

## Certification Form Quick Tips: Generally Accepted Laboratory Practices and Procedures

### Bureau of Justice Assistance, Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program – Formula

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) seeks to fund improvements to forensic science and medical examiner/coroner (ME/C) services through the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program (Coverdell Program). Under the Formula Coverdell Program, [State Administering Agencies](#) (SAAs) may apply for funds to improve forensic science and ME/C services provided by laboratories operated by the state or units of local government. The Coverdell law requires state applicants to certify that any forensic science laboratory system or ME/C office receiving Coverdell Program funds uses generally accepted laboratory practices and procedures as established by accrediting organizations or appropriate certifying bodies. To meet this requirement, SAAs should demonstrate that Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) aligned to those provided by accrediting organizations or appropriate certifying bodies exist and are in use within the forensic science laboratory system or ME/C office. The certification form submitted to BJA must be executed by an official who is both familiar with the requirements of the certification and authorized to make the certification on behalf of the applicant agency. Certifications made on behalf of subrecipients of award funds—rather than those made on behalf of the applicant agency—are not acceptable to satisfy the requirement.



Refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for details on certification requirements and the link to the certification template. Additional questions regarding certification and authorization requirements should be directed to your assigned BJA Policy and Programs Office representatives.

### Identifying and Aligning to Generally Accepted Laboratory Practices and Procedures – Key Considerations

**Identify the laboratory systems the funds will support.** Applicants should identify the laboratory systems, including ME/C offices, that will receive Coverdell Program funds and identify a point of contact (POC) for each. The POC should be an individual who is able to assist with the actions described below.

**Determine the services provided by each laboratory system.** For each laboratory system identified, define the discipline-specific service(s) provided by that entity. The POC should be able to describe what forensic science service(s) the entity provides, as well as any additional details associated with their testing processes.

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### **Confirm laboratory practices and procedures.**

The applicant should direct the POC to provide verification that discipline-specific, generally accepted laboratory practices and procedures are followed. These policies and procedures should be aligned to recommendations and guidance provided by accrediting organizations or appropriate certifying bodies. Verification may be obtained through proof of discipline-specific laboratory accreditation or certification. However, in situations where accreditation or certification has not been achieved or is not required (i.e., applicants requesting funds solely for ME/C offices within the state), verification may be provided by demonstrating that SOPs have been developed, are in use, and are aligned with nationally accepted best practices and recommendations.

Entities that provide guidance on generally accepted laboratory practices and procedures include the following:

- [National Institute of Standards and Technology](#) (NIST)
- [Society of Forensic Toxicologists](#) (SOFT)
- [Scientific Working Group for the Analysis of Seized Drugs](#) (SWGDRUG)
- [American Academy of Forensic Sciences](#) (AAFS)
- [International Association for Identification](#) (IAI)
- [Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science](#) (OSAC)
- [National Association of Medical Examiners](#) (NAME)
- [International Association of Coroners & Medical Examiners](#) (IACME)

## **Preparing to Submit the Certification Form – Key Considerations**

**Ensure that the certification template is used.** BJA provides a template certification form that must be signed by the individual authorized to complete the certification.

**Review the certification requirements.** Applicants must review the requirements of the certification prior to determining whether the certification can be properly completed.

**Verify qualifications prior to submission.** The form should be executed and signed by someone familiar with the requirements of the certification and authorized to sign the certification.

**Important Reminder:** A false statement in the certification or in the grant application that it supports may be the subject of criminal prosecution, including under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 and/or 1621 and 34 U.S.C. §§ 10271–10273. Office of Justice Programs grants, including certification provided in connection with such grants, are subject to review by the Office of Justice Programs and/or by the Department of Justice’s Office of the Inspector General.