

The National Institute of Justice's (NIJ) Forensic Technology Center of Excellence (FTCoE) at RTI International provides evidence-based resources about forensic technologies and emerging challenges. FTCoE systematically identifies and assesses opportunities for forensic improvement arising from scientific research and conducts technology transition and knowledge transfer activities to improve laboratory quality, efficiency and practice.

FTCoE is working collaboratively with the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD) in specific areas that relate to NIJ and ASCLD strategic priorities for the advancement of forensic science. These activities encompass rapid DNA, accreditation, sexual assault response, interlaboratory comparison, disaster victim identification, and laboratory management. Individual laboratories or laboratory systems can partner with FTCoE to evaluate the impact of novel technologies or processes and share outcomes with the broader forensic science community. The presentation will include information about these initiatives and ways that individuals and laboratories can participate.

This presentation will also provide an overview of FTCoE products available to crime laboratory directors and practitioners. Among other resources, the FTCoE sponsors conferences, such as symposia on opioids and sexual assault policy and practice, as well as working groups, such as the Forensic Laboratory Needs Technology Working Group. FTCoE's weekly newsletter and website provide webinars, podcasts, and reports to the forensic community in a wide range of forensic disciplines, including DNA, toxicology, controlled substances, crime scene investigation, medicolegal death investigation, trace evidence, and impression and pattern evidence. FTCoE also manages special initiatives about cross-cutting issues, including human factors, statistical interpretation, leadership, and performance metrics. FTCoE has emphasized workforce resiliency in the face of vicarious trauma and caseload increases, with webinars and podcasts from leading thinkers and practical advice from forensic managers and psychologists.

Forensic science organizations must adapt and change in response to the challenges facing the community, but it is critical for leaders to have the information they need to evaluate whether particular innovations and technologies fit their mission needs. FTCoE provides objective, research-based information from the perspective of an honest broker. The presentation will demonstrate that beneficial change starts with reliable information from a trusted source.