

## Houston Forensic Science Center

### INTEROFFICE MEMO

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**To:** Peter Stout, PhD, President and CEO

**From:** Lori Wilson, Quality Director

**Cc:** Amy Castillo, PhD, COO  
Jerry Pena, Director, Crime Scene/Digital and Multimedia Division

**Date:** September 6, 2017

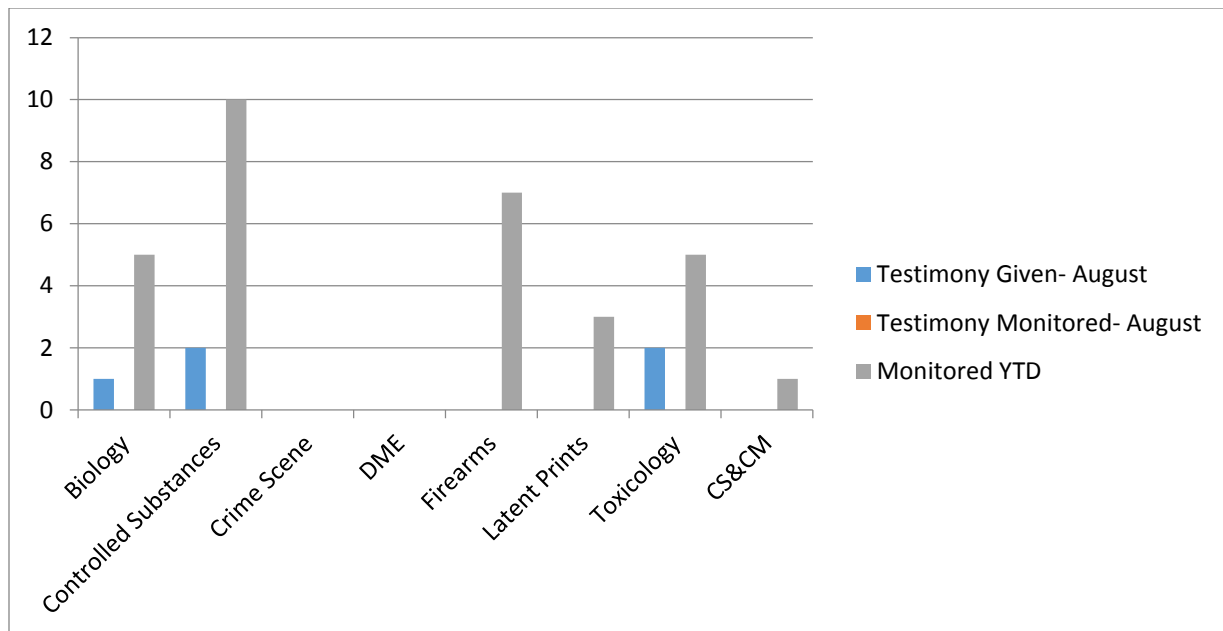
**Re:** Quality Division Update for August 2017

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The following is a Quality Division update for August 2017.

#### TESTIMONY MONITORING

Per a review of LIMS activity logs and Testimony Evaluation Forms submitted to the Quality Division, HFSC staff testified in five proceedings. The testimony of two staff members was monitored. However, both individuals were monitored earlier this year and were already included in the monitored year-to-date statistic.



#### PROFICIENCY TESTS

Proficiency activity is shown below.

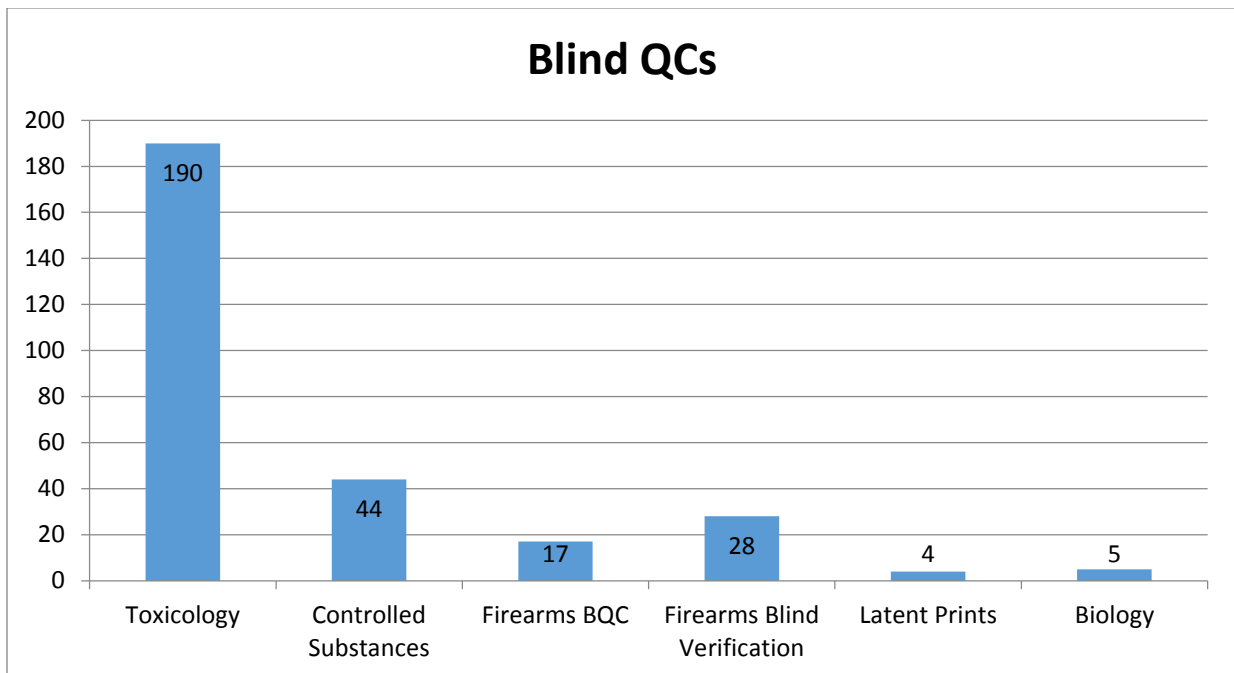
Test Identifier	Discipline	Number of Tests Assigned	Number of Participants	Date Assigned	Date Submitted to Provider	Issue?
17-5550	Digital: Mobile Device Examination	1	1	5/12/2017	5/18/2017	n/a
17-0201	Digital: Computer Examination	6	6	5/18/2017	7/10/2017	n/a
17-5190	Latent Print Processing	2	2	5/25/2017	7/13/2017	n/a
17-526	Firearms Examination	6	6	5/31/2017	7/20/2017	no
17-502	Controlled Substances (predistribution)	1	1	6/16/2017	7/13/2017	n/a
2017-1024-D	Forensic Multimedia: Video Analysis	5	5	6/23/2017	8/14/2017	n/a
PARF-B	Forensic Biology: Parentage	1	Varies	6/28/2017	8/10/2017	n/a
17-5704	Forensic Biology	9	Varies	7/19/2017	Due 9/15/2017 (extended due to weather)	n/a

17-5661	Toxicology: Blood Drug	1	1	7/19/2017	8/22/2017	n/a
2017-2005	Forensic Multimedia: Audio Analysis	3	3	8/1/2017	Due 9/14/2017	n/a
17-502	Controlled Substances: Drug Analysis	5	5	8/7/2017	Due 9/21/2017	n/a

### 2017 BLIND QUALITY CONTROL PROGRAM

August activity is shown below.

Discipline	Number of Cases Assigned	Number of Cases Completed	Results
Toxicology	8	6	Satisfactory
Firearms – Blind Verification	2	0	n/a
Firearms – Blind Quality Control	0	0	n/a
Controlled Substances	6	6	Satisfactory
Latent Print Processing	0	1	Satisfactory
Biology	1	0	n/a



This graph represents the number of BQC cases created since the beginning of the program (September 2015) through the end of August 2017.

See **Attachment 1** for additional BQC information.

#### INCIDENTS/CORRECTIVE/PREVENTIVE ACTIONS

Information regarding specific incidents and corrective actions reported during the month is included as **Attachment 2**.

#### COMPLAINTS

No complaints were received during the month.

#### DISCLOSURES

Latent Print corrective action 2017-055 (see Attachment 2 for more information) will be disclosed to the Texas Forensic Science Commission upon closure.

#### AUDITS and INSPECTIONS

On or before September 11, the Quality Division will submit the following requested desk audit information to ANAB:

- proficiency testing records
- internal audit reports
- yearly management review
- external audit reports
- organizational chart
- four-year proficiency testing plan
- significant organizational changes relevant to accreditation- **request to remove the category of Trace Evidence (Fire Debris Analysis) from our scope of accreditation**

The Quality Division conducted an internal audit of the Forensic Biology Section the week of August 14. The section was audited for compliance to HFSC policies, procedures, accreditation standards, and the FBI Quality Assurance Standards for DNA Testing Laboratories. A primary focus of this audit was observing the DNA and screening processes. The audit team inspected all evidence locations and all staff members' personal evidence custody locations. Eighty-eight case file reviews were completed. Other tasks included reviewing staff credentials, proficiency testing records, equipment and reagent records, and the Biology training program. The final written report was delayed due to Hurricane Harvey. Nonconformance details will be included in the September Quality Division report.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information.

# Attachment 1



# Blind Quality Testing Project Update - August 2017

## Quality Division Goals

Discipline	Target Cases Assigned
Controlled Substances	8/month
Toxicology	8/month
Biology	2/month
Firearms – Blind Verification	1/month
Firearms – Blind Quality Control	1/month
Latent Print Processing	1/month
Latent Print Comparison	1/month

## Challenges

- HFSC was closed 8/28 – 9/1 due to inclement weather. Therefore the Biology, Latent Print Processing, and Controlled Substances submission fell short of the target.
- The Firearms blind quality test is currently limited to the firearms marked for destruction by the HPD property room.

## Forensic Discipline

## Cases Assigned

Controlled Substances	6	
Toxicology	8	
Biology	1	
Firearms: Blind Verification	2	
Firearms: Blind Quality Test	0	
Latent Print Processing	0	
Latent Print Comparison	0	
On Target	Near Target	Target Not Met

## August 2017 Results

Forensic Discipline	Cases Completed
Controlled Substances	6
Toxicology – BAC	6
Biology	0
Firearms – Blind Verification	0
Firearms – Blind Quality Control	0
Latent Print Processing	1
Latent Print Comparison	0

**100%  
Satisfactory**

## Mitigation

- New latent print database system, MorphoTrac, is installed. Quality will work with the latent print section to design the BQC process in latent print comparisons.

## Achievements

- All quality cases completed successfully remained blind throughout the testing process.

# Attachment 2

# Quality Division Notifications

Incidents, Corrective and Preventive Actions

Wednesday, September 06, 2017

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Page 1 of 2

	Quality Notified	Summary of Notification	Comments
<b>Biology</b>			
<b>2017-056</b> IR	8/4/2017	The reagent blank was contaminated by a sample in the amplification process.	
<b>2017-057</b> CAR	8/3/2017	An ineligible DNA profile was entered into CODIS. This profile will be deleted from the database.	
<b>2017-058</b> IR	8/4/2017	A screening report stated that an evidence item was swabbed for contact DNA when contact DNA was not collected. The report was amended to correct this error.	
<b>2017-059</b> IR	8/7/2017	The reagent blank was contaminated with the DNA of a sample in the extraction batch.	
<b>2017-061</b> IR	8/10/2017	The temperature of Biology refrigerator #8 is monitored by the TempAlert system. The HFSC Quality Manual states that an acceptable temperature range for refrigerators is >0C-10C. Manufacturers' recommended temperature range for the reagents stored in this unit is 2-8C. The temperture rose above 8C on August 11.	
<b>2017-062</b> IR	8/10/2017	The reagent blank was contaminated. The source of the contamination has not been identified.	
<b>2017-063</b> IR	8/14/2017	The reagent blank was contaminated by a Biology technician who did not perform analysis on any of the associated samples.	
<b>2017-064</b> IR	8/14/2017	The reagent blank was contaminated by a DNA report writing analyst.	
<b>Firearms</b>			

HFSC's Quality Division investigates nonconforming work and helps develop solutions in compliance with accreditation and legal standards. With regard to the items listed above, the Division has not detected any use of inaccurate results in a criminal proceeding.



# Quality Division Notifications

Incidents, Corrective and Preventive Actions

Wednesday, September 06, 2017

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Page 2 of 2

	Quality Notified	Summary of Notification	Comments
2017-060 CAR	8/11/2017	Test fire evidence was left overnight in the Firearms laboratory. Although this is a secure location, the NIBIN technician should have placed the test fires into the Firearm's vault. The technician updated the LIMS chains of custody for the affected cases but the CoC comments were not consistent with what happened.	
Latent Prints			
2017-055 CAR	8/1/2017	A latent print examiner reported an exclusion when the proper conclusion was identification.	
Toxicology			
2017-065 IR	8/17/2017	The Toxicology benzodiazepine cutoff concentration was validated at 20ng/ml. However, the reporting statement listed the cutoff concentration at 50ng/ml. Reports have been issued with the incorrect concentration since October 2015.	

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