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**STRENGTHENING FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY IN THE UNITED STATES:
THE AMERICAN BOARD OF FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY RESPONSE TO THE
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES RECOMMENDATIONS**

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO, FEBRUARY 23, 2009. The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) congressionally mandated report released on February 18, 2009 finds deficiencies in the nation's forensic science system and calls for major reforms and new research. The report also calls for the development of accreditation standards, guidelines for quality control, proficiency testing, certification and a code of ethics for experts in all aspects of forensic science.

The report notes that the **American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT)** provides these elements and specific educational, training and experience requirements, including a series of competency tests for certification and participation in proficiency testing in the area of forensic toxicology.

The **ABFT** has developed and implemented all of the standards called for by the NAS report in the field of forensic toxicology and supports the development and implementation of these standards in other forensic disciplines. In 1976, the **ABFT** implemented a professional certification program for toxicologists and has since certified more than 300 diplomates and specialists in the field. In 1996, **ABFT** introduced a comprehensive, specialized laboratory accreditation program. To date, 24 leading laboratories are **ABFT**-accredited, including nine laboratories in states that mandate such accreditation.

The main barrier to expanding compliance with **ABFT** standards in the forensic toxicology community has been the absence of a national mandate and the limited funding available to many state programs. Even when sound, accepted standards and science are available, achieving the quality, validity, and integrity of forensic testing requires a significant investment of resources. The ability to meet the goals of the NAS report will be contingent on the government's financial commitment to the forensic sciences through funding of technology, staffing, education, training, quality assurance and accreditation programs for laboratories performing this critical public service.

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***Forensic toxicology** encompasses the measurement of alcohol, drugs and other toxic substances in biological specimens and interpretation of such results in a medicolegal context. The purpose of the **American Board of Forensic Toxicology** is to establish and enhance voluntary standards for the practice of forensic toxicology and for the examination and recognition of scientists and laboratories providing forensic toxicology services. Please visit www.ABFT.org for more information.*

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