

# Illinois Forensic Science Commission

## Meeting Minutes

10 September 2025

### I. **Call to order**

Illinois State Police Director Designee Robin Woolery and Executive Director Amy Watroba called to order the meeting of the Illinois Forensic Science Commission at approximately 10:03 a.m. on September 10, 2025. The meeting was held in-person at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology, 1206 W. Gregory Room 612, Urbana, Illinois. The meeting also was available via Web Ex.

### II. **Roll-call**

1. The following Forensic Science Commission members and staff were present:

1. Claire Dragovich, Vice-Chairperson
2. Dr. Ponni Arunkumar, Member
3. Jillian Baker, Member
4. Jeff Buford, Member
5. Katherine Drummond, Member
6. John Hanlon, Member (via Web Ex)
7. Judge Art Hill (ret.), Member
8. Dr. Cris Hughes, Member
9. Jeanne Richeal, Member (via Web Ex)
10. Caryn Tucker, Member
11. Carrie Ward, Member (initially via Web Ex and in-person)
12. Robin Woolery, Director Designee (via Web Ex)
13. Amy Watroba, Executive Director

2. Quorum confirmed.

3. The following members of the public were present in-person:

1. Timothy Ruppel
2. Sarah Ware

4. The following members of the public were present via Web Ex:

1. Maya Dukmasova
2. Gina Havlik
3. Jan Johnson
4. Jennifer Maples
5. Amanda Shanbaum
6. Lindsay Simpson
7. Andrew Stokes

\*Denotes individual who joined meeting after roll call.

### III. **Review/Adoption of Minutes**

1. The motion to adopt the revised minutes from the March 12, 2025 Commission meeting and to replace the original minutes with the revised minutes on the Commission's website was unanimously approved.
2. The motion to adopt the minutes from the June 11, 2025 Commission meeting was unanimously approved.

#### IV. **Executive Director Summary**

##### 1. General:

- a. ED Watroba reminded Commission Members that they must complete five training modules annually on One Net by mid-December.
- b. ED Watroba advised Commission Members who are nearing the end of their term appointments to apply for re-appointment if they wish to do so.

##### 2. Legal & Legislative Update:

- a. SB 1889: The Commission supported the proposed amendments to the DUI statute included in this bill last session. However, the bill died in committee. ED Watroba will continue to take action consistent with the Commission's position. It is possible that the bill could be re-introduced next session.
- b. SB 1764: This bill passed, was signed into law as Public Act 104-0024, and takes effect on January 1, 2026. The law amends the Commission's statute by adding the language, "Beginning January 1, 2026, the Governor shall designate the chair of the Commission for a 2-year term." This law and possible changes to the Commission's Bylaws in response to the law will be addressed as a discussion item later in the meeting.
- c. SB 0024: This bill passed, was signed into law as Public Act 104-0339, and will take effect on January 1, 2026. This law makes extensive amendments to the Missing Persons Identification Act (50 ILCS 722/1 et seq). Most of the changes are geared toward law enforcement and address issues of uniformity. ED Watroba highlighted some changes to the Act under the new law.
- d. Coverdell Grant Funding: ED Watroba drafted and disseminated a letter explaining the Commission's position in support of full funding for Coverdell grants. She will continue to monitor the status of the discretionary budget for changes in the status of the funding for Coverdell grants.

### 3. Education/Outreach Update:

- a. RTI International/NIST *Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for Forensics Symposium* (July 8-9, 2025, Washington, D.C): ED Watroba attended the two-day symposium, which was well-attended by a diverse group of stakeholders. ED Watroba also participated in a panel discussion on “High-stakes Decision-making and Court Acceptance.” ED Watroba reported back key takeaways from the symposium to the Technology Subcommittee. The archived event is available for viewing and the link is on the Commission’s TEAMS channel. A summary report is forthcoming. ED Watroba shared that all stakeholders at the symposium agreed that AI will not replace forensic scientists when it comes to testing evidence in criminal cases because of the nature of our criminal justice system.
- b. National Association of Forensic Science Boards (NAFSB) Annual Conference (October 20-21, 2025, University of New Haven): ED Watroba and DD Woolery will attend the NAFSB’s Annual Conference. ED Watroba also will present and participate in 2 panel discussions on “Facilitating Transparency through Collaboration and Psychological Safety: The Role of Forensic Science Boards,” and “Artificial Intelligence and Forensic Science: Lessons Learned.” The conference will involve a tour of the University’s lab facility. ED Watroba shared a list of topics from the conference agenda, which is available on NAFSB’s website.

## V. **Subcommittee Reports**

1. Quality Systems Subcommittee: Claire Dragovich, subcommittee chairperson, shared that the subcommittee met twice since the last quarterly meeting. The subcommittee has been reviewing the Report issued in May by the University of Illinois- Chicago (UIC) regarding activities at the Analytical Forensic Testing Laboratory (AFTL) in Chicago. The subcommittee has been going through the UIC Report and discussing the information provided therein. The Quality Systems Subcommittee previously received a report of 2024 Significant Non-conformities from AFTL and, as such, the subcommittee also is comparing the information provided by AFTL to the information included in the UIC Report. The subcommittee has reviewed approximately 2/3 of the UIC Report. When the review is complete, the subcommittee likely will draft a statement or summary document reflecting the subcommittee’s understanding of the UIC Report and will note any questions that the subcommittee would like to forward to subject matter experts. ED Watroba indicated that the topic of THC testing at AFTL is on the agenda as a discussion item.

Ms. Dragovich indicated that the Quality Systems Subcommittee will begin the process of reviewing significant non-conformities for calendar year 2025 by sending letters to publicly funded ISO 17025 accredited laboratories. The letters likely will be sent after the first of the year.

2. Training and Career Development Subcommittee: Caryn Tucker, subcommittee chairperson, summarized current subcommittee projects. The subcommittee has met monthly and continues to work on videos for the “Fundamentals of Forensic Science Video Series.” The introductory video is complete. This will be used for all disciplines. The Latent Print and Drug Chemistry videos are in the final phase of edits, which incorporates changes made in response to Commission feedback. The other disciplines (Firearms, Toxicology, DNA, and Trace) are in the content-development phase. Over the summer, the subcommittee created stock images for all disciplines that can be used for the video project. The subcommittee also worked through general technical issues and issues related to presentation consistency across disciplines. The subcommittee anticipates that the Drug Chemistry and Latent Print videos will be complete for the Commission to review prior to the December Commission meeting. If the Commission approves of the videos in December, the videos then can be posted on the Commission’s website.
3. Public Policy Subcommittee: John Hanlon, subcommittee chairperson, reported that the subcommittee has met twice since the June Commission meeting. The subcommittee has focused primarily on 2 issues. First, the subcommittee has discussed issues related to new and emerging drugs. During the discussion portion of the meeting the subcommittee will explain its recommendation for the creation of an ad hoc Drugs Subcommittee within the Commission. Second, the subcommittee is discussing the topic of funding for the identification of unidentified human remains (UHR) and missing persons cases. Dr. Hughes provided an update on this topic. The Illinois Coroners and Medical Examiners Association (ICMEA) met in August. Once an update from that meeting is obtained, the subcommittee will have an idea of any next steps, including possibly inviting a representative from the ICMEA to present to the Public Policy Subcommittee about any efforts to obtain funding legislatively.
4. Technology Subcommittee: Jeff Buford, subcommittee chairperson, reported that the subcommittee continued its discussions related to AI applications to forensic science since the last quarterly meeting. ED Watroba provided the subcommittee with a presentation on key takeaways from the RTI/NIST Symposium. Those key takeaways were in lockstep with the subcommittee’s previous discussions about AI applications to forensic science. Throughout the subcommittee’s review of AI, round table discussions were held with subject matter experts providing insight and information related to possible AI applications and issues related to specific disciplines. The subcommittee concluded that AI will not replace trained forensic scientists in casework applications, data interpretation, and court testimony. AI may have applications to administrative tasks such as quality assurance in the near term. Long term, AI applications may be used to assist trained forensic scientists. The subcommittee has completed its work related to AI at this point but may have additional speakers or revisit the topic in the future if needed. ED Watroba noted that the subcommittee created an AI Reference Library on its TEAMS channel where subject matter experts can and have been adding materials as a comprehensive resource on the evolving topic of AI.

5. Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy (FIGG) Subcommittee: Subcommittee chairperson Cris Hughes reported that after hearing from multiple subject matter experts from different fields related to FIGG, the subcommittee has begun working on materials intended to support law enforcement agencies and medical examiner and coroner offices who may consider using FIGG for casework. The materials will focus on tips for navigating the FIGG process and best practices. The subcommittee has begun work on a brochure-type document that will cover the basics and refer users to the Commission's website where more comprehensive materials can be housed. The subcommittee also has begun work on a FAQ document and a decision tree/flow chart of the FIGG process. These documents will provide more information about topics such as technical foundations for FIGG, case suitability and considerations, timetables, and funding considerations and resources. Once the subcommittee completes work on these documents, they hope to have them reviewed by subject matter experts and then bring the documents to the full Commission for review and posting on the Commission's website.

## VI. **Issues for Discussion**

1. Discussion and possible action- 2026 Forensic Science Commission Quarterly Meeting Dates:

The Commission discussed possible meeting dates and locations and unanimously decided on the following meeting schedule for the 2026 quarterly Commission meetings:

- a) March 11, 2026 at 10 a.m. in Urbana;
- b) June 10, 2026 at 10 a.m. in Urbana;
- c) September 10, 2026 at 10 a.m. in Urbana;
- d) December 9, 2026 at 10 a.m. on Web Ex.

The location of the June 10<sup>th</sup> meeting may change to the Forensic Science Center-Chicago, depending on the status of renovations at the Lab.

2. Discussion and possible action- Public Policy Subcommittee Recommendation for creation of ad hoc Drugs Subcommittee:

ED Watroba provided background on this agenda item. The Commission has the statutory authority to create new subcommittees as needed. As discussed at the last Commission meeting, the Public Policy Subcommittee has been examining the issue of emerging drugs, primarily focusing on the issue of ensuring consistent reporting of emerging drugs across lab systems in Illinois. Since the last Commission meeting, the accredited lab systems have started a working group outside of the Commission to create a mechanism to communicate across lab systems when they encounter a new or emerging compound. Once established, this working group will invite any other labs in

Illinois conducting seized drug analysis to participate in the working group. This is a short-term plan to begin to address the issue of consistent reporting of emerging drugs. The working group may be permanently housed elsewhere in the future. As previously discussed, the Commission currently is not an appropriate location to house the working group, so the subcommittee discussed the option of creating a Drugs Subcommittee within the Commission to provide a mechanism for the working group to share any information they gather with the Commission.

A Drugs Subcommittee within the Commission could include other stakeholders such as medical examiners, coroners, toxicologists, public health representatives, and law enforcement agencies. A Drugs Subcommittee essentially could serve as a hub for the sharing of information related to emerging drugs and the identification of drug trends. This information is important for criminal justice purposes, for medical examiners and coroners deciding which toxicology panels to request in suspicious deaths, and to identify drug use trends. The Drugs Subcommittee could compile data and publish the data on the Commission's website. The data also could be distributed to other interest groups, including groups involved in legislative recommendations related to controlled substances. The information also could be shared with other subcommittees such as the Training and Career Development and Technology Subcommittees since new and emerging drugs may impact the technology and types of training labs needs for their forensic sciences. Because a Drugs Subcommittee would not be limited only to the issue of identifying new and emerging drugs, the subcommittee also could make recommendations related to the Illinois Controlled Substances Act and other proposed legislation related to drugs. The Public Policy Subcommittee observed that discussions related to drug policy and legislation such as the Illinois Controlled Substances Act require subject matter experts who have the specialized knowledge in drug chemistry.

Judge Hill expressed his approval of the proposed concept and particularly the nexus between the Drugs Subcommittee and drug chemistry subject matter experts in the field. Judge Hill referred to discussions at the previous Commission meeting regarding reasons why the lab working group should remain outside the Commission at this time, including concerns about discussing active criminal cases in open meetings. Judge Hill further noted that the proposed working group and subcommittee structure could provide a mechanism that does not currently exist for practicing scientists to contribute to legislative changes by sharing what they observe in the field. ED Watroba reiterated that, as discussed at the last Commission meeting, the proposed working group/subcommittee structure is not an attempt to avoid the requirements of the Open Meetings Act but rather recognizes that the type of work that the working group will do in real time would be a difficult fit under the OMA. Once the working group and subcommittee completes its work in the short-term and produces data and deliverables, a different long-term structure may be considered. If the Commission decides later that it wants to bring the working group under the umbrella of the Commission, then the data

generated could be used to support a recommendation for an exemption under the OMA.

DD Woolery commented that creating a separate subcommittee for issues related to drugs is a good idea because issues related to drugs are time consuming. A new Drugs Subcommittee would allow the Public Policy Subcommittee to address other policy issues not related to drugs. DD Woolery also observed that the proposed structure is consistent with the notion that scientists and lab managers are neutral and generally are not directly involved in helping create public policy. The proposed structure allows the subject matter experts to neutrally present information and data to the Drugs Subcommittee and then the Drugs Subcommittee can do the work of making policy recommendations based on that information and data.

ED Watroba opened the floor to public comment from participants present both in-person and on-line. In-person participant Timothy Ruppel from the Kane County Forensic Laboratory commented that the DEA used to have a national forum called Microgram to exchange information such as this. DD Woolery noted that Microgram no longer exists. Mr. Ruppel commented that the Commission would be the right place to exchange the type of information discussed at a state level. On-line participant Amanda Shanbaum commented that, based on her experience, it would be beneficial to have an open forum for communication and collaboration on these topics within the state of Illinois, especially for policy and legislative recommendations. Ms. Shanbaum stated that there is an on-line forum with the DEA that has somewhat replaced Microgram, and that Mr. Ruppel can reach out to her for information about it.

A motion was made to approve the creation of an ad hoc Drugs Subcommittee. The motion passed following a roll call vote (12 yes votes, 0 no votes/abstentions, 1 Member absent).

3. Discussion and possible action- Revisions to ByLaws regarding Chairperson Recommendation and Selection Procedures for Vice-Chairperson:

A change to the Commission's statute provides that that, "Beginning January 1, 2026, the Governor shall designate the chair of the Commission for a 2-year term." ED Watroba suggested that the Commission consider amending Section 17 of the Commission's ByLaws to align with the new statutory language. ED Watroba also proposed adding a new section to the ByLaws to separately address the election of a Vice Chairperson.

The Commission discussed possible changes to Section 17 of the ByLaws to align with the new statutory language. The Commission also discussed topics related to the election of a Vice-Chairperson to incorporate into the ByLaws. Dr. Arunkumar suggested that the Vice-Chairperson should serve for a 2-year term for consistency with the Chairperson's term. The Commission discussed additional topics to include in the ByLaws, including the addition of language

addressing procedures for when the Chairperson and/or Vice-Chairperson leaves the Commission before expiration of their 2-year term.

ED Watroba will draft proposed language to amend the ByLaws consistent with the Commission's discussion for further discussion at the next Commission meeting.

4. Discussion and possible action- THC Testing at UIC Analytical Forensic Testing Laboratory (AFTL):

ED Watroba stated that in consultation with the Quality Systems Subcommittee she included this topic as a discussion item on the agenda because it is an important and evolving issue. It likely will be a standing discussion item on the agenda for Commission meetings for the foreseeable future to provide the full Commission with an opportunity to discuss the topic and to provide additional accessibility for public participation.

ED Watroba shared subsection (b) of the Commission's statute, which outlines the Commission's duties and purpose, because this is the first time the Commission has dealt with an issue of this nature. She noted that the statute does not give the Commission oversight or investigatory authority. However, the statute does give the Commission the ability to take significant actions. ED Watroba noted the inclusion of action verbs in the statute which allow the Commission to, for example, provide guidance and make recommendations. The statute also empowers the Commission to collect and analyze information related to the impact of policies and practices on forensic laboratories and the sound practice of forensic science and to identify new policies and practices that will yield better results in the criminal justice system consistent with the sound practice of forensic science. ED Watroba suggested that the Commission think about the types of action it may want to take consistent with the statute as the Quality Systems Subcommittee completes its first pass of the UIC Report about THC testing at AFTL.

ED Watroba noted that in addition to the UIC Report there has been television and print media coverage related to the topic. The Quality Systems Subcommittee has noted during its review of the UIC Report that the Injustice Watch article about AFTL touches upon more issues than what is discussed in depth in the UIC Report. For example, the topic of THC quantitative testing in urine is touched upon briefly in the UIC Report but is discussed more extensively in the news article.

Ms. Dragovich summarized some of the overarching issues from all the materials, specifically, the Significant Non-Conformity Report provided to the Commission by AFTL, the UIC Report, and the Injustice Watch article. These include the testing of urine for THC (which is inappropriate because analysts should not see THC in urine), testimony that THC and THC glucuronide are the same (which they are not), the inability to delineate between the two different isomers Delta-8 THC and Delta-9 THC, and the lack of appropriate notification



to stakeholders of issues with THC testing at AFTL. Ms. Dragovich commented that there is a lot of information in these sources that can only lead to the conclusion that there were problems with the work that was being performed at AFTL. Ms. Dragovich stated that it is appropriate for the Commission to continue to examine the issues to determine what if anything we can do to communicate our thoughts on the work that was performed there to bring light to the issues that other people have seen that they have not been able to make headway in dealing with.

ED Watroba shared that another topic discussed by the subcommittee is the fact that the UIC Report was written by lawyers at a law firm hired by UIC and the risk that people reading the UIC Report will take it at face value and assume it is correct. One thing the Commission may want to consider putting out is a document clarifying and correcting anything in the UIC Report that is scientifically incorrect. ED Watroba noted that lawyers are not scientists, that lawyers write differently, and that some things may have been lost in translation during the drafting of the UIC Report. Currently the UIC Report is the main document available to the public about the THC testing at AFTL and it may be important to publish something scientific that would be available to the public alongside the UIC Report. Ms. Dragovich shared that a question and concern she has is how the law was interpreted by prosecutors, defense attorneys and judges. For example, when she reads the DUI law as a scientist, it is clear to her that urine is not an appropriate matrix for THC testing, yet clearly people in the legal community read the law and thought urine was an acceptable matrix for THC testing in DUI cases. Circling back to the previous discussion about establishing an ad hoc subcommittee on Drugs, the Commission has a responsibility to clarify when there could be a misunderstanding in the law from a scientific perspective and to try to influence the law to ensure that it is clear to any reader, whether they have a scientific background or not, what was actually intended to be a controlled substance so they can assess whether someone may have committed a crime.

Judge Hill commented that it is important for the Commission to get to the same point of understanding as the Quality Systems Subcommittee and to make a statement related to the issue. Judge Hill said it seems clear that there are certain things in the UIC Report that may be incorrect in terms of the science and the law. Since the UIC Report is the main document available to the public addressing this very serious problem and since the public may rely upon it, it is important for the Commission to publish a document to make sure the record is correct on the topic. Judge Hill noted that it is well-within the authority and mandate of the Commission to issue statements of this nature for the sake of good forensic science going forward.

ED Watroba suggested that it may make sense for the Commission to take multiple actions with respect to this issue instead of trying to address everything in a single document. For example, the Commission could opt to issue one statement in response to the UIC Report as noted by Judge Hill, pointing out issues and errors identified in the Report, and then a different

document geared more towards laboratories identifying gaps, pain points, or systemic issues identified from a quality standpoint. That type of document could assist other lab systems by providing lessons learned to inform improvements in their own quality systems. The Commission also could consider drafting a document geared towards attorneys and law enforcement professionals and the systemic issue of how legal professionals assess the validity of science. These would be three different topics focused on three different audiences, all equally important and all within the scope of the Commission's statute. Ms. Dragovich responded by raising the question of what other mechanisms are available for criminal justice stakeholders to report a technical concern and have it addressed, given that the testing issue clearly went on for quite some time. She suggested the Commission should look at the available reporting mechanisms, outside of defense attorneys raising issues related to a particular case, for stakeholders to raise concerns regarding a laboratory's testing and operations

Ms. Tucker commented that she likes the idea of publishing multiple documents that provide direct answers to the stakeholder groups from a timeliness standpoint. ED Watroba noted that since the UIC Report is on-line and publicly available, it might be advisable to focus first on publishing the document addressing inaccuracies in the UIC Report to clarify those issues and then address the other topics in subsequent documents. Because this is an evolving issue, there may be other topics the Commission decides it wants to address related to this issue. Dr. Arunkumar noted that in the long term, the creation of the emerging drugs working group and Drugs Subcommittee could play a part in identifying and recommending legislative changes so that issues like this related to testing can be identified sooner.

Ms. Baker agreed that the Commission should look into what mechanisms are available in the state to report if a lab is doing work incorrectly. She also believes a gap analysis or root cause analysis with the information available should be completed by the Commission.

The Commission agreed by consensus to keep this topic as a recurring discussion topic for future Commission meetings so that the Commission can continue to discuss and take any action it deems appropriate as this issue evolves. ED Watroba thanked the Commission, the members of the Quality Systems Subcommittee, and the members of the public who have participated in meetings related to this issue.

## **VII. Housekeeping Items**

ED Watroba reminded Commission Members again about the annual One Net Training modules. She also shared that she created an Executive Director Resource Manual which compiles everything that has been put into place since she became Executive Director both for her own use and for the use of future Commission staff. She will next begin work on a similar resource manual for Commission Members that will contain information, phone numbers, and

reminders about topics such as One Net training. DD Woolery mentioned that ED Watroba has worked on building out the Commission's website and that the new content looks good and she encouraged Commission Members to visit the website.

**VIII. Public Comment**

No public comment was offered.

**IX. Meeting Schedule**

The next meeting is scheduled at 10:00 a.m., on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, on Web Ex.

**X. Adjournment**

Director Designee Woolery and ED Watroba adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:18 a.m. on September 10, 2025.