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Purpose

To establish the procedure for administrative and technical review of technical records, laboratory reports, and testimony.

Scope

This procedure applies to all employees who perform reviews of laboratory reports in the Pitt County Forensic Services Unit.

Definitions

- **Administrative review** – A procedure that checks case file documentation and laboratory reports for consistency with laboratory policy and editorial correctness.
- **Technical review** – Review of technical records, test reports and testimony to ensure the validity of test results, opinions and interpretations.

Procedure


Technical Reviews

All laboratory reports and supporting analysis documentation shall be technically reviewed prior to release. Technical reviews will be performed on 100% of cases. A minimum of 20% of technical reviews shall be conducted by an individual that has been competency tested in the task(s) that the review is encompassing. The remainder of the reviews shall at a minimum be completed by an individual that has been competency tested in reviewing the task associated with laboratory reports and supporting documentation of that discipline as outlined in QSP 5-2-1a Training Procedure for Casefile Reviewer.

All casework documentation shall be considered in progress until the Analyst completes his/her work in RMS. The Case file shall be considered complete at the point the report is released in RMS.

The Technical Leader shall issue a memo to the Quality Manager stating that a particular Analyst has the training, experience, and qualifications necessary to perform technical reviews. The Quality Manager shall then designate that the Analyst is authorized to perform technical reviews. The Quality manager shall maintain a list of Analysts authorized to perform technical review within a discipline.

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Each Technical Leader shall be responsible for assignment of reviews.

Technical Reviewers- shall ensure:

- Conformance with technical procedures and Laboratory policies and procedures.
- Accuracy of the Laboratory Report and that the data support the results and/or conclusions in the report.
- Proper qualifications in the Laboratory Report.
- Provision of all required information in the Laboratory Report.
- Conclusions of the reporting Analyst are reasonable, consistent with the documented data, and within the constraints of validated scientific knowledge.
- Verifications have been documented, when applicable. Technical language in the Laboratory Report is clear, accurate, and complete.
- Sufficient supporting documentation is present in the case file.

Manual calculations and data transfers shall be checked as part of the technical review. Required verifications shall be documented in the case file.

The technical review shall be documented on the Technical Review Sheet.

The technical review shall not be conducted by the Analyst or Laboratory employee who completed the work.

For Quality System purposes, the technical reviewer(s) and author are equally responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the technical aspects of the case file.

Technical reviews shall be conducted by personnel authorized by Laboratory management based on expertise gained through training and experience. The reviewer shall have met requirements outlined in the Training Procedure for Casefile Reviewer and have been tested to ensure competence.


Each Technical Leader shall be responsible for assignment of reviews.

Administrative Reviews

All Laboratory Reports and supporting documentation shall be reviewed administratively prior to release. Administrative reviews will be performed on 100% of cases.

Administrative Reviewers shall ensure:

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- Spelling and grammatical accuracy of laboratory report.
- All administrative and analysis records are uniquely identified according to policies and procedures.
- All key information is included in the laboratory report.
- Language in the laboratory report is clear, accurate and complete.
- Laboratory policy and procedures have been followed.
- Laboratory Report is free of clerical errors.
- Technical review has been conducted and documented.

The Quality Manager shall designate and maintain a list of personnel who may conduct administrative reviews.

The administrative review shall not be conducted by the Analyst or Laboratory employee who completed the work.

Technical and administrative reviews may be combined as *one* process and documented on a combined Technical/Administrative Review Sheet.

Timeframe for Review - Reviews shall be completed within 20 business days from the request for review. The Quality Manager may grant a time extension for the completion of a review for extenuating circumstances. Extension shall be documented in the case file.


Non-conformities - A non-conformity discovered during a technical or administrative review shall be discussed with the Analyst. Resolution of any non-conformity shall be handled as provided in the Procedure for Corrective Action and Non-Conformities.

Conflict Resolution

If conflicts arise during the technical or administrative review of casework, the Analyst shall discuss the matter, refer to any applicable references, and attempt to resolve the disagreement. If resolution cannot be achieved, the Technical Leader and/or Quality Manager shall be notified.

The Quality Manager and the Technical Leader and/or a technically qualified third party shall be involved in the resolution process. Once a decision is rendered, it shall be clearly communicated to all parties involved and documented in the case notes in the master case file. If during the resolution it is determined and required that additional supportive data be included in the file then the Analyst shall proceed with compilation of data and store it in master case file as required. In such cases, additional comments shall be included in the case file reviewer comments.

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Testimony Reviews

Monitoring and evaluating testimony are necessary to ensure that the testimony is accurate, understandable, and scientifically sound. Testimony monitoring also gauges whether the employee has displayed a demeanor and professional appearance consistent with all applicable policies and procedures of the Laboratory.

Testimony Reviewers- shall ensure:

- The testimony offered supports the recorded conclusions
- The witness was prepared and organized
- The witness demonstrated knowledge of the technical subject
- The witness demonstrated proper courtroom demeanor

The testimony of an employee shall be evaluated at least once annually. The evaluation shall be documented on the Pitt County Sheriff's Office Testimony Evaluation Form.

Individuals authorized to monitor and evaluate testimony shall have been competency tested in the discipline they are monitoring.

Each completed Expert Testimony Evaluation Form shall be routed to the Quality Manager (QM) for review and the testimony shall be reviewed with the Analyst.

Expert Testimony Evaluation Form with negative feedback shall be routed to the Quality Manager. The QM shall determine if the negative feedback constitutes the initiation of a CAR.

If an employee does not testify in a given year or if a qualified technical reviewer is not available the Quality Manager shall document this in a memo to the Lab Directory by January 31 of the following year. This memo shall be maintained in the same manner as the Pitt County Sheriff's Office Testimony Evaluation Form.

If a Laboratory employee is authorized to provide substitute testimony, the testifying employee shall be responsible for reviewing the case file prior to testifying.

Records

- Technical/Administrative Review Sheet
- Pitt County Sheriff's Office Testimony Evaluation Form

Attachments

- N/A

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REVISION HISTORY		
CURRENT VERSION	EFFECTIVE DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
1	2016/07/01	Original Version
2	2018/04/01	Changed Revision History table, Rev to Ver# and issue date to effective date. Add statement to conflict resolution and clarify where case notes go.
3	2018/10/18	Clarified definition of Technical Reviews. Clarified duties of Technical and Administrative Reviewers. Changed Forensic Scientist to Analyst in whole document. Added statement to conflict resolution requiring additional comments by the casefile reviewer if additional analysis is conducted. Renamed review sheet in Records. Added section and clarified review of courtroom testimony.
4	2019/03/22	Clarified who could conduct technical reviews and to set minimal percentage to be reviewed by competency tested analyst.

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