

Purpose: Evidence Procedures

Responsibility: Forensic Science Examiners assigned to Unit or performing casework in Unit

Procedure:

Taking Custody of Evidence

1. When evidence is submitted to the Laboratory for Questioned Documents analysis, a request is placed in the Justice Trax Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) and the examiners in the Unit are notified of the case needing analysis.
2. The evidence is transferred into the examiners possession and if the examiner is not beginning casework at that time, the evidence will be placed into a secure storage location.
Take custody of evidence and obtain copies of "Evidence Receipt" and "Request For Analysis" forms.
3. When beginning casework, review "Request For Analysis" form and/or any other form of request such as a letter of request.
 - 1) Verify that the agency case number, item/submission number, and description of items listed on both the forms for examination by Questioned Document Section, are present and accounted for.
 - 2) Determine what type(s) of Document examination(s) are requested which may require special handling of evidence.
 - 3) Determine if evidence is to be reviewed or examined by other Units of the Laboratory.
 - 4) Determine if case or evidence should be reviewed and/or examined by another Unit prior to being examined by the Questioned Document (QD) Unit. If examination is needed by another Unit prior to examination in QD, the Case Management Unit will be notified.

Beginning of Analysis

1. When opening the evidence, an inventory of the evidence contained in the packages is compared to the Request for Analysis form and Evidence Receipt. If a problem exists with evidence (i.e. all evidence listed as being submitted to Laboratory is not accounted for), the Case Management Unit will be notified to contact the submitting agency.
2. Open each container and/or package containing evidence and take physical inventory of evidence contained therein.
 - 1) Write initials and date on evidence barcode sticker on package.
 - 2) Verify that evidence and barcode information correspond.

- 3) If evidence needs to be subsequently processed by another Unit of the Laboratory (i.e. Latent Prints), ensure proper procedures are followed so as not to destroy or contaminate evidence.
- 4) After opening a container or package, appropriately identify and initial each piece of evidence received. If evidence is to be processed by another Unit (i.e. Latent Prints or DNA) this step may be skipped in order to avoid contamination or obstruction of potential evidence on the item.

Documentation of Evidence

1. Information describing the actual contents of the evidence container and/or a description [of the evidence] appearing on the evidence labels, stickers or markings on the evidence container will be recorded on the Questioned Document Worksheet (QR-DOC-2).
2. Photocopies of all evidence will be made (when practical) and placed in case file.
3. Digital photographs and/or scans of evidence will be taken as deemed necessary and appropriate by the examiner. Copies of all photographs and/or scans will be maintained in appropriate case file. When scanning document, the scanner should be set at a minimum of 200 ppi. It should be noted that the scans are used for documentation in the laboratory notes and that the actual analysis takes place using the original evidence.
4. All instrumental analysis shall be recorded on Documents worksheets (QR-DOC-2).

Use of JusticeTrax (LIMS)

1. JusticeTrax will be utilized in the event of sub-itemization of evidence.
 - 1) If more than one item is present in a Submission, the items may be sub-itemized in JusticeTrax. For Submission 001, this would be represented as 001-1, 001-2, etc.
 - 2) For items that are created, such as Electrostatic Detection Apparatus (ESDA) lifts or items that are removed from the original evidence container, they may be sub-itemized as indicated in GL-4.
2. JusticeTrax will also be utilized to document the chain of custody of the evidence, to assign cases to an examiner and to document the technical and administrative reviews.

Securing and Control of Evidence

1. All evidence will be secured in approved Questioned Document storage area or container.
2. At no time will any evidence submitted for examination be left unsecured and/or unattended outside of Questioned Document Unit.

Completion of Case and Review

1. After completion of analysis, a report will be generated by the analyst, the report may include the following information (Note: Starred items are required per GL 18):
 - a. Name and address of the Division*
 - b. Title*
 - c. Division case number*
 - d. Name and address of the submitting agency*
 - e. Agency case number*
 - f. Town of incident
 - g. Date of request*
 - h. Date of report
 - i. Individual requesting report
 - j. Description of the item(s) tested*
 - k. Description of request for analysis
 - l. Identification of the test method used*
 - m. Results obtained*
 - n. Name, title and signature of analyst and technical reviewer*
2. This report and the case file will be provided to the technical reviewer for their evaluation. The case file will contain all pertinent information to support the findings, these may include:
 - a. Evidence Receipt(s)
 - b. Request form(s)
 - c. Worksheet(s) (QR-DOC-2)
 - d. Documentation of the label on the packaging of the item(s) of evidence
 - e. Photograph(s), scan(s), photocopies, etc.
 - f. Notes
 - g. Copy of the report (including amended or supplemental report if applicable)
 - h. Case Review Form (QD-IM QR1)
 - i. Other documents as applicable

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Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro

Document ID: 2203

Revision: 3

Effective Date: 12/12/2019

Status: Published

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3. A backup of all digital files and pictures will be stored on the Laboratory's X Drive or on another drive/device as needed.

Sources of Error: N/A

Quality Assurance: N/A

References: GL 1 Quality Manual

GL 13

GL 18

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