

## **Department of Forensic Science Code of Professional Responsibilities and Ethics**

The Citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia expect honesty, truthfulness, integrity, professionalism, and competence in public employees. The Department of Forensic Science (DFS) actively promotes an organizational culture that embraces a Code of Professional Responsibilities and Ethics that fosters and supports these expectations. The ability of DFS to achieve its mission is greatly enhanced when individuals and groups display these attributes. The best means of ensuring public confidence is adherence to the highest ethical standards.

All DFS employees shall:

1. Demonstrate the highest standards of honesty, truthfulness, and integrity in all their work activities and professional relationships in order to inspire public confidence and trust in the Department.
2. Maintain the highest standards of professional practice and competence.
3. Commit to the highest ideals in the stewardship of public resources.
4. Commit to private and professional activity that demonstrates independence between their personal interests and the interests of the Department.
5. Comply with the laws of the Commonwealth and Department policies and procedures.
6. Treat all persons in a professional, respectful, and courteous manner.
7. Strive to provide performance of the highest quality.

Further, all Scientific Staff shall:

1. Be independent, impartial, detached, and objective, approaching all examinations with due diligence and without bias.
2. Notify departmental management if they determine that they may have a personal or financial conflict of interest with respect to their assigned casework.
3. Fully and honestly communicate with all parties (the investigator, prosecutor, defense attorney, and other expert witnesses), when such communications are permitted by law and Department practice.
4. Report unethical or illegal conduct of any laboratory employees to laboratory management and/or the appropriate authorities.
5. Be committed to career-long learning in the forensic discipline(s) which they practice, and stay abreast of new equipment and techniques.
6. Use only proven methods, and base conclusions and opinions on generally accepted tests and procedures.
7. Use appropriate controls and standards when conducting examinations and analyses.
8. Perform examinations on evidence using methods and techniques in which they have been trained and competency tested.
9. Honestly and objectively complete assigned proficiency tests, technical reviews of other scientists' work, and verifications of conclusions.
10. Give utmost care to the treatment of any samples or items of potential evidentiary value to avoid tampering, adulteration or loss.
11. Effectively and efficiently consume samples of evidence so as to preserve opportunities for further testing, if possible.
12. Make and retain full, contemporaneous, clear and accurate records of all examinations and tests conducted and conclusions drawn, in sufficient detail to allow meaningful review and assessment of the conclusions by an independent person competent in the field.
13. Generate reports that include facts, opinions and interpretations indicative of limitations on the methods, interpretations and opinions.
14. Testify in a manner that is impartial, clear in meaning, and accurately represents their area of expertise, education, training, and experience.
15. Document and, if appropriate, inform management or quality assurance personnel of nonconformities affecting current or previously issued reports or testimony.

I have read and agree to abide by the DFS Code of Professional Responsibilities and Ethics. By my acknowledgment of this document in the Department's Qualtrax system, I agree to be bound by its terms and conditions to the same extent as if I had executed the document in writing.