

FORENSIC SCIENCE BOARD 2026 ANNUAL REPORT

A. INTRODUCTION

Virginia Code § 9.1-1110(B) requires the Forensic Science Board (FSB) to review and make recommendations by November 1 of each year concerning items 1 through 6 below:

1. New major programs and plans for the activities of the Department of Forensic Science (DFS) and elimination of programs no longer needed;
2. Policy and priorities in response to agency needs;
3. General fiscal year operational budget and any major changes in appropriated funds;
4. Actions to foster and promote coordination and cooperation between DFS and the user programs which are served;
5. Rules and regulations necessary to carry out the purposes and intent of Chapter 11 of Title 9.1 of the Code of Virginia; and
6. Any recommendations submitted to the Board or the Director by the Scientific Advisory Committee; and

Chapter 473 of the 2019 Acts of Assembly requires that information about use of the Physical Evidence Recovery Kit (PERK) Tracking System also be included in the Forensic Science Board's Annual Report. This report has been organized to reflect those requirements.

The Forensic Science Board held meetings on January 7, 2026 (virtual), April 20, 2026 (in-person), July 15, 2026 (virtual) and October 7, 2026 (in-person). The in-person meetings were held at the DFS Central Laboratory in Mechanicsville, Virginia. A list of members of the Board is included as Attachment A.

Pursuant to Va. Code § 9.1-1110(B) and Chapter 473 of the 2019 Acts of Assembly, the Board makes this report.

B. REPORT REQUIREMENTS PURSUANT TO VIRGINIA CODE § 9.1-1110(B)

1. NEW MAJOR PROGRAMS AND PLANS FOR THE ACTIVITIES OF DFS AND ELIMINATION OF PROGRAMS NO LONGER NEEDED

DFS Accreditation Through ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB)

The Department of Forensic Science (DFS) is currently accredited by the ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB). DFS was initially accredited in 1989 through the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB), which merged with ANAB in 2016. Each DFS regional laboratory is accredited through ANAB as a testing laboratory, and the Breath Alcohol Section is accredited as a calibration laboratory.

DFS is on a four-year accreditation cycle and was reassessed by ANAB in September 2025. Accreditation is an independent, third-party assessment of DFS conformance to hundreds of criteria specified in the International Standard ISO/IEC 17025 (General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories), ANAB's Accreditation Requirements for Forensic Testing and Calibration, the FBI Quality Assurance Standards for Forensic DNA Testing Laboratories, and the FBI Quality Assurance Standards for DNA Databasing Laboratories. All DFS laboratories were reaccredited in January 2026.

ANAB conducted a remote location evaluation from May 11 through May 13, 2026, after the Department had completed its move to the new Central Laboratory facility. ANAB subsequently issued an updated Certificate of Accreditation and Scope of Accreditation for the Central Laboratory and the Calibration Laboratory (Breath Alcohol) for the new location at 8850 Times Dispatch Boulevard, Suite 100, Mechanicsville, Virginia 23116.

Additional information about the Department's accreditation, including Accreditation Certificates and Scope documents, can be found on the DFS website at:

<https://dfs.virginia.gov/about-dfs/accreditation/>

DFS Facilities

Central Laboratory Facility Project

The new Central Laboratory Facility in Mechanicsville, Virginia was completed in early 2026. DFS began its phased move-in on March 9, 2026. Casework was paused as staff,

instruments, equipment, supplies, and evidence were moved from Richmond to the Hanover facility. All Central Laboratory sections resumed casework by June 9, 2026.

DFS hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony on June 8, 2026, in conjunction with the Department of General Services and the Virginia Department of Health.



Central Laboratory Ribbon Cutting Ceremony (June 8, 2026)

On June 30, 2026, DFS notified the Department of General Services (DGS) that it no longer had an operational need for the Richmond facility located at 700 N. 5th Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219. DGS initiated the sale of the facility upon this notification.

Eastern Laboratory Roof Replacement

On September 8, 2026, DFS awarded a contract for the replacement of the roof of the Eastern Laboratory in Norfolk, Virginia. This Maintenance Reserve (MR) Project has an estimated cost of \$ 1.4 million.

Service Area Activities

New Forensic Biology Methods and Software

Validation, development of the section protocols, and staff training on the new robotic workstation continue. The work toward implementing the new thermal cyclers continues. The new VeritPro thermal cyclers have been approved for nuclear casework and will be implemented once all section protocols are updated. The validation of the next version of the STRmix™ software will begin once the new thermal cyclers are online. More studies evaluating spent cartridge cases will be conducted to develop a protocol that will increase success rates. The MiSeq FGx Sequencing System has been procured. Training,

validation, and protocol development will commence after vendor installation of the instrument is complete. Additionally, a Rapid DNA instrument has been procured for the purpose of supporting law enforcement through a non-CODIS investigative lead program. Training, validation, and protocol development for this technology will also commence after vendor installation of the instrument.

New Toxicology Methods

In 2026, the Chemistry Research Section validated a method to add several new benzodiazepines to the current methodology. The addition of these compounds keeps the section abreast of novel compounds that are being used in the Commonwealth.

New Controlled Substance Methods

In 2026, two new methods were validated and are set to be incorporated into the section's Standard Operating Procedures. One allows for quantitation of methamphetamine using UV-Vis Spectroscopy; the other changes the quantitation procedures for three compounds to include a multipoint calibration curve. The UV-Vis Spectrometer is an instrument currently in use in Toxicology, is new to Controlled Substances, and provides for a faster mechanism for quantitation.

Changes to Trace Evidence Methods

Work continues in the verification of Micro X-ray Fluorescence Spectrometry (μ XRF) for elemental analysis into the forensic comparison of glass. Studies have shown that discrimination between glass sources increases with the addition of elemental analysis. Verification will be achieved to the most recently edited ASTM Standard Test Method, currently on the OSAC (Organization of Scientific Area Committees) Registry.

DFS completed the purchase of a new Scanning Electron Microscopy – Energy Dispersive X-ray Spectrometer (SEM-EDS) primarily for the analysis of Primer Residue. The verification is in the final stages and is expected to be available for use in casework after this reporting period, but before the end of 2026.

New Breath Alcohol Instrument

DFS has completed the purchase of a new evidential breath alcohol instrument, the Dräger Alcotest® 9510. This purchase included 220 new instruments that will communicate through ethernet connections, utilize a laser printer for reports, and has a touchscreen interface. The database, Forensic Advantage Breath Alcohol Database, is also being upgraded to accommodate the ethernet connectivity. Current licensed breath alcohol

operators will be trained to utilize the Alcotest 9510 through a combination of online and in-person training. Initial instrument deployment for evidential testing is anticipated to start in late 2026.

“Prelog” Electronic Evidence Submission System

The Department aspires to begin a “soft launch” of an electronic system known as “Prelog,” which will be used to document the submission of evidence from law enforcement agencies to DFS. Two law enforcement agencies will utilize this functionality. Currently, such submissions are documented on a paper form known as a “Request for Laboratory Examination.” Virginia Code § 19.2-187.01 was recently amended to authorize the use of electronic signatures in the new system.

Historical (Archived) Case File Review Project

The Department began its Historical or Archived Case File Review Project after obtaining funding in FY16. Through the project, an electronic database of archived case file information is being created that includes scanned copies of all Certificates of Analysis and available case information (e.g., the jurisdiction of the offense, the investigating agency, victim and suspect names, date evidence received, type of examination, and examiner names). The database includes cases from 1973 through 1994, prior to the Department’s current Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS).

The Department has six wage positions assigned to the project, each working approximately 20 hours per week. As of September 8, approximately 345,000 of the estimated 1,000,000 archived case files covering the relevant period have been entered into the database.

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In FY24, the database’s case information and scanned documents were integrated with the Department’s Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS), which was obtained in 1995. DFS staff are now able to electronically search for cases that have been added to the database using its LIMS.

Microscopic Hair Comparison Case Review

In 2016, the Board created a Microscopic Hair Comparison Case Review Subcommittee, which developed a process for the initial screening of DFS’s microscopic hair comparison cases and for the review of transcripts in cases with convictions. A Review Team, consisting of two attorneys (i.e., one defense attorney and one prosecutor) and one DFS scientist, conducts reviews of the transcripts and makes recommendations to the

Subcommittee regarding whether notification to the parties is appropriate in each case. The Department discontinued Microscopic Hair Comparisons in 2006.

The Department has continued its work identifying microscopic hair examination cases as part of its Historical Case File Review. For cases determined to include positive, probative hair associations, the Department confirms conviction information and seeks out transcripts or transcript substitutes, where appropriate, for review. As of September 2026, 1,931 positive, probative associations have been identified, and conviction and transcript inquiries have been sent to the appropriate Circuit Court Clerks' offices.

The Microscopic Hair Comparison Case Review Subcommittee met October 7, 2026, to review recommendations made by the Review Team regarding two transcripts. Notifications were made by the Department in _____ of those cases as indicated by the Subcommittee.

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2. POLICY AND PRIORITIES IN RESPONSE TO AGENCY NEEDS

Improving Timeliness

Caseload Data

The caseload data reported in the table below reflects, for FY25 and FY26, the total number of case submissions statewide for each DFS testing section, the ending backlog (total number of cases on hand) in each section as of the end of the respective fiscal years, and the average case turnaround time (number of days from receipt of evidence in a case by DFS to the release of the Certificate of Analysis) for each section. The table also specifies the percentage change for each category, by section, between the two fiscal years.

Section	Case Submissions (cases)			Backlog (cases)			Average Turnaround Time (TAT) for Cases Completed (days)		
	FY25	FY26	% Change	As of 6/30/25	As of 6/30/26	% Change	FY25	FY26	% Change
Controlled Substances	26,382	26,584	1%	2,240	4,170	46%	35	48	27%
DME	116	88	-32%	85	86	1%	300	221	-36%
Firearms & Toolmarks	3,952	3,391	-17%	1,660	1,378	-20%	147	152	3%
Forensic Biology**	6,091	5,545	-10%	3,818	3,701	-3%	231	263	12%
Latent Prints & Impressions	2,124	1,740	-22%	408	232	-76%	89	76	-17%
Toxicology*	9,771	9,293	-5%	1,128	1,227	8%	52	50	-4%
Trace Evidence	620	533	-16%	380	385	1%	183	227	19%

* Toxicology case submissions do not include cases outsourced from OCME

** Forensic Biology average TAT includes cases outsourced

The table below presents, for each testing discipline, the ending backlog as of September 30, 2026, and the average turnaround time for cases completed in September 2026.

While case submissions to the Controlled Substances Section have not risen substantially between FY25 and FY26, the backlog and case turnaround times have increased (+46% and +27% respectively) due to various factors, including staffing issues, increased case size and complexity, and the Central Laboratory move. DFS will continue to monitor the backlog and turnaround times to see if they return to FY25 levels once staffing issues have been resolved with new examiners completing training and the impact of the laboratory move has dissipated.

Case submissions to the Firearms & Toolmarks Section continued to decrease (-17%) in FY26. The biggest driver in the overall reduction of firearms case submissions is the increasing number of state and local law enforcement agencies with the capability of entering cartridge casing evidence and those from seized crime guns for National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) searching. Despite changes in staffing and the revision of the Western Laboratory's accreditation scope removing comparison examinations, the Section's backlog has decreased; however, case turnaround times remain high, since the remaining comparison cases are more time consuming than NIBIN cases. Cases are being transferred around the state for examination and verification. DFS is recruiting for two Forensic Scientist positions. Currently, there are four Forensic Scientist

Trainees in the two-year training program for new firearms examiners: two approximately mid-way through, and two just beginning.

Statewide, the submissions of Forensic Biology cases decreased in FY26 (-10%), and the backlog of cases has slightly decreased (-3%). Despite these reductions, DFS continues to struggle with increasing Forensic Biology case turnaround times. In FY26, average case turnaround times were ~260 days (over 8 months), which is significantly higher than the current 120-day goal in the DFS Strategic Plan. Despite recent modest additions to staffing levels in Forensic Biology, several implemented workflow strategies, such as streamlining DNA screening and utilizing robotics in the workflow, and outsourcing of non-persons cases, DFS does not have the testing capacity to sufficiently reduce the backlog to bring case turnaround times below 120 days. Additional scientists, positioned at all four regional laboratories, are needed to increase capacity to provide timely DNA analyses to support the criminal justice system.

The Department continues to rebuild capacity in the Trace Evidence Section following an examiner's retirement and another's promotion in 2023. Two scientists are currently in training to assist in the rebuilding; one training in explosives analysis, the other in fiber analysis, with both expected to complete their training within 2027. Rebuilding capacity in Trace Evidence is a multi-year process that will also require additional subdisciplines, or evidence areas of expertise, to be added to other section examiners.

Breath Alcohol Tests Administered

Based on data downloaded from evidential breath test instruments statewide, the number of breath alcohol tests performed showed a modest increase for FY26. The table below shows the number of tests performed by month comparing recent years, as well as the percentage change for each month for FY25 to FY26.

Tests by Month	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	% Change FY25-26
July	1,661	1,606	1,654	1,612	-2.5
August	1,582	1,609	1,772	1,776	+0.2
September	1,665	1,720	1,626	1,671	+2.8
October	1,685	1,775	1,593	1,614	+1.3
November	1,489	1,599	1,597	1,682	+5.3
December	1,671	1,728	1,660	1,606	-3.3
January	1,694	1,482	1,427	1,486	+4.1
February	1,608	1,636	1,521	1,485	-2.4
March	1,815	1,766	1,757	1,859	+5.8

April	1,655	1,578	1,649	1,551	-5.9
May	1,778	1,628	1,677	1,871	+11.6
June	1,617	1,588	1,527	1,580	+3.5
Overall	19,920	19,715	19,460	19,793	+1.7

Factors Affecting DFS Workloads and Backlogs

Outsourced Testing of OCME Toxicology Cases

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) maintains accreditation through the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME). NAME requires that 90% of all toxicology testing be completed within 90 days. During periods when the DFS Toxicology Section has had insufficient testing capacity, OCME has found it difficult to meet the NAME requirement of completing 90% of autopsy cases within 90 days due. During FY25 and FY26, outsourcing was utilized in the Western Laboratory as DFS responded to decreased Toxicology staff levels through the recruitment and training of additional Toxicology staff. Having achieved staffing levels in Western Toxicology staff that can accommodate the workload, outsourcing of Western OCME cases was discontinued in September 2026. DFS also utilized outsourcing for OCME cases from the Central Laboratory for a short time while its Toxicology Section relocated from the prior facility in the City of Richmond to the new facility in Mechanicsville, Virginia.

Increased THC Testing in DUI Cases

As of January 1, 2023, DFS made a change to the general analytical protocols for Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drug cases (DUI/DUID). The updated DUI/DUID protocols are designed to identify alcohol and drugs that can impair driving using two levels of testing for alcohol and impairing drugs. Some exceptions to the testing protocol may be necessary due to customer requests for additional testing. The first step of testing is a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) determination. If the BAC is equal to or greater than 0.100 % by weight by volume (%w/v), the sample will be screened for cannabis-related compounds using an immunoassay. If the BAC is less than 0.100 % by weight by volume, a broader immunoassay screen is completed to determine if any drug is potentially present and further analysis as appropriate is conducted. Comparing FY26 to FY25, the percentage of cases with BAC $\geq 0.100\%$ w/v and quantifiable THC were approximately 26% and 23%, respectively.

Total Number of Impaired Driving Cases				
	Total Cases	Cases with BAC $\geq 0.100\%$ w/v	Cases with BAC $< 0.100\%$ w/v	Cases with BAC reported as present

FY25	4,565	2,253	2,300	12
FY26	4,788	2,467	2,317	4

Total Number of THC Positive Cases		
	Cases with BAC $\geq$ 0.100% w/v	Cases with BAC <0.100% w/v
FY25	522	1,010
FY26	647	974

Concentrations of THC Positive Cases		
	Cases with BAC $\geq$ 0.100% w/v Average (Median)	Cases with BAC <0.100% w/v Average (Median)
FY25	0.0055 mg/L (0.0037 mg/L)	0.0082 mg/L (0.0049 mg/L)
FY26	0.0056 mg/L (0.0036 mg/L)	0.0080 mg/L (0.0054 mg/L)

DNA outsourcing

The Department established a DNA outsourcing contract to process non-persons cases, which include property crimes and possession type cases, to increase analytical capacity while new staff are being trained. These types of cases were selected because they typically have a small number of items to test and have limited court appearances for DNA staff. Approximately 600 cases were transferred to the private laboratory in 2025. Data from all those cases have been received and reviews by DFS examiners for upload and searching in DNA databases continue. Another 400 cases are expected to be shipped within the coming months.

PERK Processing Unit

The PERK processing unit became operational in July of 2025. These scientists screen sexual assault evidence for male DNA and perform DNA testing on samples from sexual assault victims. The data for cases requiring more complex interpretations and statistical calculations is forwarded to other scientific staff for reporting. The group is currently concentrating on cases from the Western Laboratory and Central Laboratory. This type of triage unit has been recommended in national best practices for DNA case processing to separate the processes of evidence screening from DNA analysis to standardize workflow and increase the predictability of case output which leads to increases in case completion productivity.

Subpoenas and Court Appearances

When examiners are out of the laboratory for court appearances, they have fewer hours available to perform forensic analyses. Controlled Substances and Toxicology are the two sections that receive the largest volume of subpoenas, and the Toxicology Section makes the most court appearances. In FY26, DFS continued to see an increase in the total time away from the laboratory. DFS continues to work with stakeholders, encouraging the use of video testimony when the parties and the court agree and requesting that the examiners be placed on call for testimony when feasible.

Appearance Year	Days Away	# of subpoenas	# of appearances	# times testified
FY24	742	14,264	3,668	807
FY25	792	13,492	3,236	677
FY26	806	13,243	3,429	769

Ability to Hire and Train Qualified Examiners

The demand for trained, experienced examiners has exceeded the supply for many years. To fill positions with limited qualified applicants, DFS hires and trains individuals with the necessary educational credentials but without practical experience. In the last few years, DFS has been experiencing both more difficulty in filling scientific positions and an increase in our scientists leaving the agency for better paying jobs, particularly from the Northern Laboratory. The Department conducted a compensation study last year that included sending a salary survey. Salaries for DFS Northern Laboratory scientific staff were below current survey minimums for comparable positions in other laboratories in the Northern Virginia region. Some other statewide salaries were also below market level. DFS submitted a budget request last year to address the survey results, but it was not successful. The budget request was renewed this year.

The table below reflects the average length of the training for new scientists hired as trainees in each discipline. The length of training for scientists who come to DFS as previously “qualified” in another laboratory system may be reduced. Current examiners conduct the training for new hires and must dedicate significant time to working with the trainees, which results in decreased case output for the examiners conducting the training.

Section(s)	Average Examiner Training Period
Firearms & Toolmarks - NIBIN	6 months
Forensic Scientists in Breath Alcohol, Controlled Substances, DME, Forensic Biology (DNA), Latent Prints, Impressions, Toxicology, Trace Evidence	12 months
Toxicology - Toxicologists	18 months
Firearms & Toolmarks – Forensic Scientists	24 months

3. GENERAL FISCAL YEAR OPERATIONAL BUDGET AND ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN APPROPRIATED FUNDS

Budget Overview

The Department's annual operating budget for FY26 to FY28 is:

	<u>FY26</u>	<u>FY27</u>	<u>FY28</u>
General Fund (GF) - Beginning Base Budget	\$55,639,990	\$62,009,944	\$62,009,944
Continue Prior Chapter Funding Changes:			
Central Appropriations	\$3,632,568	\$2,956,246	\$3,007,282
Statewide Salary Increase	\$684,584		
Agency Decision Packages	\$496,070		
Technical Adjustments	(\$126,752)		
New Funding Legislative Changes to Agency Budget	\$468,080		
New Funding Agency Decision Packages	\$1,215,404		
GF Fiscal Year Beginning Operating Appropriation	\$62,009,944	\$64,966,190	\$65,017,226
New Funding Central Appropriations Changes	\$2,655,945	\$1,375,831	
One Time Change to Operating Appropriation			
Discretionary Carryforward of Prior Year Unspent Funds	\$5,452,192		
Transfer from Another Agency for Grant Awards	\$17,680	\$13,149	
Central Appropriations Statewide Bonus	\$537,888		
Total General Fund Operating Budget	\$70,673,649	\$66,355,170	\$65,017,226
Non-General Funds (NGF) - Beginning Base Budget	\$2,680,488	\$2,780,056	\$2,780,056
Continue Prior Chapter Funding Changes:			
Central Appropriations	\$99,568	\$77,309	\$77,309
NGF Fiscal Year Beginning Operating Appropriation	\$2,780,056	\$2,857,365	\$2,857,365
One Time Change to Operating Appropriation			
Transfer from Another Agency for Grant Awards	\$912,639		
Total Non-General Funds Operating Budget	\$3,692,695	\$2,857,365	\$2,857,365
TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET	\$74,366,344	\$69,212,535	\$67,874,591

DFS requested and received funding and five (5) positions in FY26. Two positions were for the Facilities section of the new Central Laboratory, two were for the Forensic

Biology section, and one was for the Legal section. DFS also requested and received funding for two (2) additional positions for the Forensic Biology section in FY27.

Grant Awards

During the period of October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026, funding was awarded to DFS under the following grant programs:

FY25 DNA Capacity Enhancement and Backlog Reduction Grant – \$1,858,249 was awarded by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to enhance capacity in the Forensic Biology Section. The funds are to be used to support personnel, training, and the purchase of equipment and supplies. The grant period is October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2027.

2027 Highway Safety Grant Program – \$364,034 in federal funds was awarded by Virginia DMV for the DFS Breath Alcohol Section. Funding is provided for reimbursement of training travel costs for law enforcement officers, supplies needed for breath alcohol classes, continuing education for DFS Breath Alcohol personnel, and the retention of the grant-funded Breath Alcohol Forensic Scientist position. The award requires a match of 25%. The grant period will be October 1, 2026 – September 30, 2027.

2027 Highway Safety Grant Program (TREDS Project) – \$580,393 was awarded by Virginia DMV to DFS under its TREDS (Traffic Records Electronic Data System) Program. The project goal is to decrease the turnaround time of data from the OCME to DMV in cases involving motor vehicle accident fatalities. DFS received funds to retain two part-time FLS II positions and six full-time FLS III positions to assist in the Toxicology Sections statewide to increase capacity. The award requires a match of 25%. The grant period will be October 1, 2026 – September 30, 2027.

Grant Applications

During the period of October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026, DFS applied to the following grant programs but has not received notice of award or denial:

FY25 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Program – DFS has applied for \$237,778 from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) as the State Administering Agency. DCJS recently informed us that they have been awarded funds from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and will be issuing DFS funding via a subaward. These funds will be used toward training and continuing education of scientific staff in the Chemistry, Physical Evidence, and Toxicology program areas, as well as equipment for the Firearms and Toolmarks Section. The final grant amount and project dates are TBA.

2026 National Integrated Ballistic Information (NIBIN) Modernization Program – DFS has applied for a total of \$1.8 million from the U.S. Department of Justice to replace aging equipment and deploy new NIBIN-compatible technology to ensure reliable, modern ballistic analysis capability nationwide. This would increase ballistic evidence processing capacity, reduce backlogs, and improve gun crime case clearance rates through enhanced NIBIN technology and crime gun intelligence best practices.

FY25 Research and Evaluation for the Testing and Interpretation of Physical Evidence in Publicly Funded Forensic Laboratories – DFS has applied for \$561,700 in research funding from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). The goal of this research project is to develop, validate, and compare high resolution mass spectrometry techniques for the screening of seized drugs. This research would satisfy the NIJ’s intent to identify and inform the forensic community of best practices through the evaluation of existing and emerging laboratory protocols and/or have a direct and immediate impact on laboratory efficiency and assist in making laboratory policy decisions.

4. ACTIONS TO FOSTER AND PROMOTE COORDINATION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN DFS AND THE USER PROGRAMS WHICH ARE SERVED

Notices Sent to DFS User Agencies

Policy Notices

- ***Relocation of Central Laboratory*** – On March 2, 2026, DFS sent a notice to all user agencies notifying them of the relocation of the DFS Central Laboratory and Statewide Administrative Offices. The Notice highlighted closures of the Central Laboratory Evidence Receiving Section necessitated by the move and resulting address and FAX number changes. DFS noted that turnaround times for the Central Laboratory would be impacted while operations were moved.
- ***DFS Leadership Change*** – On June 23, 2026, all DFS user agencies were notified of Director Linda C. Jackson’s retirement, effective July 31, 2026. DFS also announced Governor Spanberger’s appointment of Alka B. Lohmann as the new Director, effective August 1, 2026.
- ***Updated Submission Policy for Marijuana*** – On September 11, 2026, DFS notified all user agencies of changes to the marijuana submission policy resulting from the budget language passed by the 2026 Special Session I of the General Assembly establishing the marijuana market.

Enhancing External Communication

The DFS website includes a public-facing [Case Statistics Dashboard](#). The dashboard provides information on case submissions, case completions, average case turnaround times, and caseloads/backlogs. A user may select metrics for specific months or years concerning information from different sections, including Controlled Substances (Seized Drug), Forensic Biology (DNA), Firearms (includes Toolmarks), Trace Evidence, Toxicology, Digital Multimedia Evidence (DME), and Latent Prints (includes Impressions). Dashboard data is updated monthly. DFS also has a Seized Drug Dashboard on its website. DFS has continued to update portions of its [Evidence Handling and Laboratory Capabilities Guides](#), designed to be a resource to law enforcement officers, as needed.

Over the past year, DFS staff provided agency updates to various external entities, including the Virginia Sheriffs' Association, the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, the Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council, and the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia (new judge orientation).

Compounds Scheduled Through Board of Pharmacy Regulations

Pursuant to Va. Code § 54.1-3443(D), in consultation with DFS, the Board of Pharmacy is permitted to temporarily place substances into Schedule I or II via an expedited regulatory process. DFS monitors evidence submissions to its Controlled Substances Section and tracks new compounds that are submitted statewide. DFS recommends compounds to the Board of Pharmacy for this process on a quarterly basis for their consideration under the statute.

Between October 1, 2025, and September 30, 2026, DFS consulted with the Board of Pharmacy on 15 compounds. These included: four synthetic opioids, six compounds expected to have hallucinogenic properties (Schedule I), four compounds expected to have depressant properties (Schedule I), and one cannabimimetic agent (Schedule I). Eight of the 15 compounds have been placed into Schedule I via Board of Pharmacy regulation, and seven are under administrative review.

Report of Drug Cases Submitted to the Virginia Department of Forensic Science

The Department receives tens of thousands of drug samples every year submitted by law enforcement agencies from across the state. The annual report of *Drug Cases Submitted to the Virginia Department of Forensic Science*, a joint effort by DFS and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), highlights the frequency with which various selected drugs are submitted, broken out by the seven Virginia State Police divisions and 32 Virginia Court Districts. On July 8, 2026, the Department released the report of *Drug Cases Submitted to the Virginia Department of Forensic Science CY2025*, which is accessible at: <https://dfs.virginia.gov/documentation-publications/>.

Seized drug data is also available on a public-facing dashboard that is updated monthly. The dashboard operates with the assistance of the Office of Data Governance and Analytics (ODGA) and DCJS. It is accessible at: <https://dfs.virginia.gov/seized-drug-dashboard/>

Training

Forensic Training Section

The Department's Forensic Training Section conducts the Forensic Science Academy (FSA), a nine-week school in Crime Scene Technology. Each nine-week FSA session provides in-depth training to twelve select law enforcement personnel in the recognition, documentation, collection, preservation, and handling of physical evidence through classroom instruction by forensic experts, evidence collection demonstrations, and numerous practical exercises in simulated crime scenes. The 116th FSA Session graduated November 14, 2025, and the 117th FSA Session graduated June 12, 2026. The 118th FSA Session began September 21, 2026. The section is planning to hold three nine-week sessions in 2027.

The Forensic Training Section also presents numerous short courses throughout the year on various crime scene investigation subjects, including Basic Crime Scene Investigation, Basic Crime Scene Photography, and Impression Evidence Documentation and Collection. The Virginia Forensic Science Academy Alumni Association Annual Retraining Seminar was conducted on September 8 - 11, 2026, in Virginia Beach. Over 100 attendees heard presentations regarding topics such as case studies, legal and laboratory updates, and how new technology can assist with crime scene documentation.

Breath Alcohol Instrument Operator Training

The Department's Breath Alcohol Section provides maintenance of the evidential breath alcohol instruments, responses to legal requests for information, testimony, and training for law enforcement personnel. From July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, the Breath Alcohol Section conducted 28 initial breath alcohol instrument operator (three-day) classes and licensed 382 new operators. During this period, the number of initial breath alcohol instrument operator classes was reduced due to the Central Laboratory building move and the procurement of the new evidential breath testing instruments. The Section continued to utilize the online recertification course, and offered 17 of these courses, relicensing 990 operators online during FY26. In addition, the Section conducted 73 in-person recertification (four-hour) sessions and subsequently relicensed 1,443 operators in person. There are over 6,000 licensed operators statewide.

Legal Resources Provided on DFS Website

The Department provides Legal Resources on its website. Topics include Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests, Subpoenas Duces Tecum (SDTs), Requests for Results and Orders for Scientific Investigations under Va. Code § 9.1-1104, Long Term Storage Orders under § 19.2-270.4:1, Post-Conviction Testing under § 19.2-327.1, and Witness Subpoenas for Civil Cases. Updated Model Orders are also available. The information can be accessed on the DFS website at: <https://dfs.virginia.gov/about-dfs/legal-resources/>

5. RULES AND REGULATIONS NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT THE PURPOSES AND INTENT OF CHAPTER 11 OF TITLE 9.1 OF THE CODE OF VIRGINIA (DFS)

Regulations

Amendments Required Due to Central Laboratory Relocation

The Board approved amendments to 6 VAC 40-30-30 and 6 VAC 40-50-30 at its January 7, 2026, meeting. These amendments were necessitated by the Department's move to the new facility in Mechanicsville, Virginia. DFS was subsequently notified that this proposed fast-track action was not necessary. The Department's statewide office address could be amended in the Virginia Administrative Code pursuant to Virginia Code § 30-150 through the Forms process provided by the Register of Regulations. The Board subsequently approved the withdrawal of the proposed fast track action.

Periodic Reviews of 6 VAC 40-20, 6 VAC 40-30, 6 VAC 40-40, 6 VAC 40-50, and 6 VAC 40-60

At its July 15, 2026, meeting, the Forensic Science Board initiated periodic reviews for five of its six regulations:

- 6VAC40-20, Regulations for Breath Alcohol Testing
- 6VAC40-30, Regulations for the Approval of Field Tests for Detection of Drugs
- 6VAC40-40, Regulations for the Implementation of the Law Permitting DNA Analysis Upon Arrest for All Violent Felonies and Certain Burglaries
- 6VAC40-50, Regulations for the Approval of Marijuana Field Tests for Detection of Marijuana Plant Material
- 6VAC40-60, DNA Data Bank Regulations

The Notice regarding these periodic reviews was published in the Virginia Register of Regulations on August 10, 2026 (Vol: 42 Iss: 26). The public comment period began August 10, 2026 and continued to August 31, 2026. No public comments were received.

At its October 7, 2026, the FSB reviewed the recommendations of DFS staff and determined...

Commented [AJ3]: Will need to be updated

6. ANY RECOMMENDATIONS SUBMITTED TO THE FORENSIC SCIENCE BOARD OR THE DIRECTOR BY THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) met in person on April 22, 2026, and by video conference on October 7, 2026. A list of its members is included as Attachment B.

Scientific Advisory Committee Recommendations/Actions

SAC Meeting on April 22, 2026

At its April 21, 2026 meeting, the SAC received reports from the DFS Director, the Controlled Substances Subcommittee, the Toxicology Subcommittee, the Trace Evidence Subcommittee, the Forensic Biology Subcommittee, and the Firearms Subcommittee.

The Controlled Substances Subcommittee reviewed two validation summaries: (1) Quantitative Analysis of Cocaine, Heroin, and Methamphetamine using a Multipoint Calibration Curve by GC-80 FID and (2) Quantitation of Methamphetamine Hydrochloride by UV-Vis Spectroscopy. Following its consideration, the Subcommittee recommended closing the review of both validations.

The Toxicology Subcommittee reviewed two validation summaries: (1) Addition of Novel Psychoactive Substances to the Amphetamines, Phentermine, and Designer Stimulants Quantitation and Confirmation by LCMSMS Method, and (2) Qualitative Addition of Seven Novel Benzodiazepines to the Benzodiazepines, Zolpidem, Zopiclone and Zaleplon Quantitation and Confirmation by LCMSMS Method. Following its consideration, the Subcommittee recommended closing the reviews of both validations.

The Trace Evidence Subcommittee reviewed the Department's Verification Summary for the Micro 87 X-ray Fluorescence (μ -XRF) Spectrometry for the Forensic Comparison of Glass. The Subcommittee discussed two potential recommendations regarding additional experiments that could be conducted. Based on instrumental limitations, one recommendation was made. The Subcommittee recommended closing the review of the Verification subject to the additional recommendation.

The Forensic Biology Subcommittee reviewed the (1) VeritiPro Thermal Cycler Validation and accompanying verifications and (2) the Validation of the BSD600 Ascent A2 Instrument for Precision and Accuracy. Following its consideration, the Subcommittee recommended closing the review of both validations.

The Firearms Subcommittee met to review the corrective action process still ongoing related to CTS proficiency test 23-5262 and other related corrective actions. DFS staff also discussed the various disclosures made by DFS to prosecutors and law enforcement agencies regarding the corrective actions. The Subcommittee recommended an additional disclosure be made to members of the Virginia defense bar regarding the corrective action process.

Staff from the Virginia State Crime Commission provided a status update on the review of the Mary Jane Burton cases and the legislative panel that has been established by the Commission that will review cases to determine whether she engaged in a pattern of misconduct. DFS Chief Deputy Director Amy Jenkins provided an update on the notifications being sent to convicted offenders. See the 2024 Forensic Science Board Annual Report for additional background information.

The SAC considered proposed amendments to its bylaws in response to the passage of HB680, which made modifications to the Committee's enabling statute. The members were informed that the proposed changes would be voted on at the October 2026 meeting.

A new Chair and Vice Chair were elected.

SAC Meeting on October 6, 2026

At its October 6, 2026 meeting, the SAC received reports from ...

Commented [AJ4]: To be updated

C. REPORT REQUIREMENTS PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 473 OF THE 2019 ACTS OF THE ASSEMBLY

PERK Tracking System Overview

In accordance with Va. Code § 19.2-11.13, DFS maintains a statewide electronic tracking system for physical evidence recovery kits (PERKs). All health care providers, law enforcement agencies, the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS), and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) are required to update the status and location of each kit in the PERK Tracking System whenever such status or location changes. Use of the System became mandatory on July 1, 2020.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations associated with data derived from the PERK Tracking System. The System was designed to track individual PERKs and not for broad data analysis.

On a regular basis, DFS performs multiple standardized quality checks to identify anomalies in the data. With these findings, DFS provides targeted assistance to agencies and their users so that they can adjust information that may have been entered in error or add entries that may have been skipped entirely.

PERK Tracking System Training

Only authorized personnel from collection sites, law enforcement, DCLS, and DFS may access the System. Users are granted access to the System only after completing PERK Tracking System Training provided by DFS.

Collection Sites

Virginia Code § 19.2-11.5 defines the term “health care provider” (collection sites) for purposes of the PERK legislation. Collection sites include any hospital, clinic, or other medical facility that provides forensic medical examinations to victims of sexual assault. As of September 1, 2026, 38 collection sites have received PERKs from DFS for collection and have staff trained to use the system.

Law Enforcement

Virginia Code § 19.2-11.5 defines the term “law enforcement agency” for purposes of the PERK legislation. It means the state or local law-enforcement agency with the primary responsibility for investigating an alleged sexual assault offense case. As of September 1, 2026, there are 216 law enforcement agencies that are active system users, which is defined as an agency that has initiated at least one action in the System.

Victim Advocates

Although victim advocates do not have direct access to the PERK Tracking System, law enforcement agencies with victim advocates on staff (or who work for a Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office) may provide these victim advocates with viewer-only access to their agency account.

Kits in the PERK Tracking System

The Department of Forensic Science receives new, bar-coded PERKs from an outside vendor and initiates the kit history in the PERK Tracking System. Kits are then distributed to collection sites throughout the state, and to hospital systems with locations in Tennessee, and to a limited number of law enforcement agencies. Once a kit has been collected during a forensic medical examination, the kit will be designated as either an

“anonymous kit” or an “offense reported kit.” An anonymous kit is one where the victim elects, at the time of the examination, not to report the sexual assault to law enforcement.

Anonymous Kits

As of September 1, 2026, there were 2,496 kits listed in the System as anonymous. This number is an approximation as there have been limited situations where a collection site has transferred an anonymous PERK to a law enforcement agency which affects the data.

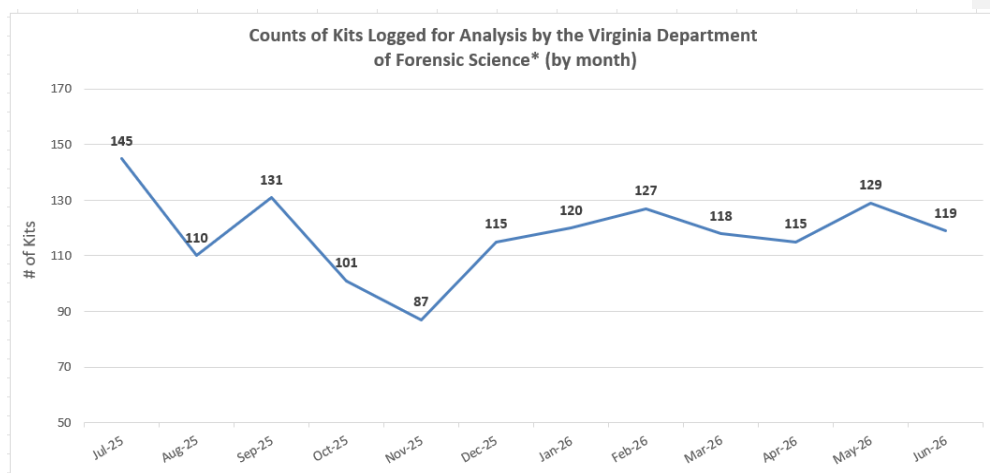
Not all anonymous kits remain anonymous. Victims who, at the time of collection, elect not to report the offense to law enforcement may subsequently decide to report the offense. In FY26, 28 kits in anonymous storage at DCLS were transferred to the investigating law enforcement agency when the victims subsequently reported the offense.

Actions Performed on Kits in the PERK Tracking System

Actions Performed on Kits in the PERK Tracking System (July 1, 2025- June 30, 2026)	Count of Kits
Kits Collected by Collection Sites	1,532
Virginia (non-OCME Collection Sites)	1,501
OCME	27
Tennessee Collection Sites	4
Kits Received by DCLS for Anonymous Storage	395
Kits Received by Law Enforcement from Collection Sites or DCLS	1,485
Kits Received by Law Enforcement from Other Law Enforcement Agencies	22
From Virginia Law Enforcement Agencies	18
From Non-Virginia Law Enforcement Agencies	4

Kits Received by DFS for Analysis

From July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026, DFS logged the receipt of 1,418 kits from law enforcement for analysis. Since July 2025, DFS has logged the receipt of an average of ~118 kits per month for analysis.



*Kits logged as received from law enforcement by DFS for analysis, only includes the initial submission of kits that were submitted multiple times. Kits counted in this graph include barcoded PERKs (including OCME PERKs), non-barcoded legacy PERKs, and non-Virginia kits.

Kits Destroyed

As of September 1, 2026, 75 kits had been logged as destroyed since the System's inception. Prior to July 1, 2022, law enforcement could choose from one of three "Reasons" when logging the destruction of a kit in the System: "Exempt from Submission – Not Connected to Crime," "Exempt from Submission – Routine Death Investigation," or "Submitted for Analysis – Statutory Requirements for Destruction Met." The most common Reason selected was "Exempt from Submission – Not Connected to Crime" (29 kits, 60%). One kit (<1%) was logged as destroyed because it was connected to a routine death investigation.

Effective July 1, 2022, Va. Code § 19.2-11.8 was amended and now includes mandatory retention periods for PERKs including those that are exempt from submission to DFS for analysis. Previously, mandatory retention periods only applied to PERKs that had been returned to law enforcement upon completion of analysis by DFS. Generally, the minimum retention period for a law enforcement agency is now 10 years.

Since this statutory change, DFS has worked with staff from the Office of the Attorney General to educate System users to prevent the destruction of PERKs prior to the expiration of the 10-year minimum retention period. From July 1, 2024, to September 1, 2026, 33 kits were destroyed with the law enforcement agency indicating the reason as “Not Connected to a Crime - Ten (10) Year Minimum Retention Period Met” for nine of these kits and “Returned from DFS Post-Analysis - Ten (10) Year Minimum Retention Period Met,” for the remaining 24 kits.

Victim PINs Granted

Victims with anonymous PERKs may access the System through the Victim Portal by entering their unique PERK ID number, which should be provided to them at the time of examination by the health care provider/collection site. Victims who elect to report the offense to law enforcement will be required to enter a PIN, in addition to their kit’s unique PERK ID, to access the System. Effective July 1, 2022, Va. Code § 19.2-11.11 requires law enforcement to provide victims, parents, guardians, or next of kin with this PIN plus the PERK ID and information for accessing the Victim Portal as long as doing so will not interfere with the investigation or prosecution of the offense.

As of September 1, 2026, 1,818 Victim PINs have been granted by law enforcement, and 392 of those were granted in FY26. By design, the System does not capture whether these PINs were actually used to access the Victim Portal.

Designated Statutory Reasons for Non-Submission

Pursuant to Va. Code § 19.2-11.8, a law enforcement agency that receives a PERK must submit the kit to DFS for analysis within 60 days unless one of five statutory exceptions applies. If a collected PERK received by a law enforcement agency will not be submitted to DFS for analysis because an exception applies, the statutory reason for non-submission should be designated in the PERK Tracking System. These statutory exemptions are:

1. The PERK is anonymous;
2. The PERK is part of a routine death investigation and the medical examiner and law enforcement agree that analysis is not warranted;
3. The PERK is connected to an out-of-state offense;
4. The investigation associated with the PERK is being transferred to another law enforcement agency; and
5. The PERK was determined by the law enforcement agency not to be connected to a criminal offense.

Kits Logged as Exempt from Submission by Law Enforcement* (as of September 1, 2026)	Count of Kits
Anonymous ***	35
Routine Death Investigation	120
Out-of-State Offense	39
Transfer of Investigation (to a Virginia Law Enforcement Agency)**	28
Not Connected to Crime	1136
TOTAL	1,358

*Not all law enforcement users will explicitly designate that a kit is exempt from submission in the System but will instead only log a related subsequent action. For example, a law enforcement user may not designate

that a kit is exempt from submission because it is associated with an out-of-state offense and may only log the transfer of the kit to an out-of-state agency. Such scenarios are captured here.

** The receiving law enforcement agency will determine whether submission is required by law and update the kit's status accordingly in the System.

*** The status of an anonymous kit also changes when received by DCLS or when the victim reports the offense.

The most widely designated statutory reason by law enforcement agencies for not submitting an offense reported kit for analysis to DFS is that the law enforcement agency considers the kit to meet the statutory exemption contained in Va. Code § 19.2-11.8(A)(iv): "the physical evidence recovery kit was determined by the law-enforcement agency not to be connected to a criminal offense." Such kits still must be retained by the law enforcement agency for a minimum retention period of 10 years.

Of all the offense reported kits logged as received by law enforcement agencies from either a Collection Site, DCLS, or another law enforcement agency since inception of the System in 2020 to September 1, 2026, 11.23% (1,136 out of 10,120) have subsequently been logged as exempt from submission to DFS for analysis because they were deemed not to be connected to a criminal offense. Virginia Code § 19.2-11.8 (A)(iv) provides no guidance to law enforcement agencies as to the nature or extent of investigation required, the standard of proof to be considered, or a requirement to consult with another entity (such as the relevant Commonwealth's Attorney's Office). This exemption relates to the requirement that DNA profiles must be linked to the commission of crime prior to being uploaded to CODIS.

PERK Legislation Compliance

As indicated above, Va. Code § 19.2-11.8 requires any law enforcement agency receiving a PERK to submit the kit to DFS for analysis within 60 days of receipt unless one of the five statutory reasons applies. Law enforcement users are notified if they have

missed this deadline in two ways: 1) through the PERK Tracking System's internal notification system, and 2) through targeted emails sent by DFS at the beginning of every month. Law enforcement agencies will receive the email notification if either of two scenarios applies: (1) If they have logged the receipt of a collected kit more than 60 days ago, but they did not log it as transferred to DFS for analysis or as falling under one of the statutory reasons for non-submission, or (2) if another user (i.e., collection site, DCLS or another law enforcement agency) has logged the transfer of a kit to the affected law enforcement agency more than 60 days ago, and no further action has been logged in the System with respect to the kit.

DFS sent a recent round of notifications to law enforcement on September 1, 2026. There were 43 kits with 19 agencies that had logged the receipt of a collected kit more than 60 days ago but had not logged it as transferred to DFS for analysis or as falling under one of the statutory reasons for non-submission. There were 26 kits with 13 agencies that had kits logged as transferred to their agency more than 60 days ago with no further action being logged in the System, including the initial receipt by the law enforcement agency.

D. CONCLUSION

For additional information, please feel free to contact the Department of Forensic Science Director's Office at (804) 786-2281 or dfs.virginia.gov.

Attachment A - FORENSIC SCIENCE BOARD MEMBERS
(as of October 1, 2026)

- **Colonel Jeffrey S. Katz** – Term: period in office or employment Superintendent of the Virginia State Police
- **Ashaki McNeil** – Term: period in office or employment Director of the Department of Criminal Justice Services
- **William T. Gormley, MD** – Term: period in office or employment Chief Medical Examiner
- **Caroline D. Juran, RPh (Chair)** – Term: period in office or employment Executive Director of the Virginia Board of Pharmacy
- **Jae K. Davenport (Vice Chair)** – Term: period in office or employment Designee of Jay Jones Attorney General of Virginia
- **Karl R. Hade** – Term: period in office or employment Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia
- **Delegate Charniele L. Herring** – Term: period in office or employment Chair of the Virginia State Crime Commission,
- **Denise M. Toney, PhD** – Term: period in office or employment Director of the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services
- **The Honorable Russett Perry, Senator** – Term: period in office or employment Designee of Senator Scott Surovell, Chair of the Senate Committee for Courts of Justice
- **The Honorable Vivian E. Watts, Delegate** – Term: period in office or employment Designee of Delegate Patrick Hope, Chair of the House Committee for Courts of Justice
- **George C. Maha, PhD** – Term: designated by Scientific Advisory Committee Chair Member of the Scientific Advisory Committee
- **Jennifer Breaux** – Term: designated by Scientific Advisory Committee Chair Member of the Scientific Advisory Committee
- **Officer Allen Evans**– Term: ending 6/30/2029, Gubernatorial Appointee – Member of Law Enforcement
- **The Honorable Eric Olsen** – Term: ending 6/30/2029, Gubernatorial Appointee – Member of the Virginia Association of Commonwealth’s Attorneys
- **Graven Craig** – Term: ending 6/30/2029, Gubernatorial Appointee – Criminal defense attorney with specialized knowledge in the area of forensic sciences

Attachment B - SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS
(as of October 1, 2026)

- **Alka B. Lohmann** – Term: period in office or employment Director of the Department of Forensic Science
- **Aine Ramirez** – Term: ending 6/30/2027, Gubernatorial Appointee – Director of a private or federal forensic laboratory
- **Erin P. Forry (Chair)** – Term: ending 6/30/2027, Gubernatorial Appointee – Scientist or other person with education, training or experience in laboratory standards or quality assurance regulation and monitoring
- **Peter M. Vallone, PhD** – Term: ending 6/30/2029, Gubernatorial Appointee – Molecular Biologist
- **George C. Maha, PhD** – Term: ending 6/30/2027, Gubernatorial Appointee – Population Geneticist
- **Claire M. Dragovich** – Term: ending 6/30/2030, Gubernatorial Appointee – Forensic Chemist
- **Jennifer Breaux (Vice Chair)** – Term: ending 6/30/2027, Gubernatorial Appointee – Forensic Biologist
- **Christopher Bommarito** – Term: ending 6/30/2030, Gubernatorial Appointee – Trace Evidence Scientist
- **Marc A. LeBeau, PhD** – Term: ending 6/30/2030, Gubernatorial Appointee – Toxicologist certified by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology
- **Kenneth B. Zercie** – Term: ending 6/30/2027, Gubernatorial Appointee – Member of the Board of the International Association for Identification
- **William E. Demuth, II** – Term: ending 6/30/2029, Gubernatorial Appointee – Member of the Board of the Association of Firearms and Tool Mark Examiners
- **Robert Miles** – Term: ending 6/30/2030, Gubernatorial Appointee – Member of the International Association for Chemical Testing
- **Kathleen Corrado, PhD** – Term: ending 6/30/2029, Gubernatorial Appointee – Member of the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors