



MINUTES - August 22, 2018

Strategic Planning Advisory Committee of the Delaware Commission on Forensic Science

Division of Forensic Science - Department of Safety & Homeland Security
200 S. Adams Street, Wilmington DE, 19801
1st Floor - Conference Room

Committee Members Present:

DAG Barzilai Axelrod
Director John Evans
DNA Technical Leader Amrita Lal-Patterson
Dr. Don Lehman
ODS Lisa Schwind
Chief Toxicologist Jessica Smith

Committee Member Excused:

DAG Lisa Morris (Non-voting Commission's Legal Support)

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- DAG Axelrod called the meeting to order. Introductions were made.
 - DNA Technical Leader Lal-Patterson made a motion for approval of 3/26/18 minutes; Chief Toxicologist Smith seconded the motion.
 - The Committee continued to work towards identifying, obtaining, and refining the data it has on current DFS space and personnel allocation. In an effort to present data that provides meaningful metrics, the Committee is attempting to think of it not only in terms of DFS specific numbers, but also will attempt to have a base comparison with external information, like the Project FORESIGHT Annual Report, 2015-2016, published by the Forensic Science Initiative, College of Business & Economics, West Virginia University – which presents the results of surveys of various laboratories and looks at some metrics per discipline in terms of the number of cases handled.
 - Director Evans reported that not all disciplines have a national standard number of cases per employee, but suggested to look at the mean number from the DFS 2017 Annual Report per particular discipline and compare it to the FORESIGHT report. The Committee should identify the percentage of the workforce in each discipline that is casual/seasonal so that when we see how one position is counted in one report, we can determine parity with the other report.

- The Committee began to look into the data to determine what categories are comparable and, if not, what factors we need to assess to see if they can be made comparable. For example, for the toxicology section, Chief Toxicologist Smith pointed out that the FORESIGHT data does not include similar statistics for certifying toxicologists, and not all DFS positions within a laboratory perform the same tasks. In toxicology, DFS lists four analysts, but only three of them do casework and the remaining one does research. The Committee would then use the data of three analysts when making the appropriate comparison regarding number of tests per analysts. For DFS, there are approximately 7000 samples (*e.g.*, not cases) for post-mortem and DUI combined. The FORESIGHT report, does not capture the data in the same combination and therefore the Committee should match it to the extent that it can and explain the differences where it can't.
- DAG Axelrod suggested that the Committee is ultimately looking for two subsets of data. The first relates to the number of samples and the second to the number of cases. Director Evans said the data, when compared to the medians, will let us know if we need more employees and if so, how many.
- The Committee also began to identify limitations of the FORESIGHT report, for example, it discusses cases at an analyst level, but does not appear to capture management functions and the span of control of a manager. There is a limit to what a manager can effectively oversee if the size of the analyst complement they oversee is increased.
- The Committee continued to discuss similar initial data for the various other disciplines. There were discussions regarding what could constitute a “test” for data purposes.
- It was agreed that the FORESIGHT report should be circulated to the various DFS disciplines so that each discipline can present similar raw data that the Committee can then analyze.
- The Committee settled on generating data on the number of cases and tests using calendar year 2017 and 2018 per discipline. When generating the internal numbers, each discipline will also be tasked with noting if there was a change in staffing levels during a particular calendar year such that if the discipline had an assigned personnel slot, but it turned-over or was not filled for the entirety of the year, the report could reflect it. Further, the various disciplines will also be asked to note any significant changes in processes that have contributed to differences as well.
 - Chief Toxicologist Smith pointed out that allocated staffing has remained relatively constant within the disciplines, despite caseloads increasing. An important metric to include is the progression of how the caseload has increased based on existing numbers.
 - The Committee will focus on staffing and space metrics for calendar years 2017. Once the Committee is able to determine what data categories we are generating, the Committee can then look to expand it to other years.
- Regarding space allocations, there is no set formula to compare it to at this time. Once the personnel data are clearer, the Committee will work up from the staffing needs, the equipment and workstation needs, and other discipline specific requirements and re-assess at that point.

- DNA Technical Leader Lal-Paterson made a presentation to the Committee regarding her recent visit to the Alaska State Crime Lab.
- Dr. Lehman moved to adjourn the meeting; Chief Toxicologist Smith seconded the motion.
- The meeting was adjourned.