



# Crime Lab News

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## A Message from our Director



The Arkansas State Crime Laboratory is constantly working on reducing the backlog and turn-around-time of our analysis. We realize that if our laboratory is not efficient, delays can occur in the criminal justice system. Recently I issued a letter to all prosecutors to help us identify cases that have been adjudicated through plea negotiations, or other reasons, and require no further laboratory analysis.

Due to the cooperation and improved communications, we have been able to “stop” work on 270 cases, saving thousands of dollars in reagents and bench hours. This allows our analysts to focus on those cases you are actively pursuing.

If you have any cases that forensic analysis is no longer needed, please let us know by emailing [stopwork@crimelab.arkansas.gov](mailto:stopwork@crimelab.arkansas.gov)

Thank you all in this effort!

## Current Turn Around Times

### Drug Chemistry

- Little Rock 7 months
- Hope 7 months

### Toxicology

- Law Enforcement 32 days
- Coroner 34 days
- Medical Examiner 29 days

### Latent Prints

- Comparisons (Homicide) 12 days
- Comparisons (Other) 40 days

### Firearms

- Comparisons (Homicide) 6 months
- Comparisons (Other) 30 months
- NIBIN 34 days

### Digital Evidence

- Computers 23 days
- Mobile Devices 9 days

### Trace Evidence

- Ignitable Liquids 20 days
- Primer GSR 25 days

### Serology

- Homicide 52 days
- Sexual Assault 44 days
- Property/Other 5 Months

### DNA

- Homicide 8 months
- Sexual Assault Kits 9 months
- Property/Other 24 months



## ASCL Training Opportunities

<p><b>Evidence Packaging &amp; Sexual Assault Kit Tracking</b></p>	<p>Friday, April 26 Friday, August 9 Friday, December 6 {9:00-11:00am}</p>	<p>In addition to educating agencies on proper packaging and delivery for a wide variety of evidence, Sexual Assault Kit submission for the tracking website will be covered in-depth.</p>
<p><b>DNA/CODIS</b></p>	<p>Wednesday, May 22 Thursday, September 19 {9:00-11:00am}</p>	<p>This training will cover specific case management guidelines, submission form content, importance of documentation, and interpretation of reported results for the DNA section. An overview of the CODIS database systems and laws governing database collection will also be discussed.</p>
<p><b>Drugs &amp; Toxicology</b></p>	<p>Thursday, June 20 Thursday, July 18 {9:00-11:00am}</p>	<p>This training will cover specific case management guidelines, evidence packaging and safety, submission form content, and interpretation of reported results for the Drug and Toxicology sections. In addition, this course will provide an overview of staffing and caseload in each section, fentanyl field safety and drug trends in the state of Arkansas.</p>
<p><b>Latent Prints &amp; Firearms</b></p>	<p>Wednesday, May 15 Wednesday, August 21 {9:00-11:00am}</p>	<p>The training will cover the case management guidelines, best practices for packaging and overviews of the AFIS and NIBIN database systems.</p>

**These training opportunities each provide 2 CLEST hours. To register, go to the following link: <https://forms.gle/EVbWhEQw86FTSQyK6>**

All training events are held at the Arkansas State Crime Laboratory, #3 Natural Resources Drive, with the exception of the Drug & Toxicology (July 18) training which will be held at the new Northwest Arkansas Satellite Laboratory, 1120 AR Hwy 264, W. Monroe Ave, Lowell.

<p><b>CODIS Collection Training</b></p>	<p>Tuesday, May 21 Thursday, June 20 [10:00am-12:00pm]</p>	<p>This training is open for any agency that collects DNA Database offender and arrestee samples. The training will cover the kit collection process and information on our Remote Collection website. This new process allows collection sites to verify if a sample is needed from an individual, which will help reduce duplicate and non-qualifying submissions.</p>
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**The training provides 2 CLEST hours. Please call 501-227-5747 and ask for the CODIS section to register.**

## Section Focus — DNA

The mission of the Forensic DNA section is to analyze biological evidence, utilizing state of the art DNA technology. This is the most powerful tool to include or exclude individuals from having left evidence in the commission of a criminal act. The Forensic DNA section processes evidence from a wide array of criminal cases ranging from property crimes to homicides. This section assists in body identifications as well as missing persons investigations.

Due to a shortage of staff and our focus on sexual assault and homicide cases, there have been delays in processing property crimes. To address this issue, we are using contract vendor laboratories to analyze these cases in order to get results back to your investigating agencies in a more timely manner. We will be fully staffed by the end of May for the first time since 2016! Thank you all for your incredible patience as we become fully staffed and have the ability, once again, to provide you results and important investigating information in a more appropriate timeframe.

If you have any questions or would like more information about forensic DNA testing, please feel free to contact the DNA Supervisor, Jennifer Beaty, at 501-683-6241.

## Staffing Updates — Role Changes

**Merianne Stinnett** was promoted to Chief Latent Print Examiner. After dedicating almost 9 years of service to the lab, with 4 of those years spent in the Medical Examiner's Office, Merianne has exhibited the patience, skills, and leadership qualities necessary to guide the Latent Print section.

**Brandon Davis** is relocating from Forensic Chemistry (Little Rock) to Forensic Chemistry (Lowell). Since being hired in 2014, Brandon has developed the instrumental maintenance expertise necessary to facilitate the opening of our new satellite laboratory in Lowell.

**Danny Sanders** is transferring from Toxicology (Little Rock) to Toxicology (Lowell). In the nearly 9 years since he has been employed by the Crime Lab, Danny has amassed the knowledge base and expertise that will prove invaluable while the ASCL expands to Northwest Arkansas.

## Staffing Updates — New Hires

Since the publication of our Fall/Winter 2018 newsletter, we have hired a few new employees:

- ★ Chris Langan, CODIS Database Coordinator
- ★ Nicholas Lowe, Drug Chemist (Little Rock)
- ★ Spencer Bierfreund, Drug Chemist (Lowell)
- ★ Michael Brown, Drug Chemist (Lowell)
- ★ Leah Douglas, Drug Chemist (Lowell)
- ★ Carrie Sokol, Toxicologist (Lowell)
- ★ Kelli LaPorte, Lab General Counsel
- ★ Morgan Baucom, Evidence Receiving Technician



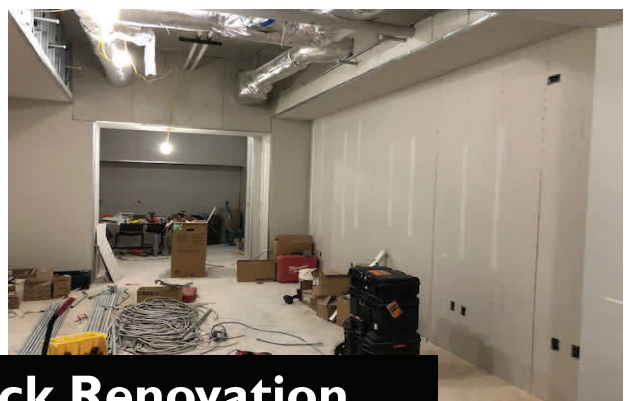
## Construction Updates

Construction of the new ASCL NW satellite lab (Forensic Chemistry and Toxicology sections) in Lowell is currently on track for a completion date in late May. It will take 1-2 months to install instrumentation and validate methods before forensic testing will begin.

Simultaneously, renovations of the main lab in Little Rock to house a new workspace for Physical Evidence are on schedule to be finished by mid-June.



**Lowell Satellite Lab Construction**



**ASCL- Little Rock Renovation**

## Important Tidbits

- UPCOMING Evidence Inventory: July 31, 2019 — August 2, 2019
- When photographing latent prints for submission to the ASCL, please include a ruler in the overall photo. Knowing the unit of measurement (mm or cm) is vital when calibrating photos to launch into AFIS.
- DNA is in the process of outsourcing a large portion of their Property Crime backlog in an effort to drastically reduce the Turn Around Time for that category.
- Be on the lookout for a “Letter from the Director” regarding new legislative changes that include:
  - ◇ Sexual Assault Legislation
  - ◇ Firearms Testing



## Sexual Assault Kit Tracking (New Points of Contact)

Thank you to those who have signed up to use the Sexual Assault Kit tracking program. We now have **44 Medical Facilities** and **75 Law Enforcement Agencies** using the program!

This Sexual Assault Kit program tracks all distributed kits. This program is very easy to use and has several benefits:

- ◆ This program helps to comply with the inventory process required by Act 1168 of 2015
- ◆ The health care provider or law enforcement agency can track all their kits and the progress of testing
- ◆ The victim can see the progress of their kit through the Criminal Justice System

### How To Sign Up:

- **Click on the SA Kit Banner on the ASCL website ([www.crimelab.arkansas.gov](http://www.crimelab.arkansas.gov))**
- OR**
- **Call Andrea Swift or Anne Cameron @ 501-683-6100**

## ATTENTION CASE COORDINATORS...Introducing New Subpoena Calendar – LASSO!

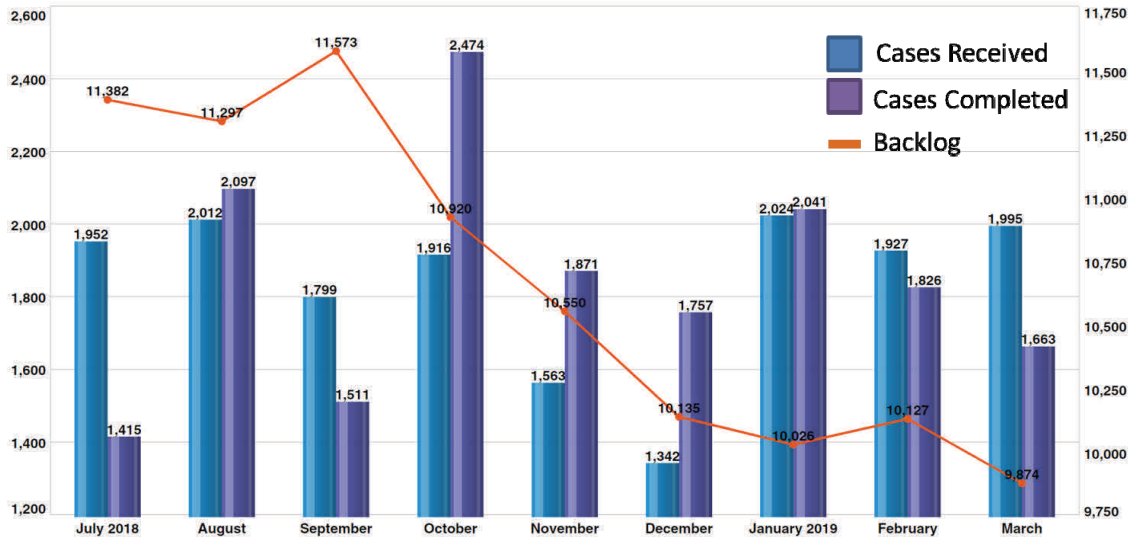
In May, the ASCL will be launching its new Subpoena Calendar software, LASSO. What does this mean? The new LASSO software will replace the current calendar. It will not only allow you to check an analyst's calendar, but also electronically submit your subpoenas. In order to use LASSO, you will need to 'create an account'. Once accepted, you will see a new and improved subpoena calendar with enhanced features.

⇒ Subpoenas are being coordinated by:

- \* **Isabel Higgins-Threats:** Drugs only — (501) 683-6149
- \* **Kelle Hutson:** All other subpoenas — (501) 683-6114

## Drug Chemistry Caseload Update

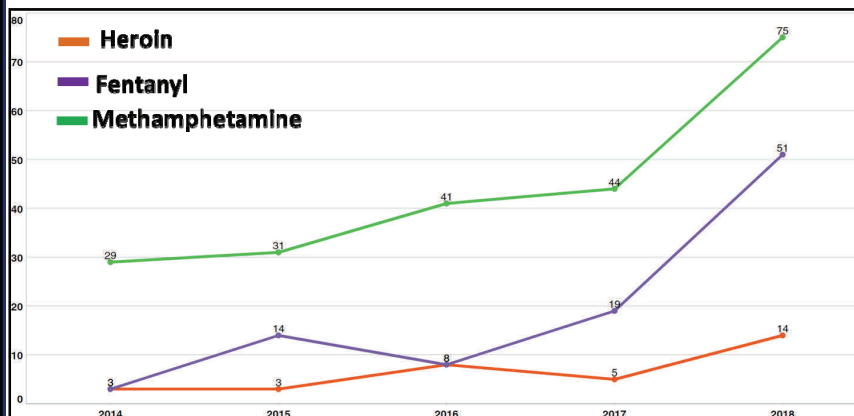
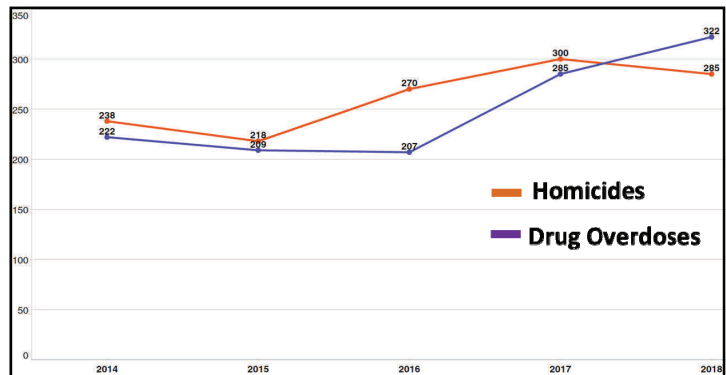
We continue to update you on the progress of decreasing the Drug Chemistry backlog and turn-around time. The backlog has decreased by over 1,700 cases since September with the turn-around time also decreasing from 9 months to 7 months. We expect the trend to continue in an accelerated rate once our last 4 new chemists complete training at the end of June. We expect the turn-around time to be around 4 months by the end of the year. Thank you for your patience as we staff appropriately and train our new chemists!



## Medical Examiner Stats—A Look Back over the last 5 years...

The chart to the right indicates that drug overdose deaths continue to rise in Arkansas, surpassing homicides in 2018

**Note: These stats are based on autopsies conducted.**



The chart to the left indicates that methamphetamine continues to be a major contributor to drug overdose deaths, with fentanyl deaths also increasing.

# ARKANSAS STATE CRIME LABORATORY

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Little Rock, Arkansas 72205

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## Mission



To provide quality forensic services to the criminal justice community and the State of Arkansas in a timeframe amenable to our customers.

## Vision



Support public safety by providing analytical results with thirty days of submission.



**Clear Communication:** Communicate often, promptly, professionally and in person when appropriate

**Quality:** Excellence, getting it right the first time, consistent performance, continuous improvement, taking pride in one's work

**Professional Development:** Growing and engaging employees through training, mentoring, and providing leadership opportunities

**Safety:** Providing a safe work environment and educating employees on safety practices

**Accountability:** Holding oneself and others responsible for productive and ethical behavior.

**Teamwork:** Having a common vision, ensuring cohesiveness, assisting one another, supporting other sections, putting others interests first and making decisions based on what is best for the laboratory

## ASCL Performance Survey Results

The Arkansas State Crime Laboratory Performance Survey is located on the Law Enforcement page ([iResults](#)) of the ASCL website. We welcome your feedback so that we can continue to improve and meet your needs.

*"Given the current manpower constraints I feel you are doing a great job."*

*"If I have ever needed answers or a "rush" on something, all I have to do is call and ask. If it is possible, the staff follows through with the request and helps speed the process, and for that I am grateful."*

*"Staff is always more than helpful when I have questions."*

*"They do a great job. If I call, I always get the information I need in a timely manner."*

*"The information in the newsletter is excellent. Keep up the good work!"*

