

**Texas Forensic Science Commission
Minutes from February 15, 2008 Meeting in Dallas, Texas**

Members Present: Kerrigan, Watts, Bassett, Hamilton, Natarajan, Adams and Hampton
Members Absent: Levy, Eisenberg

Alicie Watts and Sarah Kerrigan were introduced as new Commission members.

The minutes from the December 2008 meeting were approved.

Drs. Hamilton and Hampton, along with the SHSU staff discussed applications received thus far. At the time of the meeting, three (3) applications for the position had been received and more were anticipated. A process for interviews was discussed and it was emphasized that the merits of the candidates would have to be discussed at our April meeting rather than among ourselves. Drs. Hamilton and Hampton agreed to set up interviews in Huntsville for the applicants in March or April. Dr. Natarajan agreed to assist in applicant processing and interview materials. Sam Bassett agreed to participate telephonically in the interviews, as possible. We are hoping to hire the staff person in April with a May 1st or May 16th start date. The applications received were disseminated to the members of the Commission

Dr. Kerrigan discussed the issue of disseminating information to accredited laboratories, licensed to conduct forensic analyses in Texas. The feedback to Dr. Kerrigan from DPS was not favorable since the labs provide results through their "LIMS" (Laboratory Information Management System) programs and inclusion of a statement regarding TFSC would be difficult for them to manage in many respects. Dr. Adams raised the issue of "voluntary compliance" as did Sam Bassett. Dr. Kerrigan is to work with Dr. Eisenberg on the issue of voluntary compliance. It was discussed that other organizations might wish to advertise the availability of TFSC for laboratory complaints (i.e. Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, Texas District and County Attorneys' Association).

Gabriel Oberfield of the Innocence Project provided input on the dissemination of TFSC by talking about Senator Patrick Leahy's desire to have an analogous system in place pursuant to the implementation of the federal "Justice For All Act."

There was discussion of the website. The domain name www.tfsc.state.tx.us is not available and it was approved that we would use www.fsc.state.tx.us. Dr. Kerrigan discussed the "D.I.R." issue and agreed to work with the staff at SHSU to attempt to work toward getting our website up and running this spring. The website content was approved though it was mentioned that there is additional information to be included.

Dr. Kerrigan also agreed to work with SHSU staff to set up the physical office for TFSC, obtain a phone number (including a 1800 number). It is hoped we will have an office by May 1, 2008.

Commission members were reminded of Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act training requirements with a reminder to complete the training and submit completion certificates to SHSU staff for the TFSC file.

Extensive work was done on edits/revisions to the “letter to complainants” and “complaint form.” All revisions/edits were approved.

The Commission voted NOT to attempt to define the terms “professional negligence” and “misconduct” for purposes of the enabling statute. It was mentioned that this was unnecessary since we have no rule making and/or enforcement authority under the present statutory structure.

The next meeting is to be held in Austin on April 11, 2008, beginning at 9:30 a.m.