

# THE FQS UPDATE

## WELCOME TO “THE FQS UPDATE”

“There is one quality which one must possess to win, and that is definiteness of purpose, the knowledge of what one wants, and a burning desire to possess it.” Napoleon Hill



### Important Announcement Affecting All Laboratories: Report on Forensic Sciences

A public briefing from the Committee on Identifying the Needs of the Forensic Science Community released its report “Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward”. The briefing was held in the lecture room at the National Academy of Sciences Building in Washington, D.C. at 1:00 P.M. EST on Wednesday, February 18, 2009. Copies of the report are available from the National Academies Press at <http://WWW.NAP.EDU> and can be found on the FQS home page at [www.forquality.org](http://www.forquality.org). FQS strongly advises our accredited labs to view this briefing. FQS-International is part of the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO) and has been working on a response to the NAS report which will have impact on ALL forensic labs and organizations. FQS believes in providing you all the information possible and will update you as we progress through new challenges. The report is welcomed and we hope to use it as a tool toward future improvements and providing the highest degree of quality toward the forensic community. Our laboratories commitment toward excellence and dedication to their field will make any transition easy. Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

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### FQS-I’s Police Science Accreditation Program

By Frank Fitzpatrick, Police Science Accreditation Program Manager & Lead Assessor, Forensic Quality Services-International

What do Bill Tilstone and the National Academies of Science have in common? Both recognized the need for accreditation for all forensic science providers in the United States. However, Bill recognized it five years ago.



Accreditation of crime laboratories just passed its twenty-fifth anniversary. Currently about 400 crime labs have been accredited, many in ISO/IEC 17025 standards. This represents over 90% of traditional crime labs.

However, there are far more forensic science providers in police agencies than crime labs providing services of latent print analysis and crime scene investigation. By some estimates, there could be as many as 8,000 police and sheriffs’ departments providing

## FQS-I's Police Science Accreditation Program Cont'

at least some of these tasks, yet only a handful of these non-crime lab forensic service providers are accredited.

Five years ago, recognizing the need for accreditation of all forensic science providers, then-FQS president Bill Tilstone, initiated an outreach program to bring the accreditation message to stand-alone latent print and crime scene investigation providers who are unaffiliated with a crime lab.

The FQS-I outreach has included vendor booths and workshops on principles of ISO accreditation at International Association of Identification education conferences. FQS-I has authored articles on the value of accreditation in *IAI News* and the International Association of Chiefs of Police's publication *Police Chief*.

In August, 2007, the Illinois State Police Crime Scene Command became the first stand-alone crime scene investigation unit to become accredited by FQS-I. FQS-I has several other agencies that are in the accreditation pipeline.

But why aren't more police agencies seeking accreditation? Why has accreditation been embraced by crime labs but not other police organizations? Some of the major reasons stem from the origins of accreditation.

As an program from the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors, crime lab accreditation had laboratory directors' commitment to the accreditation process and the directors recognized the resources needed for accreditation. An additional impetus for accreditation was the requirement for DNA laboratories to meet mandated FBI quality assurance standards. For the police sciences, despite some significant quality assurance failures in agencies such as Los Angeles and Boston Police Departments, most police executive management remain largely unconcerned about accreditation.

Many in the police sciences complain that accreditation will slow down case work or that some requirements are nonsensical. As those involved with accreditation understand, better documentation may slow you down, but also provides proof of the thoroughness of your examination process. As to nonsensical requirements, sometimes an agency's implementation of accreditation principles is awkward and ill-informed.

The financial and personnel cost of not obtaining accreditation and following its principles, in terms of loss of public confidence, lawsuits against an agency for consequences of errors, and loss of careers, is far greater than the cost of following internationally accepted standards of quality assurance. Accreditation does not guarantee that every examination an agency performs will be error free, but it provides a framework to avoid errors and to correct them if they occur.

FQS-I continues to be committed to accreditation of all forensic science providers, and especially to the police science providers. The police science accreditation program will continue to promote the message to all those who provide forensic testing services of the need to demonstrate continuing managerial and technical competence to its clients.

## We Want You!

Are you interested in providing a workshop or presentation? Interested in becoming an assessor or being part of an audit team?

We have had a lot of questions like these and We Want You! Let us know your strengths and we will find a job for you. Please contact Vickie Holm at [vfh@forquality.org](mailto:vfh@forquality.org) for the assessor application package.





# FOS Workshops Go Global!

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## ◆ Barbados

FOS-I Quality Manager Bill Tilstone, PhD and FOS Lead Assessor Bruce Lodge, PhD just completed a “Understanding ISO 17025 and Laboratory Internal Auditing Training Workshop” in beautiful Barbados. The workshop was held at the Forensic Sciences Centre, Barbados on January 12-16, 2009. This was a customized workshop providing the laboratory staff with skills in basic internal auditing and post audit management and was developed to suit the individual needs of the laboratory.

“Understanding ISO 17025 and Laboratory Internal Auditing Training Workshop” was well received by those who have attended. Here are just a few comments completed by our attendees:

“Exceeded my expectations”

“Surpassed”

“Extremely willing to work with and be flexible”

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## ◆ India

On January 22, 2009 FOS President Sudhir Sinha, PhD presented a lecture at the State Forensic Science laboratory at Patna, India. The presentation was titled “Advances in DNA Technology and Quality Systems for DNA Laboratories” and outlined the recent advances in DNA technology. The main focus was establishing quality systems for DNA laboratories and also included casework examples such as Y-STR, Mito and Mini STR testing.

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## ◆ AAFS

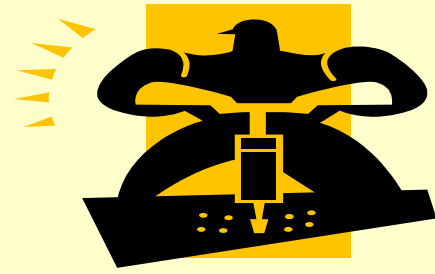
FOS President Sudhir Sinha, PhD provided a presentation at the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) meeting on February 17, 2009 in Denver, CO. The presentation was a component of the International Accreditation of Forensic Laboratories Workshop and was titled “Preparation and planning for ISO Accreditation: The FOS-I Perspective”. The presentation demonstrated FOS-I’s role in accreditation and programs. The attendees were provided with the information regarding the organizational set up of FOS and its accreditation programs. The talk by Dr. Sinha covered the importance on quality manuals especially the management section of ISO 17025 standards. The workshop was attended by a large number of international participants. The presentations at the workshop by other presenters contained an excellent outline of the understanding of the ISO 17025 accreditation process. Additional information was provided to the attendees on the importance of knowing and working with the standards to which a laboratory is being accredited and how to meet the ISO 17025 requirements.

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## ◆ Denver

An “ISO Without Tears” workshop was recently held at the Denver Police Department on February 23-25, 2009. The workshop was presented by FOS-I Manager of Accreditation Randy Robbins and FOS-I Technical Assessor Ronnie Freels. The class is for those starting the ISO 17025 process, and provided help to alleviate fears and anxiety that can accompany the accreditation process. Also presented was a review of forensic aspects of ISO 17025 and supplements. This was a customized workshop created as a tool to train staff in the principles of ISO 17025. This workshop is similar to our spring and fall workshops we offer at the Summit Executive Center, 13575 58th St. N., Clearwater, FL 33760. Our workshops can be tailor made to address an agency’s needs and can be conducted at your agency on request. Check out our calendar of events and don’t miss out on future workshops.

# Under Construction



FOS is in the process of updating our website and preparing new workshops to serve you better. The workshops were constructed from requests based on your specific needs:

**DNA Auditing Assessor Training:** This workshop is designed to train staff who wish to become technical assessors. The workshop will cover auditing techniques against the standards of accreditation for ISO 17025 and audit team requirements.

**Forensic Relationship Testing Workshop:** This statistics workshop will cover relationship/paternity testing, calculations, mixture interpretation, unusual case studies, Hardy Weinberg, Linkage equilibrium and MORE!

**Expert Witness Testimony Workshop:** This workshop is intended for forensic investigators who serve as expert witnesses and will provide tools to improve the quality and reliability of testimony as well as the jury perspective.

- ◆ These workshops are “under construction” so stay tuned for further information in up coming newsletters. We welcome your suggestions. Please let us know if there are particular areas you would like addressed in these workshops, our website, or if you have any additional comments.

## ACHIEVEMENTS!

Congratulations to the following agencies that achieved FOS-I ISO 17025 accreditation, reaccreditations, or expansion of scope of accreditation from Jan & Feb:

Rhode Island Dept of Health (reaccreditation)

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner Delaware (extension of scope)

Forensic Testing Laboratories (initial accreditation)

South Dakota State Laboratory (reaccreditation)

Denver Police Department (extension of scope)

Midwest Research Institute (initial accreditation)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

**March 16-20: “ISO 17025 and Audit Preparation Workshop”** (general), FOS Workshop, Clearwater, FL. **(Limited space is still available)**

**April 7 “ISO Without Tears Workshop”** Presented by FOS-I Lead Assessor Dorothy Gill at the Mid-America DNA Conference in Columbia, MO.

**November 9-13: “ISO 17025 and Audit Preparation Workshop** (general and advanced), FOS Workshop, Clearwater, FL. **(Sign up NOW)**



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***Forensic Quality Services-Consulting (FQS-C) provides a range of organizational assistance and training/education services to support Forensic Science delivery.***

***Forensic Quality Services-International (FQS-I) is the country's longest established provider of ISO 17025 accreditation to forensic testing agencies in the U.S. It is one of the accrediting bodies recognized by the NDIS Procedures Board.***

## **SUBMIT AN ARTICLE TO "THE FQS UPDATE"**

"The FQS Update" will be published bimonthly starting in January through November by Forensic Quality Services.

FQS welcomes submissions to this newsletter and will evaluate all such submissions with regard to their general interest to the readership. FQS reserves the right to edit submissions for length and editorial correctness. Please contact Pat for deadlines or submission requests at [pab@forquality.org](mailto:pab@forquality.org).

#### **Rates for ad space are as follows:**

One-eighth page: \$75/issue, \$300/yr (6 issues)

One-quarter page: \$100/issue, \$450/yr (6 issues)

One-half page: \$125/issue, \$600/yr (6 issues)