

# Dept. of Justice: AG Schimel's reforms improving turnaround of evidence at State Crime Lab but more support needed through funding, staffing and technology

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MADISON, WIS. – Casework times in most units at the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory (WSCLB) continue to improve even as evidence submissions remain high.

“I am immensely proud of our crime lab team; but we are always striving to better serve Wisconsin’s law enforcement agencies who rely on us to help them get justice for victims,” said Attorney General Brad Schimel. “I am well aware of the workload pressures they face, and getting them the help they need is my number one priority in our budget request.”

An internal analysis of case work at the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory (WSCL) shows while evidence submissions remain high when compared to submission rates in previous years, turnaround times in casework continue to improve in most units at the state’s crime lab. Under Attorney General Schimel’s direction, the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) hired the National Forensic Science Technology Center (NFSTC) at Florida International University to assess the needs of the WSCL and make recommendations to improve productivity and efficiency.

“Today, a high percentage of criminal cases involve some level of scientific evidence requiring analysis by the lab and the public needs to have confidence in those results, whether from the 1,600 examinations done on 70 pieces of evidence

for a recent Milwaukee homicide case or a run-of-the-mill burglary investigation in La Crosse,” said Attorney General Schimel. “We have been aggressive and innovative when it comes to staffing and processing times, but we always strive to be better.”

Attorney General Schimel has taken the following steps within his authority since 2015 at WSCLB to address the increasing volume of evidence submitted:

- Moved two Full Time Employee (FTE) positions from other divisions in the agency to the crime lab.
- Updated WSCL submission guidelines, so that law enforcement is only submitting evidence that is absolutely necessary for a conviction.
- Repurposed a position in order to hire a case manager to assist with determining when testing of submitted evidence is no longer necessary because a case is no longer active.
- Added new equipment to increase speed and efficiency, including equipment that decreases testing time and increases automation.
- Added safety equipment that prevents inadvertent exposure to dangerous chemicals.
- Implemented automatic monitoring and control systems.
- Updated crime scene response vehicles.
- Implemented pilot programs based on best practices around the country, including a High Throughput Workflow Pilot, which incorporates automation and batching into many of the DNA processing steps, assigning analysts to a specific step of DNA processing for a given period of time and moving cases through the steps in batches rather than having one analyst focus on one case at a time.
- Shifted funding in shared appropriations to the WSCL when needed, and hired new WSCL management.
- WSCL has re-written internal policies to increase efficiency, and relied on interns and LTEs for special projects whenever possible.

While all of these reforms are in place, the assessment from the NSFTC confirmed the agency’s belief that these reforms need to be expanded.

Attorney General Schimel’s budget request reflects the suggestions made by the NSFTC.

[Read the fact sheet on the number of cases different units are handling, and further](#)

[details on the DNA Analysis Unit.](#)

[View the evidence submission statistics for the WSCL, from 2015 to date.](#)