



Accreditation Update for the Houston Forensic Science LGC

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Requirements for Crime Laboratories in Texas

- Government Code §411.0205 requires all laboratories to be accredited by DPS in order for evidence to be admissible
- Effective September 1, 2005
- Programs-Legacy and International Testing
 - Legacy Program has been longstanding accreditation program since 1982
 - International Program based on ISO 17025 standards supplemented by Legacy Program forensic specific requirements



ASCLD/LAB Accredited Laboratories June 2012

- 388 Accredited Laboratories (Federal, State, Local, International, and Private)
- 45 Accredited Laboratories in Texas



Accreditation

- Granted by the ASCLD/LAB when a laboratory meets minimum management and technical requirements
- Requires documentation of
 - competency and proficiency testing
 - testimony monitoring
 - document control
 - customer service
 - validated procedures
 - calibration and maintenance
 - corrective and preventive action plans
- Requires management reviews
- Requires annual audit report and self-evaluation



Success: National Accreditation 2005 and 2006 DNA





Current State of Forensic Services

- Accreditation granted in 2005(exc DNA), 2006, 2007, 2011 to these Crime Laboratory disciplines
 - Controlled Substances
 - Firearms
 - Forensic Biology (serology and DNA)
 - Toxicology (blood alcohol only)
- Accreditation granted for 5 years
 - current certificate expires January 31, 2016
- Plan to apply for ASCLD/LAB *International* accreditation by end of calendar year
 - expect a 6-9 month timeframe before on-site inspection
 - final report issued and corrective actions completed before accreditation is granted



Other Forensic Disciplines

- Accreditation is available for these additional Forensic disciplines
 - Audio/Video Laboratory
 - AFIS
 - Crime Scene Unit
 - Digital Computer Forensics
 - Latent Print Laboratory



Polygraph Unit

- Polygraph Services Unit received accreditation through the Polygraph Law Enforcement Accreditation (PLEA) Program in October 2010.
- This program is a voluntary oversight process designed to ensure participating law enforcement (LE) agencies have implemented polygraph standards representing the “best polygraph practices” as developed by participating LE agencies.
- Accreditation through PLEA demonstrates a standard of service that is ethical, professional, and provides reliable results for the jurisdiction served by an accredited Polygraph Services Unit.
- Agencies re-inspected every 3 years. Re-inspection scheduled for 2013.



Challenges for Non-accredited Disciplines

- Laboratory must apply for accreditation in all disciplines in which accreditation is available
- Disciplines must have documented policies and/or procedures addressing:
 - quality assurance
 - proficiency testing
 - continuing education
 - customer service
 - other programs to provide effective overall service
- Must meet all applicable requirements of International Program before accreditation is granted