

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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The Texas Department of Public Safety Crime Laboratory Service is committed to providing quality expert forensic services and it demands quality workmanship from all employees. The department employs an extensive quality assurance program to this end. One aspect of the quality assurance program is the use of a formal process to document when any aspect of its testing and/or calibration work, or the results of the work, do not conform to its own procedures (which is required by ISO/IEC 17025 Standard 4.9). The formal process adopted by the Crime Laboratory Service is commonly referred to as a Quality Action Plan (QAP). The QAP process documents the quality incident in detail, determines the root cause(s), and develops an action plan to prevent the incident from recurring. Historically, the Quality Action Plan has been included within the case file of the affected case(s) and provided during the discovery process. Recent discussion with our client base suggests a need to disclose quality action plans outside of the discovery process.

The Crime Laboratory Service is sending this letter to facilitate for the legal community, a better understanding of the goals of the Quality Action Plan. The QAP process is designed to encourage open participation and unbiased assessments of quality incidents for the purpose of transparency and process improvement. It is generally not related to an individual and is non-disciplinary. This process follows the National Commission on Forensic Science Directive Recommendation (Version 2015-0717; Root Cause Analysis in Forensic Science) which advises all responsible forensic science providers should embrace and implement a just culture of learning from error and continuous improvement.

The Quality Action Plan process and level of documentation have evolved since implementation in 2005. QAPs initiated in 2017 have markedly improved in root cause analysis compared to those initiated a decade prior. Prior to 2005, incidents were documented in the relevant case record.

The Crime Lab Service will continue to strive to improve its quality processes and stands behind its work product.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brady W. Mills".

Brady W. Mills
Deputy Assistant Director
Law Enforcement Support Division
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bwm:AEA