

# Teaching Ethics

A case approach

“How best to provide ethics training  
to forensic scientists and what the  
essential components should be”

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# Ethics in the context of professional practice

- Professional practice guidelines
- Standards of practice
- Professional standards

# Concepts of moral behavior

- Truthfulness
- Fairness
- Collegiality

# Requirements of the “scientific method”

- Hypothesis testing
- Peer review
- Replication

# Legal requirements

- Due Process
- Confrontation
- Advocacy
- Codes/Cases/Rules

# Codes of ethics (Professional Practice Standards)

- Written
- Agreed to
- Relevant to professional practice

# Sources of ethics/professional practice guidelines

- Scientific tradition
- Ethics codes
  - CAC (and other regional organizations)
  - ABC
  - AAFS
- Good forensic practice guidelines

# Legal Requirements

- Federal Procedural Rules
- State Discovery Laws
- Cases (*Brady, Daubert*)
- Constitution (Confrontation)

# Other sources of practice guidelines

- Various SWGs
- ASTM Committee E30
- Employer rules

# Education

- General education requirements
- Science education
- Forensic science education
- FEPAC standards

# Case examples



# Answering the right questions

- Toolmark case



# Full disclosure

“Where test results are inconclusive or indefinite, any conclusions drawn shall be fully explained.” (CAC)

--or--

Written reports must be generated. . . and must contain the conclusions and opinions. . .” (ASCLD/LAB)

# Victim of rules and regulations

Tests are designed to disclose true facts and all interpretations shall be consistent with that purpose and not be knowingly distorted. (CAC)

--or--

Every member of the AAFS shall refrain from providing any material misrepresentation of data upon which an expert opinion or conclusion is based. (AAFS)

# Intentional actions

“Ensure that a full and complete disclosure of the findings is made to the submitting agency.” (ABC)

--or--

“Laboratory managers shall establish operational procedures in order to meet constitutional and statutory requirements.” (ASCLD)

# Professional responsibility

**“Ensure that all exhibits in a case receive appropriate technical analysis.” (ABC)**

**--or--**

**“...the [criminalist] will use all of the scientific means at his command to ascertain all of the significant physical facts...”**

# Reporting requirements

"Findings of facts and conclusions and opinions should then be reported. . . to the end that all may fully understand and be able to place the findings in their proper relationship to the problem at issue." (CAC Preamble)

--or--

"Ensure that a full and complete disclosure of the findings is made to the submitting agency" (ABC)

# Further information

Barnett, Peter D., *Ethics in Forensic Science – Professional Standards for the Practice of Criminalistics*, Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2001.

- Various Codes of Ethics
- Case Examples