

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY BUREAU OF CRIMINAL APPREHENSION

SUPPORT TO DECREASE FORENSIC EVIDENCE EXAMINATION TURNAROUND TIMES

Recommendation

The Governor recommends \$6,164,000 in FY 2024 and \$5,131,000 in ongoing funding starting in FY 2025 to support additional efforts to decrease turnaround times for forensic processing of evidence in criminal investigations for state and local law enforcement partners.

Fiscal Year 2024 Cost	\$6,164,000.00
Ongoing Cost	\$5,131,000.00
Number of FTEs	39

Forensic & Digital Multimedia Evidence 30-Day Turnaround Time

This request includes the requisite staffing, equipment, and supplies to achieve a standard 30-day turnaround time for all forensic examinations, including digital and multimedia analysis, to expedite delivery of forensic results on evidence in ongoing criminal investigations for law enforcement partners across the state. As requests for forensic examination have expanded continuously over the past several years, the turnaround time has slowly lengthened and investments are needed to reduce current backlogs and establish a consistent 30-day turnaround time.

Minnesota Uniform Crimes Reports for 2021 and 2019 reflect significant increases in violent crimes, with a 71.8% increase in murder offenses, 29.5% increase in robberies, and a 62.7% increase in aggravated assaults. In addition to the changes noted above, there were 779 carjackings (primarily in Minneapolis & Saint Paul) in 2021 as well as 14,829 motor vehicle thefts. This last number represents a 30% increase over 2019.

The BCA provides forensic science testing and digital and multimedia evidence analysis as well as subsequent expert testimony. Without further investment, the demand for these critical services exceed the BCA's abilities to meet them.

Three forensic services were identified as requiring capacity building resources to assist Minnesota law enforcement in combatting violent crime: Digital and Multimedia Evidence Analysis, DNA Analysis, and Latent Fingerprint and Firearms Analysis. Operational supports, including support staff, for the Forensic Science Services efforts are also requested.

Digital and Multimedia Evidence Analysis

A decade ago, the number of computers seized associated with a single investigation was rarely more than one. In 2010 alone, DME Forensic Examiners processed 40 terabytes of digital evidence. To describe this quantity in other terms, if this were sheets of paper, and all 221,880,960,000 sheets of paper were to be stacked, this would result in a tower that is 83,205,360 feet tall (equivalent to over 66,000 Empire State Buildings stacked end to end or the length of 80 round trips to the moon). As technology continues to advance and online criminal activity continues to grow, the number of investigations and, therefore, requests for DME analysis continue to increase. The increase in complexity, demand, and crime rates have resulted in exponential growth in demand for services, resulting in backlogs and lengthened turnaround times, as well as delays in prosecutions and holding individuals responsible for their crimes.



With the requested capacity support, all DME analyses are projected to reach 30-day turnaround time by the end of 2025. Without support, current resources are only sufficient to attain a 30-day turnaround time for approximately 22% of the caseload.

DNA Testing Laboratory Capacity Enhancement

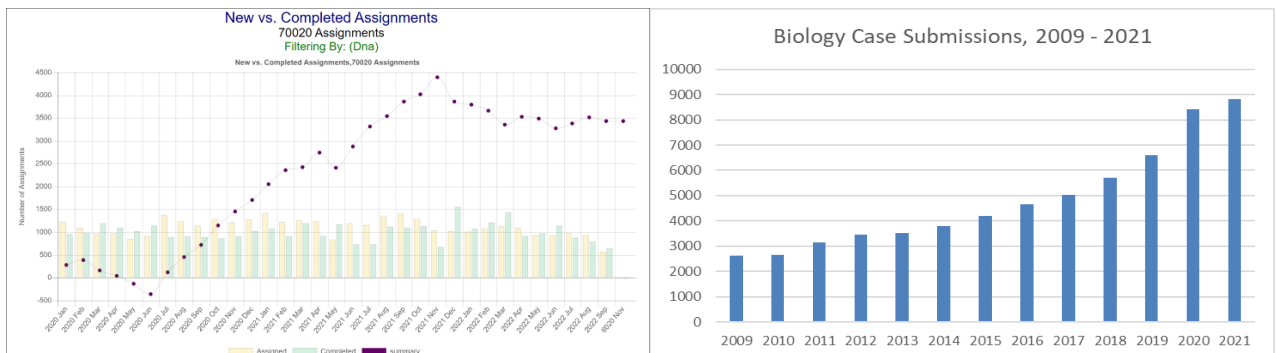
Between 2015 and 2019, the BCA experienced a continuous increase (approximately 10-15% annually) in the demand for DNA testing services for cases involving violent crime and weapons, with a dramatic increase of 29% in 2020. This surge in violent crime testing demand persisted through 2021 and into 2022. The capacity of the section needs to increase further to address the accumulated backlog and persistent level of violent crime cases in a timely manner.

The recommendation will increase current capacity for forensic DNA testing to address the recent significant increase in evidence being submitted from violent crimes, including gun crimes and carjackings, committed across the state. The capacity increase is also intended to alleviate the need for externally funded scientists and ultimately provide for sustained turnaround times of approximately 30 days following integration of new scientists and reduction of the backlog.

DNA Section Productivity Summary Trend

“Summary” represents the accumulation of the incoming cases that exceeded the section capacity.

Report date 9/17/2022; Last two entries (Sep, Nov) do not represent full data.



With requested capacity support, turnaround times are projected to reach an average of 30-days by spring 2025. Without support, while turnaround times are still expected to improve, they are not projected to go below 130-days on average, assuming demand remains steady.

Latent Fingerprint and Firearms Laboratory Capacity Enhancement

The number of cases requiring latent print examination has grown 33% in the last six years. The surge in violent crime experienced in 2020 and 2021 as well as the BCA’s statutory responsibility to investigate resulted in an increased demand for firearms examinations as well as an emphasis on the need for faster results. Projections based on submission history and scientist output indicate that the demand on the section significantly exceeds the capacity. The value of fingerprint and firearms results early in an investigation is extremely high and can contribute to the quick apprehension of the suspect, save resources for the law enforcement agency, and clear the innocent. To ultimately achieve a sustained turnaround time of 30 days, additional staff are needed to process these cases.

With requested capacity support, turnaround times are projected to reach an average of 30 days by the end of 2025. Without support, turnaround times are projected to double to 240 days by end of 2025.