

## Standard for Consultation during Friction Ridge Examination



### 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?

When a competent friction ridge examiner seeks consultation on an image or comparison, this standard sets the requirements for documenting the consultation.

This standard prohibits examiners who have viewed both known and unknown friction ridge impressions from being a verifier for that examination.

It does not apply to conflict resolution.

Consultation is mentioned as an additional quality assurance measure in both ANSI/ASB 165, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 2024 and ANSI/ASB 166, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., 2024.

### WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

Consistency, accuracy, and reliability in the analysis and comparison of friction ridge impressions are needed for forensic investigations.

The benefits of conforming to this standard are multifaceted and include:

- Increased accuracy and reliability
- Reduction of bias
- Enhanced documentation and transparency
- Improved collaboration through structured consultations
- Clarity in complex cases



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

This standard is to be used by friction ridge examiners who have been authorized to conduct independent work. It does not apply to examiners in training.

This standard requires preliminary observations to be recorded in the case record by the initial examiner before requesting a consultation, and the preliminary observations are not provided to the consultant until after they have conducted their observations.

Other key elements of this standard include:

- Level of Interactions – The standard provides requirements for which interactions require consultation documentation and what the documentation must include.
- Documentation of in-depth interactions – It also provides recommendations for documenting specific in-depth interactions.
- Case Record – The standard requires documentation of the consultation, including additional notes, annotations, or images from the consultant, to be maintained in the case record.
- Consultation Documentation – Information about the consultation (e.g., specific friction ridge impressions reviewed, the consultation topic, etc.) must be documented.
- High Complexity Consultations – The standard directs consultants to generate an additional set of notes, annotations, and/or images in consultations where there is high complexity as defined by the forensic science service provider's policy.