



Principles of Forensic DNA for Officers of the Court

The Office of Justice Programs' National Institute of Justice is offering a free, online course on the use of forensic DNA in judicial proceedings.

"Principles of Forensic DNA for Officers of the Court" is a 15-module -tutorial developed to educate prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges on DNA analysis and the legal issues surrounding the use of DNA in the courtroom. Although developed with the criminal justice community in mind, the course, which can be accessed at www.dna.gov, will also interest the general public.

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) was first introduced as evidence in the United States in a State court in 1987. DNA technology is now widely used by police, prosecutors, defense counsel, and courts in the United States.

Training modules, which include links to online glossary terms, cover the following topic areas:

- **Introduction.** Provides an overview and program objectives.
- **Biology of DNA.** Discusses biological terminology and the basic biology of forensic DNA identity testing.
- **Practical Issues Specific to DNA Evidence.** Discusses crime scene issues related to DNA evidence.
- **Introduction to the Forensic DNA Laboratory.** Discusses the history of forensic DNA analysis and laboratory processes used in forensic DNA analysis.
- **Assuring Quality in DNA Testing.** Discusses quality assurance and standards that apply to DNA testing.
- **Understanding a Forensic DNA Lab Report.** Provides basic elements and common terminology used in a DNA forensic lab report.
- **Statistics and Population Genetics.** Discusses both the statistical interpretation of DNA evidence and the statistical software used.

- **Mitochondrial DNA & Y-STR Analysis.** Discusses the application of mitochondrial DNA and Y chromosome markers in the examination of biological evidence.
- **Forensic DNA Databases.** Discusses how DNA databases can be used to investigate crime.
- **Collection of DNA Evidence From a Suspect or Arrestee.** Discusses how a suspect's DNA is obtained and relevant legal issues.
- **Pretrial DNA Evidence Issues.** Covers discovery issues, expert testimony, and defendant issues.
- **Victim Issues.** Discusses issues important to victims in cases involving DNA evidence, such as privacy concerns.
- **Trial Presentation.** Discusses presentation of DNA evidence to a judge or jury.
- **Postconviction DNA Testing Cases.** Discusses legal and procedural issues that should be considered in State postconviction DNA cases.
- **Emerging Trends.** Discusses new forensic technologies being developed.

This online training course was developed as part of President Bush's DNA Initiative, Advancing Justice Through DNA Technology, a 5-year, \$1 billion initiative to improve the use of forensic DNA analysis in the criminal justice system through increased funding, training, and other assistance.

For more information about the initiative, visit dna.gov. For more information about the Principles of Forensic DNA for Officers of the Court and other training courses, visit dna.gov/training.

The National Law Enforcement and
Corrections Technology Center System
Your Technology Partner
www.justnet.org
800-248-2742



This article was reprinted from the Summer 2006 edition of *TechBeat*, the award-winning quarterly newsmagazine of the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center system, a program of the National Institute of Justice under Cooperative Agreement #2005-MU-CX-K077, awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Analyses of test results do not represent product approval or endorsement by the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice; the National Institute of Standards and Technology, U.S. Department of Commerce; or Lockheed Martin Aspen Systems Corporation. Points of view or opinions contained within this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The National Institute of Justice is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and Office for Victims of Crime.