

SOP Template: Chain of Custody Documentation and Tracking

This SOP details the process of **chain of custody documentation and tracking**, ensuring the accurate and secure handling, transfer, and documentation of evidence or samples from collection to final disposition. It includes procedures for labeling, recording, verifying transfers, maintaining integrity, and preventing contamination or tampering, thereby supporting accountability and traceability throughout the entire custody lifecycle.

1. Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for documenting, tracking, and ensuring the integrity of evidence or samples throughout their lifecycle.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all personnel involved in the collection, transport, transfer, storage, and final disposition of evidence or samples requiring chain of custody documentation.

3. Responsibilities

- **Custodian:** Responsible for evidence/sample while in their possession, ensuring correct documentation and transfer.
- **Supervisors/Managers:** Ensure staff are trained and SOP is enforced.
- **All Personnel:** Adhere strictly to documentation, handling, and transfer procedures to prevent compromise.

4. Definitions

- **Chain of Custody:** Documentation that tracks the possession, handling, and transfer of evidence or samples.
- **Custodian:** Individual currently responsible for the item.
- **Final Disposition:** The final stage or status of the evidence/sample (e.g., returned, disposed, archived).

5. Chain of Custody Workflow

1. Sample/Evidence Collection

- Collect item following all relevant protocols to prevent contamination.
- Assign a unique identifier (number/barcode/QR code).
- Label item clearly with identifier, date, time, collector name, and location.
- Complete Chain of Custody Form (see template below).

2. Documentation

- Fill out Chain of Custody Form immediately upon collection and each transfer.
- Document date, time, person transferring, person receiving, purpose, and condition of item.

3. Transfers

- Transfers must occur in the presence of both outgoing and incoming custodians.
- Both parties sign the Chain of Custody Form for each transfer.
- Verify item identification and integrity at each transfer.

4. Storage

- Store securely in authorized locations with controlled access.
- Restrict access to authorized personnel only.
- Record storage location on the Chain of Custody Form.

5. Final Disposition

- Document final status and location of the item.
- Complete disposition section on Chain of Custody Form.
- Retain records as per policy requirements.

6. Chain of Custody Form Template

Item ID	[Enter Unique Identifier]	
Description	[Description of Evidence/Sample]	
Date/Time Collected	[YYYY-MM-DD HH:MM]	
Collected By	[Name, Signature]	
Initial Location	[Physical/Storage Location]	
Transfer Log		
Date/Time	From (Name/Signature) → To (Name/Signature)	Purpose/Notes
[YYYY-MM-DD HH:MM]	[From Name/Signature] → [To Name/Signature]	[Reason for transfer, item condition, etc.]
Final Disposition	[Disposed/Archived/Returned, Date, By Whom, Location]	

7. Records Management

- Maintain completed Chain of Custody Forms in accordance with the document retention policy.
- Ensure forms are legible, complete, and secure (digital/electronic or paper records as applicable).
- Restrict access to records to authorized personnel only.

8. Prevention of Contamination and Tampering

- Use tamper-evident seals or packaging.
- Minimize handling and always use appropriate PPE.
- Document any evidence of tampering or compromise immediately and report to management.

9. Training

All personnel involved in chain of custody must complete initial and periodic training on this SOP and relevant procedures.

10. References

- [List applicable laws, regulations, standards, and organization policies]

SOP Version: [Enter Version] | Effective Date: [Enter Date] | Review Due: [Enter Date]