

This case study will be utilized as a tool throughout the training modules, and is particularly employed as an example throughout the module review questions. It may be helpful to refer back to this case study frequently, and/or print out a copy for easy reference.

CASE STUDY

DNA testing is a problem for many laboratories because the demand to test forensic evidence is increasing faster than the capacity of laboratories to process cases, creating a backlog. There are two types of backlogs: 1) *casework backlogs*, and 2) *convicted offender and arrestee DNA backlogs*. Casework is forensic evidence collected from crime scenes, victims, and suspects in criminal cases and then submitted to a laboratory. Convicted offender and arrestee DNA samples are taken directly from convicted offenders and arrestees.

The process for working with casework evidence is more time-consuming than working with DNA samples because it must be screened first to determine whether any biological materials exist. However, DNA evidence has a related but different problem – the amount of *untested* DNA evidence collected from crime scenes and stored in law enforcement evidence rooms awaiting submission to laboratories. Federal funding programs to reduce backlogs in crime laboratories have not been designed to address *untested* evidence stored at law enforcement agencies.

The Department of Crime Laboratory Service (DCLS) operates forensic DNA laboratories which serve federal, state and local law enforcement agencies throughout Maryland. The DCLS submits forensic evidence collected from crime scenes (*casework*) to its laboratories, as well as DNA samples to analyze taken directly from convicted offenders and/or arrestees. There are five cities which operate DNA laboratories in Maryland: Cumberland (western Maryland), Baltimore (northern Maryland), Annapolis (central Maryland), and Leonardtown and Salisbury (southern Maryland). DCLS has two on-going DOJ grant awards valued at \$878,000.

Currently, the Maryland DCLS has a combined backlog of forensic DNA evidence cases of 8,427, an increase of 19% over last year. On average, the laboratories perform 3,780 casework screenings (315 cases per month), and performs 2,292 DNA analysis (191 cases per month). To reduce this backlog, the DCLS has just been awarded a new OJP grant to 1) expand its staff levels by adding 10 additional forensic scientists (2 per site), 2) purchase new automated equipment that will allow the analysis of multiple samples simultaneously and eliminate the need for scientists to wait in line to utilize existing equipment, and 3) have the existing staff (50) work overtime on the backlog of DNA cases. Additionally, the DCLS is proposing to construct a new laboratory in Reisterstown to address an 8% increase in the DNA cases submitted in the northern section of Maryland.