

# ASCLD GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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- Forensic Science & Ethics
- Code of Honor
- Expectations of the Forensic Science Community
  
- [www.asclid.org](http://www.asclid.org)

**American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors  
Laboratory Accreditation Board**

- **ASCLD/LAB GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CRIME LABORATORIES AND FORENSIC SCIENTISTS**

*“If the law has made you a witness,  
remain a man of science.  
you have no victim to avenge,  
no guilty or innocent person to convict or save --  
you must bear testimony within the limits of science.”*

*Dr. P.C.H. Brouardel  
19th Century French Medico-legalist*

# ASCLD Guiding Principles:

These Guiding Principles provide a framework for describing ethical and professional responsibilities in the forensic laboratory community.



# Guiding Principles

- The Guiding Principles are designed to promote integrity among practitioners, and to increase public confidence in the quality of laboratory services, whether or not the laboratory is accredited by any accrediting body.
- Professionalism
- Competency & Proficiency
- Clear Communications



- Ethics & Guidelines are as follows:

The ethical and professionally responsible forensic scientist and laboratory manager . . .

# Professionalism

- Are independent, impartial, detached, and objective, approaching all examinations with due diligence and an open mind.
- Conduct full and fair examinations. Conclusions are based on the evidence and reference material relevant to the evidence, not on extraneous information, political pressure, or other outside influences.
- Are aware of their limitations and only render conclusions that are within their area of expertise and about matters which they have given formal consideration.
- Honestly communicate with all parties (the investigator, prosecutor, defense, and other expert witnesses) about all information relating to their analyses, when communications are permitted by law and agency practice.
- Report to the appropriate legal or administrative authorities unethical, illegal, or scientifically questionable conduct of other laboratory employees or managers. Laboratory management will take appropriate action if there is potential for, or there has been, a miscarriage of justice due to circumstances that have come to light, incompetent practice or malpractice.
- Report conflicts between their ethical/professional responsibilities and applicable agency policy, law, regulation, or other legal authority, and attempt to resolve them.
- Do not accept or participate in any case on a contingency fee basis or in which they have any other personal or financial conflict of interest or an appearance of such a conflict.

# Competency & Proficiency

- Are committed to career-long learning in the forensic disciplines which they practice and stay abreast of new equipment and techniques while guarding against the misuse of methods that have not been validated. Conclusions and opinions are based on generally accepted tests and procedures.
- Are properly trained and determined to be competent through testing prior to undertaking the examination of the evidence.
- Honestly, fairly and objectively administer and complete regularly scheduled:
  - relevant proficiency tests;
  - comprehensive technical reviews of examiners' work;
  - verifications of conclusions.
- Give utmost care to the treatment of any samples or items of potential evidentiary value to avoid tampering, adulteration, loss or unnecessary consumption.
- Use appropriate controls and standards when conducting examinations and analyses.

# Clear Communications

- Accurately represent their education, training, experience, and area of expertise.
- Present accurate and complete data in reports, testimony, publications and oral presentations.
- Make and retain full, contemporaneous, clear and accurate records of all examinations and tests conducted, and conclusions drawn, in sufficient detail to allow meaningful review and assessment of the conclusions by an independent person competent in the field. Reports are prepared in which facts, opinions and interpretations are clearly distinguishable, and which clearly describe limitations on the methods, interpretations and opinions presented.
- Do not alter reports or other records, or withhold information from reports for strategic or tactical litigation advantage.
- Support sound scientific techniques and practices and do not use their positions to pressure an examiner or technician to arrive at conclusions or results that are not supported by data.
- Testify to results obtained and conclusions reached only when they have confidence that the opinions are based on good scientific principles and methods. Opinions are to be stated so as to be clear in their meaning. Wording should not be such that inferences may be drawn which are not valid, or that slant the opinion to a particular direction.
- Attempt to qualify their responses while testifying when asked a question with the requirement that a simple “yes” or “no” answer be given, if answering “yes” or “no” would be misleading to the judge or the jury.