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Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders
STATE OF ARKANSAS

Theodore T. Brown, M.D.
DIRECTOR

Arkansas State Crime Lab Board Meeting Minutes

July 12, 2024

Board Members Present (GoToMeeting-Virtual):

- Danny Ormand
- Gregg Parrish
- Sheriff Rodney Wright
- Chief Richard Elliott (virtual)
- Chuck Graham (virtual)
- Brent Davis (virtual)
- Eric Rosenbaum

Others Present:

- Director, Dr. Ted Brown
- Deputy Director, Jennifer Beaty
- Deputy Director, Sammy Williams

Welcome/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Chuck Graham and Chief Elliott 2nd the motion. Roll call was taken, 7 members were present and a quorum was made.

I. ASCL Update

A. Financial Update-Jenna Castleberry from DPS

- We received about 1.3 million for FY25 in Medical Marijuana Money.
- There was a 10% increase in uniform filing fees which is more than projected for the year.
- DNA Special came in over 1 million for the year, which was about a 6% increase over what we originally projected for FY24.

- Forfeitures ended out the year at \$445,000.00 for the year with a 16% decrease from what we had originally estimated for the year. This fluctuates from year to year depending on how they are dispersed.
- New construction update, we have paid out 4.8 million as of today.

2. Section Chief's Reports

A. Evidence Receiving-Andrea Swift

- We are preparing for our quarterly lab wide inventory.
- In our Little Rock Secured Storage we have about 10,000 items. In Lowell, we have about 1700 items and in Hope, we have about 400 items.

B. Physical Evidence-Mandi Wertenberger

- Trace Evidence is still having challenges due to instrument issues. We have been working with the vendor to fix issues and validations.
- Our section is continuing to focus on TAT for Sexual Assault Kits, while maintaining rushes and merge 40 outsourced kits in with the weekly assignments. Our TAT is still 21 days for SA Processing.
- As of July 9th, we have 37 unassigned cases in SA Processing (kits), 92 unassigned SA (non-kit- and post kit testing). We have seen an increase in numbers for SA kits which not uncommon for the summer.
- Exciting news for us is we are working on getting a new instrument, the Crime-lite ML Pro 2. Our analyst went to a conference and had the opportunity to test drive one. It will help us immensely, so we are very excited about the possibility of this instrument.

C. DNA-Jennifer Beaty

- As of July 1st we have 94 SA Kits backlog with a 28 day TAT. With the combined TAT between Serology and DNA puts us at 49 days. This means our TAT is below the 60 days. This is exciting news for us. Our team has worked hard to reach this milestone.
- Our homicide backlog went from 116 with a 9-month TAT to 83 backlog with a 1 yr backlog. One of the reasons is older cases can make an impact on our TAT.
- We have gone from 511 backlog in property cases with a TAT of 1.5 years to 392 backlog cases with a TAT still at 1.5 years. We are working hard to continue to knock the numbers down.
- Big announcement for us is we have a second DNA Supervisor, Lindsey Heflin which means we will be hiring another DNA analyst to replace her open position.

D. CODIS-Miranda Crawford

- Our current staffing updates, 1 CODIS/DNA analyst, Samantha Heustis has completed all CODIS training.
- We have had over 6700 arresting offender's samples come in and had 318 hits, 462 sample backlog with a 10-day TAT.
- SAKI grant update, we have about 400 lawfully owed samples. We have started sending out kits to active or probation parole offices.
- Update on the Rapid DNA, our 2 instruments in house have been installed and training will begin soon.

- We received 1.3 million from the legislature and 400K from the AG's office.
- Our goal for first quarter of 2025, is to have FBI approval and to be operational in 1-2 "pilot" booking facilities. Saline County and Faulkner County is expected to join early deployment with instruments purchased funded under their own community grants.

E. Friction Ridge-Merianne Stinnett

- In Q2 2024, we had 427 cases pending and our goal was to work 350. We were able to complete 392 cases. Of those cases, 243 were for Friction Ridge, 149 were DNA Collection cases.
- ANAB External Assessment went very well.
- In Q3 2024, we had 312 cases pending and our goal was to work 350 and we were able to complete 35 as of July 9th.
- We were 2 yrs behind with our DNA Collections cases, but our tech has been working hard and has been able to get us up to date with those cases.

F. Drugs-Sammy Williams

- Drug section has 4 vacant spots. Two in Little Rock and 2 in Lowell. We have two in LR that are almost done with training and two new hires.
- One technician and one analyst that have left for another job and one analyst that has transferred to another section within the lab.
- In our Lowell lab, we've had one analyst leave for another job and one analyst moved. The two analyst that left for other jobs, were for higher paying jobs in the same kind of field. We are still having trouble with retention because of salaries here at the lab.
- In the Lowell lab, they are actually a year ahead of our projection. They have been able to help LR with their case work, which has been a tremendous help.
- Our goal is to be at a 30-day TAT by next year.
- We are currently working on a new method to better separate THC compounds. There are several new TCH compounds coming out and most of them are ways around the different laws. We are seeing a lot more cannabinoids come out and could be mixed with other products. So we need to work on our methods to make sure that we separate those better.
- We have an analyst, Virginia Rankin in our Lowell lab that has created a new method and they're working on getting it out to all the instruments.
- Lowell has been working out different techniques for testing Clandestine lab. Our goal is to start the validation process in the next couple of months.
- Little Rock is creating a poster board to use in court to explain the manufacturing process, which helps the jurors.
- Drugs has been trying to transition to a digital tracking system for our controlled substance reference material inventory.
- We have purchased cameras and other technology so we can add that data to the case file so it can be reviewed and shown in court.
- Gregg Parrish asked for clarification on our TAT. Little Rock is at a 5-month TAT and Lowell is at a 2-month TAT.

G. Toxicology-Kristen Mauldin

- We have had trouble with staff retention as well. Our goal is to revise our training program, revamp our hiring process with the help from our Admin/HR from DPS.
- We are still outsourcing our M.E. cases to NMS since February which has been a big help.
- Currently we are working on validating our Q-Tof and THC validations.
- The THC compounds are difficult, so we are working on trying to get that up to date with our methods.
- We are collaborating with the Health Department on a Surveillance project to look at impaired drivers. ASCL receives blood samples >0.08 g% DUI's and deidentifies samples for Arkansas Department of Health. ADH performs drug testing since ASCL does not on >0.08 g% DUI cases.
- We sent 20 samples and 11 were positive for drugs. Out of 11 samples, 4 tested positive for meth. Meth is a big problem in our state.
- As of July, we had 642 requests pending and our average TAT is 61 days.

H. Firearms-Rebecca Mullin

- We currently have two trainees; one is for a Firearm Examiner, and one is for our technician. Our technician's training is much shorter and should be complete by August. This will help with our Operation Shutdown backlog.
- Our numbers have increased except for Homicides, which is where our focus is right now. We've seen some reduction in backlog and our TAT is about 1 yr.
- In looking back and comparing 2023 to 2024, we have been consistent with homicides, FA Comparison and Operation Shutdown Cartridge Casings. We have seen an increase in Operation Shutdown cases.
- With a new technician, she can start to tackle those cases and reduce our backlog.

I. Digital Evidence-Adam Wilson

- We've upgraded to Magnet Axion 8 system.
- Ashley Henderson is now fully trained and able to work on computer cases. This has been a long process because with only 2 analyst working cases it was challenging to train as well. This will help tremendously having another analyst able to work those cases.
- We have a new analyst starting, Chris Acebedo. We are working on getting him cleared to work mobile device cases.
- Currently we have 133 unassigned cases which is a decrease of about 25 since January.
- We have 101 mobile device cases, 27 computer devices (usually larger number of items), 5 Digital Evidence submissions (most are computers) and 1 video submission.

J. Medical Examiner-Dr. Ted Brown

- In our last Board Meeting, we discussed having a record number of autopsies last year. We're currently on track to have another record year and this is the first 6 months.
- We have already had 945 autopsies, and with the weather getting hotter and bodies are decomposing. Merianne is having a direct impact on this because we are sending more latent prints to them for identification. I fully anticipate this being another record year for

us. We've had two new Field Investigators, two new Autopsy Techs and we have made an offer for a Forensic Pathologist to join us, tentative start date is September 2nd.

- We are pleased to share that we were successful in matching our very first Forensic Pathology Fellow, Dr. Lance Trong and he will join us starting July 2025.
- Dr. Trong just completed his residency in pathology at Brown University. He is currently at Harvard University doing a Pediatric Pathology Fellowship.
- Currently we have a Neuropathologist and adding a Pediatric Pathology to our team is exciting.
- We are experiencing a critical shortage of forensic pathologists throughout the country. I am working with the American Board of Pathology CEO and President to revamp how we train future forensic pathologists, and I am pleased to share that I'll be presenting to the Board of Trustees next month to see if there's an opportunity to recreate how we recruit and attract future pathologists.

3. New Business

- Dr. Brown shared that every month, we ask for our team to nominate a crime lab champion. Since November, we have had 9. With this honor, each person has VIP parking for a month but more importantly, they are recognized for their dedication and going above and beyond.
- We had a successful visit with Governor Sanders and her team. She expressed her full support of what we are doing here.
- Big thank you to everyone in this room for your support, and our team.
- We recognized Mary Lynn from Toxicology, she has been instrumental in our relationship with Tom Fisher, Arkansas Drug Director and Robert McGough, Arkansas Chief Data Officer.
- We are working on developing a new drug overdose dashboard that will include all 75 counties. We anticipate this to go live by the end of this year.
- Jennifer and Sammy expanded on the Supreme Court ruling on Smith vs Arizona.
- Chuck volunteered to reach out to prosecutors asking why they require retesting. Gregg expanded on this-the burden is not only on Crime Lab but also for the Crime Lab.
- Dr. Brown expanded on the plans for the new crime lab and Chuck asked how long it will take to build. We anticipate the building to be complete and operational by July 2027.

Chuck made the motion to adjourn, and Gregg seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 9:56