

Forensic Science Practitioner Training, Continuing Education, and Professional Development Programs



WHAT IS AN AAFS STANDARD FACTSHEET?

The AAFS produces clear, concise, and easy-to-understand factsheets to summarize the contents of technical and professional forensic science standards on the OSAC Registry. They are not intended to provide an interpretation for any portion of a published standard.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STANDARD?

Forensic science service providers (FSSPs) establish training programs designed to achieve competency in targeted disciplines. FSSP management and its parent agency shall provide support and opportunities for continuing professional development.

This standard provides foundational requirements for the training, continuing education, and professional development of forensic science practitioners. Requirements address competency training criteria, documentation of training, training implementation, and continuous professional development.

This practice covers requirements for forensic science practitioners as they acquire and maintain their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and for training programs to manage and support the continuous development of their employees.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

Adherence to this standard establishes consistency between FSSPs, promotes efficient use of resources, and encourages general acceptance of training, continuing education, and professional development programs.

It provides information to help FSSPs to establish a training framework with program structure and content.

FSSPs are encouraged to meet this standard.



HOW IS THIS STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

FSSPs shall establish a process to oversee, coordinate, and document all training, testing to competency, and continuing professional development. Competency testing should be used as a measure of assessing the necessary KSAs of forensic science practitioners. At a minimum, training records shall contain documentation regarding the following: satisfaction of positional requirements, initial training, education, subsequent training, professional development, and the total number of hours or days involved in achieving or maintaining professional development. An annual average of at least 16 hours of continuing education or professional development shall be obtained by all forensic science practitioners over a three-year period.

Training and continuing professional development can be implemented in a variety of ways to maximize opportunities, minimize costs, and ensure high standards of professional practice. The implementation shall include one or more of the following: seminars, lectures, professional meetings, and in-service classes. Content and attendance are expected to be documented and available for external audits. Continuing education and professional development should be a combination of internal and external activities and can be delivered in-person, online, self-directed, or computer based.

This is a standard practice. Additional procedural steps beyond those required in the standard may be necessary. FSSPs that are unable to meet the requirements in this standard may use external resources to meet the requirements (e.g., outsourcing, partnerships).

