

# DNA Evidence Management

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# DNA Evidence Management

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This document describes the operational guidance and procedures for evidence management in the DNA Casework Unit (DCU) and the Scientific and Biometrics Analysis Unit DNA Group (SBAU) and supplement the FBI Laboratory level 1 documents pertaining to receipt, check-in, inventory, transfer, return, and storage of physical evidence. The Case Administration Group (CAG) functions as the evidence hub within DCU.

## 2 SCOPE

This document applies to DNA personnel performing evidence management tasks, including receiving, transferring, and returning evidence for DCU and SBAU.

## 3 PROCEDURES

It is noted that the procedures listed below will typically occur in the order described; however, to maximize the workflow, they can occur in a different order, as necessary.

### 3.1 General Operations

- A. Evidence transfers to/from entities outside of DCU are generally performed by CAG personnel, with the exception of transfers that occur outside of normal Laboratory Division (LD) business hours. In these situations, other appropriately trained personnel may temporarily support CAG functions. DNA discipline evidence transfers in SBAU are generally performed by SBAU DNA personnel.
  
- B. Personnel will record all evidence transfers, including secondary evidence transfers, in the FBI Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) Forensic Advantage (FA) and/or in the unit's STACS™ Casework (STACS) software, on a paper Chain-of-Custody (COC) Log (7-243/7-243a), or in the Chain-of-Custody Log in the Explosives Reference Tool (EXPeRT), as appropriate, prior to performing work on the evidence.
  - 1. STACS is typically used to track evidence and secondary evidence during laboratory activities within the DCU and SBAU.
  - 2. For legacy cases, a paper Chain-of Custody Log or the Chain-of-Custody Log in EXPeRT are generally used in lieu of FA throughout these procedures.
  
- C. A virtual transfer is a recording of a transfer within FA, STACS, or EXPeRT where the physical custody of the item does not change. Virtual transfers are typically used when switching between the LIMS systems, for administrative reasons (e.g., Chain-of-Custody corrections in STACS), or due to limitations of the software.
  - 1. For virtual transfers recorded to switch between LIMS (i.e., FA to STACS or STACS to FA), a reason will not be recorded on the COC as an exception to the level 1 requirement.

- D. Transfers of drug and valuable evidence will be performed according to the appropriate level 1 documents. Appropriate locations for the storage of drug and valuable evidence may be physically located outside of DCU or SBAU controlled space; however, virtual storage locations for these areas will be available within STACS.
- E. For Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) investigations or prohibited cases that are conducted outside of FA or for classified information, the case and sample information entered into STACS will be limited to generic descriptions.

### **3.2 DNA Evidence Management**

- A. DNA personnel will follow the relevant level 1 documents and these procedures when receiving, transferring, examining, storing, or returning evidence.
- B. Evidence is stored, secured, and/or sealed in a manner to prevent loss, cross-transfer, contamination, or deleterious change.
  - 1. Evidence such as tissue, bones, teeth, liquid blood, and vaginal aspirates should generally be stored refrigerated, but may be stored frozen, if deemed necessary.
  - 2. Items that will be processed for latent prints should be stored at room temperature.
  - 3. Items with dried biological staining are generally stored at room temperature, but may be stored in a refrigerator or freezer.
  - 4. DNA extracts should be stored refrigerated or frozen.
    - i. For long term storage, DNA extracts may be dried and samples tubes stored at room temperature.
- C. Appropriately trained individuals accept evidence into the DCU or SBAU and ensure appropriate entries are in STACS. (See Evidence Receipt) The DNA Units use STACS for both Legacy and Forensic Advantage (FA) cases.

### **3.3 Evidence Receipt**

- A. The listing of incoming evidence placed in the Evidence Storage Room (ESR) can be viewed in the DNA (Primary) Evidence module (or equivalent) of FA. For evidence submitted in Legacy cases, DCU and SBAU personnel will be notified, typically by email, by the Evidence Management Unit (EMU) or the delivering LD unit or discipline.
- B. Evidence may be physically transferred in bulk from the DCU ESR or by a hand to hand transfer(s) from EMU or other LD unit personnel to a laboratory space for receiving into DCU, as long as the evidence transfers are appropriately recorded. The CAG laboratory space (e.g., Rm 3390) may be used as a temporary storage location for all non-drug and valuable related evidence during evidence receipt into

DCU. Evidence may be physically transferred in bulk from the SBAU ESR to a laboratory space for receiving into SBAU by any SBAU DNA personnel.

**Note:** All drug and valuable evidence will be transferred hand to hand, as per level 1 requirements.

- C. Since opening the primary evidence package (i.e., packaging in contact with evidence, also referred to as the proximal packaging) prior to laboratory activities could compromise the integrity of the evidence, the information obtained from the labeling or information provided by the customer will be used to describe the items during evidence receipt, when possible.
  - 1. In general, CAG does not open evidence containers received as part of a Multiple Unit Submission (MUS). If necessary to separate evidence into different storage conditions (e.g., freezer, room temperature), the Chain-of-Custody will reflect this separation to include confirmation of the listed contents within the container upon opening.
  - 2. For evidence received as a Single Unit Submission (SUS), an appropriately trained individual will open evidence containers as necessary for evidence breakdown and inventory purposes in accordance with the appropriate documents (e.g., LAB-200, LAB-400).
  - 3. If a primary evidence package is opened by CAG personnel, a note will be made in the case file (e.g., COC comment, Check-in Notes comment).

### 3.3.1 Evidence Receipt in a Multiple Unit Submission (MUS)

- A. Retrieve the evidence and in FA record the transfer to personal custody and a virtual evidence transfer to the “DCU (see DCU STACS COC)” or “See SBAU DNA STACS COC” (or equivalent) storage location.
- B. The information pertaining to the evidence received and packaging expectations in the FA batch details is captured for the DNA file in a record referred to as the FA list.
- C. Proceed to Receipt and Inventory in STACS.

### 3.3.2 Evidence Receipt in a Single Unit Submission (SUS)

- A. Retrieve the evidence and record the transfer to personal custody in FA.
- B. Review the request for examinations (e.g., Electronic Communication [EC], Laboratory Examination Request [LER], incoming communication) and any additional records to determine relevant information regarding the submitted evidence.
- C. Perform evidence breakdown according to the appropriate level 1 document (i.e., LAB-200). This includes generating check-in notes, capturing the batch details (i.e.,

generating the FA list), and assigning newly inventoried items to the DNA Case Record in FA.

1. The contents of packages that are received unsealed or damaged will be verified prior to correction.
  2. If swab packages are not opened, the check-in notes will reflect the swab count was not verified.
- D. Record a virtual evidence transfer in FA to the “DCU (see DCU STACS COC)” or “See SBAU DNA STACS COC” (or equivalent) storage location.
- E. Proceed to Receipt and Inventory in STACS.

### 3.3.3 Receipt and Inventory in STACS

- A. Add an evidence container using a STACS container barcode (e.g., AXXXXXE) and complete the appropriate information fields pertaining to the evidence container (i.e., Container Description, External Unit of origin).
- B. Based on the information from the batch details page in FA, the FA list, and/or the container markings (e.g., FA barcode), select the appropriate items of evidence in STACS and add to the newly created STACS container.
- C. Ensure the STACS container barcode is applied to the evidence container and complete the container inventory. This will record a virtual transfer from FA in the STACS COC.
- D. Repeat, as needed, for additional evidence containers.

### 3.3.4 Completion of Evidence Receipt

- A. As necessary (i.e., receipt of SUS evidence), notify the contributor that the evidence was received within DCU or SBAU and record the contact in the Case Communication Log within FA or STACS. [Refer to LAB-200 for acknowledgement content.] Ensure emails are retained (i.e., attached to the Case Communication Log, retained in a physical 1A, or uploaded to Sentinel).
- B. Use the appropriate transfer module in STACS and transfer the evidence to a person or a storage location.

## 3.4 Evidence Handling for Laboratory Activities

Guidance for describing evidence items during sampling is contained in the DNA collection procedure (i.e., BIO-501).

**CAUTION:** Be aware of items of evidence that resemble packaging (e.g., box, bag, envelope) as to not inadvertently damage the item (e.g., applying tape and initials to the evidence) or impact subsequent examinations.

- A. The Biologist, or an appropriately trained individual, that will perform laboratory activities (i.e., sampling or testing) will ensure the custody transfer is properly recorded.
  - 1. The item(s) transferred for laboratory activities will be verified to the extent possible without unnecessarily opening packaging layers.
    - i. The contents of evidence containers or packages not opened for laboratory activities by the DNA Units will not be verified.
  - 2. Any necessary corrections will be made to the Chain of Custody.
  - 3. Any packaging discrepancy (e.g., torn bag, broken seal) will be noted.
  
- B. If a primary evidence package (i.e., packaging in contact with evidence) is opened but no laboratory activities are conducted, it will be noted in the case file.
  
- C. Evidence from only one case will be examined by an individual at a time and only one evidence package will be opened for laboratory activities at any one time.
  - 1. The portion of the stain identified for analysis will be removed/collected from the item, placed into a corresponding labeled tube or new packaging (e.g., envelope), and the item returned to the evidence packaging. This process will be sequentially repeated for each separately packaged item within the case. Items that are packaged together or that will be further sub itemized may be examined together and then returned to the evidence packaging.
  
- D. Evidence is sealed and stored in accordance with the level 1 documents (Refer to LAB-200) with the following exception:
  - 1. DNA sample tubes/secondary evidence (e.g., extract tubes) will be stored without a proper seal from their creation until they are itemized in FA and packaged in a properly sealed container for return or storage.
    - i. If secondary evidence is removed from packaging for additional testing (e.g., recall from EMU or EU, resubmission) these sample tubes may again be stored without a proper seal until completion of the additional testing.

### **3.5 Evidence Return**

- A. An appropriately trained individual will ensure all items examined by the DNA Units are accounted for prior to return. FA should be referenced for packaging information.
  - 1. Caution must be taken when the contents are evidence items that resemble packaging (e.g., box, bag, envelope) as to not inadvertently

damage the item (e.g., applying tape and initials to the evidence) or impact subsequent examinations.

- B. When returning secondary evidence, create a new FA item (as needed), and generate a secondary evidence list report in STACS. This secondary evidence log will be retained in the case file. If secondary evidence from both a MUS and a SUS for a case will be returned at the same time and to the same location, all secondary evidence may be returned with the MUS.

#### 3.5.1 Evidence Return in a Multiple Unit Submission (MUS)

- A. Retrieve the evidence and record the transfer to personal custody in STACS.
- B. For evidence containers opened in DCU or SBAU, ensure all items are accounted for and containers are sealed appropriately.
- C. In STACS, record a virtual transfer of the evidence, including any necessary comments (e.g., FA item number for secondary).
- D. In FA, record the virtual and physical transfers of the evidence to the appropriate storage location or person.

#### 3.5.2 Evidence Return and Shipping of a Single Unit Submission (SUS)

For a TEDAC SUS, refer to section [3.5.1](#), unless items are requested to be returned to the contributor or another person/facility.

- A. Retrieve the evidence and record the transfer to personal custody in STACS.
- B. Ensure all items are accounted for and containers are sealed appropriately.
- E. In STACS, record a virtual transfer of the evidence, including any necessary comments (e.g., FA item number for secondary).
- C. Record the virtual transfer to personal custody in FA.
- D. Package the evidence for return according to the appropriate level 1 documents.
  - 1. Ensure the FA label is affixed to the shipping container and the appropriate items within the shipping container are reflected in FA.
  - 2. Ensure the shipping address is correct and generate a Shipping Invoice (7-264/7-264 LIMS) in accordance with the appropriate LOM practice.
  - 3. Ensure the Shipping Invoice and secondary evidence log (if applicable) are in the shipping container and a copy of the first page of the Shipping Invoice is attached to the outside of the container.

4. Ensure the shipping container is labeled with the appropriate evidence type descriptor (e.g., general [G], drug [D], valuable [V], firearm [F]). As appropriate, ensure the refrigeration label is affixed to shipping container.
- E. When physically transferred to the mailroom, record the hand-to-hand transfer in FA. Sealed shipping containers may be appropriately stored prior to transfer to the mailroom.

### 3.5.3 Evidence Return Records

The following records are typically generated and/or retained during evidence return:

- Secondary Evidence List Report.
- Shipping Invoice (for non-TEDAC SUS cases)
- STACS Chain-of-Custody
  - The STACS COC may be generated during evidence return and uploaded to the Case Record Object Repository and/or will be uploaded to Case Object Repository when the case is closed in STACS.

## 4 LIMITATIONS

The items transferred will be verified to the extent possible without unnecessarily opening packaging layers. The record of the items transferred relies on the markings on the evidence containers (e.g., FA or STACS barcodes) to ensure all item transfers are properly recorded on the Chain of Custody. Any necessary modifications will be made if/when the containers and packages are opened.

## 5 SAFETY

All evidence samples are considered potentially infectious regardless of the perceived status of the source individual or the age of the material. All personnel who work with such material will refer to the [FBI Laboratory Safety Manual](#) for information on personal safety and proper disposal of the chemicals and biohazardous wastes.

## 6 REVISION HISTORY

Revision	Issued	Changes
00	02/04/2022	Reformatted DNA 501-8 into new template and assigned new Doc ID. Minor updates to content. Added exception for virtual transfer reasons.
01	04/01/2024	Moved evidence management and handling requirements from BIO-101 into this document. Updates throughout to reflect current workflows.