

ORG: Peer Groups

Definition

A *peer group* is comprised of analysts working within the same discipline or category of testing. Refer to *01 Organization, ORG: Laboratory Organization* in the *Quality Manual* for additional information.

Peer groups will be established, as appropriate.

Function

Peer groups assist management, making recommendations that bolster the technical capabilities of the entire laboratory by

- establishing state-of-the-art methodology and fostering continuous improvement of analytical procedures for use in casework
 - establishing written guidelines for procedures, evidence handling, note keeping, and report writing
 - providing a forum to discuss and resolve problems relating to specific evidentiary categories
 - developing a sense of cooperation and commitment to quality among analysts within the same discipline or category of testing.
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ORG: Peer Groups, Continued

Responsibilities Peer groups are responsible for the following activities:

- review of the discipline's procedures manual
- development and review of new procedures and validation studies
- development and review of modified procedures
- resolution of technical issues within their discipline or category of testing.

In addition, peer groups may from time to time be called upon by the Quality Manager or laboratory management to provide recommendations in the following situations:

- criminalist case analysis problems
- proficiency and competency test inconsistencies
- quality audit findings.

Procedure requirements for corrective actions in these situations may be found in *10-Assuring Quality of Results* in the Quality Manual.

Chairperson Each peer group has a chairperson who may volunteer or be elected by the group. This position should change annually.

The chairperson is responsible for

- calling meetings
 - setting meeting agendas
 - chairing meeting proceedings
 - ensuring meeting minutes are kept and distributed.
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ORG: Peer Groups, Continued

Meetings

Peer groups should meet periodically. Discussions may identify quality issues before they become serious problems.

Announcements and agendas for each meeting should be prepared and distributed to each peer group member, the unit supervisors, the Quality Manager and the Director.

Management staff may attend peer group meetings.

Meeting minutes

A record of discussions, recommendations, and assignments must be kept for each meeting.

Copies of the minutes must be given to each peer group member the unit supervisor, the Quality Manager, and the Director in a timely manner.

Approval of recommendations

A peer group's recommendations for changes in procedures, evidence handling, or report writing and recommendations for resolution of proficiency test disputes, audit findings, and casework problems are subject to review and approval by the Quality Manager or laboratory management as appropriate for each situation.
