



HFSC adopts standards approved by national forensic organization

December 14, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Houston Forensic Science Center is voluntarily adopting national industry-leading standards for forensic analysis in a continuous effort to support improved quality and standardization of the field.

HFSC's board of directors authorized Friday the adoption of internal protocols and standards that will align with standards approved by the [Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science](#) (OSAC), which is administered by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

OSAC's mission is to strengthen forensic science by coordinating the development of sound scientific standards for the field and is part of the federal government's efforts in the past decade to ensure that science presented in court has an objective foundation.

"HFSC's history as a police-run crime lab with a multitude of problems makes us all the more aware of how crucial it is to ensure standards, policies and protocols used by our analysts and examiners are based on strong, sound, objective science," said Dr. Peter Stout, HFSC's CEO and president.

"HFSC has changed policies and procedures since its inception in 2014 to ensure the best quality forensic work to Houstonians. Adopting these standards, the result of years of work by the nation's top forensic scientists, is the logical next step," Dr. Stout said.

Protocols in HFSC's forensic biology/DNA section and seized drugs, which analyzes substances to determine if they are illegal drugs, will change to better align with the

OSAC-approved standards. Most other HFSC disciplines will not be impacted by the change.

All HFSC disciplines, including the Crime Scene Unit, are accredited to international standards and HFSC considers them to be minimum requirements. OSAC takes this to the next level by supporting the development of standards requiring scientifically sound protocols, formal education, training, competency testing, continuing education and other measures.

OSAC standards also help promote consistency among forensic labs nationwide.

“HFSC staff from all levels have participated in OSAC committee discussions, meetings and standards development. Like other forensic agencies nationwide, our analysts are familiar with the work that OSAC has been doing and the direction the field is going,” Dr. Stout said. “Now we are taking the steps required to lead the rest of the country in the direction of adoption and standardization.”

HFSC is a local government corporation that provides forensic services to the City of Houston and other local agencies. HFSC is overseen by a Board of Directors appointed by the Mayor of Houston and confirmed by the Houston City Council. Its management structure is designed to be responsive to a 2009 recommendation by the National Academy of Sciences that called for crime laboratories to be independent of law enforcement and prosecutorial branches of government.

HFSC operates in seven forensic disciplines.

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