Anthony Onorato  
Chair, SWGDAM  
FBI Laboratory  
2501 Investigation Parkway  
Quantico, VA 22135

Dear Mr. Onorato:

This letter is intended as a reminder of important revisions made to the FBI Director’s Quality Assurance Standards for Forensic DNA Testing and DNA Databasing Laboratories (QAS) that took effect September 1, 2011. Please share this reminder with your organizational members.

A review of the NDIS procedures, policies and standards resulted in revision to the FBI Director’s QAS in 2011 that now provide States the flexibility to search outsourced DNA data at the State level prior to completion of the required technical review and the option of using contractors to perform the required technical review. These changes are explained in the enclosed description of the 2011 QAS revisions. Outsourced DNA data must be technically reviewed in accordance with QAS Standard 17 in order to be uploaded to the National DNA Index System (NDIS). The FBI believes, however, that these revisions offer laboratories workable alternatives for the outsourced DNA data as we strive to maintain a balance between our responsibility for the quality and integrity of the DNA data in NDIS and the efficient uploading of the data in order to generate investigative leads for law enforcement agencies across the country.

I hope this information concerning the 2011 QAS revisions is helpful. Please feel free to contact Jennifer Wendel, Chief of the CODIS Unit at (703) 632-8315 or Jennifer.wendel@ic.fbi.gov if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Alice R. Isenberg, Ph.D.  
Section Chief  
Biometrics Analysis Section  
FBI Laboratory
Quality Assurance Standard Revisions to Facilitate Searching and/or Review of Outsourced DNA Records

Several years ago, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) conducted a review of the standards and procedures governing the National DNA Index System (NDIS) in an effort to identify if additional efficiencies could be gained to maximize the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) as a law enforcement investigative tool. One area identified for additional efficiency was to provide states with the flexibility to search at the state level the DNA records generated by a vendor laboratory (referred to as outsourced DNA records). Following the solicitation of stakeholders in and users of CODIS, the NDIS Enhancement process resulted in the recommendation of revisions to the FBI Director’s Quality Assurance for Forensic DNA Testing and DNA Databasing Laboratories (QAS) that were approved and took effect September 1, 2011.

QAS Standard 17 on outsourcing had previously prohibited the searching of outsourced DNA data in CODIS prior to completion of a laboratory’s technical review of that outsourced DNA data. The 2011 revisions to Standard 17 removed the prohibition for searching the outsourced DNA data at the state level (SDIS) and now permits, at a state’s discretion, the searching of outsourced DNA data at SDIS. The FBI’s experience with database hits over the years has demonstrated that over 85% of the hits occur at the state level. Thus, providing states with the option to search outsourced DNA data at SDIS allows laboratories to quickly and efficiently identify potential investigative leads at the state level and also allows laboratories to prioritize the review of those samples involved in a match. A technical review of the outsourced DNA data is still required for the upload of the outsourced DNA data to the NDIS.

NDIS participating laboratories interested in searching outsourced DNA records at the state level pursuant to the 2011 QAS revisions should contact their State CODIS Administrator. Law enforcement agencies must consult with their local forensic laboratories prior to outsourcing the analysis of DNA samples to ensure eligibility for searching in CODIS.

The 2011 QAS revisions also expanded a laboratory’s options for who could perform the required technical review by authorizing contract employees to serve as technical reviewers as long as the contractor satisfies the QAS qualifications for a technical reviewer and receives approval by the employing laboratory for any additional employment. Thus, laboratories can now use contractors as technical reviewers and provide assistance in performing the required technical review of the outsourced DNA data.

The text of these QAS revisions is available at [http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/lab/biometric-analysis/codis](http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/lab/biometric-analysis/codis) under “QAS Revisions Effective September 1, 2011.”

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer C. Wendel, Chief of the CODIS Unit, Jennifer.wendel@ic.fbi.gov.