



**Quality Division Use Only**

Quality Tracking #:	2023-027	Classification:	Corrective Action
Risk Level:	Moderate to High	Section:	Firearms
Date of Discovery:	06/07/23	Date of Incident:	06/07/23

Forensic Case Number(s), if applicable:	Agency Case Number(s), if applicable:
2023-06375	094455421

**Description of Non-conformance:**  
HFSC's Multiple disciplinary request (MDR) process was not followed for latent print processing request on a firearm. The firearm was processed by a NIBIN technician who was not aware of the latent prints request.

**Additional Information/Follow-Up:**  
HFSC's multi-disciplinary request (MDR) process was not followed when HFSC received a call from a Houston Police Department (HPD) officer requesting latent print processing on a firearm. An autogenerated NIBIN request was received by HFSC for the firearm, and the firearm was subsequently processed by a NIBIN technician before the request for latent prints was created in HFSC's laboratory information management system (LIMS), JusticeTrax.

The Firearms section notified the Latent Prints (LP) and Quality Division on 6/7/2023 that a possible MDR was missed. As part of the investigation into the cause of the missed MDR, a quality specialist interviewed the LP and Firearms section case managers.

The investigation found that an HPD officer called HFSC's Client Services/Case Management section (CS/CM) on 6/5/23 requesting latent print processing on a firearm. The officer did not have access to HFSC's electronic request submission portal (Where's My Result portal). The CS/CM specialist sent the officer an email with details on how to request access to the portal and emailed the LP support specialist/case manager requesting that an LP request be created in the portal for the officer.

Per HFSC's Magazine Preservation Policy, firearms are not processed for latent prints. Requests for exceptions to this policy must be approved by either HFSC's CEO or COO.

The LP support specialist emailed the LP section manager on 6/5/23 to let the manager know there was a request for LP processing on a firearm. She also emailed the officer on 6/5/23 and provided him with information about HFSC's Magazine Preservation Policy and instructions on how to request an exception.

Additionally, the LP support specialist emailed Firearms section management to let them know of the request. A Firearms supervisor responded with information on the exception process and stated that she would create the portal request later that day or the next morning if the LP section did not. LP did not create the request because they were waiting to hear back from the officer, and the Firearms supervisor forgot to create the request. An auto-



generated request from HPD for NIBIN processing of the firearm came through the next day. The request was accepted into JusticeTrax as a regular NIBIN request by the CS/CM evidence team, who were not aware of the LP request. A NIBIN technician processed the firearm before the Firearms supervisor realized that neither she nor the LP section had created the LP request.

Each section at HFSC is responsible for reviewing requests for their section in the portal and either rejecting or accepting them. When a request is accepted, it is imported into JusticeTrax. Each case is assigned a forensic case number (FCN) associated with the submitting agency's case number (ACN). Any subsequent requests under the ACN will be assigned as a new request in JusticeTrax under the same FCN. If the request is associated with an item of evidence that had another request (i.e., an MDR), the person accepting the request or case manager adds a banner to the case stating that there's an MDR request and places a marker (a bell icon) next to the item of evidence. These steps are taken to alert everyone that there is an MDR request.

Each section at HFSC has developed a case acceptance process that works for their section. It became clear during the investigation into this nonconformance that case managers for Firearms and LP were unfamiliar with each other's case acceptance process. LP requests are not typically worked immediately. In this instance, the LP process was to wait for the officer to respond to their email and for HFSC's CEO or COO to review and accept the exception prior to creating the request in the portal. The Firearms section's case acceptance process would be to create the request immediately because NIBIN processing requests are auto-generated at the HPD property before they are submitted to HFSC. The goal of the Firearms section is to process NIBIN requests within 24 to 48 hours. The Firearms section expected a request to be created shortly after the officer contacted HFSC with his request. However, the LP case manager was not familiar with the NIBIN processing timeline.

Firearms are not eligible for latent prints processing once NIBIN processing is complete. The LP support specialist emailed the stakeholder on 6/7/23 to let him know that the firearm was no longer eligible for LP processing, but that the firearm's magazine could be printed if he submitted a request. The officer did not respond to the email.

#### Summary of Root Cause Analysis:

Note: Incidents are documented for tracking purposes and trend analysis. Root Cause Analysis is not required for incidents.

The root cause of this nonconformance was not creating the MDR request in JT as soon as information about the email request was received. The MDR process addresses requests received via the portal, but in this instance the request was received via an email from an officer who did not have a portal account and HFSC did not create the request in the portal prior to NIBIN processing. This was due to a lack of understanding between case managers of the Firearms and LP sections regarding each section's timelines for processing evidence.

HFSC is aware that there are risks associated with MDRs. To help address these risks, HFSC initiated a Lean Six Sigma (LSS) process improvement project in 2018. Several improvements were implemented in 2019, including the creation of a team of representatives from different sections, including case managers, who communicate daily about MDR requests. The representatives from each section have changed over time and this has contributed to each section being unfamiliar with each other's processes and drift from the original MDR process.

As part of the investigation into the root cause of the missed MDR, the original MDR LSS project manager was interviewed. The project manager agreed to help the quality division and MDR team develop actions to reduce the risk of a recurrence.



**Actions Taken:**

The LSS project manager held a series of meetings with members of the Quality Division and subject matter experts from sections commonly involved in MDRs (Firearms, Latent Prints, Biology, and Multimedia). The team developed a series of best practices for handling MDR requests, including how to process MDR requests that are received via email or phone, rather than through the portal. The team also developed process maps for sections that commonly receive MDRs, and an informational PowerPoint presentation. These documents were uploaded to an MDR folder in Qualtrax and were uploaded to the MDR Teams site.

The MDR team also created an MDR policy that replaced the Firearms Magazine Policy. The requirement for stakeholders to obtain an exception from HFSC’s CEO or COO prior to requesting latent print processing on firearms was removed. The new MDR policy, issued on 2/8/2024, includes instructions for how to submit requests for latent print processing on firearms. The MDR policy will be maintained in Qualtrax as a controlled document and reviewed annually to ensure it remains up to date and relevant. The policy will be provided to stakeholders via HFSC’s portal, as well as HFSC’s external website and eDiscovery site. Information about the policy was shared with the HCDAO on 02/27/2024 during a priority request management meeting.

<b>Section Manager:</b> <u>Donna Eudaley</u>	<b>Date:</b> <u>03/04/24</u>
<b>Section Manager:</b> <u>Ashley Henry</u>	<b>Date:</b> <u>03/05/24</u>
<b>Section Manager:</b> <u>Rebecca Green</u>	<b>Date:</b> <u>03/08/24</u>
<b>Division Director:</b> <u>Amy Castillo</u>	<b>Date:</b> <u>03/18/24</u>

Incidents or Corrective Actions that involve the Biology/DNA section are reviewed by the Technical Leader and CODIS Administrator.

<b>Technical Leader:</b> <u>N/A</u>	<b>Date:</b> _____
<b>CODIS Administrator:</b> <u>N/A</u>	<b>Date:</b> _____

**Quality Director:** Jackeline Moral                      **Date Closed:** 03/18/24