



**Latent Print Section**  
**Conflict Resolution and Consultation Procedures**  
Comparative and Analytical Division



## 1. Conflict Resolution and Consultation Procedures

### 1.1 Scope

- 1.1.1 This procedure details the consultation and conflict resolution policy when two latent print examiners/processors arrive at different conclusions. This procedure applies to all Latent Print Examiners (LPEs) and Latent Print Processors (LPPs) assigned to the Latent Print Section of the Houston Forensic Science Center (HFSC).
- 1.1.2 A conflict could generally occur under the following circumstances:
  - 1.1.2.1 The case examiner and **reviewer** disagree on the suitability of a latent impression.
  - 1.1.2.2 The case examiner and the verifier reach different conclusions, i.e. Identification, Inconclusive or Exclusion.

### 1.2 Overview

- 1.2.1 During casework, a case examiner may consult with another examiner on various aspects of a latent impression to determine orientation, anatomical origin and which target group to search. This type of interaction between examiners does not rise to the level of consultation.
- 1.2.2 A consultation is defined as a significant interaction between examiners/processors regarding one or more latent impressions. A significant interaction is when the consulting examiner/processor consults on suitability or the determination of a comparison.
- 1.2.3 A conflict arises when two examiners arrive at two different conclusions in which a consultation has not been successful.

### 1.3 Procedure for Consultations and Conflicts

- 1.3.1 If the case examiner/processor forms a conclusion differing from that of the **reviewer**, the first step in resolving the difference of opinions is for the case examiner/processor and the **reviewer** to discuss the differences of opinion.
  - 1.3.1.1 If after consulting, either party changes their opinion based on the other's explanation, then the matter is resolved. The differing opinions and resolutions must be documented in the case record. If this occurs, it will be classified and documented as a consultation.
  - 1.3.1.2 **In the instance of processing, the conclusion will defer to the most conservative decision regarding possible suitable latents.**
  - 1.3.1.3 If after consulting, the case examiner and the verifier cannot agree and both still have differing opinions, then the technical lead (tech lead), manager or designee will be notified **and the conflict resolution process will begin.**
  - 1.3.1.4 The tech lead, manager or designee will form, **if possible**, a **panel** of examiners consisting of the tech lead, manager, supervisor **or designees** and an examiner from each team. **The panel** will be sent an unmarked image of the latent impression and/or the record print for a consensus. **Individuals from the panel may request any additional images for analysis.**



- 1.3.1.4.1 If a unanimous consensus cannot be reached, then the most conservative conclusion garnered regarding the latent in question, will be assigned as the final conclusion.
- 1.3.1.4.2 In the case of a unanimous consensus which agrees with the original opinion of the case examiner, either the specific latent/impression in question or the entire case **may** be re-assigned to another verifier for completion.
- 1.3.1.4.3 In the case of a unanimous consensus which agrees with the original opinion of the verifier, either the specific latent/impression in question or the entire case **may** be re-assigned to another examiner for completion.
- 1.3.2 All opinions, resolutions and documentation by all involved parties must be documented in the case record. All images notes and conclusions of the **panel** will be placed inside the case record.
- 1.3.3 At the discretion of the manager, a quality review of the **case** examiner/processor or **reviewer's** work may take place, depending on the circumstances.

#### **1.4 Procedure for Documenting Consultations**

- 1.4.1 Any interaction between examiners/processors that rises to the level of consultation must be documented in the case examiner's case **record**. Documentation **should** include:
  - Name of consulting examiner/processor
  - Date of consultation
  - Subject (Latent **identifier**) of the consultation
  - Brief summary of the consultation and action taken
- 1.4.2 The case examiner's/**processor's** original decision must be maintained in the worksheet.

#### **1.5 Procedure for Documenting Conflict Resolution**

- 1.5.1 Any interaction between examiners/processors that rises to the level of conflict resolution must be documented in the case examiner's case **record**. Documentation **shall** include:
  - Date of conflict
  - Examiner involved
  - Verifier involved
  - Forensic Case Number
  - Summary of conflict and resulting action taken
  - Resolution
  - **Panel** member names, if applicable

#### **1.6 References**

Defense Forensic Science Center, *Document CILA LP 11.1 Conflict Resolution*, 13 March 2014



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*SWGFAST, Document #15 Standard for the Definition and Measurement of Rates of Errors and Non-Consensus Decisions in Friction Ridge Examination (Latent/Tenprint) 11/15/12*

*SWGFAST, Document #16 Standard for the Technical Review of Friction Ridge Examinations (Latent/Tenprint) 11/16/12 Ver. 2.0*

*SWGFAST, Document #10 Standards for Examining Friction Ridge Impressions and Resulting Conclusions (Latent/Tenprint) 3/13/13*

*SWGFAST, Document #21 (Standard for Consultation Latent/Tenprint) 3/14/13 DRAFT FOR COMMENT, Ver. 1.0*