

## **Georgia Bureau of Investigation-Division of Forensic Sciences Celebrates Third Anniversary as the First Crime Lab to Implement OSAC Registry Standards**

In January of 2017, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation-Division of Forensic Sciences (GBI-DOFS) made the decision to adopt all standards placed on the Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science (OSAC) Registry. This decision was made in support of the efforts of OSAC to identify needs for research and development within the community and to further the standardization of forensic science laboratories by providing standards that have not only been through the rigors of being published by a standards development organization, but have also been determined to be beneficial by our own peers within the community and the Forensic Science Standards Board and in support of the GBI laboratory's mission statement to, "provide the highest quality forensic services for our customers, achieved through accurate and thorough analyses utilizing state of the art technology. This mission will be accomplished by innovative, highly skilled, unbiased professionals with vision and integrity."

Many individuals and laboratories have asked about the implementation plan for inclusion of OSAC Registry documents and the challenges faced. Honestly, when GBI-DOFS made the decision, in part due to the number of documents on the Registry at the time (three, only one (ISO/IEC 17025:2005) of which was relevant to the laboratory!), there was not a plan. The laboratory director at the time, George Herrin, Jr., initially proposed the idea of incorporation of Registry documents to the quality manager. After much discussion, changes to reflect the inclusion of documents placed on the Registry within the GBI-DOFS management system were made by placing the requirement directly after our Mission, Values and Vision statements within our Quality Manual where the lab director declared support of the management system:

I personally affirm this commitment and support the established comprehensive quality assurance system, which will allow our agency to meet all of the requirements of the ISO 17025 quality assurance standard and the requirements of ASCLD/LAB *International*. The laboratory will meet the requirements of standards and guidelines on the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) Registry where those documents are applicable to forensic analyses performed at the Division of Forensic Sciences. Standards or guidelines published by a recognized Standards Development Organization (e.g. ASTM) which are referenced within documents on the OSAC Registry but which themselves have not been added to the Registry will be adhered to with the following provision; the additional requirements of these referenced standards or guidelines must not place an undue operational burden on the Division and must improve the quality of work product or other Division activities.

There were numerous concerns raised by laboratory individuals, the most frequent concern centered around not being aware of what documents would eventually be placed on the Registry. To combat this concern, individuals are encouraged to be a part of the process through applying to be OSAC members for their respective disciplines, applying to become members of applicable consensus bodies for the American Standards Board (ASB), and, most importantly, to comment on documents through out the process when appropriate. By encouraging laboratory staff to participate in all aspects of the broader forensic science community and, more specifically, throughout the standard development/registry process, GBI-DOFS hopes to instill a sense of ownership of the documents and ease the distress when a

document is placed onto the Registry with parts that individuals, or even the laboratory, may not wholeheartedly agree with, as is the nature of standard implementation.

As time has progressed, the laboratory is refining the process for implementation. Current considerations include creating a matrix of all documents on the Registry to indicate where the lab is with compliance (compliant, in progress or not applicable to the activities of GBI-DOFS), obtaining non ASTM or ASB documents (e.g. ISO 17043-2) and formalizing the implementation program as the volume of standards being placed on the Registry increases.

To echo the sentiments of Peter Stout and others, accreditation to the applicable ISO/IEC standard is demonstrating minimum requirements and GBI-DOFS encourages other laboratories to implement, in whatever fashion is appropriate for their lab, the documents on the OSAC Registry as a means of continual improvement for the forensic science community.