



WASHOE COUNTY

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: November 18, 2025

DATE: Tuesday, November 18, 2025

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Steve Johnson, Forensic Science Division Director
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THROUGH: Darin Balaam, Sheriff

SUBJECT: Recommendation to adopt the Washoe County Sheriff's Office - Forensic Science Division (WCSO-FSD) fee schedule to include services related to crime scene response, DNA, controlled substances, firearms, latent print processing and comparison, and toxicology, and to approve the method used to calculate fees for Fiscal Years 2027-2029. If approved, the fee schedule will be retroactive to July 1, 2025 for the Reno and Sparks Police Departments and effective July 1, 2026 for all other customer agencies. Sheriff. (All Commission Districts.) FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

SUMMARY

The Washoe County Sheriff's Office – Forensic Science Division (WCSO-FSD) recommends the Board approve a new fee schedule and method used for forensic services provided for local, regional, federal, and tribal agencies, and to approve the fee schedule to be retroactive to July 1, 2025, for the Reno and Sparks Police Departments. Staff recommends that the Board approve the method used to calculate fees effective July 1, 2026, for all other customer agencies. The recommendations are based on a Crime Lab Fee Study conducted by MGT of America Consulting (MGT) and staff input. The fee schedule changes the method in which the WCSO-FSD will invoice customer agencies, which will be based on actual work completed, and will provide greater transparency to Washoe County and the agencies we serve.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item:

Fiscal Sustainability – Efficient delivery of regional services

Economic Impacts – Meet the needs of our growing community

PREVIOUS ACTION

On May 12, 2020, The Board approved Item 8, "Presentation of Washoe County Crime Lab Fee Review study, discussion and direction to staff or other action thereon."

AGENDA ITEM # _____

BACKGROUND

The WCSO-FSD is one of three accredited forensic laboratories in the State of Nevada and provides forensic services for over 50 local, state, federal, and tribal agencies within thirteen of Nevada's seventeen counties and one county in California. Agencies pay for forensic services through two methods:

- Toxicology services are charged based on the test(s) performed. Rates for these services have not changed since 2013.
- Annual Forensic Service Agreements between the WCSO-FSD and customer agencies are for crime scene and laboratory services. Agencies may choose to have laboratory and crime scene response services (Option A) or laboratory services only (Option B). Fees for these agreements are determined based on the average percentage of work performed for an agency over the previous three-year period. Agencies are limited to these two options and don't have the freedom to use the laboratory as needed. Additionally, the agency fees within the Forensic Service Agreements are based on previous work performed and not the current forensic needs.

In May 2024, the WCSO-FSD commissioned a fee study with MGT. MGT consultants provide government agencies with fair, transparent, and defensible fee studies to ensure long-term financial sustainability, are recognized locally and nationally, and previously worked with the Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCRAS) in 2024 to update the WCRAS fee schedule. The primary goals of the WCSO-FSD fee study were to analyze costs for laboratory fees, ensure fees are consistent with industry standards, provide recommendations related to fee structures and services, determine revenue projections, and evaluate fees against comparable market rates.

MGT developed a fee schedule based on direct and indirect costs for testing activities performed by WCSO-FSD and compared these rates to private and public forensic laboratories. Staff created a proposed fee schedule for Fiscal Year 2026, and projected fee schedules for Fiscal Years 2027-2029 based on MGT's recommendations. The projected fee schedules for Fiscal Years 2027-2029 were created for the Board to evaluate anticipated charges and revenue increases; however, staff recommends that the Board approve the fee schedule and method used to calculate the fees and not the fees listed in the projections. This will allow the WCSO-FSD to update the fee schedule annually to be based on the approved budget for each Fiscal Year and will ensure that the fees for all testing activities are based on the current and true costs for service.

Many of MGT's recommendations were included in the proposed fee schedules with the following exceptions:

- The MGT report lists 80% for the "Recovery Level (pages 7 and 8)." It is the staff's recommendation to set the recovery level at 100% and the proposed fee schedules include charges based on 100% recovery level.

- **DNA – Rapid** was removed. This fee was created for a future charge that can be implemented after the Rapid DNA program is established. When this program is implemented, staff will present an update fee schedule for the Board to approve.
- **DNA – Reference Sample** was added. This fee was created to account for a common testing activity not captured in the MGT study.
- **Firearms – Per Sample** was removed. Firearms – Per Hour will be used for all firearms testing activities.
- **NIBIN** (National Integrated Ballistics Information Network) was removed. This activity was approved by the Board to be performed by the WCSO-FSD for agencies within Washoe County on September 24, 2019, Item 7.I.2 and fees related to this testing activity could jeopardize the MOU in place with Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and have a negative impact to public safety.

The MGT report includes a typographical error on page 7. The report lists the current toxicology fees as “DRUGS, BLOOD TEST” (drug confirmation testing) as \$100 and “SCREEN, BLOOD TEST” (drug screen testing) as \$0. These costs are reversed and the actual current fees for “DRUGS, BLOOD TEST” are \$0 and “SCREEN, BLOOD TEST” are \$100. This error has no impact on the projected revenues and has been corrected in the fee schedules provided for Fiscal Years 2026-2029.

FISCAL IMPACT

Revenues from the toxicology fees will be deposited into General Ledger Account 150651-460318. Revenues from all other laboratory fees will be deposited into General Ledger Account 150650-460162.

Should the Board approve the proposed fee schedule, revenues are projected to remain consistent for Fiscal Year 2026 and it is estimated that the WCSO-FSD will increase revenue for all testing activities by approximately \$1,500,000 to \$1,900,000 in Fiscal Year 2027. This additional revenue is projected to increase the WCSO-FSD to close to full cost recovery (70%-75%) for user fee services.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners adopt the Washoe County Sheriff’s Office - Forensic Science Division (WCSO-FSD) fee schedule to include services related to crime scene response, DNA, controlled substances, firearms, latent print processing and comparison, and toxicology, and to approve the method used to calculate fees for Fiscal Years 2027-2029. If approved, the fee schedule will be retroactive to July 1, 2025 for the Reno and Sparks Police Departments and effective July 1, 2026 for all other customer agencies.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff’s recommendation, a possible motion would be: “Move to adopt the Forensic Science Division fee schedule to include services related to crime

scene response, DNA, controlled substances, firearms, latent print processing and comparison, and toxicology, retroactive to July 1, 2025 for the Reno and Sparks Police Departments and effective July 1, 2026 for all other customer agencies and to approve the method used to calculate fees for Fiscal Years 2027-2029.”