

### Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences Breaks Ground on Harris County's New Forensic Facility

October 22, 2014

HOUSTON, Texas – The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences (HCIFS) today broke ground on the construction of its new forensic facility. The 200,000 square foot, nine-story tower is slated to be complete in early 2017 and will be equipped with state-of-the-art technology as well as integrated clinical, laboratory, administrative, public and teaching/training areas.

“Today, we celebrate not just the construction of a building, but the work to be housed here and those dedicated to the role of sound scientific evidence in the pursuit of justice,” said Dr. Luis A. Sanchez, HCIFS executive director and chief medical examiner. “When complete, the new facility’s open lab design will foster collaboration between both the Medical Examiner and Crime Laboratory services.

“I am so grateful to the officials and citizens of Harris County. In 2007, the citizens voted in favor of a bond to fund the construction cost of this state-of-the-art facility. Harris County has shown leadership and vision through their support of this project, and the result will be a well-designed, safe and secure facility where we will provide valid, reliable and compassionate forensic services to our community.” Dr. Sanchez continued.

“The building will incorporate the high standards of customer service and scientific integrity for which the Institute has become known. It will be an ideal setting to continue our mission of service and academic progress,” said Dwayne A. Wolf, M.D., Ph.D., HCIFS deputy chief medical examiner.

Construction is underway on a 3.2-acre site in the Texas Medical Center. The new forensic facility, when complete, will feature:

- Designed space for the following forensic expertise: pathology; investigation; anthropology; neuropathology; entomology; emergency management; morgue services; histology; toxicology; drug chemistry; trace evidence analysis, including fire debris, gunshot residue and paint analysis; firearms; quality management; evidence handling; imaging, design and photography; administrative and operational support services.



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- Dedicated consultation rooms throughout the facility for hosting private meetings with families, attorneys and law enforcement as well as specially equipped conference rooms to facilitate multidisciplinary consultation and collaboration.
- A multipurpose training room for hands-on teaching.
- An ADA-compliant auditorium, with seating for more than 200, for academic endeavors.

“The laboratories are designed as open environments that can be reconfigured quickly as equipment and methods evolve over time,” said Roger Kahn, Ph.D., director, HCIFS Crime Laboratory. “This flexibility will allow the Institute’s Crime Laboratory to readily adapt to emerging technologies and remain at the forefront of forensic science.”



Dr. Sanchez concluded that “the Institute also serves as a teaching institution providing forensic training. Without a doubt, the impact of the work performed in this new building will transcend its walls – touching the lives of many community members in Harris County and beyond.”

**About the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences:**

HCIFS provides two distinct forensic services for the Harris County community – the Medical Examiner Service and the Crime Laboratory Service. The Institute’s Crime Laboratory provides the justice system with the highest quality analyses in the disciplines of Forensic Genetics, Drug Chemistry, Forensic Toxicology, Trace evidence, and Firearms Identification in an unbiased and timely manner.

HCIFS is a member institution of the Texas Medical Center® and is accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners, the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board-International, the American Board of Forensic Toxicology, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, the Texas Department of Public Safety, and the Texas Medical Association for the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education.



To learn more about the Institute of Forensic Sciences and the new Forensic Center, visit: [www.harriscountytexas.gov/ifs](http://www.harriscountytexas.gov/ifs).

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