

ORG: Ethical Conduct of Laboratory Staff

Undue influence

4.1.5.b

4.1.5.d

By adhering to the ethical standards of the forensic science profession, the laboratory ensures that its staff is free from any undue internal and external commercial, financial and other pressures and influences that may adversely affect the quality of their work.

All personnel are encouraged to express all ethical concerns to their supervisor, Quality Manager, or the Laboratory Director.

The laboratory staff is committed to maintaining the ethical standards of the forensic science profession.

Conflict of interests

4.1.5.d

Conflict of interest is addressed in the District Attorney's Employee Policy Manual¹ which states that involvement in activity outside of the organization that "is determined to be detrimental to the accomplishment of the goal of the office, creates an appearance of impropriety, or compromises the integrity of the office, the employee shall desist from such activity upon being notified by the chief deputy or the assistant district attorney."

Commitment to ethical standards

The laboratory staff is committed to maintaining the ethical standards of the profession as described in the

- American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board, *Guiding Principles of Professional Responsibility for Crime Laboratories and Forensic Scientists*
 - American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors, *Guidelines for Forensic Laboratory Management Practices*
 - California Association of Criminalists, *The Code of Ethics of the California Association of Criminalists*
 - American Board of Criminalistics, *Rules of Professional Conduct*.
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¹ Office of the District Attorney, County of Sacramento, *Employee Policy Manual*, October 2, 1996, pp. 3-6

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ASCLD/LAB The ASCLD/LAB *Guiding Principles of Professional Responsibility for Crime Laboratories and Forensic Scientists* were written for forensic scientists and laboratory management to provide a framework for describing ethical and professional responsibilities in the forensic laboratory community.

“The Guiding Principles are designed to promote integrity among practitioners, and to increase public confidence in the quality of laboratory services, whether or not the laboratory is accredited by any accrediting body.”²

ASCLD The ASCLD *Guidelines for Forensic Laboratory Management Practices* express the guiding principles for the laboratory’s management staff. These guidelines require management staff to balance responsibilities to their employer, employees, the public, and the profession.

“We are the holders of a public trust because a portion of the vital affairs of other people has been placed into our hands by virtue of the role of our laboratories in the criminal justice system. The typical users of forensic laboratory services are not in a position to judge the quality of our work product or management for themselves. They must rely on the expertise of the individual professional practitioners and the standard of practice maintained by the profession as a whole.”³

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² *Guiding Principles of Professional Responsibility for Crime Laboratories and Forensic Scientists*, American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board

³ *Guidelines for Forensic Laboratory Management Practices*. American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors

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California Association of Criminalists

The *Code of Ethics of the California Association of Criminalists* expresses the guiding principles regarding the professional and technical conduct expected of all technical laboratory staff.

- It is to be noted, as stated in the preamble of the Code of Ethics, that “This Code is intended as a guide to the ethical conduct of individual workers in the field of criminalistics. It is not to be construed that these principles are immutable laws nor that they are all-inclusive. Instead, they represent general standards which each worker should strive to meet.”
- In circumstances in which employees are uncertain of the proper ethical conduct, they are expected to confer with their supervisors.

“It is the duty of any person practicing the profession of criminalistics to serve the interests of justice to the best of his ability at all times. In carrying out these functions, the criminalist will be guided by those practices and procedures which are generally recognized within the profession to be consistent with a high level of professional ethics. The motives, methods and actions of the criminalist shall at all times be above reproach, in good taste, and consistent with proper moral conduct.”⁴

American Board of Criminalists

Rules of Professional Conduct of the American Board of Criminalistics are rules that “describe conduct in the profession of forensic science (Criminalistics) and are meant to encompass not only work done by Applicants, Affiliates, Technical Specialists and Diplomates, but the extent possible, work supervised by them as well. They meet general acceptance by peers in that profession. They specify conduct that must be followed in order to apply for, receive, and maintain the certification status provided for by the American Board of Criminalistics.”⁵

⁴ Code of Ethics, California Association of Criminalists

⁵ *Rules of Professional Conduct*, American Board of Criminalistics