

SOP: Evidence Collection and Documentation Standards

This SOP defines the **evidence collection and documentation standards** to ensure the accurate, systematic, and legally compliant handling of physical and digital evidence. It covers procedures for proper evidence identification, preservation, packaging, labeling, transportation, and chain of custody maintenance. The aim is to maintain the integrity and reliability of evidence throughout the investigative process, minimizing contamination or loss, and providing clear, detailed documentation to support investigation and legal proceedings.

1. Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for the collection, preservation, documentation, and transfer of evidence, ensuring evidentiary integrity and admissibility in legal and investigative settings.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all personnel involved in handling physical and digital evidence during investigations, including but not limited to investigators, forensic specialists, and evidence custodians.

3. Definitions

- **Evidence:** Any item or data collected during an investigation potentially relevant to the case.
- **Chain of Custody:** The chronological documentation showing the seizure, custody, control, transfer, analysis, and disposition of evidence.
- **Physical Evidence:** Tangible items such as objects, substances, or biological materials.
- **Digital Evidence:** Information and data stored or transmitted in digital form.

4. Responsibilities

- All involved personnel must adhere to this SOP and maintain accurate records of evidence handling.
- The Evidence Custodian oversees the chain of custody and evidence storage.

5. Procedures

5.1 Evidence Identification

- Assign a unique identifier to each item of evidence upon discovery.
- Record a detailed description of the item, location, date, and collector's name.

5.2 Evidence Preservation

- Take measures to prevent contamination, degradation, or loss.
- Use gloves, clean tools, and appropriate containment.

5.3 Packaging and Labeling

- Package evidence in appropriate, tamper-evident containers.
- Clearly label each package with:
 - Unique identifier
 - Description
 - Date and time collected
 - Collector's name and signature
 - Seal information

5.4 Transportation

- Transport evidence promptly and securely to the designated storage area or laboratory.
- Document all transfers in the chain of custody log.

5.5 Chain of Custody Maintenance

- Maintain a detailed log for each evidence item, recording every transfer, person handling, date, time, and purpose.
- Store evidence in secure, access-controlled environments.

5.6 Documentation Standards

- Use standardized evidence collection forms and chain of custody logs.
- Attach photographs and sketches as supporting documentation.
- Records must be clear, legible, and stored securely.

6. Documentation Samples

Field	Description
Evidence Identifier	Unique number or code for each item
Description	Detailed item description (type, quantity, characteristics)
Date & Time Collected	Date and time of collection
Collector	Name and signature of person collecting
Location	Exact location of evidence recovery
Chain of Custody Log	Documentation of all transfers and handling

7. Review and Revision

This SOP shall be reviewed annually and updated as needed. All personnel shall be notified of any changes and trained accordingly.