Background, Function, and Purpose

The need to identify qualified forensic scientists who can provide essential professional services for the nation's judicial and executive branches of government has long been recognized. In response to the professional need, the American Board of Forensic Toxicology was organized in 1975 to provide, in the interest of the public and the advancement of the sciences, a certification program in forensic toxicology. In 1996, the Board established a Laboratory Accreditation Program in Forensic Toxicology.

With regard to Laboratory Accreditation, the objectives of the Board are to establish, enhance, and maintain standards of qualification for those laboratories that practice Postmortem Forensic Toxicology or Human Performance Toxicology and to accredit as qualified laboratories those applicants who comply with the requirements of the Board. In this way, the Board aims to establish a practical and equitable system of readily identifying laboratories that have demonstrated the requisite qualifications and competence in forensic toxicology.

Laboratory Accreditation is based upon compliance with professional standards as assessed by peer review, including an onsite inspection and successful achievement in proficiency testing programs as required by the Board.

The Board is a non-profit 501(c)(6) organization incorporated in the District of Columbia. It is recognized by the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, the Society of Forensic Toxicologists, the California Association of Toxicologists, the Canadian Society of Forensic Science, and the Southwestern Association of Toxicologists. The Board is composed of the officers and other directors, who serve staggered terms and are selected from Certificants at large by a Nominating Committee process.

General Provisions

- The right to deny Accreditation is reserved.
- The period of accreditation is for two years following successful completion of the inspection, dependent on a satisfactory 12-month review of a self-evaluation, proficiency test summaries, and remediation of any areas of non-compliance.
- Laboratories holding valid Certificate of Accreditation are entitled to state on reports, or in another appropriate manner, that they are "Accredited by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology, Inc."
- A list of currently accredited laboratories is maintained on the ABFT website.
- Certificates may be suspended or revoked for appropriate cause under an elaborate system of safeguards for the laboratory concerned.
- Requirements and application procedures for accreditation are subject to revision by the Board. The latest version is available on the ABFT website.
- Successful applicants are issued a Certificate of Laboratory Accreditation in Forensic Toxicology, and the name of the laboratory is published on the ABFT website and, from time to time, in other publications at the discretion of the Board.

For additional information, and for answers to questions concerning the Laboratory Accreditation process, please contact either the ABFT Executive Director or the Chair of the ABFT Laboratory Accreditation Committee at the addresses listed on the ABFT website.

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American Board of
ABFT
Forensic Toxicology™

Laboratory Accreditation

Mission of the ABFT Laboratory Accreditation Program

The mission of the ABFT Laboratory Accreditation progam is to enhance and maintain standards of practice for the detection, identification, and quantitation of alcohol, drugs, and other toxins in biological specimens.

An introduction to the Nature and Purposes of the Board with a summary of the requirements for Laboratory Accreditation.

Complete details can be obtained from the ABFT website and the provided Accreditation Documents.

The American Board of Forensic Toxicology
is accredited by the
Forensic Specialties Accreditation Board.

Accrediting Forensic Toxicology Laboratories since 1996

www.abft.org

American Board of Forensic Toxicology Laboratory Accreditation Overview

Eligibility and Preamble

Laboratories eligible to apply are those performing postmortem toxicology or human performance toxicology, including at least the detection, identification, and quantitation of alcohol and other drugs in biological specimens such as whole blood, urine, and other tissues. Other areas of toxicology are not included (e.g., clinical toxicology, forensic urine drug testing, methadone maintenance testing).

The standards used in this program are based on the report of the joint SOFT/AAFS Forensic Laboratory Guidelines Committee (March 21, 1991, and subsequent revisions) and additional recommendations of the ABFT Accreditation Committee.

Application Procedure

All application documents are available on the ABFT website. Review the ABFT Laboratory Standards Manual and Program Outline carefully before completing the Accreditation Application and Standards Checklist.

The completed documents and attachments will be reviewed by the Accreditation Committee of the ABFT to assess whether the laboratory is ready to submit to an onsite inspection. The ABFT Committee may request clarification or additional information from the laboratory before an inspection is scheduled. It is recognized that the budget of most forensic laboratories is limited, such that a second accreditation inspection following an initial unsuccessful inspection is to be avoided if possible. It is, therefore, in the interest of the laboratory to provide as much supplementary information as practical with the initial application, in order that the preliminary assessment is both comprehensive and fair. In particular, use the space available in the Checklist to make notes clarifying "Conform/Non-conform" answers. Answers to most of the questions in the checklist must be qualified by a description and as applicable, reference to the place in the laboratory's SOP where the issue or policy is described.

Compliance with all standards is mandatory unless deemed to be not applicable. Applicant laboratories must ensure that, to the best of their knowledge, they are in compliance with all standards before an inspection is scheduled. If the ABFT Accreditation Committee judges that the laboratory's performance in the proficiency tests to which they subscribe has been unsatisfactory over the 12 months preceding the application, the application for accreditation may be denied. Obviously, deficiencies may become apparent during an inspection, and the laboratory will be required to address them prior to accreditation being granted.

Additional copies of the Application Form, Program Outline, and Standards Checklist may be downloaded from the ABFT website at www.abft.org.

The forms may be completed using a word processor and submitted "as is" or as an Adobe PDF file. For new applications, prior to review of an application, the laboratory must provide a check or purchase order for the application and inspection fee payable to American Board of Forensic Toxicology, Inc. and sent to the ABFT office at the address noted on this brochure and the website. Finally, please contact the Chair of the ABFT Accreditation Committee prior to submitting an application for inspection.

The following documents are required to be submitted as part of the application:

1. Application form.
2. Standards Checklist (completed in full with narrative answers).
3. Summaries of results of relevant proficiency tests covering the previous 12 months, to include, at a minimum, CAP AL1, CAP FTC, and CAP T-series* (to include the PT provider summary showing the applicant laboratory's results, in addition to the laboratory's own documentation summarizing the results and internal review. (Note: for the CAP T-series, labs are expected to complete all qualitative challenges, plus those quantitative tests that the lab offers and would ordinarily perform within the report period for the T-series shipment.)
4. Summary documentation of any corrective action for PT deficiencies (see also the ABFT document "Guidelines for Performing Corrective Action for Deviations in Proficiency Test Results").
5. Laboratory floor plan showing access security.
6. Litigation package(s) for positive ethanol and positive drug quantitation (may be same or different cases). Copies of current SOPs utilized in the screening and confirmation of the reported results must be included.

Reaccreditation

After 20 months of the two-year cycle, a letter will be sent to the laboratory inviting application for reaccreditation. The same requirements and procedures apply to reaccreditation as to the laboratory's initial accreditation.

Application Review

Review of the application will be based, to the extent practical, on the same general criteria that will be employed for the final inspection. In reaching a decision, the Accreditation Committee will make use of the information provided by the laboratory, including the Litigation Package, the Proficiency Test summaries, and the comments given in the Checklist completed by the laboratory director, in judging whether Accreditation standards are met.

Accreditation Cycle and Fees

A non-refundable fee is required for processing and reviewing the initial application. There will be an additional cost for the onsite inspection. This will cover the cost of the inspection, review of the inspection reports, and follow-up correspondence. After initial accreditation, each laboratory is assessed an annual maintenance fee. That annual fee covers the cost of a biannual mid-cycle review and a biannual inspection. The current fee schedule is posted on the ABFT website (www.abft.org).

Twelve-Month Review

Approximately ten months after initial accreditation (or the last renewal), the laboratory director will be asked to complete a Mid-Cycle Self-Report (which consists of only the primary checklist section summaries) and send it, together with all relevant Proficiency Test Summaries received since the last onsite inspection and summaries of corrective action, to the ABFT Accreditation Committee chair.

Proficiency Testing

The ABFT accreditation is contingent upon successful performance in the following three programs: CAP Whole Blood Alcohol, CAP Whole Blood Forensic Toxicology (FTC), and the CAP T-series. For both the CAP FTC and T-series programs, laboratories must perform qualitative screening and confirmation tests, as required, on all samples. Quantitative testing must be performed for all analytes which are included in the laboratory's list of routinely quantitated substances. For the T-series, quantitative testing may be limited to those analytes that the laboratory normally performs on a regular basis, defined as being within the reporting period set by CAP.