

Background, Functions and Purposes of the American Board of Forensic Toxicology, Inc.

The need to identify qualified forensic scientists who can provide essential professional services for the nation's judicial and executive branches of government has long been recognized. In response to the professional need, the American Board of Forensic Toxicology was organized in 1975 to provide, in the interest of the public and the advancement of the sciences, a certification program in forensic toxicology. In 1996, the Board established a Laboratory Accreditation Program in Forensic Toxicology.

With regard to Laboratory Accreditation, the objectives of the Board are to establish, enhance, and maintain standards of qualification for those laboratories that practice Postmortem Forensic Toxicology or Human Performance Toxicology, and to accredit as qualified laboratories those applicants who comply with the requirements of the Board. In this way, the Board aims to establish a practical and equitable system of readily identifying laboratories who have demonstrated the requisite qualifications and competence in forensic toxicology.

Accreditation is based upon compliance with professional standards, as assessed by peer review, including an on-site inspection, and successful achievement in one or more proficiency testing programs recognized by the Board.

The Board is a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia. It is recognized by the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, the Society of Forensic Toxicologists, the California Association of Toxicologists, the Canadian Society of Forensic Science, and the Southwestern Association of Toxicologists. The Board is composed of officers and other directors, who serve staggered terms and are selected from the Certificants at large by a Nominating Committee process.

General Provisions Concerning Accreditation

- The right to deny Accreditation is reserved.
- Certificates of Laboratory Accreditation in Forensic Toxicology are valid for up to two years, according to the standards and conditions established by the Board.
- Laboratories holding Certificates of Accreditation are entitled to state on reports or in other appropriate manner that they are "Accredited by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology, Inc."
- Certificates issued by the Board are not transferable. They remain the property of the Board, but every laboratory to which a Certificate has been properly issued is entitled to its continued possession unless such Certificate is revoked.
- Certificates may be suspended or revoked for appropriate cause, under an elaborate system of safeguards for the laboratory concerned.
- Requirements and application procedures for accreditation are subject to revision by the Board. The latest version is available from ABFT. (See address information under Procedures for Application.)
- Successful applicants are issued a Certificate of Laboratory Accreditation in Forensic Toxicology, and the name of the laboratory is published on the ABFT website.

The Board's STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION IN FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY are contained in the following statements on "Eligibility and Requirements for Laboratory Accreditation in Forensic Toxicology."

ABFT IS RECOGNIZED BY:

American Academy of Forensic Sciences
Society of Forensic Toxicologists
California Association of Toxicologists
Canadian Society of Forensic Science
Southwestern Association of Toxicologists

ABFT is actively involved in supporting the activities of SWGTOX (The Scientific Working Group for Toxicology). SWGTOX (www.SWGTOX.org) is supported by the U.S. Department of Justice and also funded by ABFT and Society of Forensic Toxicologists (SOFT). The mission of the SWGTOX is to investigate, analyze, develop and disseminate consensus in standards of practice for forensic toxicology.

An introduction to the nature and purposes of the Board, with a summary of requirements for accreditation and application procedures.

Laboratory
Accreditation
Program

2010

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Eligibility and Requirements for Laboratory Accreditation in Forensic Toxicology

ELIGIBILITY

- Applicant laboratories must be actively engaged in the practice of either or both Postmortem Forensic Toxicology or Human Performance Toxicology (e.g., DUID-type toxicology), to include at least the detection, identification and quantitation of alcohol and other drugs in biological specimens.
- Only laboratories located within the United States of America and its territories and possessions, or of Canada and its territories are eligible for Accreditation.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

- The Laboratory Accreditation Program is based on the SOFT/AAFS Forensic Laboratory Guidelines (March 1991 and subsequent revisions), with additional criteria set by the Accreditation Committee of the ABFT.
- The goal of the program is to enhance and maintain standards of practice for the detection, identification and quantitation of alcohol, drugs and other toxins in biological specimens.
- Applicant laboratories are required to successfully participate in at least one alcohol and one 'non-alcohol' (drug) proficiency testing program for the 12 months prior to application.
- Applicant laboratories must submit:
 1. A completed application form and self-evaluation checklist;
 2. Relevant proficiency test results for the past 12 months (to include evidence of corrective action where program criteria were not met);
 3. A data package for a case involving a positive blood alcohol result and a case involving one (1) positive, quantitative blood drug result (which may be the same or separate cases).

- The program cycle is 2 years. Laboratories must submit to an on-site inspection at least once every 2 years (normally 2 inspectors for 2 days: up to 3 inspectors for 3 days).
- Checklist questions are designated as either *Essential*, *Important* or *Desirable*. All *Essential* questions must be answerable "yes" before accreditation can be granted. The laboratory must also satisfy at least 90% of the *Important* questions and at least 75% of the *Desirable* questions. Effective January 1, 2011, all deficiencies must be satisfactorily addressed by the time the mid-cycle report is submitted 10–12 months after the last accreditation date.
- Enrollment in the CAP FTC, CAP Toxicology Program (T-series) and CAP AL1 Whole Blood Alcohol programs is required. All quantitative challenges must be completed for the CAP FTC survey that are on the laboratory's list of routinely analyzed substances. Quantitative challenges for the T-series survey must be completed for those assays that are routinely set up within the reporting time limit set by the survey provider.
- "Acceptable performance" will be determined by the Accreditation Committee based on the following: no false positives; ethanol within $\pm 2S.D.$ or $\pm 10\%$ of the participant mean; and drug challenges should be within $\pm 2S.D.$ or $\pm 30\%$ of the participant mean. Appropriate corrective action is considered a vital part of this program and must be documented for false negatives and other deficiencies, appropriate for the stated mission of the laboratory.
- Areas of testing within the laboratory other than Postmortem Forensic Toxicology or Human Performance Toxicology will usually not be evaluated, unless there is overlap.
- Accreditation is for one year initially. An automatic extension will be given for a second year, subject to satisfactory review of a mid-cycle report and of relevant proficiency test results for the 12 months following initial accreditation.

Accreditation Extension

At the end of the first year of the 2-year accreditation cycle, the laboratory will be requested to complete a mid-cycle report and submit relevant proficiency test summaries for the previous 12 months. In addition, the laboratory will be required to submit documentation of any prior corrective actions that were required.

Procedures for Application

- Application forms and instructions for their submission can be obtained from:

The American Board of Forensic Toxicology, Inc.
Attn: The Forensic Sciences Foundation, Inc.
410 North 21st Street
Colorado Springs, CO 80904
Telephone: (719) 636-1100
Fax: (719) 636-1993
e-mail: office@abft.org
or download from www.abft.org

- The completed application package should be sent to ABFT according to the instructions given on the application form, together with the application fee of \$500, none of which is refundable. Only laboratories that feel they meet the stated requirements for Accreditation should submit applications.
- Completed applications are reviewed by the Accreditation Committee of the Board, which will assess whether or not the laboratory is ready to submit to an on-site inspection.
- If in the opinion of the Accreditation Committee there are deficiencies that need to be addressed prior to an on-site inspection, the laboratory will be contacted and requested to take corrective action prior to an inspection being scheduled. Documentation of that corrective action may need to be submitted for review. A period of up to 6 months will be given for any necessary corrective action prior to an inspection being scheduled. If the laboratory fails to respond within a 6-month period, the application is considered withdrawn.

- If the corrective action (if any) is satisfactory, an inspection will be scheduled at a time mutually agreed upon by the Accreditation Committee and the applicant laboratory. The laboratory will be notified of the fee for the inspection and subsequent review. The fee is payable in advance.
- An inspection team comprised of 2 inspectors for 2 days or up to 3 inspectors for 3 days will be arranged, depending upon the size and workload of the laboratory.
- A closing conference will be conducted at the end of the on-site inspection. However, inspectors are instructed not to discuss whether they feel the laboratory has "passed" or "failed" the inspection.
- The inspection reports will be reviewed by the Accreditation Committee. The laboratory will be notified of any corrective action that needs to be taken prior to the granting of accreditation. Documentation of appropriate corrective action will normally be requested by the Accreditation Committee for review.

Reaccreditation

After 20 months of the 2-year cycle, a letter will be sent out to the laboratory, inviting application for reaccreditation. The same requirements and procedures apply to reaccreditation as apply to initial accreditation.