
Laboratory Policy on Ethics and Conduct

- 1.0 Purpose** – This document provides guidance on the ethical standards and responsibilities for all personnel assigned to the State Crime Laboratory (Laboratory).
- 2.0 Scope** – These standards apply to all Laboratory personnel.
- 3.0 Laboratory Employee Pledge**
- 3.1** Upon hiring, new employees shall be required to read and sign a copy of the North Carolina State Crime Laboratory Employee Pledge (see Attachment A). Current Laboratory personnel will be required to read and sign a copy of the Employee Pledge upon enactment of this policy.
- 3.2 Acknowledgment**
- 3.2.1** The signed Employee Pledge shall be provided to the employee.
- 3.2.2** A copy of the signed Employee Pledge shall be maintained in the employee's personnel file.
- 4.0 Code of Conduct**
- 4.1** Prior to employment, and in order to remain in good standing, all Laboratory employees must be of sound moral character, exhibit integrity and honesty, and exhibit a high level of ethical repute.
- 4.2** Laboratory employees shall conduct themselves, in both their private and professional lives, in such a manner as to reflect most favorably upon the Department of Justice and the Laboratory.
- 4.3** Every Laboratory employee shall read, acknowledge and adhere to the Laboratory's Policy on Ethics and Conduct.
- 4.4** The Laboratory Code of Conduct, as set forth in this policy, shall govern the official and unofficial actions of each employee, whether the status is sworn, non-sworn, on-duty, or off-duty.
- 4.5** Laboratory employees shall not engage in conduct which is contrary to the intent and purpose of Laboratory policies or goals, or which would reflect adversely upon the Laboratory or its employees. This includes all unlawful acts, but also all acts, which although not unlawful, would degrade or bring disrespect upon the employee or Laboratory.
- 4.6** Laboratory employees shall be respectful, courteous, and impartial when dealing with the public and other employees.
- 4.7** Laboratory employees shall not use coarse, violent, profane, derogatory, or insolent language or gestures and shall not express maliciously any prejudice concerning race, religion, politics, sex, or national origin.
- 4.8** Laboratory employees are encouraged to bear in mind the sensitivity of others and should refrain from making remarks that may be offensive to others even though the remarks are not meant to be malicious.

4.9 Laboratory employees shall not make derogatory remarks against the character, reputation, integrity, intelligence, ability, or efficiency of the Laboratory or any of its employees to anyone other than the appropriate Supervisor, Manager, Assistant Director, or Director. An employee making such remarks shall provide substantiating facts.

4.10 The Laboratory has adopted the Guiding Principles of Professional Responsibility for Forensic Science Providers and Forensic Personnel. These principles apply not only to the Forensic Scientist and Laboratory Manager, but to all Laboratory personnel to the extent allowed by their job description and position.

4.11 The Forensic Scientist Manager or Supervisor shall ensure that all Laboratory personnel read and acknowledge the Guiding Principles of Professional Responsibility for Forensic Science Providers and Forensic Personnel annually.

4.12 Acknowledgement

4.12.1 This acknowledgement shall be documented.

5.0 Ethics Training

5.1 Application of ethical practices in forensic science is a crucial part of the training provided to newly-hired Forensic Scientists. Training shall be provided during completion of the Forensic Scientist Academy.

5.2 Acknowledgement

5.2.1 All ethics training shall be documented.

6.0 Compliance with the Laboratory Policy on Ethics and Conduct

6.1 Employees shall comply with all the rules, regulations, directives, and policies adopted by the Laboratory. Ignorance of rules, regulations, directives, and policies shall not justify non-compliance.

6.2 Employees who fail to comply with all the rules, regulations, directives, and policies adopted by the Laboratory shall be subject to disciplinary action according to Department of Justice and Laboratory policies and procedures, as well as the State Human Resources Manual.

6.3 An employee that observes a potential ethical violation shall notify his or her direct supervisor. The name of the employee reporting the violation shall remain confidential. No punitive action will be administered to an employee in retaliation for reporting a potential ethical violation.

6.4 Based on the ethics violation, additional action may be required.

6.4.1 If the ethics violation originates as an outside complaint, a Quality Assurance Record may be initiated in accordance with the Laboratory Procedure for Complaints.

6.4.2 If the ethics violation concerns the Quality System, a Corrective Action may be initiated. See the Laboratory Procedure for Corrective Action and Non-Conformities.

- 6.4.3** If it is determined that a violation of Laboratory Policy may have occurred, the Forensic Scientist Manger shall notify, via memo, the Laboratory Director within 2 business days.

7.0 Conformance with Laws

- 7.1** Each employee shall obey the laws of the United States, as well as the laws of North Carolina and local jurisdictions. If the evidence revealed by an investigation indicates that it is more likely than not that an employee has knowingly committed an act(s) which constitutes a violation of civil or criminal law or ordinance, then the employee may be deemed to have violated this subsection irrespective of prosecution or judicial verdict.

8.0 Employee/Close Association Arrest

- 8.1** An employee shall notify his or her direct supervisor immediately upon the occurrence of any of the following:
- 8.1.1** The employee has been arrested or otherwise charged with a crime, or the employee has reason to believe that he or she may be a suspect in a criminal investigation.
 - 8.1.2** The employee knows that his or her immediate family or household member has been arrested or otherwise charged with a crime, or the employee has reason to believe that such person may be a suspect in a criminal investigation.
- 8.2** The direct supervisor shall notify those in the chain of command.
- 8.3** The employee shall set forth, in writing, all known circumstances concerning the arrest and/or investigation.

9.0 Associations

- 9.1** Except as necessary for the performance of official duties, employees shall avoid associations or dealings with persons they know, or should know, are racketeers; sexual offenders; suspected felons; under criminal investigation or indictment; or have a reputation in the community for present involvement in felonious or criminal behavior.

10.0 Personal Involvement in Investigations

- 10.1** Laboratory employees shall not perform any analysis or investigation in a case in which they or their immediate family, or close personal friends, are involved (e.g., as suspects, witnesses, victims, etc.), without the knowledge and approval of his or her immediate supervisor.

11.0 Personal Appearance

- 11.1** All Laboratory employees shall maintain a neat, well-groomed appearance while at work.
- 11.2** Personal hygiene and appearance shall not adversely affect normal operations and/or employees of the Laboratory.
- 11.3** Employees shall abide by the following guidelines:

11.3.1 Hair Styles

- 11.3.1.1** Hair must be neat, trimmed, combed, and clean.
- 11.3.1.2** Hair must not be styled in such a manner as to hinder the effective use of gas masks, hearing protectors, and other headgear designed for individual safety.
- 11.3.1.3** Wigs and hairpieces must conform to guidelines established for natural hair.

11.3.2 Tattoos, Brands and Piercings

- 11.3.2.1** Tattoos or brands cannot be visible on the head, face, chest or neck.
- 11.3.2.2** Visible tattoos or brands cannot be vulgar, indecent, sexist, racist, or incite sexual thoughts.
- 11.3.2.3** Tattoos that do not meet the above specifications must be covered by clothing that meets the guidelines of this directive, tattoo-covering makeup consistent with the employee's skin tone or by an approved "Tat-Jacket." Any other method for covering tattoos must be approved by the Laboratory Director. These items must be purchased at the employee's expense.
- 11.3.2.4** Piercings shall be limited to the ears. No other piercings (including, but not limited to, nose, lip, brow, tongue, neck) shall be displayed while working.

11.3.3 Dress Code

- 11.3.3.1** Employees, while at work, shall dress according to individual taste but in a manner which will promote/enhance a professional image of the Laboratory. Attire shall be clean, neat, and not propose or portray attitudes or ideas inconsistent with the standards of the Laboratory.
- 11.3.3.2** When attending court, meeting with the public or other members of the criminal justice community or otherwise appearing before a group of individuals as a spokesperson for the Laboratory, employees shall dress in business attire. Business attire is defined as follows:
 - 11.3.3.2.1** Females shall wear a conservatively designed dress, suit, skirt and blouse, or coordinating dress pants and jacket, and footwear designed for dress wear.
 - 11.3.3.2.2** Males shall wear a conservative suit or conservative and coordinated sport coat and dress slacks, dress shirt and tie, and clean/shined dress shoes.
- 11.3.3.3** When participating as an attendee in training courses/conferences with no likelihood of attending court, conducting interviews, meeting with the public or other members of the criminal justice community, or otherwise appearing

before a group of individuals as a spokesperson for the Laboratory, employees may dress in business casual as described below:

- 11.3.3.3.1** Females shall wear a conservatively designed dress, skirt, blouse/shirt, dress slacks with leg length at the ankle, khakis, and footwear designed for dress purposes.
- 11.3.3.3.2** Males shall wear khakis, dress slacks, collared shirt, and footwear designed for dress purposes.
- 11.3.3.4** Casual attire, including smocks/scrubs, will be allowed at all other times. Pants/slacks with leg length above ankles will be permitted for women. Athletic type footwear will be permitted for both men and women.
- 11.3.3.5** Any time an employee is dressed in business casual or casual attire as outlined, they shall have available appropriate clothing to allow them to meet the requirements of business attire should a change of circumstances dictate.
- 11.3.3.6** When engaged in crime scene searches or related training, employees may wear authorized utility clothing in lieu of appropriate attire as outlined in the preceding paragraphs.
- 11.3.3.7** The following attire shall be PROHIBITED:
 - 11.3.3.7.1** Clothing which induces ridicule or is offensive.
 - 11.3.3.7.2** Clothing which shows excessive wear or has faded or washed out appearance.
 - 11.3.3.7.3** Dress/skirt with hemline 3” inches or more above the knees.
 - 11.3.3.7.4** “Flip flop” type footwear.
 - 11.3.3.7.5** Bedroom type footwear.
 - 11.3.3.7.6** Clothing designed for athletic activity.
 - 11.3.3.7.7** Tank tops.
 - 11.3.3.7.8** Clothing which is designed to reveal the midriff.
- 11.3.3.8** Management may prohibit or allow other articles of clothing on a case-by-case basis.

12.0 Records

- Signed copy of North Carolina State Crime Laboratory Employee Pledge
- Annual employee acknowledgement of Guiding Principles of Professional Responsibility for Forensic Science Providers and Forensic Personnel

- Documentation of annual ethics training

13.0 Attachments

- Attachment A: North Carolina State Crime Laboratory Employee Pledge

Revision History		
Effective Date	Version Number	Reason
10/31/2014	1	Original Document
07/01/2016	2	8.1 – added immediate family or household member.
04/28/2017	3	4.10, 4.11, 12.0 – Updated reference to Guiding Principles of Professional Responsibility for Forensic Science Providers and Forensic Personnel 6.3 – added instructions for observed violations. Appendix A – updated logo.

Attachment A: North Carolina State Crime Laboratory Employee Pledge

North Carolina State Crime Laboratory Employee Pledge

I, _____, understand that as an employee of the North Carolina State Crime Laboratory, I must make it my primary goal to focus on three key objectives: Truth, Science and Justice.

I promise to pursue the truth while remaining objective at all times.

I promise to remain proficient in my field of expertise, and to serve proudly as a representative of my scientific discipline.

I promise to treat my work with fairness and impartiality, all the while striving to achieve a logical, lawful and just conclusion.

I am mindful that professionalism, honesty and integrity are fundamental to my work, and I understand that my actions reflect upon me, my fellow employees and our agency as a whole.

Most importantly, I understand that, first and foremost, my duty is to serve the citizens of North Carolina, and I pledge to do so to the best of my abilities.

One Team. One Mission.

Signature _____

Date _____

Supervisor/Manager Signature _____

Laboratory Director Signature _____

