Identification of Unidentified Patients
Model Policy
January 2017

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
80 South Swan Street, Albany, New York 12210
www.criminaljustice.ny.gov
Identification of Unidentified Patients – Model Policy

This model policy has been prepared to assist hospitals and medical facilities in developing policies and procedures for missing and unidentified person’s investigations consistent with New York State statutes and regulations. The information contained in this document is meant to provide guidance and highlight points to consider when drafting a policy to meet the needs of a particular community. This document is not intended to direct policy development nor does it purport to contain the only acceptable practices. It is recommended that each hospital and medical facility consult with its own legal advisor prior to adopting or amending a final policy regarding identification of unknown patients.
Identification of Unidentified Patients – Model Policy

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THE 2017 EDITION IS PUBLISHED BY THE:

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

Missing Persons Clearinghouse

80 South Swan Street
Albany, New York 12210

http://criminaljustice.ny.gov

VERSION January 2017

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Identification of Unidentified Patients – Model Policy

Acknowledgements

The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) acknowledges the extensive work done by the following associations and agencies:

**Albany Medical Center**
John Heritage, Director of Security

**Albany Memorial Hospital and Samaritan Hospital**
John S. Janikas, MD, Director of Emergency Medicine

**Greater New York Hospital Association**
Laura Alfredo, Senior Vice President, Deputy General Counsel
Alison Burke, Vice President, Regulatory and Professional Affairs

**New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation**
Deirdre Newton, General Counsel

**New York State Department of Health**
Ruth Leslie Director, Division of Hospitals and Diagnostic & Treatment Centers
Karmel, Jonathan, Attorney - Bureau of House Counsel

**New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services**
Lisa Marie Coppolo, Associate Attorney
Cindy Neff, Program Manager, Missing Persons Clearinghouse
Raymond Neves, Case Manager, Missing Persons Clearinghouse

**NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services**
Sara Osborne, Associate Attorney, Division of Legal Affairs

**New York State Office of Mental Health**
John Tremark, Chief Safety and Security Officer
Jessica R. Eber, Assistant Counsel

**Samuel Stratton VA Medical Center**
Alfred Articolo, Police Chief
John J. Nett, Emergency Manager
I. PURPOSE

This policy is designed to provide guidance to emergency department staff in developing procedures for the identification of unidentified patients that are admitted to the hospital.

II. POLICY:

When an unidentified patient is admitted to the Hospital, the admissions staff will coordinate efforts to determine the unidentified patient’s identity.

III. DEFINITIONS:

A. Adequate identification: the ability of the patient or their escort to identify the patient by name and date of birth or the patient has written identification such as a driver’s license that contains that information.

B. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA): the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) established national standards for the security and privacy of health data. HIPAA privacy rules (45 CFR § 164.501 et seq.)

HIPAA allows disclosures to law enforcement in the following cases:

1. Court Order, Warrant, Subpoena, or Administrative Process: a Provider may disclose information in response to a court order, warrant, subpoena or other administrative process if certain conditions are satisfied. (45 CFR § 164.512(f)(1)(ii));

2. Identify Person: if law enforcement requests information to help identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness or missing person, a Provider may disclose the following limited information: (a) name and address, (b) date and place of birth, (c) social security number, (d) ABO blood type and rh factor, (e) type of injury, (f) date and time of treatment, (g) date and time of death, and (h) a description of distinguishing physical characteristics. Other information related to the individual's DNA, dental records, body fluid or tissue typing, samples, or analysis cannot be disclosed under this provision, but may be disclosed in response to a court order, warrant, or written administrative request. (45 CFR § 164.512(f)(2)). The disclosure must be in response to a request from law enforcement, which may include a response to a "wanted" poster or bulletin;

3. Death: a Provider may disclose information to notify law enforcement about the death of an individual if the Provider believes the death may have resulted from a crime;
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4. Fugitive: a Provider may disclose information to law enforcement to identify or apprehend an individual who appears to have escaped from lawful custody. (45 CFR § 164.512(j)(1)(ii)(B));

5. Medical Examiners and Coroners: a Provider may disclose information about a decedent to medical examiners or coroners to assist them in identifying the decedent, determining the cause of death, or to carry out their other authorized duties. (45 CFR § 164.512(g)(1));

6. When considering disclosures to law enforcement, Providers should consider the following:
   a) If the law enforcement official making the request for information is not known to the Provider, the Provider must verify the identity and authority of such person prior to disclosing the information, e.g., by requesting identification. (45 CFR § 164.514(h));
   b) Except when required by law, a Provider should limit disclosures to the minimum necessary. (45 CFR §§ 164.502(b), 164.514(d)). When reasonable to do so, the Provider may rely upon the representations of the law enforcement official (as a public officer) as to what information is the minimum necessary for their lawful purpose. (45 CFR § 164.514(d)(3)(iii)(A));
   c) In all cases, a Provider should document the circumstances surrounding the disclosure to law enforcement in the log for accounting of disclosures as required by 45 CFR § 164.528.

C. New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services – Missing Persons Clearinghouse: the Missing Persons Clearinghouse is responsible for providing assistance to law enforcement agencies handling cases involving children, college students and vulnerable adults who have gone missing. The Clearinghouse maintains a 24/7 hotline at 800-346-3543.

D. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: the leading nonprofit organization in the U.S. working with law enforcement, families and the professionals who serve them on issues related to missing and sexually exploited children.

E. National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs): is a national centralized repository and resource center for missing persons and unidentified decedent records. NamUs is a free online system that can be searched by medical examiners, coroners, law enforcement officials and the general public from all over the country in hopes of resolving these cases.

F. National Crime Information Center (NCIC): is a computerized index of criminal-justice information (i.e., criminal-record-history information, fugitives, stolen properties, missing persons, unidentified bodies). Records contained in NCIC are provided by federal, state, local, and foreign criminal-justice agencies, as well as authorized courts. The index is available to federal, state, and local law-enforcement and other criminal-justice agencies and is operational 24 hours a
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day, 365 days a year.

G. Unidentified Patient – when a patient is brought to the Emergency Department without any identification and is not able to self-identify.

IV. PROCEDURE:

A. Upon the arrival of an unidentified patient:

1. The admission staff member will review the chart, personal belongings and hospital records to determine if there is any information regarding patient’s identity;

2. The admission staff member will notify the Information Desk so that inquiries related to the unidentified patient are referred to the appropriate staff as well as public safety personnel.

3. The patient will be registered into the hospital database with a last name of Unidentified and a first name of either Male or Female which will be dependent on their gender. Should there be multiple unidentified patients admitted during a disaster or other such incident; they will be registered as follows: Male Unidentified I, Male Unidentified II, etc. Detailed physical descriptions should be entered into the database. This will enable staff to more readily search for a patient should there be an inquiry from the public or a family member.

B. If initial identification efforts fail, the admissions staff will contact hospital public safety who will then contact the local law enforcement agency and request that a police report be completed for an unidentified living/deceased person. The law enforcement agency should be requested to enter the unidentified patient into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database as an Unidentified Living Person or an Unidentified Deceased Person (see attached NCIC Initial Entry Report).

C. The admissions staff as well as public safety officers should also monitor incoming e-mails and faxes from the New York State Missing Persons Clearinghouse. The Missing Persons Clearinghouse routinely sends out posters on active Missing Persons cases (Missing Child, Missing College Student and Missing Vulnerable Adult). These posters for the most part contain a photo as well as a description of the missing person. Additionally, a check of the following websites should be conducted in an attempt to identify the patient:

New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services Missing Persons Clearinghouse Children
http://criminaljustice.ny.gov//missing/#

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children
http://www.missingkids.org/search

National Missing and Unidentified Persons Systems
http://namus.gov
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D. If there is a request from a law enforcement officer inquiring in regard to unidentified patients, the hospital staff will conduct a search of the admissions records to determine if there is a patient who may be a “possible match” for the missing person. The “possible match” information should be provided to the requesting law enforcement officer and every effort should be made to assist in identifying the patient. Refer to HIPAA privacy rules (45 CFR § 164.501 et seq.):

1. Law enforcement verification standards include but are not limited to:
   a) Official law enforcement agency email;
   b) Official law enforcement agency fax;
   c) In-person request of law enforcement officer with proper identification;
   d) Hospital Public Safety/Security personnel can also assist with law enforcement verification;
   e) Existing hospital policies.

2. Clinical information including but not limited to substance abuse and HIV testing should not be released to law enforcement.

E. If finger printing services are needed, the admissions staff or public safety personnel will contact the local law enforcement agency to request that fingerprints of the unidentified patient be taken and processed:

F. If identification has not been made through the process of fingerprinting, the admissions staff or public safety personnel shall make a referral to the Public Information Officer to obtain a photograph of the patient as well as significant facts that will help with identification. This information, along with the photograph, will be submitted to local media outlets, (print and TV) for assistance in identification. Consideration will be given to a specific locale if the patient’s point of origin is known or suspected;

G. If the patient’s condition makes it impossible for a photograph to be taken, details will be submitted for publication without the photograph;

H. If the patient is not identified within one week of publication of the photograph, the photograph and significant facts shall be submitted for publication in a wider area, until identification has been made.

I. A DNA sample can be collected by utilizing a DNA control kit and then forwarding the sample to one of the regional centers for classification and possible matching. Refer to attached list of regional centers;

J. When identification of a patient is made known, the Manager in the Admitting Department is to be notified immediately so that the system and all records may be updated;
K. The elements necessary for identification are: patient’s name, address, date of birth, social security # (if known), and next of kin;

L. The Manager in the Admitting Department is responsible for ensuring that appropriate changes are made in the hospital’s registration system;

M. The Manager in the Admitting Department is responsible for notifying the Medical Records department when it is deemed necessary to merge multiple patient record numbers.

V. Applicable Health Laws:

A. HIPAA privacy rules (45 CFR § 164.501 et seq.);

B. MHL § 33.13. Clinical records; confidentiality;

C. § 164.510 Uses and disclosures requiring an opportunity for the individual to agree or to object.

Note: The titles of those responsible for implementing this policy are generic and should be modified to coincide with the staff titles for each individual hospital.

Attachments:
- NCIC Unidentified Data Collection Entry Guide (NCIC Initial Entry Report)
- DNA Regional Laboratories
NCIC Initial Entry Report

Message Key (MKE) (See Categories, page 2)
- Unidentified Deceased (EUD)
- Unidentified Living (EUL)
- Unidentified Catastrophe Victim (EUV)

Date

Reporting Agency (ORI)

Body Parts Status (BPS)
- All 15 parts recovered - fresh (ALF)
- All 15 parts recovered - decomposed (ALD)
- All 15 parts recovered - skeletal (SKL)

Body Parts Status (BPS) if incomplete body or skeleton, see body diagram page 7 for coding corresponding parts

N: Not Recovered  D: Recovered Decomposed  F: Recovered Fresh  S: Skeletal

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15

Sex (SEX)
- Male (M)  Female (F)  Unknown (U)

Race (RAC)
- Asian or Pacific Islander (A)
- American Indian/Alaskan Native (I)
- Unknown (U)

- Black (B)
- White (W)

Estimated Year of Birth Range (EYB)

Estimated Date of Death (EDD)

Date Body Found (DBF)

Approximate Height Range (HGT)

Approximate Weight Range (WGT)

Eye Color (EYE)
- Black (BLK)
- Blue (BLU)
- Brown (BRO)
- Gray (GRY)
- Green (GRN)
- Hazel (HAZ)
- Maroon (MAR)
- Pink (PNK)
- Unknown (XXX)
- Multicolored (MUL)

Hair Color (HAI)
- Brown (BRO)
- Black (BLK)
- Gray or Partially Gray (GRY)
- Red/Auburn (RED)
- Blond/Strawberry (BLN)
- Blue (BLU)
- Green (GRE)
- Orange (ONG)
- Pink (PNK)
- Completely Bald (XXX)

Scars, Marks, Tattoos, and other Characteristics (SMT) (See Checklist, page 8)

Fingerprint Classification (FPC)*

Originating Agency Case Number (OCA)

Miscellaneous (MIS) Information such as build, handedness, clothing description, hair description, and weather conditions at the time of death, place where the individual was found, should be included. If more space is needed, attach additional sheet.**

* Fingerprint, if available, may be submitted electronically via the CJIS Wide Area Network or in hard copy to the FBI, CJIS Division, Post Office Box 4142, Clarksburg, West Virginia 26302-9929.

** All dental information should be recorded on the NCIC Unidentified Person Dental Report and entered into NCIC as supplemental information.
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<th>Blood Type (BLT)</th>
<th>A Positive (APOS)</th>
<th>B Positive (BPOS)</th>
<th>AB Positive (ABPOS)</th>
<th>O Positive (OPOS)</th>
<th>Unknown (UNKWN)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Negative (ANEG)</td>
<td>B Negative (BNEG)</td>
<td>AB Negative (ABNEG)</td>
<td>O Negative (ONEG)</td>
<td>O Unknown (OUNK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Unknown (AUNK)</td>
<td>B Unknown (BUNK)</td>
<td>AB Unknown (ABUNK)</td>
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<td>Was</td>
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<td>Full (F)</td>
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<td>Partial (P)</td>
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<td>None (N)</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Glasses</td>
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<th>Jewelry Type (JWT) (See Checklist, page 20)</th>
<th>Jewelry Description (JWL) (See Checklist, page 20)</th>
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<th>Medical Examiner/Coroner Agency Name and Case Number (MAN)</th>
<th>Medical Examiner/Coroner Locality (MAL)</th>
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<th>Medical Examiner/Coroner Telephone Number (MAT)</th>
<th>Investigating Officer and Telephone Number (MIS)</th>
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| NCIC Number (NIC)                                           |                                                     |
ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CENTRAL POLICE
SERVICES FORENSIC LABORATORY

John Simich, Ph.D. – Laboratory Director
Public Safety Campus Building
45 Elm Street
Buffalo, New York 14203
E-mail: john.simich@erie.gov

Kori Gawrys, Ph.D. – QA Manager
E-mail: Kori.Gawrys@erie.gov

ERIE COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINERS OFFICE
FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY LABORATORY

Christine Giffin – Chief County Toxicologist
Erie County Health
501 Kensington Ave
Buffalo, New York 14214
E-mail: Christine.Giffin@erie.gov

MONROE COUNTY CRIME LABORATORY

John Clark – Laboratory Director
85 West Broad Street
Rochester, New York 14614
E-mail: johnclark@monroecounty.gov

Marcia E. Bledsoe – QA Manager
E-mail: mbledsoe@monroecounty.gov

MONROE COUNTY OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER
FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY LABORATORY

Jeanne M. Beno, Ph.D. – Chief Toxicologist
740 East Henrietta Road
Rochester, New York 14623
E-mail: jbeno@monroecounty.gov

Karen Mahoney – QA Manager
E-mail: kmahoney@monroecounty.gov
NASSAU COUNTY OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER
TOXICOLOGY LABORATORY

Joseph Avella, Ph.D. – Director of Forensic Toxicology
2251 Hempstead Turnpike
Building R - Toxicology
East Meadow, New York 11554-1856
Email: javella@nassaucountyny.gov

Timothy Hahn – QA Manager
E-mail: thahn@nassaucountyny.gov

NASSAU COUNTY OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER
DIVISION OF FORENSIC SERVICES

Pasquale Buffolino, Ph.D. – Laboratory Director
2251 Hempstead Turnpike
Building R/DNA
East Meadow, New York 11554-1856
E-mail: pbuffolino@nassaucountyny.gov

Karen Dooling – QA Manager (Biology)
E-mail: kdoolling@nassaucountyny.gov

Mark Gil-QA Manager (Latents)
mgil@nassaucountyny.gov

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT
POLICE LABORATORY

Scott O’Neill, Ph.D. – Laboratory Director
Forensic Investigations Division
150-14 Jamaica Avenue
Jamaica, New York 11432-3725
E-mail: scott.oneill@nypd.org

Jennifer Lady – QA Manager
E-mail: Jennifer.Lady@nypd.org

ASCLD/LAB International CERTIFICATION ALI-057-T  Accreditation period: 03/20/2013 – 03/19/2018

NYS Accreditation: Drug Chemistry (Controlled Substances, Quantitative Analysis, General Chemical Testing); Forensic Toxicology (Human Performance Forensic Testing [Blood/Alcohol Analysis only], Beverage Alcohol Analysis); Trace Evidence (Paint, Fibers and Textiles, Glass, Fire Debris, Explosives, Hair, General Physical and Chemical Analysis); Latent Prints (Latent Print Processing); Firearms/Toolmarks (Firearms, Individual Characteristic Database - NIBIN);
Questioned Documents (Document Examination); Other (Impression Evidence [Footwear only], Gunshot Distance Determination, Serial Number Restoration)

NEW YORK CITY OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER
DEPARTMENT OF FORENSIC BIOLOGY

P: 212-323-1300
F: 212-323-1590

Tim Kupferschmid – Laboratory Director
421 E. 26th St.
New York, New York 10016

Marie Samples – Deputy Director
E-mail: Msamples@ocme.nyc.gov

Meredith Rosenberg-QA Manager
E-mail: Mrosenberg@ocme.nyc.gov

ASCLD/LAB International CERTIFICATION ALI-166-T Accreditation period: 11/19/2015 – 11/18/2019
NYS Accreditation: Biology (DNA- Nuclear, DNA- Mitochondrial, Body Fluid Identification)

NEW YORK CITY OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER
FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY LABORATORY

P: 212-447-2637
F: 212-447-6062

Dr. Gail Cooper
Director of Forensic Toxicology
520 First Avenue, Room 501
New York, New York 10016
E-mail: GCooper@ocme.nyc.gov

Reinaldo Fonseca – QA Manager
E-mail: Rfonseca@ocme.nyc.gov

ABFT CERTIFICATION #L007 Accreditation period: 10/01/2015 - 06/30/2017
NYS Accreditation: Forensic Toxicology

NEW YORK STATE POLICE CRIME LABORATORY

P: 518-457-1208
F: 518-457-2477

Ray Wickenheiser – Laboratory Director
1220 Washington Avenue, Building #30
Albany, New York 12226-3000
E-mail: ray.wickenheiser@troopers.ny.gov

Major Daniel Hart – Assistant Director
E-mail: daniel.hart@troopers.ny.gov
Dave Pulikowski – QA Manager
E-mail: david.pulikowski@troopers.ny.gov

ASCLD/LAB International CERTIFICATION ALI-064-T  Accreditation period: 6/21/13-6/20/18

NYS Accreditation: Drug Chemistry (Controlled Substances, Quantitative Analysis, General Chemical Testing, Clandestine Laboratory Analysis); Forensic Toxicology (Human Performance Forensic Toxicology); Biology (DNA-Nuclear, Body Fluid Identification, Individual Characteristic Database, Hair [Screening Only]); Trace Evidence (Paint, Fire Debris, General Physical and Chemical Analysis); Firearms/Toolmarks (Firearms); Latent Prints (Latent Print Processing, Latent Print Comparisons); Other (Impression Evidence [Footwear/Tires], Serial Number Restoration)

**NYSP Mid-Hudson Satellite Facility**

Joelyn Cornwell, MHSCL Supervisor
E-mail: joelyn.cornwell@troopers.ny.gov
224 Breunig Road
New Windsor, New York 12555
{Sergeant Shane Conklin – Station Commander}
E-mail: shane.conklin@troopers.ny.gov

**NYSP Southern Tier Satellite Facility**

Abigail Roberts, STSCL Supervisor
Email: Abigail.Roberts@troopers.ny.gov
P.O. Box 213
44 Park Street
Port Crane, New York 13833
{Sgt. Stephen D. Fessenden – Station Commander}
Email: stephen.fessenden@troopers.ny.gov

**NYSP Western Satellite Facility**

Jeffrey Marciano, WSCL Supervisor
E-mail: Jeffrey.Marciano@troopers.ny.gov
722 Homer Street
Olean, New York 14760
{Sergeant David Elliot – Station Commander}
E-mail: david.elliot@troopers.ny.gov

**NIAGARA COUNTY SHERIFFS DEPARTMENT**

**FORENSIC LABORATORY**

Chief Albert T. Mack – Laboratory Director
Brandon Sacco – QA Manager
E-mail: Brandon.sacco@niagaracounty.com

ASCLD/LAB International CERTIFICATION ALI-282-T Accreditation period: 06/11/2013 – 06/10/2018
NYS Accreditation: Drug Chemistry (Controlled Substances, Quantitative Analysis); Forensic Toxicology (Human Performance Forensic Toxicology, Forensic Urine Drug Testing, Post-Mortem Forensic Toxicology); Biology (Body Fluid Identification); Trace Evidence (Paint, Fiber and Textiles, Hair, Fire Debris, General Physical and Chemical Analysis); Firearms/Toolmarks (Firearms, Toolmarks); Other (Impression Evidence [Footwear/Tires], Serial Number Restoration)

ONONDAGA COUNTY CENTER FOR FORENSIC SCIENCES
Kathleen Corrado, Ph.D. – Laboratory Director
100 Elizabeth Blackwell Street
Syracuse, New York 13210
E-mail: kathleencorrado@ongov.net

ASCLD/LAB International CERTIFICATION ALI-058-T Accreditation period: 04/4/2013 - 04/03/2018
NYS Accreditation: Drug Chemistry (Controlled Substances, Quantitative Analysis, General Chemical Testing); Biology (DNA-Nuclear, Body Fluid Identification); Trace Evidence (Fire Debris); Firearms/Toolmarks (Firearms); Latent Prints (Latent Print Processing, Latent Print Comparisons); Digital & Multimedia Evidence (Computer Forensics); Other (Serial Number Restoration)

ONONDAGA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY LABORATORY
Kristie Barba – Laboratory Director
100 Elizabeth Blackwell Street
Syracuse, New York 13210
E-mail: Kristiebarba@ongov.net

Karen Sgarlata, MS – QA Manager
E-mail: Karensgarlata@ongov.net

ABFT CERTIFICATION # L 031 Accreditation period: 07/01/2015-6/30/2017
NYS Accreditation: Forensic Toxicology
SUFFOLK COUNTY CRIME LABORATORY

Robert E. Genna – Chief / Director of Crime Laboratory
Forensic Sciences Building #487
725 Veterans Memorial Highway, P.O. Box 6100
Hauppauge, New York 11788-0099
E-mail: robert.genna@suffolkcountyny.gov

Constance Dinkel – Acting QA Manager
E-mail: Constance.Dinkel@suffolkcountyny.gov

ASCLD/LAB-International CERTIFICATION #ALI-275-T   Accreditation period: 4/10/13 – 4/9/2018
NYS Accreditation: Drug Chemistry (Controlled Substances, Quantitative Analysis), Biology (DNA-Nuclear, Body Fluid Identification), Trace Evidence (Paint, Fiber and Textiles, Gunshot Residue, Glass, Hair, Fire Debris, General Physical and Chemical Analysis); Firearms/Toolmarks (Firearms, Toolmarks, Individual Characteristic Database), Questioned Documents (Document Examination), Crime Scene (Crime Scene Investigation, Crime Scene Reconstruction, Bloodstain Pattern Analysis), Other (Impression Evidence [Footwear/Tires], Serial Number Restoration)

SUFFOLK COUNTY OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER
TOXICOLOGY LABORATORY

Michael Lehrer, Ph.D. – Chief Toxicologist
Forensic Sciences Building #487
North County Complex
Hauppauge, New York 11787-4311
E-mail: michael.lehrer@suffolkcountyny.gov

Michael Katz – Assistant Toxicologist
E-mail: Michael.Katz@suffolkcountyny.gov
Robert Dettling - QA Manager
E-mail: Robert.Dettling@suffolkcountyny.gov

ABFT CERTIFICATION #L003   Accreditation period: 07/01/2014 – 06/30/2016
NYS Accreditation: Forensic Toxicology

WESTCHESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF LABORATORIES
& RESEARCH, DIVISION OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

Robert Adamo – Director of Forensic Science Services
10 Dana Road
P: 914-231-1630
(914) 231-4425
F: 914-231-1798

SUFFOLK COUNTY CRIME LABORATORY
P: 631-853-5585
F: 631-853-5739
Valhalla, New York 10595
E-mail: raa9@westchestergov.com

Linda Duffy – QA Manager
E-mail: Led1@westchestergov.com

ASCLD/LAB-International CERTIFICATION #ALI-016-T Accreditation period: 03/30/12 - 09/29/2016
NYS Accreditation: Drug Chemistry (Controlled Substances, Quantitative Analysis, General Chemical Testing); Biology (DNA-Nuclear, Body Fluid Identification); Trace Evidence (Paint, Fibers/Textiles, Gunshot Residue, Fire Debris, General Physical and Chemical Analysis); Crime Scene (Crime Scene Investigation, Blood Stain Pattern Analysis); Digital Evidence (Video Analysis, Audio Analysis); Other (Impression Evidence [Footwear/Tires])

WESTCHESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF LABORATORIES & RESEARCH, DIVISION OF FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY
P: 914-231-1800
F: 914-231-1798

Elizabeth Spratt, MS, DABFT – Director of Forensic Toxicology
10 Dana Road
Valhalla, New York 10595
E-mail: ess4@westchestergov.com

Christopher Cording, FS-ABFT – QA Manager
E-mail: cccd@westchestergov.com

ABFT CERTIFICATION #L012 Accreditation period: 07/01/2015-06/30/2017
NYS Accreditation: Forensic Toxicology

WESTCHESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY CRIME LABORATORY
P: 914-231-4031
F: 914-864-7684

Sergeant James Harrison – Laboratory Director
2 Dana Road
Valhalla, New York 10595
E-mail: jghj@westchestergov.com

Det. Richard Van Der Meulen – QA Manager
E-mail: rav5@westchestergov.com

ASCLD/LAB International CERTIFICATION ALI-302-T Accreditation period: 10/15/2013 – 10/14/2018
NYS Accreditation: Firearms/Toolmarks (Firearms); Latent Prints (Latent Print Processing, Latent Print Comparisons); Crime Scene (Crime Scene Investigation); Digital & Multimedia Evidence (Computer Forensics)

YONKERS POLICE DEPARTMENT FORENSIC SCIENCE
P: 914-377-7756
Laboratory

Colleen Lockhart – Laboratory Director
Robert W. Cacace Justice Center
104 South Broadway FSL

Yonkers, New York 10701-4007
E-mail: colleen.lockhart@ypd.YonkersNY.gov

Lenore Kodet – QA Manager
E-mail: lenore.kodet@ypd.yonkersny.gov

ASCLD/LAB International CERTIFICATION ALI-259-T Accreditation period: 12/18/2012 – 12/17/2017
NYS Accreditation: Drug Chemistry (Controlled Substances, Quantitative Analysis); Latent Prints (Latent Print Processing); Other (Impression Evidence [Footwear/Tires])