

# National Commission on Forensic Science - “An” AAFS Perspective

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# AAFS – Background

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- The American Academy of Forensic Sciences is a multi-disciplinary professional organization that provides leadership to advance science and its application to the legal system.
- Objectives
  - To promote professionalism, integrity, competency, education
  - To foster research
  - To improve practice
  - To encourage collaboration



# AAFS – Eleven Sections

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- Anthropology
- Criminalistics
- Digital & Multimedia Sciences
- Engineering Sciences
- General
- Jurisprudence
- Odontology
- Pathology/Biology
- Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences
- Questioned Documents
- Toxicology



# AAFS – Membership

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- Founded in 1948
- National and international members
- 7,000+ members Academy-wide
  - The Criminalistics Section
    - 2,800+ members



# NCFS – AAFS Involvement (2016)

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- Fourteen commission members
  - Three ex-officio members
- Numerous sub-committee member positions



# NCFS – Benefits

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- Creation of a Forensic Science “sandbox”
  - Local, state and federal agencies
  - Various Forensic Science disciplines
  - Statisticians and scientists outside of Forensic Science
  - Officers of the court
  - The public





# NCFS – Concerns

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- Recommendations are adopted at the discretion of the DOJ
- Policies may not affect private laboratories
- The limited number of Forensic Science practitioners appointed as Commissioners
  - Three (one state and two county labs)



# NCFS – Challenges

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- Very narrow focus as an advisory committee
- The lack of direct implementation authority
- The limited involvement of independent/ non-federal laboratory affiliated scientists
- Lack of enforcement
  - Funding



# Needs of the Forensic Science Community

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- Federal entity dedicated to Forensic Science
  - Leadership
    - Guidance
    - Support



# AAFS – Background

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- The American Academy of Forensic Sciences is a multi-disciplinary **professional organization that provides “leadership”** to advance science and its application to the legal system. (emphasis added in the original)
  - Forums for discussion on issues with a diversity of perspective
  - Not designed to make policy



# NCFS – Leadership

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- Synthetic opioids ( e.g. Fentanyl and Carfentanil)
  - Analyst safety
    - PPE
    - Engineering controls
  - Storage
  - Disposal



# Needs of the Forensic Science Community

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- Federal entity dedicated to Forensic Science
  - Leadership
    - Guidance
    - Support
  - Funding programs
    - Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants (Coverdell)
    - Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG)



# NCFS – Funding

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- Use of grant funds
  - OT programs
  - Instrument purchases/ upgrades
  - Consumables
  - Accreditation



Why the knotted rope?

# Demands on the Forensic Science Service Providers (FSSP)

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- Backlogs
- Customers
  - Submitting agencies
  - Prosecutors
  - Defense attorneys
  - Victims
- Accreditation

# QUALITY

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# Continuation of the NCFS?

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**YES**



# Continuation of the NCFS!

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- The identification of key issues
  - Accreditation and proficiency testing
  - Reporting and testimony
  - Scientific inquiry and research
  - Training on science and law
    - Curriculum development



# Accreditation

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- Recommendation on Universal Accreditation
  - Work Product – March 2016
  - Recommended that all FSSPs become accredited
  - Beneficial yet challenging
  - Proposed implementation strategy
    - Direct all DOJ FSSPs to maintain their accreditation
    - DOJ grant funding provided to non-DOJ FSSPs shall be granted to accredited FSSPs only
    - Enforce by any means necessary

# Justice for All Reauthorization Act of 2016

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- Reauthorizes Coverdell through FY2021
  - Applicant must certify accreditation
  - If not accredited, existing grant recipients must include progress towards obtaining accreditation
  - Expansion of “forensic science evidence” wrt the elimination of backlogs
    - Impression, digital and fire evidence
- More funds are available to test rape kits



# NCFS – The Path Forward

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- More involvement from the greater Forensic Science Community
  - State, county and local level
  - A balance of backgrounds is needed
- Continue to seek feedback from the FSSPs
  - The FSSPs are stakeholders
- **Continue to advance the Forensic Sciences**

# Thank You!

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