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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 25, 2025

Board Members Present (GoToMeeting-Virtual):

- Gregg Parrish
- Chuck Graham
- Rodney Wright (virtual)
- Eric Rosenbaum (virtual)
- Brent Davis (virtual)
- Danny Ormand (virtual)
- Rick Ellittott (virtual)

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. Roll call was taken, seven members were present, and a quorum was met. The motion was made to approve April's minutes, all approved and none opposed. The minutes were approved as written.

ASCL Update

Financial Update

Karen Perry, Chief Fiscal Officer at DPS

- Karen gave a financial update for the quarter and fiscal year.

I. Section Chief's Reports

Evidence Receiving-Sammy Williams

- An update on changes in staffing for Lowell was given.

Physical Evidence-Mandi Wertenberger

- Mandi gave an update on her section's staffing and where they are in their training.
- An update was given on casework and TAT's. In April-June P.E. had 22 Rush's. Mandi was happy to share that her team was able to meet/exceed team goals for six consecutive months.
- P.E. has received a new state-of-the-art instrument, the Crime-Life ML PRO 2 that provides advanced alternate light source technology. We are currently working on validations.
- DNA-Lindsey Penner
 - Lindsey expanded on the current backlog for sexual assault kits. We have had agencies in the Northwest Region submit kits that do not have an agency involved.
 - In June there were 80 new SAK requests, this was the highest monthly total this year. Our TAT for SA kits is 32 days, which allows DNA to focus on homicides
 - DNA received 26 new homicide requests in April, along with an increase in body ID's.
 - Lindsey updated the stats and TAT for Property Crime cases.
 - An update was given on the FaSTR Software Installation/Training and the completion of the EZ-2 (Extraction) Validation.

CODIS-Jennifer Beaty

- Jennifer gave an update on submissions and TAT as of July 1st.
- Staffing updates were given, with the announcement that Chris Langan was promoted to I SAKI Coordinator/Database Coordinator.
- Updates were given on the SAKI grant
- Brown asked Sheriff Wright for an update on their Rapid DNA in booking for Saline County and Sheriff Wright responded saying they are waiting on approvals from the FBI and us.

Friction Ridge-Merianne Stinnett

- Merianne gave an update on cases and TAT's.
- Dr. Brown elaborated on the influx of body ID's due to hot weather. This has increased our workload significantly.

Drugs-Lauren McDonald

- Lauren gave an update on staffing for Little Rock and Lowell labs. With the new pay plan in place, we have seen an increase in interest from candidates wanting to work with the Crime Lab.
- Lauren expanded on the status of cases and their TAT's for Little Rock and Lowell.

- With new analysts on staff, we have had to pull other analysts away from cases to help with training. This effects our backlog and TAT. We are implementing Lean Six Sigma to help with efficiency.
- Future quality changes-we had interns work on a few projects for quality improvements.
- We have 2 new instrument verifications waiting on Admin approval.

Toxicology-Amanda Jaliha

- Amanda gave an update on current staffing.
- Tox receives 280 cases a week on average with a current backlog of 1212 cases. Last meeting in January, Tox's backlog was 1331, and the team has been working hard to decrease those numbers.
- Our plans for improvement are to fill our open analyst positions. With the pay increase, this opens doors and gives us the better opportunity for recruiting.
- Amanda shared they are working on validations for the Q-ToF. The Q-ToF is going to help replace our current preliminary testing method. It will provide a broader and more untargeted method so we can better see emerging drugs. The validation can take up to 18 months in-house so we are working on outsourcing to a 3rd party and hopefully this will be funded through Grant Funding.

Firearms-Rebecca LoBalbo

- Rebecca shared they have had a few changes in staffing. By September, we will have 2 analysts and 1 technician trained and working independently.
- An update was given on the number of cases submitted the 1st 6 months of this year. And with everyone trained, we should see a reduction in our backlog.

Digital Evidence-Adam Wilson

- Currently D.E. has 68 cases to be assigned. Team goals have been met for the last several months.
- Adam gave details of their case load and statistics.
- Adam shared that Chris has completed his training and is now working on mobile devices. Ashley is currently working on her IACIS Certification.
- We are currently updating our Quality Manual and other controlled documents to meet current requirements.

Medical Examiners-Dr. Brown

- For the first half of the year, we have already completed 900 postmortem examinations. We are looking at a record year this year.
- We have received three inquiries from physicians that are interested in our lab and Dr. Brown shared that he is in early communication with them.
- Dr Lance Truong started in July as our new Forensic Pathology Fellow. He will go to death scenes throughout the year.

- We will have Dr. Katrina Taylor starting in 2026. She is currently finishing her pathology residency at East Tennessee State University.
- We have already received an application for the 2027/2028 open fellowship position.
- We are establishing ourselves as a great leader within the Medical Examiner section.

New Business-Dr. Brown and Sammy Williams, Deputy Director

- Dr. Brown started off by sharing that with the help of Chuck Graham and DPS, we have been able to work with prosecutors and judges in finding ways to keep our analysts safe. Sometimes they drive to court early in the mornings or leave late in the evenings from counties that are sometimes 3 hrs away. The judges are working with the lab in having criminal cases in the mornings and inmate arraignments in the afternoon.
- We're currently working with our in-house IT team to look at our LIMS system (our laboratory information management system) to see what is best for us.
- With the help of our Toxicology Team, we are about to go live with our drug overdose dashboard. This will allow us to provide information to our stakeholders quickly to inform them what drugs are in what counties in Arkansas.
- Lastly, Dr. Brown shared that he will be joining Col. Hager and other DPS leaders throughout the state along with stakeholders to ensure that everyone is on the same page in case of a mass disaster.
- Sammy Williams expanded on the New Pay Plan that took effect on July 1st.
- This is fantastic news for us in recruiting new team members and in retaining current employees.
- On the downside, the FY26 and FY27 budget was not increased. As of now, all salary increases have been incorporated into our current budget. We have several positions that we cannot fill because we are not able to fit them into the budget.
- Another area of concern is we received money from the Attorney General's office for decedent transport and for outsourcing our Tox overdose cases for the medical examiners office. Those funds have been used at this point, so we are working on creative ways to continue providing same service but without the funds. The outsourcing of those tox cases has allowed us to work on decreasing the backlog of what they currently have and working on developing new testing.
- Sammy gave an update on the new Crime Lab building and its progress. He showed slides from the groundbreaking ceremony and the new progress. The architects and construction team confirmed that they are still on schedule to be completed by July 2027.
- Brown ended the meeting by Thanking the Board Members for their support for this new Lab and their encouragement.

Chuck Graham asked for motion to adjourn, Rick Elliott made the motion, and Gregg Parrish seconded the motion and all were in favor.