

EXECUTIVE DIGEST

FORENSIC SCIENCE DIVISION

INTRODUCTION

This report, issued in April 1998, contains the results of our performance audit* of the Forensic Science Division (FSD), Michigan Department of State Police.

AUDIT PURPOSE

This performance audit was conducted as part of the constitutional responsibility of the Office of the Auditor General. Performance audits are conducted on a priority basis related to the potential for improving effectiveness* and efficiency*.

BACKGROUND

The mission* of FSD is to provide leadership, development, coordination and delivery of "state of the art" forensic services to the criminal justice community.

FSD services are provided in seven regional laboratories. Services include examination, analysis, and expert testimony related to narcotics, toxicology*, latent prints*, serology*, firearms/toolmarks*, polygraph*, trace evidence*, questioned documents*, and deoxyribonucleic acid* (DNA). All services are not available at every laboratory.

FSD was appropriated \$14.0 million for fiscal year 1996-97 and had 173 employees as of November 30, 1997.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES,
CONCLUSIONS, AND
NOTEWORTHY
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Audit Objective: To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of FSD in providing forensic science services to criminal justice agencies.

Conclusion: We concluded that FSD was generally effective and efficient in providing forensic science services to criminal justice agencies. However, we noted the following material condition* :

- Substantial amounts of forensic laboratory fees were not assessed and submitted to FSD as required (Finding 1).

The Department responded that it agrees with the corresponding recommendations. FSD will continue to work with applicable parties to ensure that legislated fees are assessed and submitted and will evaluate the forensic services notification process.

Noteworthy Accomplishments: FSD has continuously maintained American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors Laboratory Accreditation Board* (ASCLD/LAB) accreditation since first obtaining it in 1984. FSD's ASCLD/LAB accreditation was most recently renewed in April 1996. This accreditation is fundamental in ensuring the credibility of forensic science services.

Audit Objective: To assess the effectiveness of the State's DNA profiling system.

Conclusion: We concluded that the State's DNA profiling system was not effective. We noted two material conditions:

- The DNA profiling program was not effective because samples* frequently were not collected and submitted to FSD for profiling (Finding 2).

The Department responded that it agrees with the corresponding recommendation and that FSD will continue to work with affected entities to ensure increased compliance with the provisions of the DNA profiling legislation.

- The DNA data base had not been developed and implemented (Finding 3).

The Department responded that it agrees with the corresponding recommendation and that FSD has developed a plan to expedite the development and implementation of the DNA data base.

Noteworthy Accomplishments: FSD is participating in a Federal Bureau of Investigation DNA research project. FSD is one of a select number of laboratories from around the country and Canada performing experiments to validate a new DNA profiling technique for use in the Combined DNA Index System* (CODIS).

**AUDIT SCOPE AND
METHODOLOGY**

Our audit scope was to examine the program and other records of the Forensic Science Division. Our audit was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and, accordingly, included such tests of the records

and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.

To accomplish our objectives, we examined FSD records related to proficiency testing* , productivity, forensic laboratory fees, and DNA profiles* for the period July 1, 1994 through November 30, 1997. We interviewed staff at FSD, district and circuit courts, the Department of Corrections, and local law enforcement agencies. We reviewed the FSD mission statement and applicable statutes, policies and procedures. We also reviewed procedures related to the receipt and processing of evidence. We visited nine courts to determine the process for assessing laboratory fees and contacted five sheriff departments and 19 State correctional facilities related to DNA profiling.

**AGENCY RESPONSES
AND PRIOR AUDIT
FOLLOW-UP**

Our audit report includes 3 findings and 4 corresponding recommendations. The agency preliminary response indicated that the Department agrees with all 4 recommendations.

We did not repeat any of the three recommendations included in the prior audit report.