

Standards for Training in Forensic Serological Methods



WHAT IS AN AAFS STANDARD FACTSHEET?

The AAFS produces clear, concise, and easy-to-understand factsheets to summarize the contents of technical and professional forensic science standards on the OSAC Registry. They are not intended to provide an interpretation for any portion of a published standard.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STANDARD?

Items of evidence suspected of containing biological fluids such as blood, semen, or saliva are routinely screened by forensic science service providers (FSSPs). Locating and identifying possible biological material on an item and ensuring that the appropriate samples are submitted for subsequent DNA testing are important to an investigation. DNA test results may aid in an individual's exclusion or potential link to a scene.

Comprehensive and documented training of personnel prior to conducting any testing on evidence in a case promotes quality and consistency in the testing and communicating the test results.

This standard establishes minimum requirements for a documented forensic serology training program for the methods used to evaluate body fluids, stains, or residues related to forensic investigations.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

This standard provides requirements for the proper training of personnel in the methods used to detect, characterize, identify, and type possible biological material present on evidence items and correctly reporting the results. The presence of particular biological tissues or fluids may aid in a forensic investigation.

The proper detection and identification of appropriate biological samples on an evidence item is a key step in evaluating which items of evidence could be subjected to subsequent DNA testing.



HOW IS THIS STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

This standard applies to all personnel processing potential biological evidence.

The requirements for the documented training program for forensic serology personnel include: 1) information regarding the individuals overseeing and conducting the training; 2) specific knowledge-based training regarding the fundamental scientific principles and methods, including validation studies and any limitations of the methodology; 3) practical training in the procedures, documentation and the reporting of results; and 4) knowledge-based and practical competency assessment of that training. In addition, there is a requirement that all training is documented and retained by the FSSP. This standard applies to various methods that may be used to screen biological substances, including physical methods, biochemical assays, reactions, and microscopy.

This standard is one in a series of training documents for forensic personnel working with human biological samples that span various aspects of forensic biology and DNA testing.

This is a standard of practice. Training beyond that required in the standard may be necessary depending on the testing assays used and the types of evidence tested by the FSSP.