cases in the police department's Evidence Control Branch (ECB).

DFS and Trinity University established an educational partnership to incorporate into the university's forensic science program DFS-led forensic pattern recognition, latent fingerprints and firearms examination courses. This includes a hands-on apprenticeship opportunity for university students. Board member Jones welcomed DFS leadership to consider including NIST exposure in potential outside engagements or field trips that may be planned for participating students in the Trinity University partnership.



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DFS has established a diversity and inclusion initiative designed to build on the successes of the agency's diverse workforce, promoting an inclusionary cultural climate ensuring that all levels of the department's employees have access to the tools and supports to succeed.

An update of the DFS Chemistry Section's surveillance program, which included the lab's commencement of monitoring timelines associated with synthetic opioids at the peak of the District's medical examiner's reporting of opioid fatalities, identification of opioid purity levels, trends and geographic distribution, was conducted by Dr. Luke Short, Chemistry Section Chief. He noted that Grubbs, a local District support group of the user community, has been instrumental in the collection of syringes containing source material for laboratory testing.

On November 21, 2019, CDC issued an official announcement noting a "chemical of concern" formally recognizing the Chemistry Section's finding the presence of Vitamin E Acetate in e-cigarette and vaping products (cartridges). A report about a CT verification study, methadone testing and other toxicology-related activity in the lab will be presented when the board convenes its next meeting.

Dr. Colleen Courtney provided an overview of the laboratory's support and response to norovirus and mumps outbreaks occurring in District schools. With the continuing surveillance of Influenza by the Public Health Laboratory (PHL), a summary of the current 2019-2020 influenza season was also reported during which 613 patient samples were tested, resulting in detection of 35 Influenza A and 142 Influenza B.

The Public Health Laboratory was certified by CDC for PulseNet Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS), conducting weekly runs since July 2019 accompanied by internal analysis. All work is done on the Illumina MiSeq Platform and weekly WGS reports are submitted to D.C. Health, PFGE. Included among the lab's Next Generation Sequencing projects are respiratory sequencing and CLIA validation in conjunction with CDC validation panels: ANI, *Escherichia*, *Salmonella*. According to Dr. Courtney, the lab intends to hire a bioinformatician. She agreed to share the recruitment posting with Board member Pentella for potential interested candidates.

Kristy Hopkinson, (Manager, Forensic Biology Unit (FBU)) identified recent personnel changes occurring within FBU, provided an update of the unit's Next Generation Sequencing project and conducted a comprehensive discussion of Board's comments and recommendations after review of FBU SOPs.

Jessica Beckman, Latent Fingerprint Unit (LFU) Manager, presented a brief follow-up discussion addressing Board concerns regarding documenting AFIS quality latent impression, the handling of controlled substances and LFU's plans to change workflow for powder cases.



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Review of Firearms SOPs by the Board is scheduled for the Board's April 17, 2020, meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 12:41 p.m.

An audio recording of the meeting is available upon request.