



2026 NEWSLETTER

Promoting Excellence Through Certification

President's Message

Greetings Everyone,

This year is really flying by, I'm sure you can agree. I have been on the ABC Board of Directors (BOD) since 2018 and in February of this year, the ABC Membership Directors voted me into the President role. In addition to this role, I am the Membership Director for the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD). I became certified in the General Knowledge Examination (GKE) in 2002 and have also been in the forensic science field for 30 years, with 26 of those years in Seized Drug Analysis. I have been fortunate to have worked for three agencies in my career: the Indiana State Police, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and currently the Virginia Department of Forensic Science.

Prior to my current ABC BOD role, I was an ABC At-Large Director, where one of my primary roles was the BOD Liaison to the Exam Committee (EC). I learned a lot and worked with an exceptional group of dedicated forensic professionals. I had a front row seat watching the EC develop the new Seized Drug Exam and navigate the move of all our certification examinations into the electronic testing format in January 2026, which is a huge step forward for the ABC. If you want to learn more about electronic testing, there is a short video on the website.

In 2025, the EC saw a change of command in the Question Database Manager position. We are grateful to Dave Stockwell for his 10 years of dedicated service to the EC and then 11 years as the Question Database Manager. Sara Roper, from USACIL-Army Criminal Investigation Division, has accepted the position as Dave's successor. We are excited to support Sara in this vital role. In true Dave Stockwell fashion, he continues to provide guidance on occasion to Sara and Gretchen Lajoie, our Registrar and Accreditation Manager.

Over the years, we have received a lot of feedback about the recertification process and the ways we can improve the product we

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David J. Koppenhaver, ABC-GKE
President

offer to our forensic science community. I think the recertification process is continually improving, and you may have noticed some of those improvements. However, should you have ideas for improvements and/or feedback, you can reach us on the website under Contact Us.

I also want to express a big thank you to everyone who volunteers for the ABC. We can't operate without your dedication and expertise; it truly takes all of us working together. Additionally, I would like to thank the BOD, Gretchen Lajoie, and Sara Roper.

I am looking forward to supporting the work of ABC, and if there is anything I can do to help, please email me.

Best regards,

David J. Koppenhaver, ABC-GKE

President

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We are pleased to introduce two new members to the Board of Directors. Join us in welcoming Jason Hodges and Stephen Murray! Read their messages below to learn about their professional backgrounds, involvement with ABC, and interests outside of forensic science.

Jason Hodges

ABC is pleased to welcome Jason Hodges to its Board of Directors. He is from West Virginia, where he worked as a DNA Analyst. He is currently the Quality Manager for the Pinellas County Forensic Lab in Largo, Florida. He has been certified by ABC as a fellow in Molecular Biology since 2014.

He joined the ABC Board to meet fellow professionals and promote an organization that he feels adds a lot of value to the field of Forensic Science. He loves to run and bike, go on cruises with his wife and kids, and homebrew beer.

Stephen Murray

ABC is pleased to welcome Stephen Murray to its Board of Directors. Steve hails from Atlanta, Georgia, where he currently works as a forensic biologist at the US Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory. He has been an ABC member since 2021, holding certifications in both Biological Evidence Screening and Forensic DNA, and is excited to contribute more directly to the organization's goal of promoting growth and high standards of professional practice in criminalistics.

When not in the laboratory, Steve can usually be found on a soccer field, playing keeper for teams in his rec league. He is an avid supporter of both Arsenal and Atlanta United, and is always happy to chat about soccer tactics or the latest updates in forensic biology.

STAY CONNECTED

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IMPORTANT NEWS *New Fee Structure and Due Dates*

Hello ABC Certificants,

ABC revised how we handle Professional Development Reports (Recertification Packets), which allowed us to update your points in the database much faster this past year.

Processing Recertification Packets is one of the largest projects that our organization undertakes each year. It requires significant effort from the Registrar's Office as well as many volunteers. While we have made great progress, we feel that there is still much room for improvement to make it a better process for our certificants and our personnel. Before outlining the updates to the process, it is important to note the following:

- Every year you are certified, you **MUST** submit your Annual Maintenance Fees **AND** your signed Rules of Professional Conduct. These are considered your Annual Requirements and are tied together — both must be submitted by the due date, or your certification will be in jeopardy and late fees may be applied.
- Professional Development Reports are **NOT** required to be submitted each year, but they **MUST** be submitted each year if you wish to claim points for the year prior. For example, in the spring of 2026, points were submitted for 2025 — you cannot compile points across multiple years into one packet. If you submit a report, the deadlines are the same as those applied to the Annual Requirements.
- Though the Annual Requirements and Professional Development Report follow the same timelines, they are *two distinct processes*.

With these things in mind, we have updated our timelines significantly. It is important that you carefully review the information below:

- Please note that we plan to have the Professional Development Report for 2026 points open in late fall of 2026.
- Please consider submitting your information before the due date to help us spread the workload — you should have 3-4 months available to submit your Professional Development Reports. To illustrate, some figures from this past cycle:
 - The form was opened in early December 2025.
 - We received and processed 850 packets this cycle.
 - In the first month the form was open, we received 49 forms.
 - In the last week of February, we received 240 forms (packets are due March 1st).
 - We received 50 packets between March 2nd and June 1st.

The New Timeline — Effective January 1, 2027

March 1 DUE	Annual Requirements (Fees and Rules) and Professional Development Reports are DUE.
March 2 PROBATION	- If Annual Requirements (Fees and Rules) have not been submitted, certification is placed on PROBATION. No late fee is assessed at this time for late Annual Requirements. - No Professional Development Reports will be processed while a certification is on probation. - Professional Development Reports submitted late are assessed a \$50 late fee, payable before the packet is processed.
April 2 SUSPENSION	- If Annual Requirements (Fees and Rules) have not been submitted, certification is SUSPENDED — you may not represent yourself as certified. A \$100 late fee is assessed. - Professional Development Reports submitted after April 1 are assessed a \$100 late fee, payable before the packet is processed. - Late fees are not additive — submitting all three components late still results in only one \$100 late fee.
June 2 REVOCATION	- If Annual Requirements (Fees, Rules, and any accrued late fees) have not been submitted, certification is REVOKED. - No Professional Development Reports are accepted after June 1. A late packet submitted without its late fee will not be processed.

As always, if you have any questions, please reach out to me.

Gretchen Lajoie, ABC Registrar
abcregistrar@criminalistics.com

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Meeting	Dates	Location
Midwestern Association of Forensic Scientists	August 23–28, 2026	Minneapolis, MN
Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Scientists (Joint)	October 5–9, 2026	Pocono Mountains, PA
Southwestern Association of Forensic Scientists	October 25–30, 2026	Grand Junction, CO
American Academy of Forensic Sciences	February 15–20, 2027	Orlando, FL
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors	April 11–15, 2027	Madison, WI

EXAMINATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Examination Committee (EC) has been fully staffed for over a year with an amazing group of dedicated professionals. We are a diverse group representing different regions, backgrounds, and agencies. I feel very lucky to be able to lead this group through both the challenges and successes of the committee.

One of the greatest successes of the committee has been utilizing the electronic examination administration software, WebXam. This software and new procedures in test administration have allowed the tests to be more accessible for candidates seeking certification. We are also proud of the reduction in paper usage and the ability to more quickly access feedback provided by test takers.

The feedback provided by test takers is carefully scrutinized by our committee, and it is utilized to improve the examinations. While the amount of time it takes for changes to take effect can be daunting, these comments are often the first sign that updates to an examination are needed. We want to thank test takers for taking the time to make these comments detailed and specific to items on our exams!

Tanna Brown | *Chair, Examination Committee*

FORENSIC SCIENCE WEEK SPECIAL

Apply During Forensic Science Week & Save \$75!

In celebration of Forensic Science Week, ABC will waive the \$75 application fee for eligible examination applications submitted during the promotional period.

September 20–26, 2026

- Applies to new examination applications only
- Current ABC certificants applying to sit for a new examination are eligible
- Limit one application fee waiver per person
- The completed application must be submitted during the promotional period
- Applications must be submitted by **September 26, 2026**



Visit the ABC application page for additional information or to apply:

criminalistics.com/application-process

APPEALS COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Appeals Committee of the ABC Board of Directors received nine appeals in 2026. There has been an uptick in appeals related to certificants' suspension. The suspensions are due to a failure to submit all necessary recertification paperwork by established deadlines. The Registrar's Office, the Board of Directors, and the Recertification Committee

are working to refine the recertification policy to minimize these types of appeals in the future. Please ensure that your contact email is up to date to receive and read ABC communications.

The goal of the Appeals Committee is to carefully review each certificant's appeal and make a determination as to whether the appeal shall be granted, based on the information provided, by applying the established policies and procedures of the American Board of Criminalistics, and consulting with the Board as needed.

Please file your appeal in a timely fashion so the Appeals Committee can evaluate all appeals efficiently. The Appeals Committee will continue to evaluate any new appeals in a judicious manner and note any significant issues that may be remedied by new recommendations to the Board.

Please see the website (criminalistics.com/appeals) for further instructions on filing an appeal, and do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Erin Tracy | *Chair, Appeals Committee*

QUESTION DATABASE MANAGER UPDATE

Greetings from your new Question Database Manager (QDM)! In case you didn't hear, former QDM Dave Stockwell decided he was ready to experience retired life to its fullest. He traded in his databases, spreadsheets, and meetings for more family, more gardening, and more enjoyment of everything retired life has to offer.

He handed the QDM baton to me at the end of 2025, and I officially transitioned into the role in January 2026. Before he drove off into the sunset, however, he spent about six months teaching me everything he possibly could about this position and the history of "how we got here." Let me tell you — it's a lot, and what he shared with me probably doesn't even scratch the surface of all his contributions to the organization's foundation and to the structure of this role today. To spend even just five minutes with him, one would quickly understand that this position wasn't just a job to him — it was a passion and a hobby. He kept a clean and orderly 'QDM house,' and I can't say I've ever walked into a new position that was as well organized as his was. I could easily spend another full year working side-by-side with him to improve my proficiency — unfortunately, that's not our reality, so thankfully he is always available when I ask for help. He is a great teacher and mentor and has patiently supported my transition into this role.

A little bit about me: my name is Sara Roper, and I bring over 24 years of Forensic Laboratory experience to this position. I'm a little different than Dave, in that he was a retiree fulfilling QDM duties at his leisure (his "hobby," as I called it), whereas I am full-time-employed-elsewhere and fitting this into my nights and weekends. My home field is Drug Chemistry, certified ABC-DAT, but for the last 10 years at my day job I have also served as LIMS Administrator, supporting the life cycle of laboratory work across multiple forensic science disciplines — from evidence entry to reporting and everything in between — as well as serving as a translator, if you will, between the Laboratory and IT teams. (Science-speak and IT-speak are like oil and water — a skillset Dave and I also shared.) I live in the greater Atlanta, Georgia area, and am a newly empty-nester with my kiddo studying at Kennesaw State University. My partner, Lucas, and I enjoy all things food, wine, coffee, travel, and hiking.

I've been working with our Registrar, Gretchen, for several years now in the Technical Advisor role supporting the ABC website and managing the MailChimp email platform. She keeps me grounded and pointing north. The Examination Committee, many of whom are also new to their roles, extended a warm welcome to me as I climbed aboard, and it's safe to say we are all learning together.

My short tenure here has been busy, but productive. Some successes to share include:

- Co-launched the next version of the Forensic DNA exam with the DNA Coordinators
- Finalized item amendments with the BIO Coordinators
- Completed the first round of 6-month reporting in each exam area
- Assisted the Exam Chair with improvements to the item amendments process and Coordinator folder structure
- Created an amplification document to accompany the ABC Examination Committee Training Manual, currently in development

Currently, I'm working with the BIO and DNA Coordinators on a special project to untangle the bank of test items shared between the two examination areas, which should bring additional efficiencies to the item amendment and selection process. I'm also compiling data for the DNA Coordinators to support the 5-year accreditation review cycle of the Forensic DNA examination.

I am looking forward to collaborating with everyone on even more successes and productivity throughout the year.

Sara Roper | *Question Database Manager*

ABC REGISTRAR / ACCREDITATION MANAGER UPDATE

The ABC and Registrar's Office continue to work to improve our services for our certificants. While we know that we cannot please everyone, we are continually reviewing our processes to seek improvements for our certificants and the organization. In late 2025 and early 2026, the following changes were implemented, in addition to the revised recertification process:

- We created a process where you can access your digital certificate in your profile when you log into the Member Page. Not all certificant profiles have been updated yet — if you have access to the digital certificate, you will see a Certificate Link directly below your name and other certification information. Over time, everyone will have a link as we update profiles for new certificates.
- We have transitioned to electronic testing for all examinations, except for the legacy Drug Analysis examination. *Note: we are no longer accepting applications for this examination.*
- With electronic testing, we are no longer offering examinations at regional or national meetings. If you wish to take an examination and do not see a convenient offering, consider hosting one at your organization — proctor requirements for electronic testing differ from paper testing. See our Host an Examination Offering page for more information.
- We completed and released the new Seized Drug Analysis examination.

Gretchen Lajoie | *ABC Registrar*

ABC — ABOUT US

What is the American Board of Criminalistics?

The American Board of Criminalistics is a personnel certification body committed to promoting excellence in forensic science through certification. ABC was incorporated in 1989 and currently certifies approximately 1,200 individuals.

ABC currently offers certification in Biological Evidence Screening, Forensic DNA, Foundational Knowledge, and Seized Drug Analysis. All certification programs are accredited by the ANSI National Accreditation Board under ISO/IEC 17024.

ABC Board of Directors

The ABC Board of Directors is composed of representatives from regional and national forensic organizations, along with At-Large Directors and a Public Member. Each Member Organization is entitled to appoint one Director to the ABC Board. Directors are available to answer questions about ABC, certification examinations, and related matters.

Officers of the Board of Directors

PRESIDENT

David J. Koppenhaver

SECRETARY

Erin Tracy

VICE PRESIDENT

Jennifer Remy

TREASURER

Catherine Savage

Directors for Member Organizations (9)

AAFS CRIMINALISTICS SECTION

Shawn West

ASCLD

Dave Koppenhaver

ASTM-E30

Jennifer Remy

CAC

Alice Hilker

MAFS

Danielle Hankinson

MAAFS

Catherine Savage

NEAFS

Heather Harris

SAFS

Erin Tracy

SWAFS

Angelica Noyola

At-Large Directors (3)

Rebecca Williams

Jason Hodges

Stephen Murray

Contractors

Registrar / Accreditation Manager — Gretchen Lajoie

Question Database Manager — Sara Roper

Committees

Examination Committee

Quality Assurance Committee

Credentials Committee

Recertification Committee

Appeals Committee

Ethics Committee

Communications and Marketing Committee