

# FORENSIC BIOLOGY EVIDENCE AND CASE MANAGEMENT MANUAL

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## Case Files

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND SCOPE

Each Forensic Biology case has an associated “case record” that consists of all examination and administrative documentation, whether electronic or hard copy, generated or received for the case. Case record information may be in more than one location. The term “case file” refers to a subset of the case record. It is a hard copy collection of selected examination and administrative records, usually maintained in a letter size tabbed folder (“the file”), which supports the results of analysis found in the case report(s). Each Forensic Biology case record may include more than one case file.

Case files facilitate technical and administrative review and the creation of certified copies to fulfill discovery requests. This is true whether the examinations and reports are generated outside of the Laboratory Information Management System (pre-LIMS) or by using the LIMS (post-LIMS).

This document describes the general process for how **case files** are compiled.

### PROCEDURE

#### A. General Guidelines

Cases/evidence in Forensic Biology can be classified as “pre-LIMS” and “post-LIMS”. The classification status of a case and/or its associated evidence will affect how and when case files are generated and used. In pre-LIMS work the case file is the primary location for records related to a particular case. For most evidence received post-LIMS, the LIMS is the primary location for records related to the particular evidence, and any associated case files fill a secondary role.

Because there are many possible scenarios, the following is provided as guidance:

1. Pre-LIMS cases/evidence “in progress” at the date of LIMS “go-live” will continue to be maintained in the hard copy case files that were created for the associated cases.

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2. When additional evidence for “in progress” pre-LIMS cases is received post-LIMS, the analyst should use the existing case file if space allows.
3. Case files for post-LIMS evidence/cases need not be created at Sign-In. It will usually be the reporting/interpreting analyst who will label a file folder with the FBio case number so that it may be used as the collection point for the hard copy records described in the “Administrative Records” and “Examination Records” discussions that follow. **To minimize the transfer of case files within the laboratory, it is strongly recommended that a separate case file be created for each case report that will be produced.** This will also keep case files from getting too large. For example:
  - a. When additional evidence for pre-LIMS cases with no open assignments is received post-LIMS, the analyst should create a new case file for the additional testing and case report.
  - b. When cases have assignments in multiple functional groups, e.g., missing persons and mitoDNA, a case file should be created for the missing person report and supporting documents and a case file will be created for the mito report and supporting documents.

## B. Case File Contents

1. The majority of the paperwork in the “post-LIMS” case files will be printouts of attachments and functional reports from the LIMS case record. For “pre-LIMS” testing the paperwork in case files consists of original handwritten examination notes and photocopies of documents such as batch worksheets.
2. Case files created by a contract laboratory will not contain much of the information listed below. The administrative paperwork, analytical paperwork, report format, etc. will differ from case files created by the Department of Forensic Biology.
3. Suspect files are arranged in the same format as evidence files.
4. Paperwork in case files must be maintained in a neat and organized manner. There should be no loose pages, Post-Its, etc.

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**Administrative records.** Administrative records are information not resulting from evidence examination, for example, vouchers and requests for lab testing. All administrative documentation **must** be identified for association to the case file with the appropriate case number. Multipage (stapled together) administrative documents should be marked with a case number on each page. The following are clipped to the left-hand side of each file, as applicable to the specific case:

- a. Communication Log Reports
- b. Scheduled analysis report
- c. Copies of NYPD paperwork: 61 form (NYPD complaint report), request for laboratory examination forms, ECT collection forms (if present), evidence vouchers (documentation of evidence collected), contracts with outside jurisdictions
- d. Miscellaneous correspondence, such as, **copies** of sexual assault kit paperwork or memos to and from outside laboratories.
- e. Autopsy case worksheet
- f. Chain of custody reports
- g. DNA extract tracking reports
- h. Forensic Biology laboratory case report, route sheet, and fax confirmation sheets
- i. CODIS paperwork

**Examination records.** Examination records contain information related to evidence testing. All pages of examination documentation must have the case number, dates the testing was done, the handwritten initials/name or electronic equivalent of the interpreting/reporting analyst for the case, and page numbers (double sided pages must contain page numbering on both sides of the page). The handwritten initials/name or electronic equivalent of the analyst performing a particular test must be present on the pages representing that analyst's work. For functional reports generated within the LIMS, the names of analysts, witnesses, and reviewing supervisors are considered electronic signatures, and are traceable within the LIMS system. The following are clipped to the right-hand side of each case file, as applicable to the specific test request:

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- a. Exemplar processing notes
- b. Examination notes and photos documenting the evidence examinations
- c. PSA testing and/or amylase notes
- d. DNA extraction notes
- e. Quantitation notes
- f. Amplification notes
- g. Electropherograms
- h. Pre-LIMS testing only: The case productivity worksheet, documenting the total number of examinations and tests for laboratory statistical purposes.

Page numbers are placed at the bottom margin of the pages on the examination documentation (right-hand side) of the case file, starting with the bottom page. Continue the page numbering if additional analyses are done after a report has been issued and/or if there is more than one file folder for a case. It is recommended to not start page numbering over with page one in the second case record.

**Supplemental Records.** Supplemental records contain summary information derived from testing recorded in the examination records. Supplemental records are used to aid case analysts in their interpretations and report writing. All pages of supplemental records must have the case number, the handwritten initials/name or electronic equivalent of the interpreting/reporting analyst for the case, and page numbers. The following are clipped to the right-hand side of each case file, as applicable to the specific test request:

- a. Results table (if applicable)
- b. PCR statistics worksheets
- c. CODIS match estimation worksheets

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