



TEXAS FORENSIC SCIENCE COMMISSION

*1700 North Congress Ave., Suite 445
Austin, Texas 78701*

TEXAS FORENSIC SCIENCE COMMISSION QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

The Texas Forensic Science Commission (Commission) met in person and by videoconference on April 24, 2026, at the Barbara Jordan State Office Building at 1601 Congress Avenue, Room 2.034, Austin, Texas 78701.

Members Present: Jeffrey Barnard, MD, Presiding Officer
Michael Coble, PhD
Mark Daniel, JD
Patrick Buzzini, PhD
Stacey Mitchell, DNP
Jasmine Drake, PhD
Sarah Kerrigan, PhD
Erika Ziemak, MS
Jarvis Parsons, JD

The following members attended the meeting via Zoom video conference: Dr. Patrick Buzzini, Dr. Jasmine Drake, Mr. Jarvis Parsons

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Lynn Garcia, General Counsel
Chelsea Estes, Commission Coordinator
Leigh Tomlin, Associate General Counsel
Robert Smith, Senior Staff Attorney
Jarrah Kennedy, Scientific Program Coordinator
Veena Mohan, Assistant General Counsel
Steve Miller, Multimedia Producer

During this meeting, the Commission considered and acted on the following items. The Commission took breaks as necessary.

1. Call meeting to order. Roll call for members. Excuse any absent board members.

Barnard called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Commissioners were present as indicated above.

2. Review and adopt minutes from the January 30, 2026, quarterly commission meeting.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to approve the January 30, 2026, minutes draft. Ziemak seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

3. **Office administrative update (including, but not limited to, the following administrative items for update and discussion: FY2026 budget status report; implementation of ALiS licensing platform; and office construction). (General Counsel Garcia/Associate General Counsel Tomlin)**

Staff provided a projected budget for FY2026. Staff expects to move into its newly remodeled office space this August 2026 in the William B. Travis state office building.

Staff reported fully migrating licensee and other data into ALiS, the new licensing application system. Staff is working with the developers to finalize some minor edits to the system.

4. **Discuss and consider complaints and laboratory self-disclosures pending from the January 30, 2026, quarterly commission meeting and new complaints and laboratory self-disclosures received through April 3, 2026, as detailed below. (Commissioner Daniel)**

Self-Disclosures Received through April 3, 2026:

1. **No. 25.51; Center for Human Identification (Forensic Biology/DNA)**

A self-disclosure by the Center for Human Identification reporting an incident where, during transfer of evidence from a storage locker following examination, an analyst observed two stains on the outer packaging (brown paper bag) that contained a bralette for a case (number 25-0391.2).

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis and corrective actions by the laboratory. Ziemak seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

RECUSALS: Coble, Ziemak

2. **No. 26.07; Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences (Seized Drugs)**

A self-disclosure by the Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences reporting that a licensed seized drugs analyst falsified her credentials by claiming on her curriculum vitae that she held a master's degree she had not completed.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to accept the self-disclosure for staff investigation under 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 651.307(d) to determine whether the analyst's admitted misrepresentation of her degree warrants disciplinary action by the Commission. Coble seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

RECUSAL: Barnard

3. **No. 26.08; Serological Research Institute (Forensic Biology/DNA)**

A self-disclosure by Serological Research Institute reporting that an internal assessment revealed the laboratory lacked a documented procedure for diluting or concentrating samples for amplification.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis and corrective actions by the laboratory. Ziemak seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

4. No. 26.14; Bode Technology, Inc. (Forensic Biology/DNA)

A self-disclosure by Bode Technology, Inc. reporting the laboratory's response to concerns raised by legal stakeholders regarding a Bode analyst's trial testimony. Specific concerns related to 1) the assignment of the number of contributors (NOC) in a complex DNA mixture involving related individuals; and 2) the analyst's explanation of the likelihood ratio (LR).

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to table the disclosure pending laboratory response to follow-up questions posed by Commission staff. Parsons seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

5. No. 26.15; Department of Public Safety Austin (Seized Drugs)

A self-disclosure by the Department of Public Safety – Austin reporting an incident in its seized drugs section in which the laboratory incorrectly replaced the chromatographic column on GCMS #12 with a 20 m × 0.18 mm × 0.18 µm column and subsequently used it for the sampling limit method. The laboratory's validated method requires a 30 m × 0.25 mm × 0.25 µm chromatographic column, which was the column used during method validation.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis, case review, and corrective actions by the laboratory. Mitchell seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

6. No. 26.18; Department of Public Safety Waco (Forensic Biology/DNA)

An updated self-disclosure by the Department of Public Safety – Waco regarding an incident initially reported to the Commission in the summer of 2022, where a DNA analyst claimed time that she had not worked, including overtime hours. There was a DPS OIG investigation of the incident, but the analyst resigned before the investigation was complete. In March 2026, a former co-worker of the analyst raised concerns to Commission staff that the analyst may not have been forthcoming regarding the OIG's investigative findings with her current employer (SWIFS). In March 2026, DPS provided the Commission with a copy of the final OIG report and supporting documentation.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to accept the self-disclosure for staff investigation under 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 651.307(d) to review the supporting material for the initial conduct finding regarding erroneous timekeeping as described in the OIG's report; to assess whether the analyst withheld information from subsequent employer(s); and to determine whether*

the failure to disclose warrants disciplinary action by the Commission. Parsons seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.

RECUSAL: Barnard

7. No. 25.76; Center for Human Identification (Evidence; Forensic Biology/DNA)

A self-disclosure by the Center for Human Identification reporting an incident where the laboratory mistakenly returned (via FedEx) two evidentiary items from a police department to the sheriff's office in the same county.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis, case review, and corrective actions by the laboratory. Mitchell seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

RECUSALS: Coble, Ziemak

8. No. 26.16; Department of Public Safety Garland (Evidence; Seized Drugs)

A self-disclosure by the Department of Public Safety – Garland reporting an incident in its seized drugs section in which the laboratory destroyed two items of evidence submitted for analysis for the same offense while the case was still pending adjudication.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to take no further action based on the root cause analysis and corrective actions by the laboratory. Parsons seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

Complaints Pending from January 30, 2026:

9. No. 25.29; Sween, Gretchen (Houston Forensic Science Center; Ron Smith and Associates; Forensic Biology/DNA, Friction Ridge)

A complaint filed by attorney Gretchen Sween on behalf of Lucky Ward, alleging multiple issues with the latent print analysis conducted by Ron Smith and Associates and the Houston Forensic Science Center (HFSC). The complaint further alleges significant problems with forensic DNA testing spanning over 10 years.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to dismiss the complaint because the allegations of professional negligence or misconduct in friction ridge or DNA are not supported by the case records. Parsons seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

RECUSAL: Ziemak

10. No. 25.74; Smith, Antoine (Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences; Forensic Biology/DNA)

A complaint by defendant Antoine Smith alleging a crime scene detective's testimony that he swabbed the trigger and trigger guard of a recovered weapon was incorrect and seeking an affidavit regarding potential transfer issues and how the likelihood ratio may be overstated.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to dismiss the complaint because the record does not support professional negligence or misconduct allegations in the analytical work or related testimony and the request for affidavit is outside the Commission's jurisdiction. Ziemak seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

RECUSAL: Barnard

11. No. 26.01; Narrative Project (Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences; Forensic Biology/DNA)

A complaint filed by the Narrative Project on behalf of Luis Luna alleging the presence of unidentified male DNA on the body of a murder victim and requesting a review to determine whether all forensic procedures and reporting obligations were followed or any deviations from protocols occurred.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to dismiss the complaint for failure to allege professional negligence or misconduct related to the forensic analysis of physical evidence. The records indicate evidence in the case was tested and results reported according to established protocols. Ziemak seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

Complaints Received through April 3, 2026

12. No. 26.02; Paul, Melvin (Houston Forensic Science Center; Forensic Biology/DNA)

A complaint filed by defendant Melvin Paul alleging several areas of non-compliance with current DNA mixture interpretation protocols.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to refer the case to the DNA Mixture Review Team. Buzzini seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

13. No. 26.03; Floyd, James (Fort Worth Police Department Crime Laboratory; Forensic Biology/DNA)

A complaint filed by defendant James Floyd requesting a review of the data regarding a swab from the back left pocket of a pair of jeans to determine if the interpretation was correct and whether the DNA profile of certain other individuals was compared to the evidentiary sample.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to dismiss the complaint based on the review of the laboratory report, documentation, and testimony transcript. Ziemak seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

14. No. 26.06; Narrative Project (Montgomery County Sheriff's Office; Crime Scene Reconstruction)

A complaint filed by the Narrative Project on behalf of Antonio Armstrong, Jr., alleging trial testimony regarding a home alarm system timeline and gunshot reconstruction analysis was not properly validated.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to dismiss the complaint because the Commission has no jurisdiction over a private alarm system, the testimony regarding shooting reconstruction was primarily provided by the medical examiner, and the brief testimony provided by a licensed crime scene reconstruction expert was supported by the record. Drake seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

15. No. 26.11; Narrative Project (Houston Forensic Science Center; Montgomery County Sheriff's Office; Forensic Biology/DNA)

A complaint filed by the Narrative Project on behalf of Antonio Armstrong Jr. alleging undisclosed prior "misconduct" by a crime scene reconstruction expert and undisclosed work quality issues with a DNA analyst involved in the case.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to dismiss the complaint because the alleged lack of disclosure of the prior misconduct allegations related to the crime scene reconstruction expert are outside the Commission's jurisdiction, the referenced DNA analyst was terminated after the defendant's trial and notice regarding the termination was provided by the laboratory. Drake seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

16. No. 26.12; Innocence Project (Nurse Lori Long, Dr. Ruda, Dr. Phatak; Bitemark Evidence, Autopsy)

A complaint filed by the National Innocence Project alleging bitemark evidence contributed to a defendant's conviction.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to table the complaint pending review of the transcript. Mitchell seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

17. No. 26.13; Massey, Colleen (Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences; Crime Scene Investigation, Autopsy)

A complaint filed by Colleen Massey regarding the medical examiner findings in her son's death and alleging the crime scene evidence was not properly handled by the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to dismiss the complaint because the Commission has no jurisdiction over the findings of the medical examiner, and because the person alleged to have mishandled crime scene evidence is a member of the medical examiner's investigation unit and is not responsible for crime scene evidence. Drake seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

Staff Dismissals

18. No. 26.04; Novroski, Nicole (Center for Human Identification; Forensic Biology/DNA)

A complaint filed by the Associate Director of the Center for Human Identification against the Director of the Center for Human Identification and the Director of Special Projects at the Center for Human Identification alleging mismanagement of a federal research grant and the improper retention of excessive overhead by the University of North Texas Health Science Center, among other claims.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to approve the dismissal of the complaint because the Commission does not have jurisdiction over allegations relating to grant funding management or the allocation of state funds by the university. Kerrigan seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

RECUSALS: Coble, Ziemak

19. No. 26.05; Barajas, Briza (Wharton County District Attorney's Office; Evidence Handling)

A complaint filed on behalf of the family of a 1988 homicide alleging the Wharton County District Attorney's Office lost the casefile and the associated evidence is no longer available.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to approve the dismissal of the complaint for failure to allege professional negligence or misconduct related to the forensic analysis of physical evidence. Coble seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

5. Discuss status of crime laboratory accreditation program, including: (Tomlin)

a. Summary of accreditation activities, communications, and reports received since the January 30, 2026, quarterly commission meeting;

Tomlin reported 7 accreditation related events for consideration by the Commission this quarter. None of the events required follow-up.

b. Summary of reported non-consensus proficiency testing results from accredited crime laboratories; and

Staff reported 23 proficiency monitoring non-consensus communications from laboratories this quarter. None of the proficiency tests required any further follow-up.

c. Discuss and vote on recommended rule changes including, but not limited to, amendments to Section 651.7, Disciplines Exempt from Commission Accreditation Requirements by Administrative Rule, to exempt examinations or tests performed on non-lethal munitions from accreditation and licensing requirements.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Ziemak moved to adopt the rule amendments as discussed, subject to suggested non-substantive revisions from the Office of the Governor, Texas Register, and Commission staff. Drake seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

6. Discuss updates from licensing advisory committee, including: (Tomlin)

a. Report on licenses issued and renewed;

Tomlin reported there are currently 1,390 total licenses. Staff has issued 76 new licenses so far this year.

b. Report and discuss items from April 23, 2026, Licensing Advisory Committee meeting;

Tomlin reported the Licensing Advisory Committee (LAC) met on April 23, 2026. The LAC discussed the potential parameters for a rapid DNA operator/collector license.

The Committee has formed seven domain-based working groups that are developing objectives and study materials to revise and update the General Forensic Analyst and Technician licensing exams. The groups have conducted reviews of each domain tested on the exam for relevancy and updated reading and video materials accordingly. Each group has held meetings to finalize the revised exam study materials. The groups will soon begin drafting new questions with assistance from a psychometrician service (ACS Ventures) that will provide training on question drafting and evaluate the content of the new exam. Staff expect the new exam to be complete within the next year.

c. Review and possibly adopt any coursework and/or criminal history evaluation recommendations from the Licensing Advisory Committee;

There were no coursework evaluations this quarter.

d. Report from Crime Scene Investigation Standard Operating Procedure Course, held in Austin on March 30-April 2, 2026;

Celestina Rossi provided an update for the crime scene SOP development course. There were 9 participants. The course was deemed a success and several attendees requested further SOP development classes. The group would like to continue hosting the course, and to allow for both beginner and more advanced drafting sessions.

e. Discuss and vote on recommended rule changes including, but not limited to, amendments to Section 651.219, Code of Professional Responsibility to clarify the Section's applicability to accredited law enforcement agency crime laboratory managers only;

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to adopt the rule amendments as discussed, subject to suggested non-substantive revisions from the Office of the Governor, Texas Register, and Commission staff. Drake seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

- f. **Discuss and vote on recommended rule changes including, but not limited to amendments to Section 651.207, Forensic Analyst and Forensic Technician Licensing Requirements, Including Initial License Term and Fee, Minimum Education and Coursework, General Forensic Examination, Proficiency Monitoring, and Mandatory Legal and Professional Responsibility Training, to reduce the number of work experience years required for firearms/toolmarks examiners to qualify for a waiver of coursework or minimum education requirements; and**

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to propose the rule amendments as discussed, subject to suggested non-substantive revisions from the Office of the Governor, Texas Register, and Commission staff. Ziemak seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

- g. **Report on licensing issues identified by laboratories.**

There were no licensing issues to report this quarter.

7. **Discuss and vote on recommended rule changes including, but not limited to, amendments to Section 651.307, Investigative Panels, to revise the rule heading from “Investigative Panels” to “Investigative Procedures,” to accurately reflect investigative processes may be conducted by Commission staff or by an investigative panel of commissioners.**

MOTION AND VOTE: *Ziemak moved to propose the rule amendments as discussed, subject to suggested non-substantive revisions from the Office of the Governor, Texas Register, and Commission staff. Buzzini seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

8. **Review and possibly adopt final investigative report from self-disclosure No. 25.66; Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences (Forensic Biology/DNA).**

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to adopt the draft investigative report subject to non-substantive revisions by staff. Parsons seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

RECUSAL: Barnard

9. **Review and possibly adopt final investigative report from self-disclosure No. 25.68; Jefferson County Regional Crime Laboratory (Crime Scene Investigation; Seized Drugs; Forensic Biology Screening).**

Parsons requested that the Commission discuss possible changes to the rules to address future potential conflicts of interest at the next meeting.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Drake moved to adopt the draft investigative report subject to non-substantive revisions by staff. Buzzini seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

10. Update from investigative panel in complaint No. 25.77; Federal Public Defender's Office (Houston Police Department/Houston Forensic Science Center; Firearms/Toolmarks).

Smith shared that staff is drafting a report for the panel to review. The findings will be discussed at their next meeting.

11. Update re: Statewide Firearms Working Group, including the group's February 23 and March 2, 2026, meetings with representatives from NIST. (Garcia/Smith)

At the March meeting, the group approved the final outstanding blind verification policy. On April 8th, the group met with representatives from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to get an overview of VAST tool functions and provide feedback on reporting.

12. Update re: Statewide Working Group on Rapid DNA, including the March 6, 2026, meeting, and the Licensing Advisory Committee's Rapid DNA Operator License Subcommittee's April 7, 2026, meeting. (Garcia)

Kennedy provided an update on the work of the statewide Rapid DNA Working Group. The group developed a revised version of the FBI's Memorandum of Understanding (between accredited laboratories and law enforcement agencies). The group is also creating guidance on which sample types are suitable for this technology, and well as infographics for end-users. The group intends to work with DPS to develop a curriculum to train Rapid DNA operators. The LAC is considering what level of licensure to require for Rapid DNA operators.

13. Update re: Texas Forensic Analyst Apprenticeship Pilot (TFAAP) Program (Garcia)

a. Status of Program Development and Applicable Interim Charge; and

Garcia shared that the group is developing curriculum to support new forensic analysts in the areas of seized drugs, alcohol toxicology and DNA analysis with input from the TACLD, the Center for Human Identification and the Institute for Forensic Research, Training and Innovation. Staff sent a survey to laboratories to evaluate which disciplines could benefit the most from an apprenticeship program. Kerrigan shared that IFRTI has hired a program manager for seized drugs and alcohol toxicology.

b. Discuss and vote on recommended rule changes including, but not limited to, new Subchapter G Texas Forensic Analyst Apprenticeship Pilot (TFAAP) Program to establish program rules for accredited crime laboratories and apprentices qualifying for the TFAAP program.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to adopt rule amendments as discussed, subject to suggested non-substantive revisions from the Office of the Governor, Texas Register, and Commission staff. Coble seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

14. Discuss potential Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) access changes, including expansion to private laboratories and consider impact to Texas laboratories. (Garcia/Kerrigan)

Brady Mills, Department of Public Safety Crime Laboratory System Deputy Director, gave an update on potential changes to the CODIS system that would allow private labs access to CODIS. Mills emphasized efforts aimed at increasing efficiencies. An upcoming roundtable will explore the potential impact of CODIS changes to public safety.

15. Discuss American Medical Association's resolution setting standards for forensic toxicology laboratories. (Kerrigan)

Kerrigan explained that the American Medical Association is creating a resolution to set certain accreditation standards for forensic toxicology laboratories. Kerrigan is gathering information about the current accreditation landscape in forensic toxicology to share with the AMA representatives.

16. Discuss recent and upcoming forensic development training and education projects. (Garcia)

Jarrah Kennedy and Robert Smith attended the American Academy of Forensic Sciences annual meeting in New Orleans in February 2026. They served as presenters in various talks and Kennedy presented a workshop with NIST.

Garcia recently gave a presentation to the Bexar County District Attorney's office as well as Bode's annual conference. Additionally, Garcia and Mills attended a meeting of the regional presiding judges. Next week, Kennedy will be facilitating a conversation regarding the meaning and limitations of DNA results within the context of case at the Quattrone Center.

Garcia and Barnard will present to Tarrant County defense lawyers who represent individuals in capital cases as well as at an actual innocence conference funded by the CCA at Texas A&M law school in Fort Worth. Tomlin will give a presentation at the ASCLD symposium.

Staff is also planning for a program focusing on DNA for lawyers and judges to be held at the Capitol Auditorium in August pursuant to a CCA grant in collaboration with the Center for American and International Law.

17. Report from the DNA Technical Leader Working Group on reporting and testimony, including the group's March 26-27, 2026, meeting. (Kennedy)

The group has reconvened after a short hiatus to prepare for their meeting on March 26-27. They continued work on testimony guidance including how to address common questions asked by investigators or in court. They will resume meeting again next week.

18. Update from the Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors. (Dr. Peter Stout, Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors)

There is no update from the Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors this quarter. Their next meeting will occur in July 2026.

19. Consider possible agenda items for next quarterly meeting.

Parsons requests that the Commission discuss provisions regarding disclosing personal relationships that may be a conflict of interest.

20. Schedule and location of future panel and quarterly commission meetings including, but not limited, to July 31, 2026; October 23, 2026; January 29, 2027; April 30, 2027; and July 30, 2027.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Kerrigan moved to direct staff to schedule these meetings. Ziemak seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adopted the motion.*

21. Public comment.

Shonda Taylor described a policy proposal to encourage discussion about requiring accreditation for forensic analysis related to vehicle accidents resulting in death where the offender leaves the scene. The proposal is known as the Mandatory Accredited Forensic Response Fatal Hit and Run Cases Act, and Ms. Taylor will be presenting the concept to various stakeholders in forensic science and criminal justice.

22. Adjourn.

MOTION AND VOTE: *Daniel moved to adjourn the meeting. Parsons seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously adjourned the meeting at 11:07AM.*