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Title 99. Criminal Procedure

▢ [Chapter 49](#). Preservation and Accessibility of Biological Evidence

→ **§ 99-49-1. Biological evidence; legislative intent; definitions; preservation procedures; remedies**

(1) **Legislative intent.** The Legislature finds that:

(a) The value of properly preserved biological evidence has been enhanced by the discovery of modern DNA testing methods, which, coupled with a comprehensive system of DNA databases that store crime scene and offender profiles, allow law enforcement to improve its crime-solving potential;

(b) Tapping the potential of preserved biological evidence requires the proper identification, collection, preservation, storage, cataloguing and organization of such evidence;

(c) Law enforcement agencies indicate that “cold” case investigations are hindered by an inability to access biological evidence that was collected in connection with criminal investigations;

(d) Innocent people mistakenly convicted of the serious crimes for which biological evidence is probative cannot prove their innocence if such evidence is not accessible for testing in appropriate circumstances;

(e) It is well established that the failure to update policies regarding the preservation of evidence squanders valuable law enforcement resources, manpower hours and storage space; and

(f) Simple but crucial enhancements to protocols for properly preserving biological evidence can solve old crimes, enhance public safety and settle claims of innocence.

(2) **Definitions.** For the purposes of this section:

(a) “Biological evidence” means the contents of a sexual assault examination kit or any item that contains blood, semen, hair, saliva, skin tissue, fingernail scrapings, bone, bodily fluids or other identifiable biological material that was collected as part of the criminal investigation or may reasonably be used to incriminate or exculpate any person for the offense. This definition applies whether that material is catalogued separately, such as on a slide, swab or in a test tube, or is present on other evidence, including, but not limited to, clothing, ligatures, bedding or other household material, drinking cups, cigarettes or other items.

(b) "DNA" means deoxyribonucleic acid.

(c) "Custody" means persons currently incarcerated; civilly committed; on parole or probation; or subject to sex offender registration for the period of the registration or for the first five (5) years of the registration, whichever is the shorter period.

(d) "Profile" means a unique identifier of an individual, derived from DNA.

(e) "State" refers to any governmental or public entity within Mississippi, including all private entities that perform such functions, and its officials or employees, including, but not limited to, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, courts, public hospitals, crime laboratories, and any other entity or individual charged with the collection, storage or retrieval of biological evidence.

(3) Preservation of evidence procedures. (a) The state shall preserve all biological evidence:

(i) That is secured in relation to an investigation or prosecution of a crime for the period of time that the crime remains unsolved; or

(ii) That is secured in relation to an investigation or prosecution of a crime for the period of time that the person convicted of that crime remains in custody.

(b) This section applies to evidence that:

(i) Was in the possession of the state during the investigation and prosecution of the case; and

(ii) At the time of conviction was likely to contain biological material.

(c) The state shall not destroy biological evidence should one or more additional co-defendants, convicted of the same crime, remain in custody, and shall preserve the evidence for the period of time in which all co-defendants remain in custody.

(d) The state shall retain evidence in the amount and manner sufficient to develop a DNA profile from the biological material contained in or included on the evidence.

(e) Upon written request by the defendant, the state shall prepare an inventory of biological evidence that has been preserved in connection with the defendant's criminal case.

(f) The state may destroy evidence that includes biological material before the expiration of the time period

specified in paragraph (a) of this subsection if all of the following apply:

(i) No other provision of federal or state law requires the state to preserve the evidence.

(ii) The state sends certified delivery of notice of intent to destroy the evidence to:

1. All persons who remain in custody as a result of the criminal conviction, delinquency adjudication, or commitment related to evidence in question;
2. The attorney of record for each person in custody;
3. The Mississippi Office of Indigent Appeals;
4. The district attorney in the county of conviction; and
5. The Mississippi Attorney General.

(iii) No person who is notified under paragraph (f)(ii) of this subsection does either of the following within sixty (60) days after the date on which the person received the notice:

1. Files a motion for testing of evidence under Title 99, Chapter 39, Mississippi Code of 1972; or
2. Submits a written request for retention of evidence to the state entity which provided notice of its intent to destroy evidence under paragraph (f)(ii) of this subsection.

(g) If, after providing notice under paragraph (f)(ii) of this subsection of its intent to destroy evidence, the state receives a written request for retention of the evidence, the state shall retain the evidence while the person remains in custody.

(h) The state shall not be required to preserve physical evidence that is of such a size, bulk or physical character as to render retention impracticable. When such retention is impracticable, the state shall remove and preserve portions of the material evidence likely to contain biological evidence related to the offense, in a quantity sufficient to permit future DNA testing, before returning or disposing of the physical evidence.

(i) Should the state be called upon to produce biological evidence that could not be located and whose preservation was required under the provisions of this statute, the chief evidence custodian assigned to the entity charged with the preservation of said evidence shall provide an affidavit in which the custodian stipulates, under penalty of perjury, an accurate description of the efforts taken to locate that evidence and that the evidence

could not be located.

(4) Any evidence in a murder, manslaughter or felony sexual assault case in the possession of the state on July 1, 2009, whether biological or not, shall be preserved by the state consistent with the legislative intent expressed in subsection (1) and subject to compliance with subsection (3)(f).

(5) **Remedies for noncompliance.** If the court finds that biological evidence was destroyed in violation of the provisions of this section, it may impose appropriate sanctions and order appropriate remedies.

CREDIT(S)

Added by [Laws 2009, Ch. 339, § 1](#), eff. from and after passage (approved March 16, 2009).

Current through End of the 2009 Regular and Extraordinary Sessions

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