An Update on the NIJ Special Report: Making Sense of DNA Backlogs 2012 – Myths vs. Reality

Charles Heurich, National Institute of Justice

NIJ has been very involved in the goal of reducing DNA backlogs in state and local crime laboratories since the early 2000's. In this presentation, Mr. Heurich in the update to NIJ's 2011 publication "Making Sense of DNA Backlogs, 2010 - Myths and Reality," the data collected shows that:

- Laboratory capacity continues to grow due to increasing automation, hiring of more personnel, use of overtime and improved testing procedures and methods. The federal government supports these activities through NIJ’s DNA Backlog Reduction Program.

- Laboratories processed 10 percent more forensic DNA cases in 2011 than in 2009.

- DNA backlogs nevertheless continued to increase because the demand for forensic DNA casework services in 2011 increased by 16.4 percent over 2009 demands, which continues to outpace the nation’s capacity to work DNA cases.

- Although 52.2 percent fewer database samples from convicted offenders and arrestees were completed in 2011 than in 2009, new demand to test and upload database samples dropped 51.2 percent, so the overall workload decreased 46.3 percent from 2009 levels.

- Hiring additional DNA analysts, retaining trained personnel, automating work processes, implementing new technologies and altering business practices offer potential solutions to reducing DNA backlogs.