
PLENARY DESCRIPTIONS

The “CSI Effect”: Maximizing the Potential of Forensic DNA

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A Survivor’s Story

Hear firsthand from a rape survivor and her husband, a retired law enforcement officer, about the importance of DNA evidence for victims.

Debbie and Rob Smith, H-E-A-R-T

Maximizing the Potential of DNA Technology

Learn about innovative uses of DNA technology that make CSI seem like reality, not fiction. Some jurisdictions—both in the United States and abroad—are extremely advanced in their use of DNA technology and can serve as models for U.S. states and counties. Recent advances in search techniques also have the potential to yield more investigative leads and close more cases.

Chris Asplen, Vice President, Gordon Thomas Honeywell Governmental Affairs

Demystifying DNA Profiles and CODIS: Privacy and Other Issues

Learn how forensic DNA profiles are generated from evidence, what information they contain, and how they are matched with offenders through the Combined DNA Indexing System (CODIS). This workshop will also cover how the different types of samples and profiles (offender, victim, exclusion, crime scene) are stored and accessed, and will address concerns about victim privacy.

A Detective’s Perspective: Working Cold Cases

Learn from a detective about the nuances of investigating cold case sexual assaults and homicides after receiving new DNA information. This presentation covers the background of the Denver Police Department’s nationally recognized, innovative, and pioneering Cold Case Review Project. Discuss case examples and examine pitfalls and best practices of investigating cold cases, including suspect interview and initial victim contact.

Detective Barb Wimmer, Cold Case Investigations, Denver Police Department

Interacting with Victims in DNA-Related Cases

Learn about the emerging best practices regarding interaction and service provision for cold case victims, co-victims, and their families, as established in the Victim Assistance Unit of the Denver Police Department. Topics will include interacting sensitively and respectfully with victims while obtaining needed information and cooperation. Also covers what victims need from law enforcement in general, as well as in specific types of cases (sexual assault, homicide, cold cases).

Sarah Chaikin, Cold Case Coordinator, Denver Police Department Victim Assistance Unit

A Prosecutor's Perspective: Making the Most of DNA Evidence

Learn from the prosecutor's perspective about innovative uses of DNA evidence in criminal cases, including the use of John Doe Warrants and the use of cold hit information in sex predator proceedings. Also covers responding to the CSI effect in the courtroom, challenging the defense expert, notifying victims, and constitutional concerns related to DNA collection.

Norm Gahn, Assistant District Attorney, Milwaukee District Attorney's Office

DNA Legislative Issues and Advocacy Opportunities

Learn about current and proposed laws (at both the state and federal levels) affecting the collection, storage, and testing of DNA forensic evidence, as well as innovative state laws concerning missing persons and DNA. Presenter will discuss how participants can get involved in improving their state's laws related to DNA evidence.

Lisa Hurst, Consultant, Gordon Thomas Honeywell Governmental Affairs