

BACKGROUNDER ON FORENSIC SCIENCE ADVANCES

August 7, 2017

The following is on background attributable to a Department of Justice official:

The Department of Justice has three priorities on forensic science:

- (1) facilitating coordination and collaboration across the Department, the federal government, and with state, local, and tribal agencies;
- (2) increasing capacity of forensic services to ensure evidence can be promptly analyzed;
and
- (3) improving the reliability of forensic science.

The Department is fully committed to strengthening forensic science and its use in the courtroom. The Department stands with the forensic science community and against efforts by some to reject reliable and admissible forensic evidence. The Department believes that when the adversarial American legal system functions as intended – with prepared legal practitioners and trained forensic examiners – justice is advanced.

The Department is announcing several specific actions that will advance forensic science and ensure that the Department's forensic testimony is consistent with scientific principles and just outcomes. To that end, the Department will develop Uniform Language for Testimony and Reports (ULTRs) to help guide examiner testimony and, for quality assurance, will develop and implement a new Department-wide testimony monitoring program.

The Department is also committed to supporting the practice of forensic science and to addressing issues of capacity and efficiency. The Department is conducting a needs assessment that begins with listening sessions to understand the various challenges that the forensic science practitioner community faces in terms of backlog, personnel, equipment, education, and training.

Finally, the Attorney General has appointed Ted Hunt to serve as the Senior Advisor on Forensics. Mr. Hunt has 25 years of experience as a state prosecutor but has also worked closely with the forensic science community. He will oversee development and implementation of forensic science initiatives and will work with external forensic science stakeholders, including scientists, crime lab leaders, law enforcement, and legal practitioners.