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NEARLY 9 IN 10 CRIME LABS WERE ACCREDITED IN 2014, UP FROM 7 IN 10 IN 2002

WASHINGTON – At the end of 2014, 88 percent of the nation’s 409 publicly funded forensic crime laboratories were accredited by a professional forensic science organization, which was up from 82 percent at yearend 2009 and 70 percent at yearend 2002, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. The American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board, International, was the most common type of accreditation in 2014.

The vast majority (98 percent) of publicly funded crime labs performed proficiency testing to help ensure the accuracy and reliability of their work. Ninety-five percent of crime labs used declared tests (where the examiner knew the sample he or she was analyzing was a test sample). More than a third (35 percent) used random case reanalysis (where the examiner’s work was randomly selected for reanalysis by another examiner) and a tenth (10 percent) performed blind proficiency tests (where the examiner was not aware he or she was being tested).

The findings are based on the Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories, which collects data on the budgets, staffing, workload, outsourcing and quality assurance practices of federal, state, county and municipal crime labs nationwide. Private labs were not included in the census.

In 2014, publicly funded crime labs employed an estimated 14,300 full-time personnel and had a combined operating budget of \$1.7 billion. More than half (60 percent) of the crime lab employees were analysts or examiners who prepared and analyzed evidence and reported on their conclusions.

Publicly funded crime labs received an estimated 3.8 million requests for forensic services during 2014. About three-quarters of requests involved the analysis of controlled substances (33 percent), biological samples collected from convicted offenders and arrestees for a DNA database (24 percent) or toxicology (15 percent).

Publicly funded crime labs had an estimated backlog of 570,100 requests for forensic services at yearend 2014, which was down from 895,500 backlogged requests at yearend 2009. A reduction in the number of backlogged requests to process biological samples from convicted offenders or arrestees for a DNA database between 2009 and 2014 led to the overall decline in the backlog. To address the demands for forensic services, 38 percent of publicly funded crime labs outsourced one or more forensic services to private labs or other public facilities in 2014, up from 28 percent in 2009.

(MORE)

Other findings include—

- During 2014, more than 8 in 10 (81 percent) crime labs handled the identification of illegal drugs and other controlled substances, and about two-thirds (62 percent) of labs analyzed biological samples (such as blood and saliva) from criminal casework or from convicted offenders or arrestees for DNA database profiles.
- Three-quarters (75 percent) of crime labs had written standards for performance in 2014 to establish a threshold for employee performance and ensure that performance measures were applied consistently for employees with similar roles.
- Nearly all (94 percent) crime labs had a written code of ethics to ensure analysts worked within the confines of their expertise, provided objective findings and testimony and avoided conflicts of interest and outside influences.
- During 2014, 72 percent of crime labs employed at least one externally certified analyst, which was up from 60 percent in 2009.
- The proportion of crime labs that dedicated resources to forensic science research doubled between 2009 (7 percent) and 2014 (14 percent). Research included experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, the revision of accepted methods or the practical application of new or revised methods or technologies.

The reports, *Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories: Resources and Services, 2014* (NCJ 250151) and *Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories: Quality Assurance Practices, 2014* (NCJ 250152), were written by Andrea M. Burch and Matthew R. Durose of BJS and Kelly Walsh and Emily Tiry of the Urban Institute. The reports, related documents and additional information about BJS's statistical publications and programs can be found on the BJS website at <http://www.bjs.gov/>.

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The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has six components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking. More information about OJP can be found at <http://www.ojp.gov>.