



# NEWS

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## **“The CSI Effect: Turning Fiction into Reality”**

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### ***Forensic DNA Training for Victim-Serving Professionals Scheduled for Boston and Portland***

**Washington, DC** –The National Center for Victims of Crime today announced “The CSI Effect: Turning Fiction into Reality,” two full-day trainings on forensic DNA for victim-serving professionals, to be held May 5, 2008, in Braintree, Massachusetts, and June 5, 2008, in Portland, Oregon. The sessions, featuring distinguished forensic and legal experts, will focus on forensic DNA databases and profiles, DNA-related laws, and how to help victims whose cases involve DNA evidence.

As the role of forensic DNA continues to grow, victim advocates, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers must often provide victims with accurate information that dispels common misconceptions about the use of DNA evidence in the criminal justice process. Professionals must understand:

- How DNA evidence is collected, tested, and stored;
- The structure, content, and operating procedures of state and federal DNA databases;
- Laws and proposed laws governing DNA evidence; and
- Best practices for working with victims on cases with DNA evidence.

“Advances in forensic DNA technology have revolutionized the criminal justice process in recent years,” said Mary Lou Leary, executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime and a former federal prosecutor. “But to make the most of these tools and to help victims understand them, we need to grasp DNA fundamentals ourselves.”

To find out exactly what victim-serving professionals need to know, the National Center conducted two separate studies—an online survey in February 2007 and a multidisciplinary focus group in June 2007. The resulting report, *DNA Knowledge among Victim Service Providers, Results of an Online Survey and a Multidisciplinary Focus Group*, found that

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professionals need more accurate and reliable sources of information, a better understanding of forensic DNA databases, more written information for victims, and more training for themselves.

The National Center designed the upcoming trainings to meet these needs and to explore the most recent advances in forensic DNA-related practice and public policy. Participants will learn how to apply scientific, legislative, and logistical advances to enhance the impact of forensic DNA technology in their jurisdictions. Session topics will include:

- Demystifying DNA Profiles and CODIS (the federal database)
- Interacting with Victims in Cases with DNA Evidence
- Current Laws on the Collection, Processing, and Storage of DNA Samples
- Maximizing the Potential of DNA Technology
- The Future Is Now: DNA Innovators Discuss Their Work
- Turning Ideas into Action

In the final session, participants will identify the most important forensic DNA challenges in their own jurisdictions and brainstorm how to reduce obstacles to progress.

“The ‘CSI Effect’ training will boost our field’s ‘intelligence quotient’ on forensic DNA, eliminate widespread misconceptions, and help participants tackle local problems,” said Mary Lou Leary. “We are thrilled to offer our colleagues the DNA basics, reliable sources, and working strategies they are looking for.”

Registration for the trainings, which are being offered free-of-charge, is now open at [www.ncvc.org/dna](http://www.ncvc.org/dna).

The training sessions are supported by Applied Biosystems, a leader in forensic DNA technologies. The full report that led to the development of the training (*DNA Knowledge among Victim Service Providers, Results of an Online Survey and a Multidisciplinary Focus Group*), along with the National Center for Victims of Crime’s series of educational brochures on DNA, is also available at [www.ncvc.org/dna](http://www.ncvc.org/dna).

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*The National Center for Victims of Crime is dedicated to forging a national commitment to help victims of crime rebuild their lives. The National Center’s National Crime Victim Helpline, 1-800-FYI-CALL, offers victims supportive counseling, practical information about crime and victimization, referrals to local community resources, and skilled advocacy in the criminal justice and social service systems.*