



INDIANAPOLIS-MARION COUNTY FORENSIC SERVICES AGENCY

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EVIDENCE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

SEIZED DRUGS

I. INTRODUCTION

The Drug Analysis Section of the I-MCFSA analyzes substances collected by law enforcement agencies suspected of containing an illegal or controlled substance as defined by the Controlled Substances Law listed in the Indiana Revised Statutes. Submissions for analysis should be **limited to those items that are part of a criminal investigation and are necessary for prosecution.**

II. REQUESTS FOR ANALYSIS

A. REQUESTS: All requests for **drug analysis, latent print processing, or DNA processing** should be completed through either the intranet Online Request Card Submission function, or by a physical I-MCFSA request card available at the IMPD property room. **The request MUST be submitted at the time of evidence submission.**

B. PRINTS: If an item is to be submitted for both drug and latent print (fingerprint) analysis, handle the evidence as little as possible. The outer plastic bag or box should be marked to identify the need for print processing. **Latent Print work will not be conducted without a corresponding request for analysis card submission.**

C. DNA: If an item is to be submitted for both drug and DNA analysis, handle the evidence as little as possible and use protective equipment (gloves, mask, etc.) to minimize contact with the item and potential DNA contamination. Package and protect the evidence from contact with surfaces that other individuals may have contacted. It is recommended that the suspect and evidence do not travel in the same vehicle. The outer plastic bag or box must be marked to identify the need for DNA processing.

1. Items qualify for Touch DNA only if necessary for prosecution and if the following offense and item types are both met. Exceptions must be approved by the Director.

Offense:

- a. Violent crimes against persons
- b. Residential burglaries
- c. Felony firearms offenses

2. Item(s):

Evidence items having rough/textured surfaces are mostly likely to retain DNA. Examples of drug items that may qualify: plastic Ziploc bags (textured interior surfaces of opening), metal pipes (textured threaded areas), containers with textured exterior surfaces.

3. **Touch DNA samples will not be collected from items with only smooth surfaces, such as plastic bags, smooth metal, paper, or cardboard.** These samples are suitable for latent print processing. Any evidence that has not been properly preserved for touch DNA sampling will not be processed. Improperly preserved evidence includes those received unpackaged, in unsealed containers, or which show signs of prior latent print processing in the field.

III. PACKAGING

A. PROPER PACKAGING: Evidence should be packaged in suitable containers such as plastic bags and/or cardboard boxes, and bear the following information at a minimum:

1. Submitting Agency
2. Case Number
3. Defendant name (if applicable) or another way to identify if there are multiple defendants

B. PROPER SEALS: All evidence must be submitted in a properly sealed, tamper evident, condition. A proper seal for a plastic evidence bag is a heat seal and/or tape seal across the entire opening of the bag. A proper seal for a box, paper bag, tub, or other large container includes tamper evident tape across the opening(s) (in addition to other tape if necessary for strength). Both the top and bottom of boxes should be sealed in this manner. **All seals must bear the signature, initials, or other identifier of the submitting individual, as well as the date of sealing, over the seal itself.** Cardboard boxes without evidence tape will be accepted as “convenience containers”, providing the evidence inside is properly sealed separately.

C. CANNABIS/MARIJUANA: Whole Cannabis/Marijuana plants must be dried before placing in suitable containers for storage and submission to the laboratory. The I-MCFSA Laboratory does not have a facility to dry large amounts of marijuana, thus samples will be returned in the same condition that they were submitted. Plastic bags encourage the formation of mold, or in many cases, cause decomposition in articles such as marijuana, peyote plants, or wet materials. Water should be removed from water pipes. **Moldy vegetation may be returned unanalyzed due to health risks.**

1. **Cannabis/Marijuana paraphernalia such as pipes, roaches, vapes, grinders, etc., are not routinely analyzed as part of normal case processing.** These items must be specifically indicated on the submitted request card to be tested, unless they are the only drug item of evidence submitted in the case.
2. Edible products are not routinely analyzed by the I-MCFSA unless they are specifically requested, or they are the only drug item of evidence submitted in the case.

- D. **SHARPS:** All syringes and other sharps (razor blades, knives, broken pipes, etc.) must be separated from other evidence to be tested, properly packaged in a rigid sharps container (capped plastic tube or equivalent), and labeled as hazardous sharps. Larger items should be packaged in puncture resistant containers.
- E. **INTERIOR PACKAGING:** All solid drug evidence (crystalline material, powders, vegetation, etc.) must be placed into an inner sealed bag prior to being placed into a larger tamper proof evidence bag. **Improperly packaged loose powders present a health risk to laboratory personnel and represent a potential for loss of testable evidence/weight and may be returned untested.**
- F. **SEPARATE PACKAGING AND MULTIPLE SUSPECTS:** Items from different locations and different suspects should be separated into different packaging for the I-MCFSA Chemist to properly identify what items to test, and to minimize the potential for cross contamination. Paraphernalia should be packaged separately from solid drug evidence.
- G. **LIQUIDS:** Evidence containing liquids shall be packaged to minimize the risk of breakage and leakage. Improperly packaged liquids may be returned untested.

IV. EVIDENCE TESTING

- A. **ITEM TESTING LIMIT: Cases with many items shall be limited to 5 items requested for testing.** Exceptions for additional items for testing may be made if they are needed for sentencing guidelines for weight or multiple defendants. Requests for additional/supplemental testing may be made by the Prosecutor's Office.
- B. **PARAPHERNALIA:** Paraphernalia items (syringes, spoons, pipes, roaches, etc.) should not be submitted for testing by the I-MCFSA and will be analyzed only upon request from the Prosecutor's Office.
 - 1. Requests for paraphernalia should only be made when:
 - a. The **ONLY** item(s) in the case is/are paraphernalia.
 - b. Special circumstances with "dealing" cases—limit of one paraphernalia item per suspect will be tested.
- C. **TABLETS/CAPSULES:** Marked tablets and capsules consistent with containing only non-controlled drugs (e.g. over-the-counter or prescription preparations) will not be analyzed. Exceptions would include when charges will be filed for legend drugs, precursors, dealing in look-a-like substances, dealing in counterfeit substances, or dealing in a substance represented to be a controlled substance. Resources such as www.drugs.com are available to search for preliminary pharmaceutical information based on tablet and capsule markings, color, and shape.
 - 1. Items consisting of marked tablets or capsules in a prescription bottle labeled with the correct drug and defendant's name will not be tested. Exceptions would include prescription fraud cases, prescription tampering cases, death investigations and OWI offenses.

2. Confirmatory testing on suspected controlled substances will be performed on one (1) tablet or capsule in a group of visually similar tablets or capsules. Further testing may be performed upon request from the Prosecutor's Office.
3. Pressed, unmarked tablets or pressed tablets with designs suspected of containing controlled substances will have the minimum number of tablets tested to reach one (1) gram of weight tested. Further testing may be performed upon request by the Prosecutor's Office.

D. STATUTORY CHARGES: The Chemist assigned to a case will generally test the smallest number of units needed to satisfy the highest possible level of statutory charges. Requests for analysis from the detective or the prosecutor assigned to a case that require more units to be analyzed when it has been determined that the weight of these additional units would not exceed statutory weight values must be made in writing to the Director of the I-MCFSA for approval.

E. SEMI-QUANTITATION: Semi-Quantitation is testing process performed to determine the amount of Delta-9-Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) present in a cannabis vegetation sample. The I-MCFSA requires a minimum of 0.2500 gram of a vegetation sample to conduct this testing. This testing is conducted as part of routine testing of cannabis vegetation samples and does not need to be specifically requested.

1. **Semi-Quantitation is limited to vegetation samples only. Vapes, edibles, butters, oils, and other Cannabis products are unable to be tested for THC concentration by the I-MCFSA.** The I-MCFSA will issue a report upon testing of these items as to if THC is present or not but cannot issue a statement as to the concentration.

F. FOUND ITEMS: Found property, or other cases without a known suspect should not be submitted for analysis.

V. EVIDENCE DESTRUCTION

A. The policy of the I-MCFSA is that all drug evidence will be returned to the submitting agency for disposition. Controlled substances submitted for analysis will be retained by the laboratory during analysis only. When the analysis is complete, the evidence will be returned to laboratory evidence complex for pickup by the submitting agency as soon as possible. For further information on handling of controlled substances contact the I-MCFSA Seized Drugs Section at (317) 327-3670.

VI. RE-EXAMINATION

A. The I-MCFSA does not routinely examine materials which have been previously examined. Re-examination requests must be made in writing by the prosecuting attorney having jurisdiction in the case, to the Seized Drugs Supervisor. The request will be evaluated by the Seized Drugs Supervisor and/or I-MCFSA Director.

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