

National Conference of State Legislatures ~ Legislative Study and Oversight of Forensic Services ~

Several state legislatures have created commissions or work groups charged with either studying forensic science issues or providing oversight for some aspect of their administration. These groups, their duties and their work products have been compiled in the table below.

Some of the groups, like Arizona's Cold Case Task Force, California's Crime Laboratory Review Task Force and Minnesota's Genetic Information Work Group were created to study a particular issue and were dissolved upon the completion of a final report.

Other groups, such as the District of Columbia's Scientific Advisory Board and Virginia's Forensic Science Board are charged with ongoing oversight activities for forensic services and granted varied levels of rulemaking and advisory authority. The District of Columbia's Scientific Advisory Board is charged with evaluating scientific standards and protocols and reviewing incidents of misconduct in order to make recommendations that improve forensic programs. They also act as an advisor on forensic issues to the Mayor, Director of the Department of Forensic Science and the District's Council. Virginia's Forensic Science Board is similarly charged with developing operational standards for the state's Department of Forensic Science as well as with monitoring the implementation of forensic programs. Another oversight entity in New York, the Commission on Forensic Science, is required to develop and implement laboratory accreditation standards.

At least 4 states— Connecticut, New York, New Mexico and Oregon—have panels charged with addressing DNA issues. New York's DNA Subcommittee and New Mexico's DNA Oversight Committee are charged with developing regulations for the operation and administration of state DNA databanks. Connecticut's DNA Data Bank Oversight Panel is statutorily required to maintain the integrity of the state's databank, specifically ensuring the "destruction of inappropriately obtained samples" and the "purging" of all records related to those samples. Oregon's Advisory Committee on Genetic Privacy and Research is charged with studying the genetic privacy rights of those who have their DNA collected and must submit biannual reports to the legislature on their findings. Their study and reports are required to incorporate diverse opinions from the general public and they also must provide educational opportunities for the public on their findings.

State/Jurisdiction ¹	Statute	Board Name	Primary Purpose	Does the Group Issue Reports?
Arizona	Sen. Bill 1182 (2005)	Cold Case File Task Force	Compile and disseminate information on best practices for cold case investigations	Task Force report released Dec. 28, 2007
	Sen. Bill 1274 (2008), §§ 41-2405, 2404	Criminal Justice Commission		
	Established by Arizona Attorney General in response to 2007 DNA report	Forensic Science Advisory Committee	Measure and standardize forensic science practices and increase transparency in lab operations	
California	Penal Code §11062	Crime Laboratory Review Task Force		Released Nov. 9, 2009 , disbanded without filing supplemental report
Colorado	§24-33.5-104.5	DNA Working Group	To study and make recommendations for DNA evidence retention	January 12, 2010 Report October 1, 2010 Report December 1, 2010 Report
Connecticut	§54-102m	DNA Databank Oversight Panel	Ensure the integrity of the state DNA databank	
	§19a-112f	Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Advisory Committee -- Terminated June 30, 2013	To help implement the sexual assault forensic examiners program	
	Created by Governor Dannel Malloy	Crime Lab Working Group	Develop short- and long-term strategy to address DNA backlog	
District of Columbia	§§ 5-1501.12, 11	Science Advisory Board	Review the administration of forensic science services	
Illinois	Ch. 20, §3981/1	Laboratory Advisory Committee	To make policy recommendations	Make annual reports
Indiana	§4-23-6-1	Commission on Forensic Sciences	To promote scientific information and services	
Maine	§§3360-N, O	Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Advisory Board	Advise and assist in promoting and supporting statewide sexual assault forensic examiner programs	

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Maryland	Health Code Ann. §17-2A-12	Forensic Laboratory Advisory Committee		
Massachusetts	Ch. 6 § 184A	Forensic Sciences Advisory Board	Advise on administration and delivery of forensic services	
Minnesota	§299C.156	Forensic Laboratory Advisory Board	Develop and encourage forensic policy and best practices	Annual report by January 15. 2012 Report released January 15, 2013
	2007 Minn. Sess. Laws, Chap. 148, Art. 2, §74	Genetic Information Work Group	Develop principles for public policy on the use of genetic information	Released Jan. 15, 2009
Missouri	§650.059	Crime Laboratory Review Commission	To provide independent review of any state or local Missouri crime laboratory receiving state-administered funding	Annual report to Governor detailing its activities
Montana	No statute available	Forensic Science Laboratory Advisory Board	The board acts in an advisory capacity and providing feedback to the Attorney General and crime lab administration on the work the lab produces	
New Mexico	§ 29-16-5	DNA Oversight Committee	To develop rules and procedures regarding the administration and operation of the DNA identification system	
New York	Exec. Law §995-a	Commission on Forensic Science	Develop minimum accreditation standards	
	Exec. Law §§995-b(13)(a), (b)	DNA Subcommittee	Oversee all methodologies used in DNA analysis	
North Carolina	§§ 15A-1460-1463, 1466, 1471	Innocence Inquiry Commission	Conduct inquiries into claims of factual innocence, including subjecting physical evidence to forensic and DNA testing	
	§ 114-16.1	Forensic Science Advisory Board	Review state crime lab operations and make recommendations	

State/Jurisdiction ¹	Statute	Board Name	Primary Purpose	Does the Group Issue Reports?
Oregon	§192.549	Advisory Committee on Genetic Privacy and Research	To study the genetic privacy rights of those who have their DNA collected	Biennial reports to the legislature, last in 2013
Rhode Island	§§12-1.1-1 through 11	Crime Laboratory Commission	Examining the functions, operations and procedures of crime labs	Annual report
Texas	Criminal Procedure Code Ann. §38.01	Texas Forensic Science Commission	Develop standards of professionalism for forensic practice	Annual report
	Criminal Procedure Code Ann. §63.066	Advisory Committee on Backlog of Unidentified Human Remains	To prioritize missing persons funds and cases	
Virginia	§9.1-1109-10	Forensic Science Board	To review and develop standards in forensic science	Make recommendations by Nov. 1 of each year
	§§9.1-1111 through 1113	Scientific Advisory Committee	To review and recommend laboratory operations	
Washington	§§ 43.103.010 through 901	Forensic Investigations Council	To oversee the bureau of forensic laboratory services and control the operation and establish policies of the bureau of forensic laboratory services	

Note

1. States or jurisdictions that are not included have no such provisions.

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013.