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HCIFS Forensic Toxicology Laboratory Receives Accreditation

Accreditation awarded by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology for the seventh time since 2004

HOUSTON, Texas (Nov. 28, 2016) – The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences (HCIFS) Forensic Toxicology Laboratory has received a Certificate of Laboratory Accreditation from the American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT) for the seventh time since 2004. Accreditation from the ABFT is voluntary and currently held by 39 forensic toxicology laboratories throughout the United States and Canada.

The HCIFS Forensic Toxicology Laboratory is the only toxicology laboratory in Texas to be dually accredited by the ABFT and by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board in the discipline of toxicology. Only five laboratories nationwide have attained this dual-accreditation status.

“The ABFT accreditation program sets high standards for all facets of the Forensic Toxicology Laboratory,” said Warren Samms, Ph.D., F-ABC, HCIFS director of toxicology and chemistry. “It ensures that not only are our procedures both defined and followed, but that they incorporate currently accepted practices of the forensic toxicology community.”

The Forensic Toxicology Laboratory is one of five disciplines of the HCIFS Crime Laboratory; part of an integrated forensic service with the Harris County Medical Examiner. Unlike most toxicology labs, the HCIFS Forensic Toxicology Laboratory provides analytical services in medicolegal death investigations, driving while impaired cases and drug-facilitated sexual assault investigations to support the Harris County Medical Examiner, law enforcement agencies, and the justice system. The HCIFS Forensic Toxicology Laboratory receives on average 7,000 cases for analysis each year.

“The breadth of the Toxicological services we provide make the Institute an ideal training setting for toxicologists seeking to specialize in forensic toxicology,” said Roger Kahn, Ph.D., HCIFS Crime Laboratory director, “Our commitment to excellence is demonstrated by our voluntary dual accreditation in Toxicology.”

The 2016 accreditation was granted following a rigorous onsite inspection, which included verification of the academic and professional qualifications of the laboratory’s management team, including the Institutes’ new chief toxicologist; personnel training; specimen handling; analytical procedures; and the quality assurance program.

“We are exceedingly pleased that the auditors, who are well-respected and experienced forensic toxicologists, recognize the high quality work produced by our analysts, technical reviewers, and expert reviewers every single day,” said Teresa Gray, Ph.D., F-ABFT, HCIFS chief toxicologist. “Our staff are dedicated professionals who work diligently to achieve the mission of the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences – high quality, unbiased services with uncompromised integrity.”

“With the support of our executive director and chief medical examiner, Luis A. Sanchez, M.D., and the HCIFS management team, the Forensic Toxicology Laboratory strives to continuously improve in order to maintain its accreditations and to best serve the citizens of Harris County,” Samms added.

About the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences
The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences provides two distinct forensic services for the Harris County community – the Medical Examiner Service and the Crime Laboratory Service. The Forensic Toxicology Laboratory is one of five disciplines within the Institute’s Crime Laboratory and performs analytical services to support Harris County medical examiners, law enforcement agencies and other clients in surrounding counties. To learn more about the Institute of Forensic Sciences or its Forensic Toxicology Laboratory, visit: ifs.harriscountytx.gov.

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