



July 15, 2024

Webb County Medical Examiner's Office  
Highway 59 & Henry Cuellar Rd.  
Laredo, TX 78045

Dear Dr. Stern

Thank you for the opportunity for NMS Labs to have been the forensic toxicology resource for the Webb County Medical Examiner's Office for the past thirteen years. In addition to the rigorous scientific and operational capabilities that NMS Labs will use to support your office, NMS Labs has a long-standing working relationship of over 50 years with toxicology laboratories which offers us a unique understanding of the scientific needs of complex and esoteric toxicology analysis. Successfully balancing the highest quality forensic science support; complex, high performance esoteric capabilities not available elsewhere; operational efficiencies; and economical value for over 50 years assures Webb County Medical Examiner's Office that NMS Labs is uniquely qualified to sustain this relationship as your forensic toxicology laboratory.

NMS labs currently performs postmortem toxicology for forensic crime laboratories as well as small to large Coroner/Medical Examiner's offices across the United States, Canada, and internationally. As the regulatory standards for forensic laboratory testing have become more rigorous, and the complexity of postmortem toxicology has increased due to new and emerging drugs, many coroner and medical examiners offices have opted to utilize NMS Labs for efficiency, quality, and budget savings. NMS Labs has long considered Webb County Medical Examiner's Office a partner and valued client who could benefit from our comprehensive services.

NMS Labs is currently the only private forensic laboratory providing the following capabilities:

1. NMS Labs is accredited by the Texas Forensic Science Commission and has been for over a decade. As you are well-aware, being accredited by the Texas Forensic Science Commission allows our reports to be used in courts within Texas. As your cases have the potential for criminal litigation in Texas, it is essential that your chosen reference laboratory have Texas Forensic Science Commission accreditation.
2. In addition to holding the Texas Forensic Science Commission accreditation, NMS Labs is the only private forensic laboratory to hold both the American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT) and ANAB (ANSI/ASQ National Accreditation Board) in toxicology, a testament to our quality and commitment to scientific leadership and excellence. For seized drugs, NMS Labs is accredited by ANAB (ANSI/ASQ National Accreditation Board).
3. NMS Labs offers a catalogue of over 2,500 different tests, including many not available at other laboratories. We are the esoteric source for private and governmental laboratories nationwide.
4. Our comprehensive catalogue is unmatched by our competitors. NMS Labs has the most inclusive acceptance criteria in terms of testable matrices available in addition to our large scope of testable toxicological compounds. We are routinely called upon for the most complex and difficult analysis on the most esoteric specimens including blood, serum/plasma, urine, saliva, hair, vitreous fluid, meconium, bile, gastric contents, fecal matter, umbilical cord tissue, decomposition fluid, skin, brain, lung, muscle, liver, and heart, insect larvae, food and beverage contents, unknown powders and fluids, and metals, among many others. Our laboratory capabilities allow NMS Labs to either test or develop a testing regimen for any sample of toxicological importance.

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5. NMS Labs is the only private forensic laboratory to have over 12 ABFT board-certified toxicologists. This certification ensures that our experts are among the most highly trained and up-to-date specialists in their field.

The listing below outlines the facets of NMS Labs services and the customized offerings that we will use to support Webb County Medical Examiner's Office as a Key Client.

## **I. Laboratory Accreditations**

### **A. National**

1. ABFT Accredited Laboratory – this accreditation is in alignment with NAME's current recommendation to use an accredited toxicology laboratory.
2. ASCLD/LAB *International* ISO 17025 in disciplines of toxicology and drug identification
3. College of American Pathologists (CAP) ISO 15189 for Medical Testing Laboratories
4. Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments 1988 (CLIA)
5. US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Registration

### **B. Texas-Specific**

1. Texas Forensic Science Commission Accreditation

### **C. Local Government**

1. NMS also carries state specific certifications in toxicology or forensic science disciplines in: PA, NY, CA, CO, FL, LA, ME, MD, RI and TX

*NMS Labs is the only private Laboratory to carry both ABFT and ASCLD/Lab Accreditations*

The layering of these accreditations and certifications assures the Webb County Medical Examiner's Office that NMS is compliant with the most rigorous accreditation requirements for drug identification testing. Our national reach allows us to recognize emerging issues in forensic toxicology rapidly and also gain the experience of national best practices that can be shared with Webb County Medical Examiner's Office in a manner that is not available to a dedicated local government laboratory.

## **II. NMS Staff**

- A. Current Staff includes 17 doctoral level scientists (including twelve ABFT Board Certified Toxicologists)
- B. Dedicated Forensic Client support available Monday – Friday from 7 am – 7:30 pm Central Standard Time. Staff is available via e-mail and phone.
- C. Dedicated Forensic Specimen Processing Staff – specially trained in handling postmortem samples to retain specimen integrity, confidentiality and sample volumes
- D. Currently employees over 350 individuals at our headquarter laboratory in Willow Grove, PA, and our six Integrated Services Laboratories (IFS) located in PA, TX, FL and NC
- E. Multiple ABFT Board Certified toxicologists that are active and hold officer positions in the leading professional organizations of American Academy of Forensic Sciences, Society of Forensic Toxicologists (SOFT), NAME and The International Association of Forensic Toxicologists (TIAFT)
- F. NMS Labs has multiple professional staff engaged in the National Commission on Forensic Sciences and Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC). This engagement, in the most recent efforts of the Federal Government to strengthen forensic sciences, assures Webb

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County Medical Examiner's Office that your laboratory provider will be current with the regulatory environment and best practices.

- G. A dedicated experienced forensic Territory Manager assigned to Webb County Medical Examiner's Office and responsible for overall customer satisfaction. This individual manages the business aspects of working with Webb County Medical Examiner's Office as well as being the liaison to assist Webb County Medical Examiner's Office and NMS Labs in their routine partnership needs.

### **III. Laboratory Operations**

- A. NMS Labs has been in continuous operation as a private forensic toxicology laboratory for 50 years. NMS Labs was founded as a private laboratory dedicated to servicing the needs of government police agencies and continues with this commitment by offering Webb County Medical Examiner's Office the benefits of our comprehensive drug identification testing services.
- B. Operational hours are 24 hours/7 days per week, offering sustained, consistent turnaround time on all testing.
- C. In house quality assurance and quality control departments dedicated to continuous quality improvement.
- D. In house research and development department dedicated to method improvements, validation of new methods, and validation of testing for new compounds and novel psychoactive substances (NPS).
- E. Dedicated Expert Services Department manages request for litigation support such as testimony, subpoena management, and expert opinions.
- F. NMS Labs Operations is committed to efficiency and quality with the use of Six Sigma and LEAN approaches to our laboratory operations.
- G. NMS Labs has redundant backup systems for our data and facilities in case of a mass disaster.

### **IV. Analytical Capabilities**

- A. Dedicated Depts. of Special Chemistry (Drug Screening), Gas Chromatography (GC), High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC), Liquid Chromatography (LC), Metals, Environmental, Endocrinology, Drug Chemistry (Drug Identification of materials Ex. Botanicals, pills, powders, liquids)
- B. NMS Labs has our own in-house instrumentation service engineer to minimize instrument down time.
- C. Instrumentation Duplication – whenever practical, NMS Labs will work to duplicate instrumentation platforms to support back up plans if an instrument is down.
- D. Over 2,500 tests on matrices of blood, urine, serum, tissues, body fluids, decomposition products, and insects.
- E. Rigorous protocol for special forensic investigations requiring expertise and approaches outside of commercial testing.

### **IV. Evidence Handling and Security**

- A. Specially trained forensic specimen processors
- B. Electronic Chain of custody follows all samples from receipt at NMS Labs to Disposition of the evidence
- C. Secured refrigerated or frozen specimen storage
- D. Samples may be disposed of by NMS Labs or returned to clients under chain of custody
- E. Extended Sample Storage is available to comply with individual client requirements
- F. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) to support unique requirements of handling drug identification samples
- G. Limited Access Facility with security cameras throughout the interior and exterior of the building

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**V. Result Reporting**

- A. Reports are available by mail or electronically via a secure webportal for easy case retrieval.
- B. Reports are compliant with the format and contents currently recommended by the 2014 Congressional Report "Strengthening the Forensic Sciences."

**VI. Expert Services**

- A. NMS has a dedicated Expert Services Dept. to manage requests for litigation support.
- B. NMS experts have qualified as experts at multiple levels of court proceeding in the US and internationally, including military courts. NMS is nationally recognized as a leading expert in forensic toxicology and is frequently called upon for our expertise to support both our own testing results and interpret other laboratories findings.

NMS Labs looks forward to the opportunity to discuss the postmortem toxicology services that we have to offer Webb County Medical Examiner's Office. If there are any questions regarding this communication, please contact me at the number below.

Sincerely,



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cc: NMS Labs D365 Database