Investigative Leads in Latent Prints:

A Comparison of Laboratory Procedures

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Investigative Leads

Phrase frequently used in forensic science literature and practice

Generally used to convey:

- ❖ information a lab shares with stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement)
- ❖ when that information does not meet criteria for identification/individualization, but might still be helpful for investigative purposes

Current Project

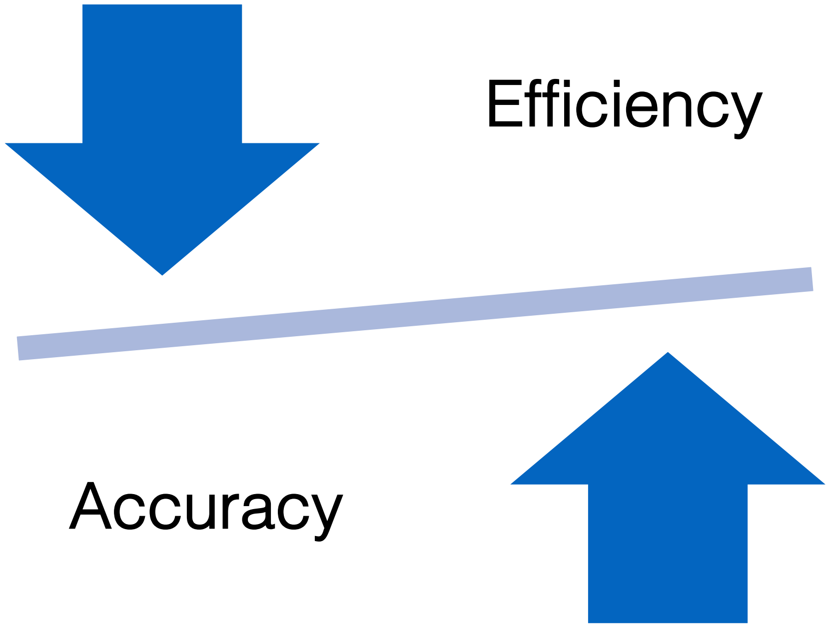
Developed out of a recognition that *investigative leads* can be used differently by different labs

- ❖ with different underlying procedures

No single operational definition (and definitions might need to differ across labs and disciplines)

- ❖ Different definitions will have different strengths and limitations
- ❖ Tradeoffs are inevitable

Goal: describe two labs' procedures re: *investigative leads*



KCRA Investigative Leads

Background

Implemented in 2014

Previously if a candidate couldn't be Identified then it would be reported as an AFIS negative (no viable candidate)

Recognized that some associations could be valuable to an investigator

Consulted with prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, and detectives on procedures

Procedures

At least 5 examiners perform their own comparisons without reviewing other's documentation

A facilitator is chosen who compiles all documentation, schedules group meeting, ensures discussion is in line with SOP and that all questions are resolved

A consensus decision is reached and a final group chart is generated that all examiners sign

Case goes to supervisor for review: supervisor may ask additional questions or decide that more examiners are needed

All documentation is retained in the case jacket, the case number gets logged, a statement is added to the Examination Report

Benefits

Allows potential limited associations to be reported out

Ensures a higher level of quality assurance and review is performed on complex comparisons from AFIS

Work is based on the data available within the latent and comparison

Doesn’t push staff to make an Identification on a candidate or ignore a potential association

Could assist investigators in connecting/corroborating evidence and statements

Limitations

Potentially can take several weeks to go through entire process

Could complicate case(s) further if there are disagreements

Wouldn’t work for agencies who don’t have the resources to have 5 staff assisting on one case

Could affect the overall turn-around-time of an agency if done often

Wording needs to be extremely clear on report that the comparison weight is limited and does not imply an ID

INVESTIGATIVE LEADS

HFSC'S APPROACH FOR INTELLIGENCE PURPOSES

BACKGROUND

- Purpose: Provide information to our customer so that they may utilize the information in their investigations
- Intent: Provide our stakeholders with information regarding results of AFIS searches in an expedited manner to aide in greater efficiencies in the investigation while balancing quality and efficiency in the laboratory
- Implemented: July 2016 full implementation

PROCEDURES

- Primary works the case up to and through reviewing AFIS searches (Inventory, Analysis, AFIS searches are conducted, and AFIS searches are reviewed)
- If upon reviewing AFIS searches a candidate shows sufficient similarities an analyst can determine the search to be a “preliminary afis association” (PAA)
- The case is sent to verification
  - Currently implement 100% verifications on sufficiency determinations and comparisons
    - *An investigative lead is not considered a comparison therefore it is not verified
- An investigative lead report is written, and case record is sent for technical and administrative review

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Relationship with the customers
  - Initial and continuing training on what an investigative lead report means
    - What we can and can’t say
    - What customers can do with the information
  - Consistent and ongoing communication with customers
    - Is the process effective for them
    - Is it giving them what they need for their investigations

THINGS TO CONSIDER CONT'D

- Time resources of the laboratory
  - Needs of the section
  - Needs of the customer
- How can it fit into current workflow
  - Mitigating as much change as possible to not inhibit current work production
  - Is it more efficient than current practices in place?

Conclusions

- Two sets of procedures underscore different ways labs might use *investigative leads*

Preliminary association

Extensively reviewed inconclusive

Highlights agreement about potential usefulness of preliminary or inconclusive information to investigations

…and the need to ensure definitions are clear to customers/stakeholders

Conclusions

- Relevant considerations

Lab resources

Stakeholder needs

Appropriate procedures and thresholds

Clear communication