A. **PURPOSE:**

The Division of Scientific Services uses a process of technical and administrative reviews of case reports as a quality assurance measure.

Technical reviews are performed on all case files prior to reports being issued to the submitting agency. Technical reviews are performed by a qualified analyst to verify that the appropriate methods were used, and conclusions made in the case are reasonable and are supported through the documentation in the case file. Technical reviewers are authorized by the Director or their designee.

Administrative reviews are performed on all case files prior to the reports being issued to the submitting agency. Administrative reviews are used to ensure that the case demographics are correct and that there are no typographical errors.

B. **RESPONSIBILITY:**

Technical reviews can be completed by any analyst who is currently (or previously) competent in the specific discipline the case encompasses and has had casework experience. The technical review cannot be performed by the author of the report or any analyst (for cases which include multiple analysts/authors) for the case.

Administrative reviews can be performed by any analytical staff member (however titled) or by those in support positions (however titled). Administrative reviews cannot be performed by the author(s) of the report.

C. **DEFINITIONS:**

Qualified analyst: any individual who has competency in the discipline the case requires. This individual is proficiency tested in the discipline.

Analyst(s): the individual(s) who performed the case work, and/or who generated the results. The analyst is also the author of the final issued report. The analyst is responsible to ensure that the case file contains all the appropriate documentation, and to review the draft report for errors prior to submission for technical review.

Technical Reviewer: Responsible to ensure that the data in the case file folder supports the report findings and that the proper DSS procedures were followed. The technical reviewer cannot be the author(s) of the report or analyst(s) in the case.

Administrative Reviewer: an individual who reviews the case file for non-technical errors (typographical in nature) the administrative reviewer cannot be the author(s) of the report or analyst(s) in the case. If an administrative reviewer notes an error that is technical in nature they must notify the technical reviewer and analyst.

Report Author or Co-Author: the analyst, or any other analyst responsible for generating results for an assigned case. An individual, who verifies a critical finding such as a technical reviewer, is not a Co-author of a case.

Report Co-Signer: The individual that performs the technical review of a case.

D. **PROCEDURE:**

1. Analysts are expected to review their own case work prior to submitting it for technical review. They must verify that the required documentation is present in the case file and they must review the case report for typographical errors or transcription errors. Ultimately, the contents and completeness of the case file is the responsibility of the case analyst(s). Once a case file is passed from the analyst to a reviewer any changes made to the report must be tracked. Draft reports used in the review process are considered examination records and will remain in the case file with any appropriate annotations. The draft report should be treated as other case documentation with case number and analyst's initials present on the page(s); additionally any cross outs or notes must be initialed by the person making the change.
   a. Division personnel that issue findings or testify in court based on another examiners work must review and document the review of the generated data. The documentation of the review will generally be demonstrated by the initialing of the specific paperwork related to the analysis.
   b. The analyst is responsible to ensure that for sexual assault cases that only the initials of the victim are used in the report.
      i. Example: Jane Doe report as JD

         Jane Smith Doe report as JSD

         Jane Joan Doe report as JJD
2. The following are general guidelines as to the information that needs to be checked on each case. Some units may find it necessary to change what is reviewed during which review (administrative or technical) based on the needs of the unit. For example a unit in which the case description is important may decide that the review of the description is an important part of the technical review instead of the administrative review. In these cases the unit specific SOPs detail what is to be reviewed during each review.
   a. What cannot be changed is that the technical reviewer must be current or previously competent in the discipline being reviewed and must be familiar with the technical procedures of the unit and they cannot have produced any data for the case. Additionally, they must be authorized for technical review in the discipline.
   b. For administrative reviews the reviewer cannot be the primary analyst(s) of the case.
3. **Technical Review** – This is a review of the case (draft) report and the documentation that supports the findings presented. The technical information that supports the case findings will be reviewed to ensure that the results listed in the case reports are supported by the documentation.

a. Technical reviews of examination data or test reports shall not be conducted by the author or co-authors) of report or examination data of the case.

b. An individual reviewing a case for technical review will:

   i. Ensure that the documentation in the case is adequate to support the conclusion made by the analyst(s).

   ii. Check all manual calculations made that effect the reported conclusions. Verify that transcription of the data is correct.

   iii. Ensure that the analysis performed is adequate to support the reported conclusion.

      (a) If associations are made, ensure that the association is clearly documented and ensure that the association on the report is properly qualified.

      (b) For units that perform verifications, ensure that the case file contains the verification documentation including who performed the verification.

      (c) If the results are not definitive (such as with inconclusive findings) ensure that the reason for reporting the result is documented in the case file and on the report.

   iv. Ensure that proper controls and/or calibration requirements as set forth in the SOPs used were met.

c. Ensure that the appropriate worksheets were used and are completed as required by unit specific SOPs.

d. Ensure that information required by the specific unit SOPs is included as required.

e. Review the findings, be it observations, photographs, instrumental data etc… to determine if the minimum requirements to make the reported conclusions are met.

f. Review the draft report and ensure that the findings represented on the report are accurate, complete, and represent what was documented in the case file.

   i. Ensure that all evidence related to the unit request is addressed on the report.

   ii. Ensure that any evidence that is related to the unit request that is not analyzed is designated as such in the report.

g. Review the case report and ensure that all required information is contained in the report, including:

   i. Title

   ii. Name and address of the Division

   iii. Name and address of the submitting agency

   iv. Division case number

   v. Agency Case Number

vi. Methods use in analysis of the case materials

vii. Evidence description

viii. Date of case receipt

ix. Items analyzed (with a reference to a sampling plan if applicable) with a statement to the effect that the results only relate to the items tested

x. Results with appropriate units of measure if applicable

xi. Name and title of the analyst(s) and co-signer (technical reviewer)

xii. Presence of the opinion/conclusion statement.

(a) For the DNA unit: This report reflects the test results, conclusions, interpretations and/or the findings of the analyst as indicated by their signature below.

(b) For all other units: This report reflects the test results, conclusions, interpretations and/or the findings of the analyst and technical reviewer as indicated by their signature below.

h. Review the Request for Analysis form and any other documentation submitted by the client to ensure that the work performed is what was required of the submitted agency.

i. To document that the technical review was performed the Technical Reviewer will complete a Case Review sheet specific to that unit, units may choose to not use a review sheet but to initial every page in the case file at the time of the technical review.

i. If using a Case Review sheet the technical reviewer may still choose to initial pages in the case file that they feel are important to the conclusions made.

ii. Any notes added, by the technical reviewer, to case documentation will be initialed by the technical reviewer.

j. Document that the review has been performed per individual unit specific requirements. By documenting the technical review the reviewer agrees that the findings documented in the report are supported by the case data in the file. All technical reviews will be minimally documented in LIMS by updating the milestone in JusticeTrax.

i. Documentation of the technical review in the case file can be achieved by including a notation in the case file such as on a technical review checklist or the use of milestone stickers to track the case progression.

k. Generate and sign the final report if the report is acceptable (this step may be performed at the administrative review step). The technical reviewer is the co-signer of case reports.

i. For units using Justice Trax to electronically sign reports no handwritten signatures are required.

l. Upon reviewing the case file, any issues, transcription errors, errors in calculations etc... must be noted to properly document the reviewer's opinion. The case file is then returned to either the analyst or the analyst's supervisor/lead to have the issues addressed prior to the case being marked as Technically Reviewed in JusticeTrax. Individual units may have preferences in the flow of the case reviews; therefore it will be at the discretion of the unit supervisor/lead if they want case issues being given back directly to the analyst or to have them flow through them.

m. The Chain of Custody for all the reported evidence will be checked in LIMS. This check may also be done as part of the administrative review.

n. Individual Units have the option of generating Technical Review check sheets; these must be approved prior to being used and must be detailed in the unit specific SOP. When used, these must stay in the case file to demonstrate that the review was performed.

o. Draft reports must stay in the case file. This is to allow for the tracking of changes to the case report after it is marked draft complete by the analyst. If any notes were made by the technical reviewer they must become a permanent part of the case documentation; notes must be initialed by the person adding them to the case.

   i. Note: * In the Toxicology Unit cases are worked in batches. Refer to SOP TX-5 for guidance.

   ii. Note: * In the DNA Unit cases are worked in batches. Refer to DNA SOP-21 and DNA SOP-23 for guidance.

4. **Administrative Review** – This is a review of general case information performed by someone other than those authoring/co-authoring the case. Since the information being reviewed in an Administrative Review is not analytical in nature the person performing this review is not required to be competent in the testing method.

   a. Administrative reviews are performed on all case reports prior to their release.

   b. An Administrative Reviewer will:

      i. Check each page of the case file and ensure that the initials of the analyst and the case number are on each page in the file. (Note: there are certain documents that can be added to a file after the release of the case that will require the case number but not necessarily the initials of the analyst; these documents will be administrative in nature).

      ii. Check the case documentation to ensure that the Technical Reviewer has annotated the review of the case as appropriate (i.e. on unit case review sheet, in JusticeTrax or on a milestone sticker).

      iii. Review the demographics of the case: this includes at a minimum - submitting agency, agency case number, name of source, address of source (if applicable).

         (a) For sexual assault cases ensure that only the initials of the victim are included on the case report.

iv. Review the case for typographical errors. The administrative reviewer will read the case report to look for typographical or major grammatical errors in the final report.

v. If the Administrative reviewer finds an issue, they will return the case file to the analyst for correction. If the administrative reviewer can fix the issue (such as addition of a case number) they can do so without involving the case analyst. Unit supervisor/lead may require all issues be addressed to them and not the analyst; this will be left to the discretion of the unit supervisor/lead.

vi. The reviewer will document that the review was performed, the method of achieving this will be unit specific; minimally this will be done by updating the milestone in JusticeTrax. By documenting the administrative review the reviewer indicates that they have reviewed the case for the items listed above and everything was as expected.

c. It is recognized that individual units may combine the responsibilities for the Technical and Administrative review based on the unit's personnel requirements. Such combined functionality is detailed in individual unit SOP's.

d. When no report is created no administration review is required; such as for duplication cases in Multi-Media.

5. **Outsourcing Review** –

An outsourcing case review will be performed on reports from contract laboratories where the contract laboratories report is being submitted directly to the submitting agency. This review will take place of the traditional Technical and Administrative reviews listed above.

Case management or the assigned reviewer will:

a. Verify evidence returned from the contract laboratory is what was sent.

b. Verify that the report matches the Division case number and represents what was submitted to the contract laboratory.

c. Verify that the requested testing was performed.

d. Mark the appropriate request in JusticeTrax as draft complete.

e. Other Units may have additional guidance in their SOPs.