

SOP: Documentation and Evidence Collection Guidelines

This SOP provides comprehensive **documentation and evidence collection guidelines** to ensure accurate, consistent, and legally defensible recording of information. It covers the proper identification, collection, preservation, and storage of evidence, as well as the protocols for maintaining chain of custody. The objective is to uphold data integrity and support effective investigation and analysis processes in accordance with regulatory and organizational standards.

1. Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for documentation and the collection of evidence in a manner that maintains integrity, reliability, and legal admissibility.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all personnel involved in handling, documenting, and collecting evidence as part of investigations or audits.

3. Responsibilities

- **Personnel:** Responsible for following the guidelines for documentation and evidence handling.
- **Supervisors:** Ensure compliance and provide training as required.
- **Custodians:** Maintain chain of custody and storage protocols.

4. Guidelines

4.1 Documentation Procedures

- Use standardized forms and logs for all entries.
- Record date, time, location, and names of individuals involved.
- Provide detailed descriptions of actions taken and observations made.
- Ensure accuracy, legibility, and completeness of all records.
- Sign and date all documentation.

4.2 Evidence Collection

- Identify all potential evidence at the scene or site.
- Photograph and/or video evidence in situ before collecting/moving.
- Label each item with a unique identifier (case number, item number, date/time, collector's initials).
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent contamination.
- Collect evidence using sterile, appropriate containers/tools.
- Seal evidence containers and record the seal number where applicable.

4.3 Preservation and Storage

- Store evidence in secure, access-controlled locations.
- Maintain original condition of evidence; avoid contamination, degradation, or loss.
- Monitor storage environment for temperature, humidity, and security, as required.

4.4 Chain of Custody

- Use a **Chain of Custody Log** for each piece of evidence.
- Document every transfer, handling, or analysis of evidence, including:
 - Date and time of transfer
 - Name and signature of person releasing/receiving evidence
 - Purpose of transfer
- Retain chain of custody records with case file for audit and legal review.

5. Chain of Custody Log Example

| Date/Time | Evidence ID | Released By | Received By | Purpose | Signature |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------|
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------|-----------|

| | | | | | |
|------------------|--------|----------|----------|---------------------|--------|
| 2024-06-10 10:35 | EV-001 | A. Smith | B. Jones | Transfer to Storage | Signed |
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6. Review and Audit

- Regularly review documentation and evidence handling practices for compliance.
- Report and rectify discrepancies or non-conformities promptly.

7. References

- Applicable laws and regulations
- Organizational policies and procedures
- Industry best practices

8. Revision History

| Version | Date | Description | Author |
|---------|------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1.0 | 2024-06-10 | Initial SOP Release | Compliance Team |