

**CLERK & COMPTROLLER
PALM BEACH COUNTY**

**LIMITED CONTROLS REVIEW OF
EVIDENCE DEPARTMENT**



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The Honorable Sharon R. Bock, Esq.
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We conducted a limited-scope review of the controls over Evidence Department.

Our objectives were to evaluate the overall effectiveness and efficiency of evidence handling and safeguarding processes and related internal controls as well as verify compliance with pertinent laws, regulations and policies.

Our review was neither designed nor intended to be a detailed study of every process, procedure, transaction or system in each area. Accordingly, the observations and recommendations included in this report are not all-inclusive.

The limited-scope review identified various control weaknesses and opportunities to strengthen the evidence handling and safeguarding processes. Specifically, the facilities and related security devices require improvement. Periodic and random evidence inventory observation and reporting practices require strengthening.

The Evidence Department currently has an inventory of more than 175,000 evidence items. Our sample inventory of 256 evidence items identified four instances (1.6 percent error rate) with evidence items misplaced or missing. Evidence clerks did not accurately record all vault entry and evidence handled in the access logs.

Opportunities exist to refine and improve existing policies and procedures throughout the evidence process. Post-hire criminal background and drug screening requirements, although existing, should be more strictly enforced and training and development practices should be improved.

We appreciated the cooperation of management and staff during the course of this review.

Respectfully submitted,

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Introduction

Background

The Clerk & Comptroller's Office is responsible for performing over 1,000 different functions for the 1.3 million residents of Palm Beach County. The Clerk's Evidence Department in the Main Courthouse is responsible for receiving, securing, recording, storing, and disposing of evidence presented in Palm Beach County criminal and civil courts.

Evidence is introduced and presented during court hearings and trials. The Clerk's Office in-court clerk in attendance takes possession of the evidence as presented. The in-court clerk maintains possession and control over the evidence throughout the duration of the trial, transporting it to the courtroom and securing it in a locked cage in the Clerk's Office at the end of each day.

When the trial or hearing concludes or a hearing on an evidence matter is over, the in-court clerk transfers custody of the evidence to an Evidence Department clerk. The Evidence Department Clerk takes custody of the evidence and enters evidence details into the Trakman system. The Trakman system is a computerized evidence tracking system that assigns bar codes to each piece of evidence. The Evidence clerk affixes the bar codes to the evidence for storage in secure vaults. The bar codes identify the case and location of the evidence, allowing for easy retrieval at a later time. The system also provides reports that assist in conducting audits and spot checks and identifying items that are eligible for disposal as authorized by Florida Statutes.

Evidence is stored primarily in three onsite vault locations. For safety and security reasons, evidence types are stored separately. For example, money and jewelry are stored in a safety deposit box at a local bank.

Entrance to the vaults is restricted to authorized personnel only, with entry recorded on printed vault access logs. Evidence is retrieved primarily for hearings or trial activities. Evidence is disposed of based on retention periods dictated by Florida Statutes, court rules and local administrative orders. Criminal evidence is disposed

of only after approval by the State Attorney's Office and the subsequent issuance of a court order by the Chief Judge.

As an added control, all Evidence department employees must undergo pre-employment criminal background checks and drug screening tests. All evidence item activity, including removal, return and disposal is recorded through a hand-held bar code reader.

The following table shows evidence item data from calendar year 2009 to 2011 as well as the projected volume of evidence items to be processed in 2012. The volume of evidence items received in calendar year (CY) 2011 declined by 2 percent from 2009. As of July 31, 2012, it is projected that the number of evidence items received will increase by 29 percent in 2012 over 2011. The volume of evidence items retrieved and returned to inventory increased by 32 percent and 93 percent, respectively, from 2009 to 2011. As of August 13, 2012, the Trakman system shows 175,586 actual physical evidence items in storage.

Evidence Items	CY2009 Actual	CY2010 Actual	CY2011 Actual	Percent Change 2009-2011	CY2012 Projected	CY2012 Projected Change
Received by an Evidence Clerk	29,299	29,488	28,701	-2%	37,041	29%
Retrieved and removed	16,162	16,970	21,400	32%	22,336	4%
Returned after removal*	13,723	17,150	26,492	93%	20,578	-22%
Removed from inventory for disposal	13,472	18,629	13,857	3%	8,472	-39%
Total Inventory**	128,356	140,875	150,743	17%	175,586	16%

*Some evidence is returned by the judge to parties in the courtroom and not returned to the Clerk for storage.

**A full evidence item inventory list is produced every year in July or August. The actual inventory as of August 13, 2012 was 175,586.

Although the volume of work has gone up, the office has not increased the number staff due to repeated legislative budget cuts to the Clerk's court operations (25 percent since 2009).

Scope and Methodology

The Clerk's Audit Services Unit of the Division of Inspector General conducted a limited-scope review of the controls over evidence stored within the Main Courthouse, including compliance with key statutory requirements and comparison with accepted standards and best practices regarding evidence processing.

This review was initiated in July 2012, immediately after allegations were received that evidence was missing from a Main Courthouse vault. The Clerk's Inspector General requested a criminal investigation by the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO).

The objectives of this review were to obtain an understanding of the evidence handling and safeguarding processes, evaluate the control environment, and verify compliance with pertinent laws and regulations as well as established policies.

In order to conduct this review and meet the objectives, we conducted management interviews. Evidence Department staff-level employees were not interviewed due to the ongoing criminal investigation. We reviewed all departmental procedures and evaluated the internal control environment as well as examined and evaluated the facilities supporting the areas. We obtained and reviewed staffing, workload and budget information for the Evidence Department for the period from October 1, 2007 through June 20, 2012. The information was analyzed to identify any trends or root causes that may have contributed to any control failures. Our findings are based on these evaluations.

The department has three storage vaults (A, B and C). Vaults A and B are located in the Main Courthouse. One must walk through Vault A to enter Vault B. Vault A is used to store civil case evidence items. Vault B, which has additional security requirements, is used primarily to store drugs, weapons and money. Vault C, which is in a different location (not disclosed for security purposes), is used to store civil case and biohazards evidence items.

Management conducted an inventory of vault B evidence items in July 2012, which primarily focused on drug-related evidence following the allegation of missing evidence. Our audit team did not validate the results of management's inventory. Our audit included independent sampling of the evidence inventory in all three vaults, with an emphasis on drugs stored in vault B. In addition, we performed a

complete inventory of the evidence held within the vault B safe and a sample inventory of the safety deposit box located at a local bank. In all, we independently verified 256 evidence items by comparing entries from Trakman system reports to the actual items in the vaults. In addition, we verified 117 evidence items by comparing these actual inventory items in the vaults to the Trakman system.

We evaluated the evidence procedures and compared them to best practices and professional standards established by the Florida Court Clerks and Comptrollers (FCCC) and the International Association for Property and Evidence, Inc. (IAPE). We performed other procedures that were deemed necessary under the circumstances.

The scope excluded the handling and safeguarding of evidence in the branch locations. Our assessment of daily standard practices was impacted because the three Evidence Department clerks were on suspension during our review. Other clerks were temporarily assigned, who were not previously involved in handling evidence on a daily basis. These circumstances required a higher level of direct involvement and supervision by the Assistant Manager. The findings in the criminal investigation conducted by PBSO are not included in this report.

Conclusion

The Clerk & Comptroller's Office is responsible for the packaging, labeling, tracking, storing, securing, retrieving and disposing of criminal and civil evidence items for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit. At the time of this review, 175,586 evidence items were held in inventory.

The Clerk's Audit Services Unit identified various control weaknesses and opportunities to strengthen the evidence handling and safeguarding processes within the Evidence Department. Standards and best practices provided by the Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers (FCCC) and the International Association of Property and Evidence, Inc. (IAPE) were utilized to help identify opportunities to strengthen the overall custodial environment.

The County-owned courthouse facilities and related security devices require improvement to ensure adequate safeguarding of evidence. Periodic and random

evidence inventory observation and reporting practices required strengthening given the expanding inventory maintained.

An inventory conducted by Clerk management of a sampling of evidence items determined that 0.2 percent of the items were missing or misplaced. Our separate, independent testing of a sampling of evidence items determined that 1.6 percent of the items were missing or misplaced.

Evidence clerks did not consistently and accurately record in access logs their entries to the vault nor the purpose and specific case evidence handled, which was required by existing procedures.

Opportunities exist to refine and improve existing procedures and practices for evidence handling. With respect to Evidence personnel, post-hire criminal background checks and drug screening requirements were not strictly enforced for these safety sensitive positions. Opportunities exist to enhance training and development practices.

Review Team:

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Michael Bodle, Senior Auditor

Charles Mansen, Audit Project Administrator

Observations and Recommendations

The review was neither designed nor intended to be a detailed study of the entire evidence process. Accordingly, the results of our testing and recommendations presented in this report may not be all-inclusive of areas where improvement may be needed.

1. Courthouse facilities for processing and storing evidence require improvement.

The county-owned facilities in the Main Courthouse used to process and store evidence require improvement to ensure adequate safeguarding of evidence and safety of employees.

The Palm Beach County Main Courthouse was designed in the 1980s and construction was completed in 1995. The Evidence Department vaults in the courthouse have not been updated since that date. The department has three vaults (A, B and C). Vaults A and B are located in the Main Courthouse. One must walk through Vault A to enter Vault B. Vault A is used to store civil case evidence items. Vault B, which has additional security requirements, is used primarily to store drugs, weapons and money. Vault C, which is in a different location (not disclosed for security purposes), is used to store civil case and biohazard evidence items.

The following observations were noted that require management attention.

- a) Vault entry procedures require dual access to Vault A, however one Evidence clerk is permitted to work alone in vault A so long as that clerk is within the line of sight of another clerk in the office area. Best practices suggest that two clerks should be present in Vault A when handling evidence.
- b) Procedures for dual access (two employees access the vault together) are not consistently followed. Surveillance cameras are not in place either inside or at the entrances to vault A or B.
- c) The vaults have drop ceilings, with a ladder inside that reaches to the ceiling.

- d) Given the lack of space within vaults A and B, clerks process all evidence in less secured office space across the hall. Processing involves confirming the items on the exhibit lists, entering details into Trakman, printing barcodes and labels, packaging the evidence items, and otherwise preparing the evidence items for storage in vaults. This office space has filing cabinets and desks with drawers. Evidence clerks work at desks facing away from each other. In addition, there are no surveillance cameras to observe or record activity. Therefore, opportunities exist for evidence to be misplaced or stolen in this work staging area.

At the time of the review, the department was under the supervision of the Circuit Criminal Assistant Manager and had three Evidence clerks. The Assistant Manager's physical location was on a different floor as she was also responsible for operation of the office's jury function. As a result, there was no continuous supervisory oversight of the Evidence Department.

Recommendations:

IAPE standards and best practices exist to guide organizations in designing facility layouts, utilizing surveillance equipment, securing the evidence, and ensuring proper ventilation and climate controls. These standards were used to develop the following recommendations:

- A. Coordinate with County Facilities Management to reconfigure the overall vault facility to create a more secure location. Require dual access into the vaults using cards, keys, and access codes. Consider replacing drop ceilings with a hard material ceiling. Create a staging area to process evidence received that is completely free of desks and any closeable space in which evidence could be hidden and removed later. Consider the use of biometric screening (e.g., fingerprinting) for vault access.
- B. Coordinate with County Facilities Management to install surveillance cameras inside and at the entry to the vaults. Video should be recorded and stored for appropriate periods.
- C. Consider obtaining input from subject matter experts on any additional enhancements that may be appropriate to strengthen the overall evidence storage facilities.

- D. Transfer evidence not classified as valuable to vault C to the extent practical to free up space in vaults A and B for storage and processing.
- E. Enhance supervisory oversight of the Evidence Department by providing a fully dedicated resource to manage and monitor the operations. Ensure the supervisor is physically located in evidence area with the staff.

Management Responses:

- A. Vaults A, B and C have always required dual access. Vault A contains non-valuable items, such as posters, photographs, copies of documents; therefore, one clerk was permitted to file, pull or research evidence as needed without requiring a second clerk or supervisor present. This practice became necessary as evidence volume increased without a corresponding increase in staffing, due to repeated legislative budget cuts to the Clerk's court operations (25 percent since 2009). Since this review, however, management reallocated staffing from other areas to ensure two clerks could be present at all times in Vaults A, B and C. In addition, a clutter-free staging area to process evidence is now in place.

Target Completion Date: Completed

As for the facility reconfiguration, alteration, relocation and ceiling replacement recommendations, management will consult with the County's Facilities Department as all facilities are owned, operated and modified by the County. Updates on this effort will be provided as soon as they are available.

Target Completion Date: 03/31/13

- B. Management agrees with the recommendation regarding the surveillance cameras. Cameras have been ordered and received. We are working with the County Facilities Department to facilitate prompt installation. Surveillance videos will be periodically monitored and retained for an extended period of time to be determined.

Target Completion Date: 11/30/12

- C. Management is researching subject matter expertise in the area. Updates on this effort will be provided when available.

Target Completion Date: 01/31/13

D. These manual transfers are done on a regular basis. However, because of budget limitations as described herein, the incoming volume is outpacing the volume of transfers-out. Management is continuing to make every effort to increase the volume of transfers.

Target Completion Date: Ongoing

E. Management acknowledges and agrees that having a dedicated onsite supervisor for the Evidence Department is optimal. However, since the 2009 legislative budget cuts, the office consolidated management positions to reduce operating costs. The result was that some managers and supervisors are responsible for supervision and oversight of more than one function or department.

Organizational changes were made prior to the release of this report by assigning a full-time, onsite supervisor to the Evidence Department.

Target Completion Date: Completed

2. Evidence inventory practices should be strengthened.

Opportunities exist to improve procedures and practices that apply to periodic and random inventories of evidence, which would help more rapidly identify missing or misplaced items and act as a theft deterrent.

Inventory Procedures

Best practices indicate that an inventory of a random sampling of evidence in storage should be performed on a monthly basis and a more comprehensive inventory should be performed periodically.

Our review of the department's inventory procedures identified the following improvement opportunities.

- a) Current procedures require spot checks of evidence at the case level and evidence item level. However, there is no specific requirement for periodic complete inventories of evidence, which is particularly important for valuable items (weapons, drugs, jewelry and currency). Management stated that a complete inventory of vault evidence took more than four years and was completed in 2010.

- b) Inventory procedures require scanning of evidence bar codes placed on each piece of evidence but do not require comparison of physical evidence to evidence tags and exhibit lists.
- c) Written procedures do not require a second individual to participate when conducting an inventory of evidence.
- d) Bubble wrap packaging obstructs viewing evidence during any inventory. Verification of the actual physical evidence requires tedious and inefficient unwrapping and re-wrapping of evidence.
- e) Procedures do not include guidance for correction of obvious errors noted when management conduct inventories of evidence. For example, our review identified barcoded evidence item entries with inadequate descriptions to identify the evidence.

Clerk Management's July 2012 Inventory Results:

When allegations of missing drug evidence arose in July 2012, management performed an inventory of all drug evidence (1802 items inventoried) stored in vault B. Management stated they used a full listing of all items in Vault B and compared the contents of the list to the physical evidence. Four evidence items (0.2 percent) were found missing initially, though one was located during our subsequent inventory testing. Our audit team did not validate the results of the inventory. Management continued their search for the other three evidence items. Best practices recommend that a summary report of the findings from the inventory. A summary was not available at the time of our review.

Inspector General's Inventory Results:

During our review, we performed independent sample testing of the approximate 175,000 evidence items located in all three vaults (A, B and C), with an emphasis placed on the drugs secured in vault B. We also performed a complete inventory of the contents of a safe located in vault B and a sample inventory of the safety deposit box located at a local bank. A total of 256 evidence items selected based upon their level of risk were tested by verifying entries from Trakman reports to the actual items in the vaults. In addition, we verified 117 of these actual inventory items in the vaults to the Trakman system.

Our testing disclosed that four (4) of the 256 items sampled (1.6 percent) had missing evidence items, as detailed below.

- One evidence item was missing in vault B, which contained one vial with four Viagra tablets, two vials each with 30 tablets of Oxycontin, and two samples of Lotrisone. The evidence was documented as observed by staff during management's July 2012 inventory. Management believes it was misfiled when returned to inventory and is searching for the evidence item.
- Box 2274 in vault C could not be located, which contained 11 evidence items. The evidence items included eight documents, pillowcases and sheets, matchbooks with burnt matches, and a mask. We could not find the listed case number in Showcase.
- One evidence item marked property receipt (copy) was listed in Trakman as stored in the vault B safe, but it was not found during our complete inventory of the safe contents.
- One evidence item in the local bank safe deposit box was marked as containing a gold chain and two gold bracelets, but instead contained a watch with a gold band and two gold bracelets. A second evidence item for the same case (not initially included in our test sample) was marked as containing a man's watch. This second evidence item accounted for the watch but we could not locate the gold chain.

Our testing also identified various instances in which evidence was not correctly or thoroughly recorded on Trakman or exhibit lists. For example, in some cases, our physical observation of the evidence matched the evidence recorded on the corresponding exhibit lists but the evidence was not correctly recorded in Trakman. In some cases, we observed evidence in one vault or safe but it was recorded in Trakman in a different location. Some items were marked as disposed on the exhibit but were recorded in Trakman in a vault or safe. Finally, we noted that some evidence items had partial display names or incomplete evidence descriptions in Trakman.

Recommendations:

- A. Establish an independent inventory process of all evidence vaults, preferably using two individuals in which one person is independent of Evidence operations. Ensure the methodology and results are thoroughly documented and corrective actions are taken as needed. Also, ensure random inventory sampling is performed and documented consistently, particularly valuable items in vault B.

- B. Establish a quality control process to ensure accuracy of evidence entered into Trackman.
- C. Acquire transparent evidence storage containers that will enable easy identification during periodic inventories without being opened.
- D. Record the necessary corrections to the Trakman inventory records based on the findings identified during audit testing, as reported above.

Management Responses:

- A. Management recognizes the need for a more comprehensive inventory of the evidence vaults. Weekly random inventories are conducted with a sampling of evidence items. However, due to the volume (175,000+ evidence items), it is not practical to conduct a complete inventory of all items on a regular basis. The last complete inventory of the contents of all vaults took more than four (4) years, from 2006 to 2010. Management agrees that inventory procedures and results should be properly documented and appropriate corrective action taken as needed. Procedures are being developed.
Target Completion Date: 12/31/12
- B. Management is currently working on a new procedure to incorporate this recommendation.
Target Completion Date: 12/31/12
- C. Management has already received the required supplies/equipment and is incorporating them into existing procedures.
Target Completion Date: 11/30/12
- D. Management has already begun this process.
Target Completion Date: 11/30/12

3. Vault access logs were inaccurate and incomplete.

Evidence clerks did not consistently and accurately record each occurrence of vault entry into the vault access logs. Without complete data, Evidence management cannot verify the purpose of vault entry or the specific case evidence accessed.

The Evidence Department's procedures require dual access to enter vaults when handling evidence. Vault access logs are used to document vault entry and details of the purpose of entry. If evidence is missing, this tool helps to identify the individuals who may be responsible.

Evidence vault A and vault B are adjacent to each other but one must enter and pass through vault A to gain access to vault B. Vault B is used primarily to store drugs, weapons and money. The vaults have separate logs. Each visit to either vault must be documented by recording the date, time, reason for entry and specific case number. The two persons entering the vault must each record their initials in the log. The logs did not require persons to sign out when departing the vaults.

A review of the vault access logs disclosed numerous instances in which proper procedures were not followed. For example:

- a) The log was only initialed by one person.
- b) Case numbers were not recorded.
- c) The date and time of entry were not recorded.
- d) The reason for entry was blank or inadequately explained, with various entries noted such as "filing", "pulling evidence" and "research".
- e) Persons signed in on the vault B access log but failed to sign in on the vault A access log on the same visit.
- f) Persons signed in on the vault B access log who had signed in on the vault A access log three to five hours earlier, implying that the persons were in the vaults for extended periods without taking a lunch break.

Recommendations:

- A. Perform periodic reviews of the vault access logs to ensure employees are accurately and completely recording entry into the vaults and ensure dual access

is enforced. Based on these reviews, provide any remedial training deemed appropriate.

- B. Revise the vault access logs by requiring persons to sign out when leaving the vault.

Management Responses:

- A. This process was implemented immediately following the incident and prior to the review.

Target Completion Date: Completed

- B. This process was implemented immediately following the incident and prior to the review.

Target Completion Date: Completed

4. Opportunities exist to enhance written procedures for evidence handling.

Opportunities exist to enhance practices and procedures related to the retention, release, return, disposal and destruction of evidence to ensure compliance with Florida Statutes and adherence to professional standards and best practices.

The following observations were noted.

- a) Delays were noted in the disposal of evidence, resulting in evidence remaining on hand longer than necessary. This impacted the expanding total inventory managed by the department.
- b) Written procedures did not address: where to secure evidence when returned after normal business hours, how to secure evidence during transfer between Court branches, and handling any discrepancies between exhibit lists and actual evidence items received.
- c) We noted the procedures for the release of evidence were complex. Written procedures should specify time frames for release of evidence and

notification of parties. Management should ensure procedures are in compliance with Florida Statutes. In addition, management should further assess the release of unclaimed monetary funds to ensure compliance with statute (F.S. 116.21). Procedures did not include the time requirement to transfer custody of tangible personal property to the Sheriff (60 days after conclusion of court proceedings).

- d) Written procedures relating to the release, disposal and destruction of evidence did not specify party notification procedures or requirements for sending copies of approved court orders to parties (e.g., seizing agencies, defense counsel, State Attorney's Office) in certain situations.

Recommendations:

- A. Review and revise the policies and procedures by incorporating the observations noted above and ensure compliance with Florida Statutes. Release the updated documents to the employees involved.
- B. Ensure that employees receive any additional training deemed appropriate.
- C. Address the backlog of evidence pending disposal.

Management Responses:

- A. Management is currently reviewing all relevant statutes and rules to ensure that all written policies and procedures are in full compliance. Management has already implemented new processes and procedures based on this review. In addition, we are reviewing workflows and industry best practices to determine the need for further changes.

Target Completion Date: 12/31/12

- B. Immediately following the evidence incident, all three Evidence clerks in the department were suspended and seasoned clerk employees were selected to replace them. The new team is undergoing thorough training in all aspects of evidence processing. They are also receiving training as new procedures are released and will continue receiving training to keep current with evidence-handling best practices.

Target Completion Date: Ongoing

- C. In the 15th Judicial Circuit, disposal of evidence requires several levels of approvals and coordination with multiple parties. We agree that a streamlining of the process and procedures is necessary and will continue working with other agencies/parties to develop a more efficient process.

Target Completion Date: Ongoing

5. Post-hire criminal background checks and drug screening policies should be more strictly enforced.

Pre-employment criminal background and drug screening checks are consistently done prior to the hire of all employees. Post-hire periodic criminal background checks, physical examinations and drug screening should be more strictly enforced for safety sensitive positions.

The Clerk & Comptroller's Employee Handbook states that:

- employees who are hired, transferred, or promoted into safety sensitive positions must undergo thorough criminal background checks and a physical examination with drug screening;
- routine drug screening will be performed every six months as well as reasonable suspicion testing; and,
- information disclosing an applicant as not suited for employment will be terminated or an offer will be rescinded.

Our examination of the personnel files for all three Evidence clerks in their positions at the beginning of this review disclosed that a routine drug screening had not been performed since December 2008. Criminal background checks were not consistently re-performed when clerks transferred into safety sensitive positions.

Failure to enforce these recommended practices may result in hiring and retaining employees who present risks to the organization in handling and overseeing the evidence functions.

Recommendation:

- A. Ensure that Clerk policies are followed regarding background checks and drug screenings for Evidence clerks, Courtroom clerks, and management positions overseeing evidence functions.

Management Response:

- A. All employees undergo thorough pre-employment criminal background checks and drug screenings. Management is now strictly enforcing all drug screening and criminal background check policies.

Target Completion Date: Completed

6. Opportunities exist to strengthen evidence training and development.

Opportunities exist to enhance the training and development of Evidence clerks and in-court clerks to help ensure adherence to Florida Statutes, Florida Rules of Judicial Administration, and Clerk policies and procedures.

At the beginning of our review, the three clerks had been in their Evidence positions ranging from 15 months (3.5 years total in the Clerk's office) to nearly 14 years. The Evidence Assistant Manager (who also managed Jury Management) had been in her position over three years. The most experienced clerk provided on-the-job training to the other clerks and management as needed. A checklist was in place that listed many of the various responsibilities related to handling and processing evidence, which was initialed off by the clerk when sharing the related information and by the clerk receiving the instruction. No other documented training program was in place.

IAPE standards recommend that evidence training should be provided to employees and management by professional instructors. The IAPE offers training tools that include live courses, online training and books. There may be other valuable resources to consider in obtaining requisite training. Management may also consider professional associations and certifications (e.g., IAPE's Corporate Certified Property and Evidence Specialist (CCPES)) to develop staff expertise.

Recommendations:

- A. Evaluate alternative sources and types of training related to handling and securing evidence. Develop an overall plan to meet the one-time and ongoing training needs of clerks and management and ensure best practices are considered and implemented as appropriate.
- B. Consider pursuing memberships and certifications to professional evidence associations to ensure best practices are maintained.

Management Responses:

- A. The new evidence team underwent thorough training in all aspects of evidence policies and procedures upon their assignment. Additionally, staff will receive continuing training to keep current with evidence handling best practices.
Target Completion Date: Ongoing
- B. We are currently a member of the Property & Evidence Association of Florida (PEAF). Management will explore membership and training from other relevant associations.
Target Completion Date: 01/31/13