GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUANCE SYSTEM

Mayor's Order 2021-146
December 13, 2021

SUBJECT: Implementation of the SNA International Report Recommendations for the Department of Forensic Sciences

ORIGINATING AGENCY: Office of the Mayor

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the District of Columbia pursuant to section 422 of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24, 1973, Pub. L. 93-198, 87 Stat. 790, D.C. Official Code § 1-204.22 (2016 Repl.), it is hereby **ORDERED** that:

I. BACKGROUND

1. On April 2, 2021, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) National Accreditation Board (ANAB) suspended the accreditation of the Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) citing findings resulting from an investigation into purported errors made by the agency's Firearms Examination Unit and its alleged lack of disclosure as the cause for the suspension.

2. On May 2, 2021, ANAB withdrew the accreditation of DFS for all five of its forensic units: the Digital Evidence Unit, the Firearms Examination Unit, the Forensic Biology Unit, the Forensic Chemistry Unit, and the Latent Fingerprint Unit. DFS immediately discontinued forensic casework operations.

3. In the interest of public transparency, accountability, and the fair administration of justice, in May 2021, the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice engaged SNA International (SNA) to review DFS's forensic operations, identify issues with those operations, and make recommendations to put DFS on a path to regain and sustain ANAB accreditation.

4. On December 9, 2021, SNA submitted its final report to the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. The comprehensive report identifies root causes of the events that led to the withdrawal of DFS's ANAB accreditation, identifies additional nonconformances by DFS with forensic accreditation standards, outlines corrective actions to be taken to regain compliance with forensic accreditation standards, and issues recommendations for DFS to sustain forensic accreditation.

II. PUBLIC RELEASE OF THE SNA REPORT

DFS shall immediately provide the SNA report to its Stakeholder Council and the Science Advisory Board and shall immediately thereafter post the report on its website.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SNA REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

To accomplish the critical goals of pursuing, securing, and maintaining ANAB re-accreditation, restoring trust and credibility with the public and stakeholders, and establishing organizational practices, policies, and protocols that promote excellence in all forensic operations, scientific practices, and business matters, the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice shall:

1. Convene an *ad hoc* committee of advisors, and shall invite representatives of the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia, the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia, the Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of Columbia, the Mayor's Office of Legal Counsel, the District of Columbia Auditor, and the Chairperson of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety of the Council of the District of Columbia, and such other persons as the Deputy Mayor finds may be useful to the goals set forth above, which shall be tasked with: (a) recommending a process for identifying an independent project executive to manage the implementation of the SNA report recommendations related to re-examining casework from reports issued by the Firearms Examination Unit and the Latent Fingerprint Unit; and (b) collaboratively working with the contracted independent project executive to create a process for conducting this work. The personnel at any meeting may vary depending on the agenda of that meeting;

2. Based on the process developed for identifying an independent project executive, select and enter into a contract with an identified independent project executive to execute the functions described above;

3. Oversee DFS's consideration of and implementation of the SNA report recommendations for the Digital Evidence Unit, Forensic Biology Unit, and Forensic Chemistry Unit; and

4. Assess the current structure and operations of DFS and its Science Advisory Board and Stakeholder Council to determine the need for additional changes, including legislation, to improve agency functioning to advance reforms by March 16, 2022 for incorporation into the FY2023 budget submission.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Order shall be effective immediately.

MURIEL BOWSER
MAYOR

ATTEST: _____
KIMBERLY A. BASSETT
SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA