

Evidence Handling, Processing and Tracking

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Overview

Physical evidence is located, collected and analyzed for the investigation and prosecution of a criminal act. It is also retained to help eliminate uninvolved parties and exonerate the wrongfully convicted

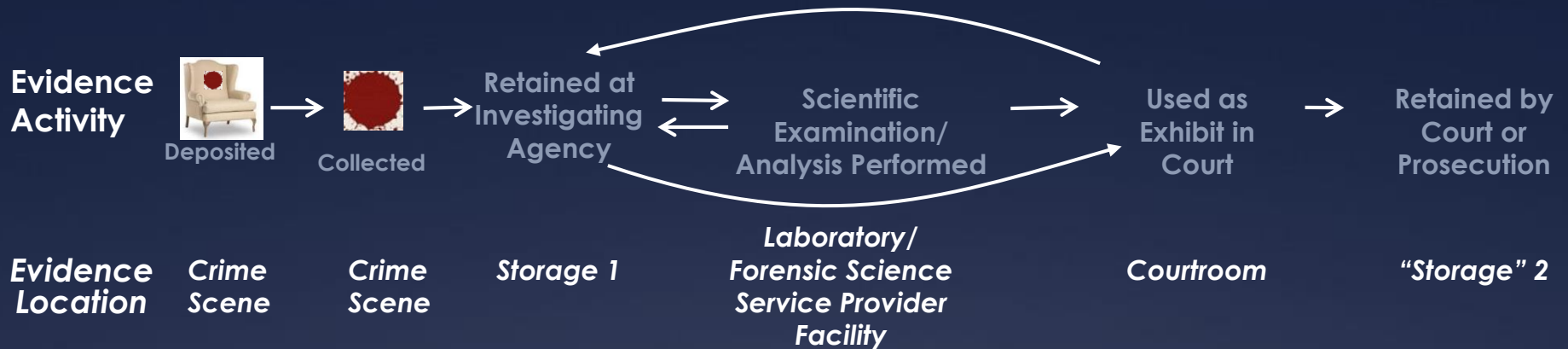
Overview

To be of value, physical evidence must be properly documented, handled and analyzed.

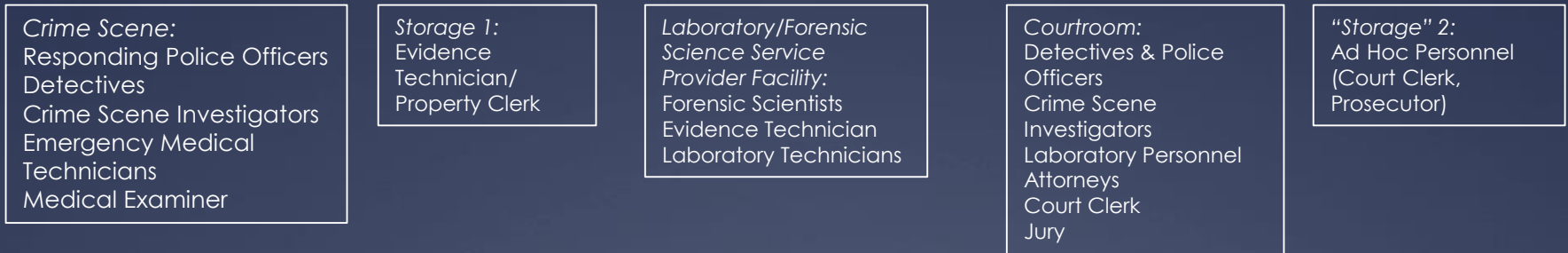
Overview

There is no technology that can resurrect evidence that has not been properly handled through its life cycle.

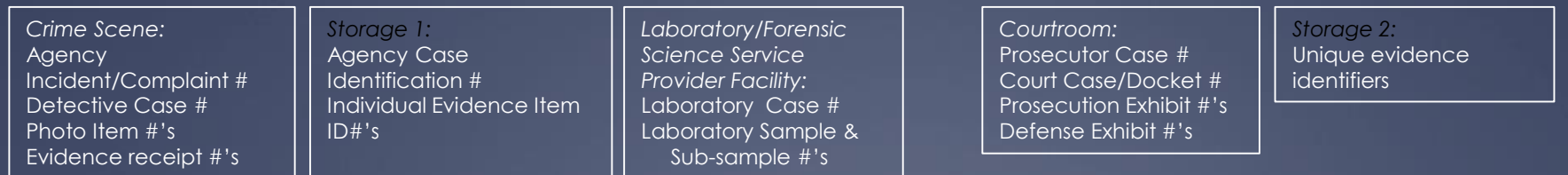
Basic Evidence Pathway



Personnel Interacting with Evidence by Location



Unique Evidence Identification & Tracking Information by Location



Aspects of Evidence

Types of Evidence

Location and Collection

Transfers and Transportation

Storage

Processing

Personnel Involved

Documentation

Types of Evidence

Biological evidence for DNA analysis:

Used for identification or establishing connections.

Biological evidence for toxicology:

Used for determining intoxication

Illegal drugs and narcotics

Types of Evidence

Non-Biological evidence :

Weapons, hair, fibers paint, documents, impressions, finger prints, etc.

Most recently developed - Digital evidence

Location and Collection

Evidence doesn't officially exist until someone recognizes an item's potential value to the investigation and prosecution of a crime.

Locating and collecting evidence must be done in a way that doesn't alter it in any way or cause the alteration of other evidence items around it.

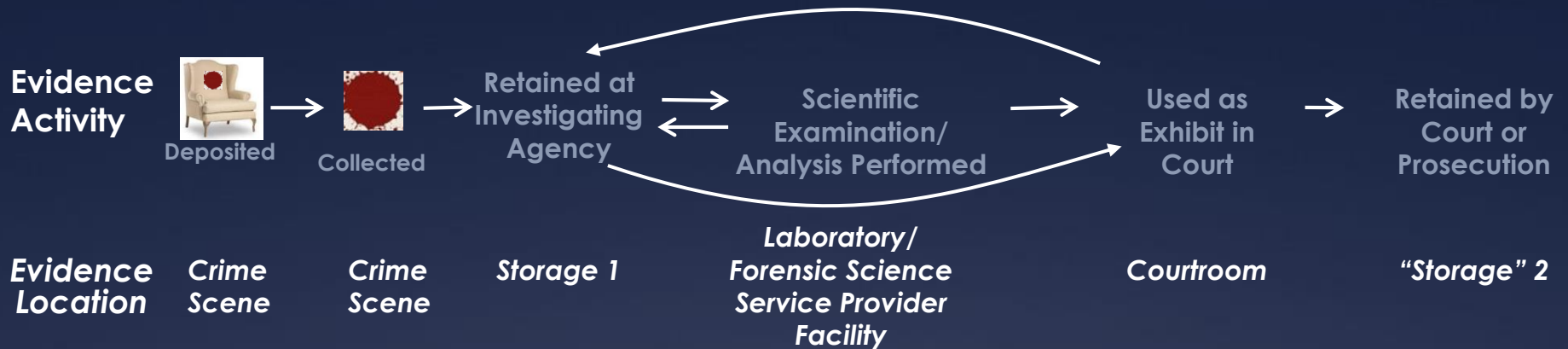
Transfers and Transportation

- From scene to collecting agency
- From agency to storage
- From one storage location to another storage location
- From storage to Forensic Science Service Provider (FSSP) and back
- Between several locations in the FSSP
- From one FSSP to another FSSP and back

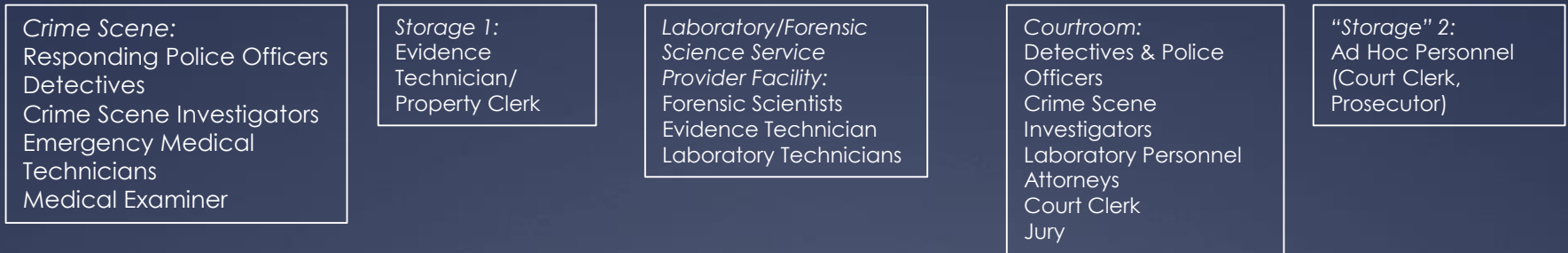
Transfers and Transportation

- From FSSP to a courtroom and back
- From agency storage location to a courtroom and back
- From the courtroom to court storage

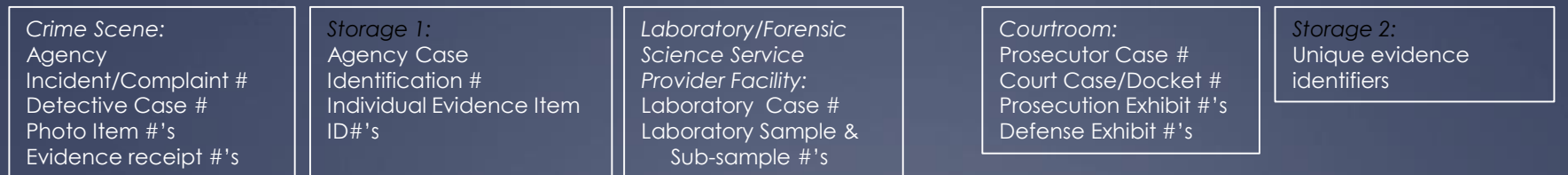
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Storage and Packaging

To properly maintain the condition and integrity of evidence requires knowledge of the best way to package each type of evidence item and store it for future examination or presentation.

Storage and Packaging

Storage and packaging conditions must not allow any change in the evidence.

Storage Conditions include:

- Room temperature
- Room temperature/controlled humidity
- Refrigerated
- Frozen

Storage and Packaging

Packaging Conditions include:

- Boxed
- Bagged
- Plastic
- Paper
- No packaging, just labeled

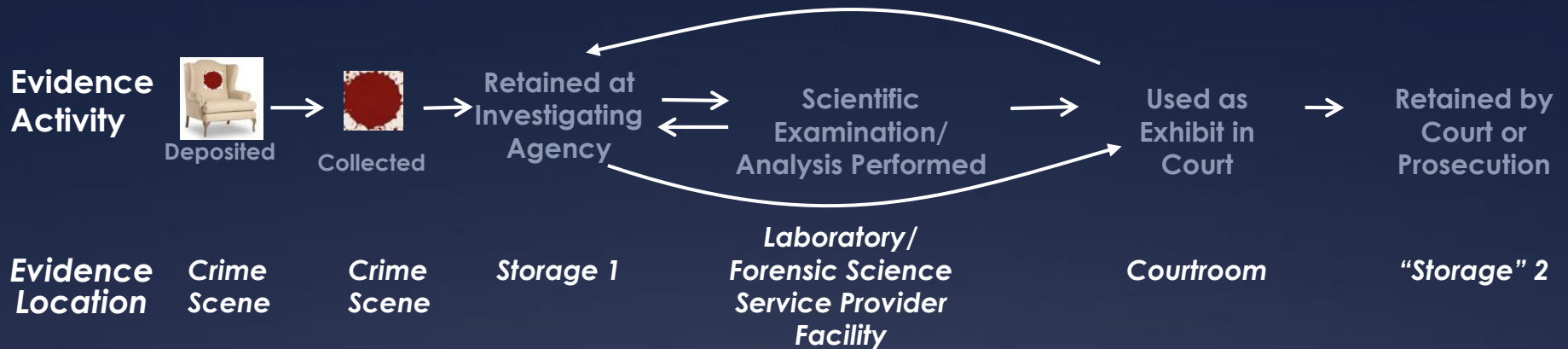
All storage conditions must be secure!

Processing

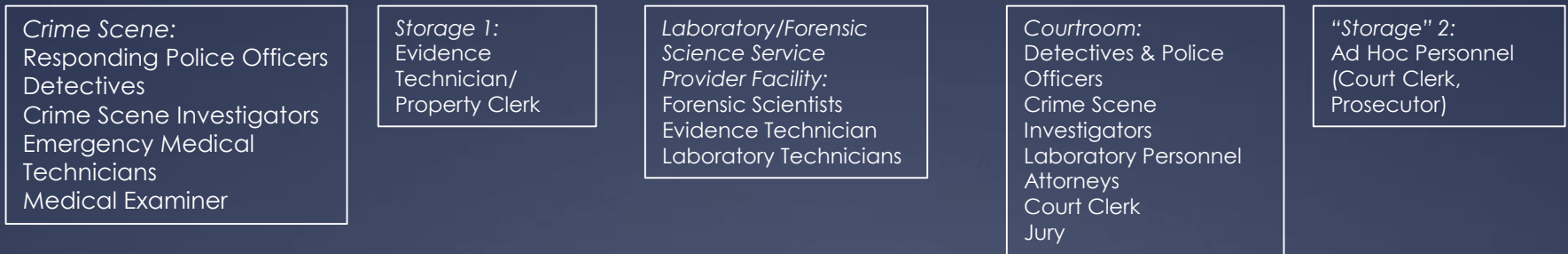
Evidence may be processed in variety of different FSSPs and a variety of locations inside each FSSP

- Collecting agency FSSP
- Other government FSSP
- Agency outsourced commercial FSSP
- Defense contracted FSSP

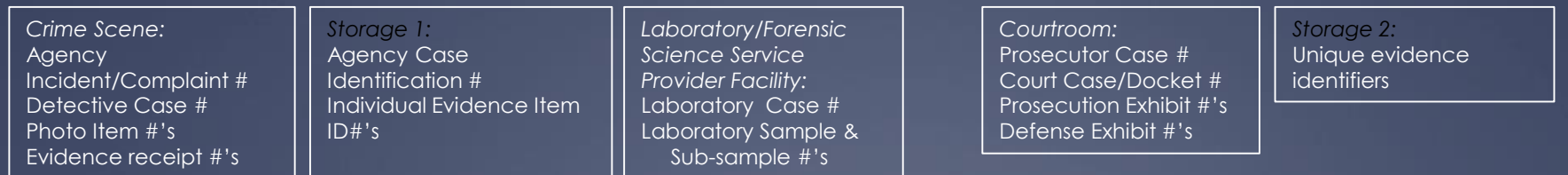
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Personnel Involved

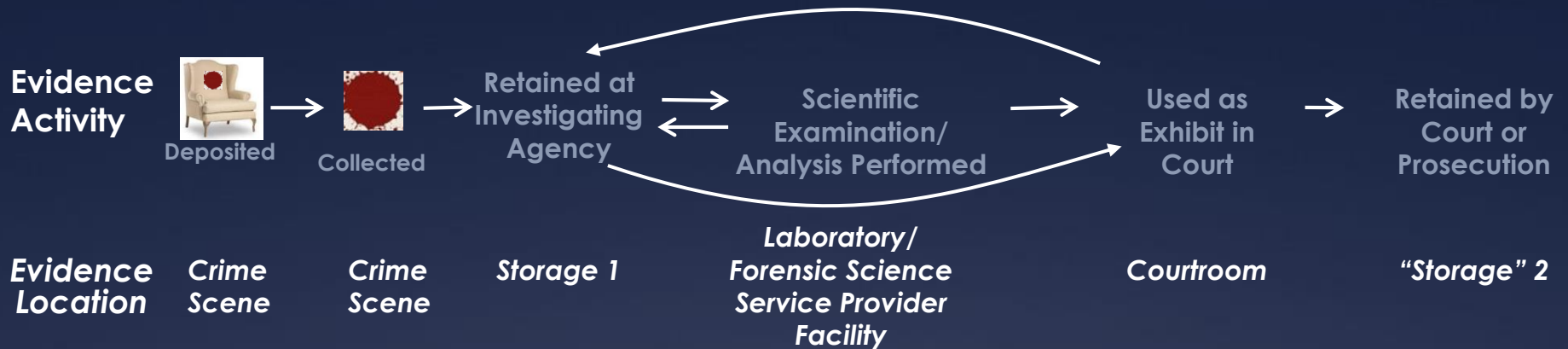
Many different people will come in contact with evidence during its life cycle:

- Initial responders
- Detectives/Investigators
- Medical Examiners
- Crime Scene Technicians

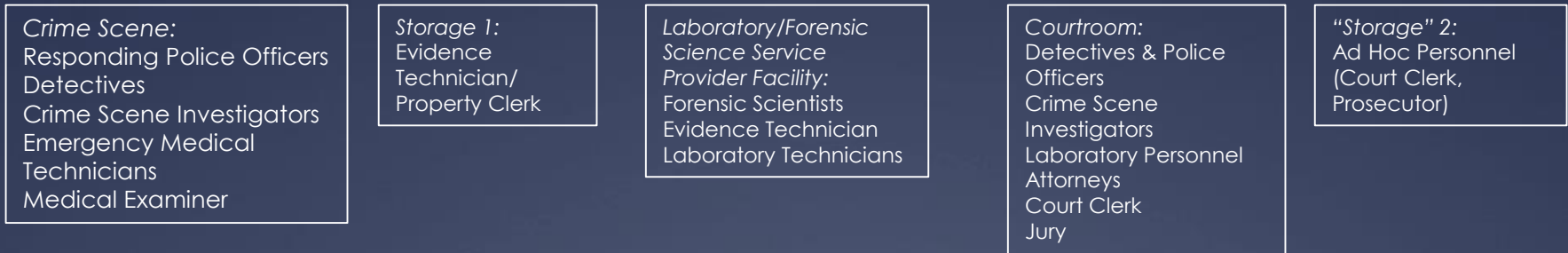
Personnel Involved

- Hospital staff
- Evidence Property Clerks
- Evidence Couriers
- Forensic Scientists and other technical staff at FSSPs
- Court Staff
- Attorneys
- Jurors

Basic Evidence Pathway



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Documentation

All aspects of evidence handling must be meticulously documented throughout its life to ensure it retains its value to the criminal justice system.

Documentation

Location and Collection:

Field Notes

- Still and video photography
- Sketches
- Measurements
- Written descriptions

Documentation

Initial Formal Documentation:

- Property Report
- Crimes Scene Report
- Marking of evidence

Documentation

Evidence Storage:

Once entered into an agency's evidence storage system additional documentation is continuously made to identify who is involved in handling of the evidence, the evidence storage location and conditions, and all transfers in and out of the storage locations.

Documentation

Analysis and Processing:

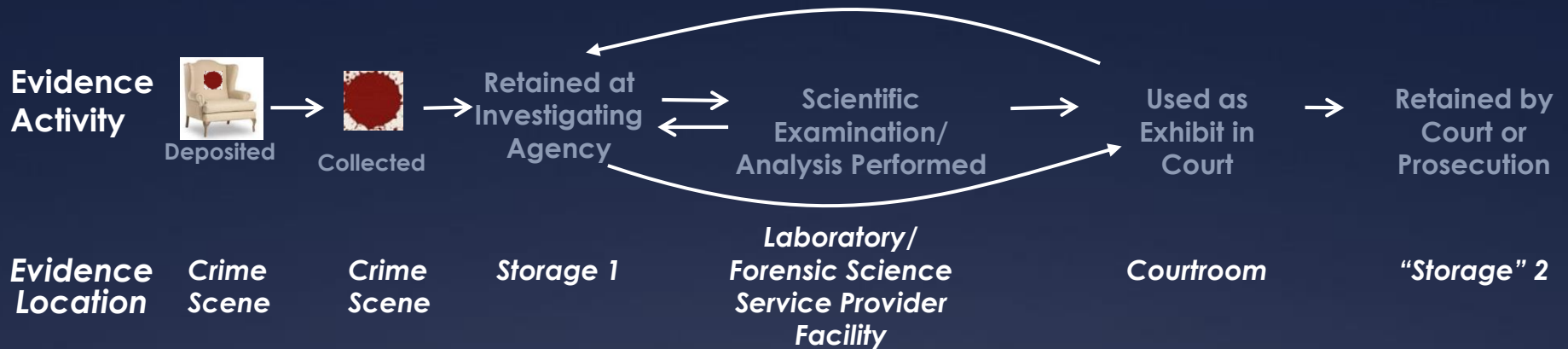
There is extensive documentation associated with the analysis and processing of evidence. Forensic science service providers create case packages (written or digital) which contain all the documentation necessary for other parties to understand exactly what was done to the evidence, the opinions and conclusions of the analysts, and how they reached their opinions and conclusions.

Documentation

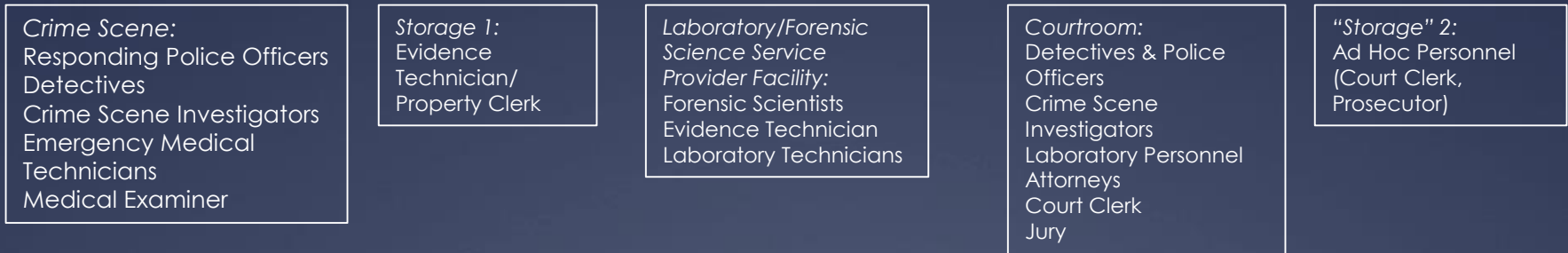
Evidence Item Identifiers:

It is essential that every item of evidence be identified in a way that allows it to be traced back as a unique item to its initial location and the case it is associated with.

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Evidence Tracking Examples

Situation – Victim found shot to death in the bedroom of a residence. A gun is found lying outside the residence in the yard.

Investigative Questions

1. Can a connection be shown between the gun and an individual.
2. Was the gun found outside the residence used to kill the victim?

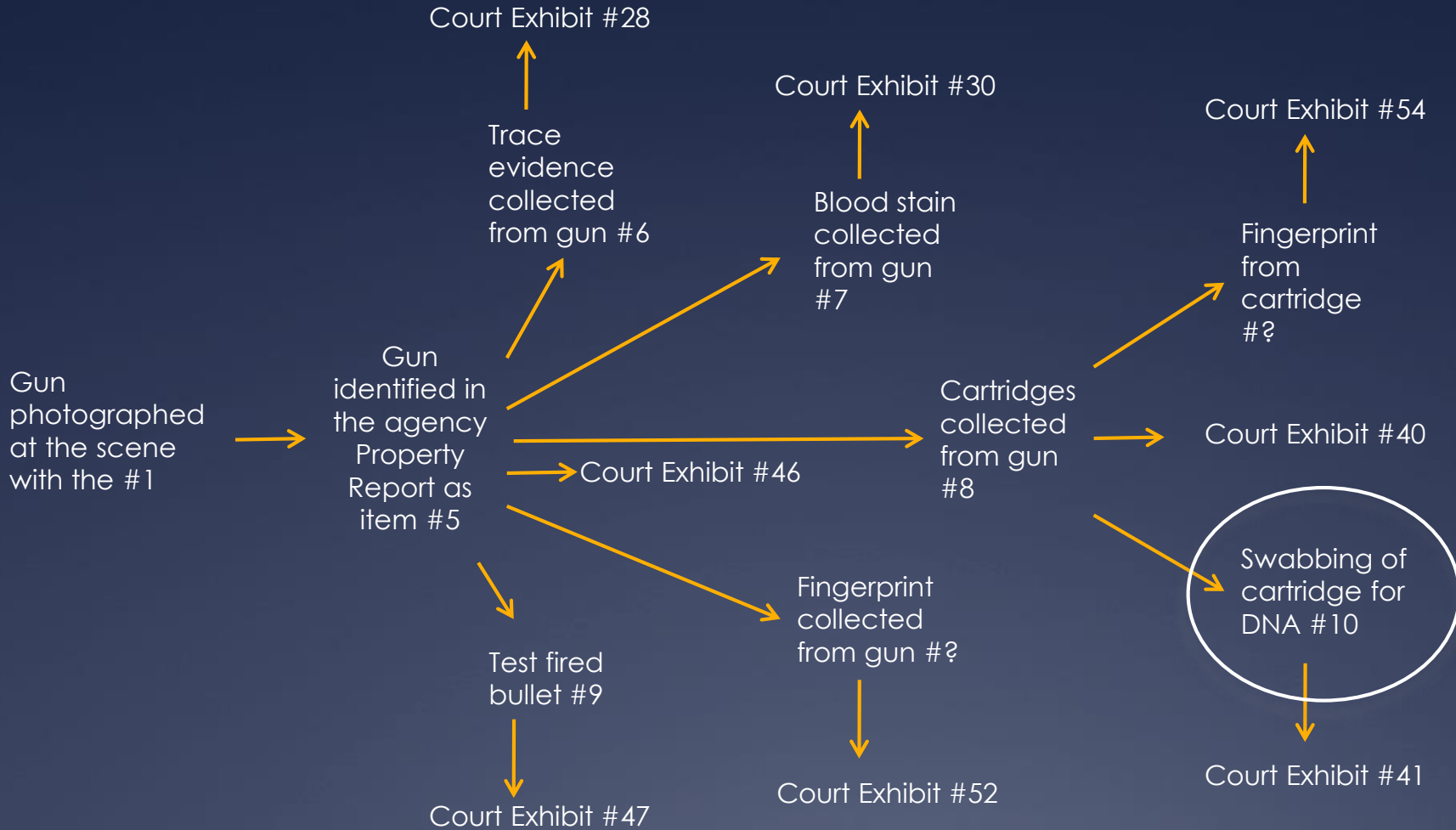
Evidence Tracking Examples

Simple Example



Evidence Tracking Examples

Real Life Example



Alternate numbering scheme for evidence collected from another it is by sub-numbering. 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.3.1 etc.

The main reason for all the documentation and item identifiers is to be able to trace each and every evidence item used during the investigation and which is presented in court back to where it was originally located and collected at the scene of the crime.

Following the trail in reverse in our example.

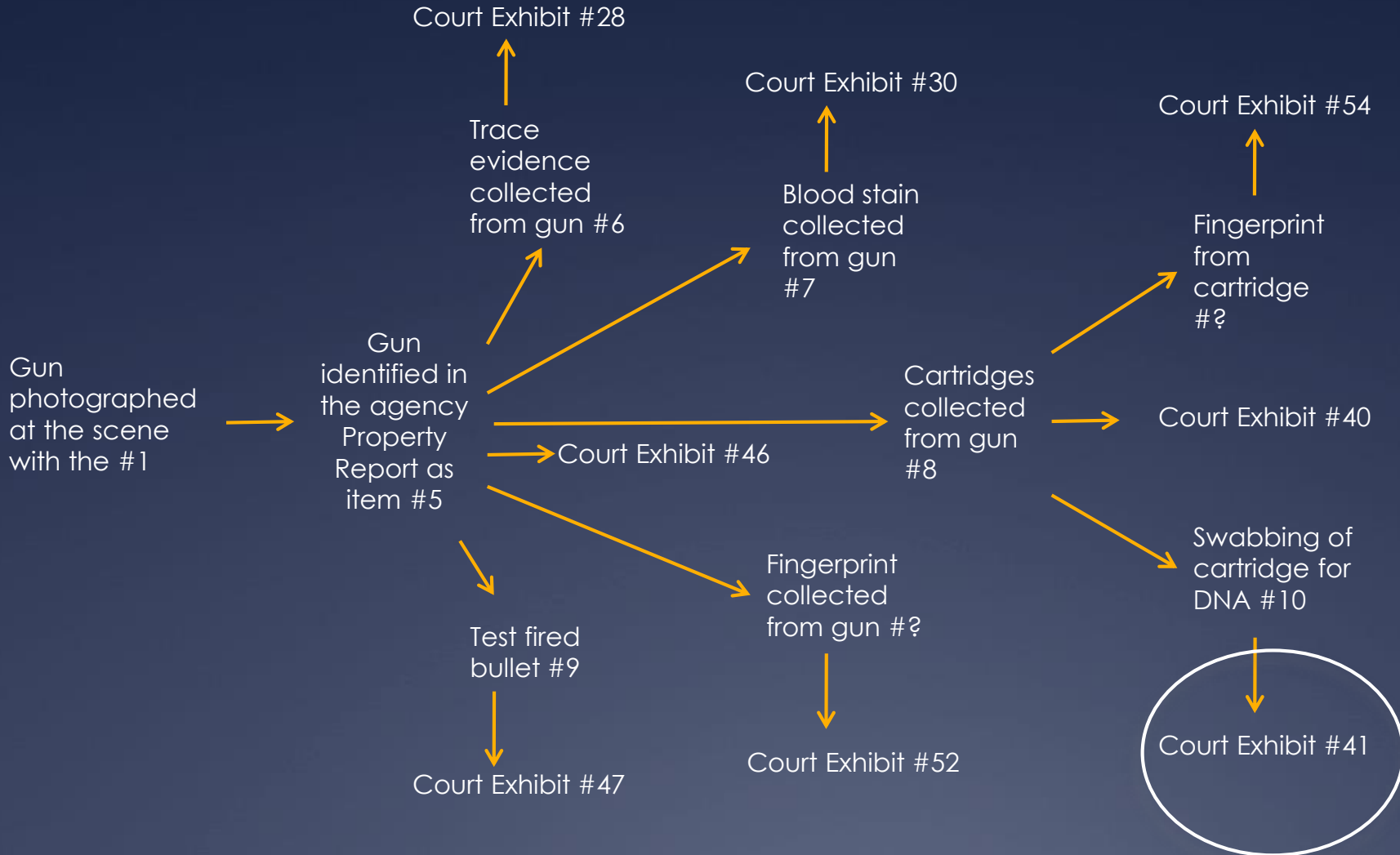
Evidence presented in court to show a connection between the defendant and the crime:

DNA swabbed off of one of the cartridge cases removed from the gun exhibits a profile the same as the defendant thus establishing a connection between the defendant and the cartridge case and by extension a possible connection between the defendant and the gun used to kill the victim.

- * The DNA profile report is entered into court as exhibit #41
- * Exhibit #41 identifies the swab with the profile as agency property item #10
- * Item #10 is described in an agency property report as the swab used to remove possible biological evidence from from a cartridge case #8
- * Item #8 is described in an agency property report as a 9mm cartridge case removed from the second position in a magazine from a firearm item #5
- * Item #5 is described in an agency property report as a Glock 9mm semi automatic handgun, serial #1234567. located on the ground 2'3" west of the west wall and 22'11" south of the north wall of the residence located at 123 E. 23rd St. NW. Photographed with the #1 at the crime scene.
- * The loop is complete

Evidence Tracking Examples

Real Life Example



Additional Complicating Factors

- * The example is just a single item collected at a single scene by a single agency
- * Items outsourced to another laboratory
- * Terms, nomenclature and processes are not standardized
- * Example focuses on individual item identifiers doesn't include all the other documentation.

Thank you

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