

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Additional Scientist/Technicians for Crime Lab's Serology/DNA Section

Background

The Forensic Science Division is Montana's only forensic laboratory. The lab's Serology/DNA section:

- analyzes biological evidence for Montana law enforcement agencies
- identifies biological fluids and develops highly discriminating DNA profiles that help match evidence to suspects in criminal cases.

The Serology/DNA section also administers the Combined DNA Index System or CODIS. This national database searches DNA profiles from known convicted offenders against DNA profiles from unsolved crimes. Since Montana joined the national database in 2002, CODIS has provided leads in six investigations here. Five of these "hits" identified suspects in rape cases and one resulted in the identification of a homicide suspect.

Increased Workload and Backlogs

In 1995, the crime lab hired two scientists to implement its new DNA section. Since then, this section has experienced a 26% increase in its caseload. Managing this increased caseload is even more difficult since, in November 2001, one of the scientist positions had to be used for the lab's Quality Assurance/Quality Control Manager position.

Despite the staff's best efforts, the turnaround time in the Serology/DNA section has increased from 3-4 months to 6-7 months, and is continuing to grow. This backlog is unacceptable because it delays investigations and can hinder the timely prosecution of criminal cases. The most frequent complaints the crime lab hears from its user agencies are about backlogs and long case-turnaround times.

In 2003, the Montana Board of Crime Control provided one-year federal grant funding for a Serology/DNA scientist. The lab hired a technician in October 2003 and, after completing a rigorous three-month training program, this individual assumed the scientist's full responsibilities. However, funding for this position expires June 30, 2005. This request will make this position permanent.

Expenditure and Funding Summary

The division is requesting a Serologist/DNA scientist and two forensic technicians to reduce the backlog that threatens the successful prosecution of criminal cases in Montana.

	<u>FY 06</u>	<u>FY07</u>
FTE	3.0	3.0
Personal Services	\$140,293	\$140,293
Operating Expenses	<u>3,010</u>	<u>3,010</u>
Total General Fund	\$143,303	\$143,303