

**TEXAS FORENSIC SCIENCE COMMISSION (TFSC) SNAPSHOT**  
*Justice Through Science*

**I. Responsibilities**

- *Accrediting crime laboratories* in and outside of Texas. There are 100 total laboratories with 46 located inside and 54 located outside of Texas.
- *Investigating allegations of professional negligence and misconduct* in crime laboratories and providing recommendations to criminal justice stakeholders.
- *Coordinating process for collecting DNA* and other forensic evidence from unidentified bodies found within 120 miles of the Rio Grande River.
- *Licensing forensic analysts* who analyze evidence on behalf of accredited crime laboratories in Texas criminal courts.
- *Serving as the independent government body* for federal grants directed to Texas law enforcement laboratories. Recipients must certify there is an independent government body that investigates allegations of negligence and misconduct in laboratories. *In 2016, the State of Texas received \$717,322 in Coverdell funds, which constitutes 143% of the Commission's current annual budget.*

**II. Recent Case Examples**

- TFSC identified major problems at Austin PD DNA lab, including a case in which the DNA of a sexual assault victim was transferred to a suspect's penile swab through carryover contamination in the lab. Suspect was innocent; true perpetrator went on to commit another sexual assault in Houston.
- Dallas man served 27 years in prison for murder based on unsupportable bite mark identification; TFSC issued major recommendations to judges and lawyers on how to handle bite mark evidence and is in process of reviewing other cases for possible miscarriages of justice.
- Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences (SWIFS) mistakenly identified a murder weapon in Grimes County capital murder case. TFSC investigated and issued public report, resulting in significant improvements in the firearms section.
- TFSC issued report in Bell County robbery cases with forensic video analysis where height determination was unsupportable; case currently in litigation.

**III. Budget and Staff**

- The TFSC receives \$500,000 per year (\$1M per biennium) in funding for all of its operations. The Commission has 9 Commissioners appointed by the Governor and 3 full-time employees.

**IV. Key Issues Facing TFSC During the 85<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session**

- The TFSC is administratively attached to Sam Houston State University, making it a "special item" in higher education. *SB-1 has eliminated all funding for special items.*
- Effort is underway to move the TFSC to Article IV under the Office of Court Administration, which many believe is a more appropriate and sustainable approach for the agency.