

Best Practice Recommendations for Limited Examinations



WHAT IS AN AAFS STANDARD FACTSHEET?

The AAFS produces clear, concise, and easy-to-understand factsheets to summarize the contents of technical and professional forensic science standards on the OSAC Registry. They are not intended to provide an interpretation for any portion of a proposed standard.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROPOSED STANDARD?

This best practice recommendation defines limited examinations as those that are not complete with regard to the forensic science service provider's (FSSP's) capabilities. It recognizes that evidence may exist that has not been partially or fully processed and/or latent prints exist that have not been analyzed and/or compared.

This standard is not an endorsement of the practice of limited examinations. Its intent is to set guidelines for agencies that choose to engage in this practice.

Following these recommendations when performing limited examinations should help to minimize potential negative impacts to future processing/comparisons.

WHY IS THIS PROPOSED STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

Limited examinations may be advantageous to FSSPs and stakeholders for any of the following reasons (not all-inclusive):

- Probative value of the evidence
- Crime type considerations (e.g., people vs. property)
- Backlog reduction
- Increased case throughput
- Effective resource allocation

This standard does not recommend limiting the collection and preservation of evidence. All potentially suitable prints should be retained.

This OSAC Proposed Standard has been sent to AAFS Academy Standards Board (ASB) for further development and publication. Get involved as a member or by providing public comment.

HOW IS THIS PROPOSED STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

This standard provides recommendations for improving efficiency while maintaining quality and consistency when conducting limited examinations in the following areas:

- Searching and/or comparing friction ridge impressions developed on the most probative items first and stopping when the investigative needs of the case have been met.
- Searching and reporting on AFIS quality impressions first.
- Performing auto-extracted minutiae searches in AFIS prior to manually-encoded searches if needed.
- Restricting which AFIS databases are searched according to crime type.
- Optimizing the physical processing of evidentiary items based on limitations and/or probative needs of the case.

Limited examinations can include both latent print processing (in the laboratory) and friction ridge examinations. Limited examinations are not performed through random sampling and should be conducted in consultation with the stakeholder.

The standard requires communicating with the stakeholder in advance when limited examinations are utilized by an FSSP and recommends providing results in a timely manner.

