Document Structure

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1.0 JusticeTrax LIMS-plus

JusticeTrax LIMS-plus is a Windows-based laboratory information management system designed specifically for the forensic lab. It features all of the software tools necessary to run a forensic lab and is flexible enough to meet a laboratory's individual needs.

2.0 CASE MANAGEMENT

2.1 MAIN CASE VIEW

All evidence and analysis must be associated with a laboratory case. The main case view, or Case Info tab, is the focal point of the application.

To open the main case view, first open an existing case or start a new one.

The tabs on the main case view open views of different kinds of information about the case. Each view has its own pop-up menu (also called right-click menu) with the commands that are available for that view.

The Main Case View will provide general information concerning a case. It provides information as to the date and time the case was opened, who opened the case, the number of Submissions and Requests associated with the case, a Synopsis window and a Related Laboratory Cases window.

2.2 Synopsis Window

No defined use

2.3 Related Cases Window

LIMS allows for the linking of related cases using this window. For those cases which are received under two case numbers, you can relate the two cases in LIMS so that analysts will be aware of related cases. Right click on the CASE INFO tab and open the RELATED CASES window. Enter the Related Case number. LIMS will automatically record the related case in the second case.

2.4 AGENCY VIEW

Agency View will list all agencies which have an interest in the lab case. You can add to the Related Agency list or edit or delete agencies. This view will also allow you to designate the Primary Agency for the case. The primary agency is normally considered to be the primary investigating agency.

2.5 OFFENSES VIEW

This window can be used to list all the offenses associated with the lab case. You can add to the list or edit and delete offenses that are already listed.

2.6 INDIVIDUALS VIEW

This view lists all the principals associated with the lab case in alphabetical order. You can add to the list or edit or delete principals that are already listed. To add an individual:

1. From the Main Case View, click on the Individuals tab.
2. Right click to open the pop-up menu and choose Add Individual.
3. Enter the name in the boxes, last name first.
4. Use the other boxes and lists to record as much additional information as you need.
5. Designate individuals as Suspect, Victim or Other, if that information is available.

2.7 EVIDENCE VIEW

This view lists all the submissions of evidence associated with the lab case in the order in which they were entered into the system. You can add to the list or edit or delete submissions that are already listed. Deleting submissions generally requires higher security access.

Items in LIMS

Sometimes the original submission may be further itemized with the recording of Items in the system. If the Item is to be separated from the parent submission, a barcode for the Item should be generated and attached to the Item. This Item barcode will be scanned to document all transfers of the Item from that point in time.

2.8 REQUESTS VIEW

This view lists all the requests for analysis associated with the lab case in the order in which they were entered into the system. You can add to the list or edit or delete requests that are already listed.
Adding requests for analysis:

1. From the Main Case View, click on the **Requests** tab and right click to open the pop- up menu. Choose Add Request.
2. Change the selections in the **Agency** and **Representative** lists.

REMEMBER: These designations will determine who is listed as the requesting officer on the top of the report for this request.

3. Select the lab department and type of analysis from the **Department** and **Services** lists. Some departments have separated services into several different categories, so be sure that you select the correct service.
4. The **Requester** box should be used to record instructions provided from the requestor (may be from the RLS). EXAMPLE: While the Department and Service may be *Bio/DNA* and *Trace Analysis*, the actual request recorded in Requester box would be: Compare the Hairs in Submission 0001 to the known hair sample in Submission 0002.

2.9 Case Activities

Case activities are utilized to track all communication (email, verbal) between the laboratory and end users (attorneys, case agents) relevant to the processing of a case.

3.0 EVIDENCE CONTROL

The control of evidence begins in **LIMS-plus** when the evidence submission reaches the lab and is entered into the system as part of a case. It ends when all reports are complete and the evidence is returned to the agency. **LIMS-plus** records all transfers, and keeps track of the evidence.

3.1 Logging in Evidence

To add a submission:

1. From the Main Case View, click on the Evidence tab, right click to open the pop-up menu and choose Add Evidence.
2. The primary agency automatically appears in the Agency list. You can select a different related agency if appropriate.
3. Continue to enter the submission information.
4. All evidence received from outside the laboratory shall be numbered as listed by the submitting agency.
5. The description shall be as listed by the agency.
6. The transfer information at the bottom of the window should reflect the transfer from the current location of evidence (evidence intake, agency representative, etc).
7. If receiving additional submissions from the same RLS, click the **Apply** button at the bottom of the window. You may now change the evidence description information at the top of the window. You can then apply this submission information without re-entering information in the Transfer

portion of the window.

3.2 Transferring Evidence

Open the **Evidence Transfer** window. Enter the transfer information. The **From** transfer line will automatically default to the last location once the **To** transfer information is entered. If the "**From"** location is a laboratory employee, the system will require the scanning of the employee's barcode and entry of employee's PIN.

3.3 Returning Evidence to the Requesting Agency

Once all Requests related to a Submission are complete, the submission is ready for return to the requesting agency. This transfer can also be documented using the **Evidence Transfer** window.

The technician will pull the submission(s) from the storage location and record the transfer from storage location to laboratory employee then an evidence return location. The laboratory employee has the responsibility to confirm transfer information is correct and complete before the **Apply** button is clicked. If the return location is a courier, then the tracking number shall be recoreded.

3.4 Chain-of-Custody

Every transfer of submissions is recorded in the chain-of-custody report for that submission. To view the Chain-of-Custody for a particular submission, open the Main Case View for the case. Click on the Evidence Tab and right click to open the pop-up menu and choose Chain of Custody.
The entire chain of custody will be displayed for that particular submission and for any Items which may have been separated from the parent submission.

If there is an error in the chain-of-custody, it should be brought to the attention of the evidence Supervisor **immediately**. Corrections of any errors in chain-of-custody require the Laboratory Manager or his designee (the evidence supervisor).

3.5 Evidence Resubmissions

In some circumstances it is necessary for evidence which has been released back to the requesting agency to be resubmitted to the laboratory for additional examinations. Submissions bearing the original barcodes can be scanned back into the system using the **Evidence Transfer** window. The submission should be checked to make sure the seals are intact and there is no sign of tampering. A new request will be entered for the submission or the submission may be

related to an incomplete request already in the system.

4.0 ANALYSIS

Requests for analytical services must be assigned to analysts before results can be recorded.

4.1 Assigning requests for analysis

The discipline Supervisor or designee can view unassigned requests and staff workloads and then assign requests to a specific analyst. All requests for analysis will be assigned to a specific analyst**.**

To assign multiple requests to an analyst the Unit Supervisor/analyst can use the **Assign Request for Analysis** window under the **Analysis** menu.

This window also features a **Refine List** button which will allow you to narrow down the list using the **Service and Reason** lists. EXAMPLE: If you want to assign all the cases that are marked **Rush** to a particular analyst, you would click the **Refine List** button, select **Rush** from the **Reason** list and click OK. The list of Unassigned Requests will now be limited to those marked **Rush**.

To assign a single request from a specific case, open the case and go to the **Requests** view and select the specific request. Double click the request to open the **Edit Request** window (or right click and choose **Edit a Request**) and select the analyst name from the **Analyst** list.

4.2 Due Dates

Due Dates can be assigned at the time the request is assigned to the analyst. This due date will print on the Assignment Notification. These due dates can be edited or changed depending on the circumstances. To change a due date, open the case and open the Edit a Request window for the specific request. Change the due date and click the **OK** button.

4.3 Reason

In the Request window is a box designated as **Reason**. The Reason list includes: Rush, and Approved Rush. The information entered under the **Reason** window will appear on the Assignment Notification.

4.4 Complexity

Used for managing discipline specific data collection needs.

4.5 Editing, Canceling and Deleting Requests for Analysis

4.5.1 To edit a request:

From the Main Case View, click on the **Requests** tab and right click to open the pop-up menu. Choose **Edit Request**. Make your changes in the editing window. You can use this window to change the Due Date, change the analyst the request is assigned to, or make changes and additions to the Requester notes, Assignor notes and Reviewer notes.

The **Related Evidence** feature under the **Request** menu can also be used to relate additional submissions to the original request.

4.5.2 To Cancel a Request:

A request may be canceled on a single submission or the entire request may be canceled. From the Main Case View, click on the **Requests** tab and right click to open the pop-up menu. Choose **Cancel Request.** The system will prompt to make sure you want to cancel the selected request. A notation should be added to the case record documenting the reason for the cancellation.

A record of the Request cancellation will be made and can be observed in the Show Milestones window for the case.

4.5.3 To Delete a Request:

From the Main Case View, click on the **Requests** tab and right click to open the pop-up menu. Choose **Delete Request**. The system will prompt to make sure you want to delete the selected request. This function normally requires a higher security level to perform.

Use of the Delete Request function should be carefully considered. Once the request is deleted, all information related to that request is removed from the Main Case View and this information is not easily retrieved. An example of when the Delete Request function may be appropriate would be when the request is entered in the wrong Department or under the wrong Service. The request can be deleted and then added as a new request in the correct department and/or service.

4.6 Recording the Analysis

After the evidence submission has been logged into the system, linked to a

request for analysis and assigned to an analyst, the next step is to complete the analysis and record the results. You can use the **Enter Findings** command on the **Requests** menu as the first step in recording results for all analytical modules.

Once the report reaches releasable status, the **Enter Findings** command opens the final report in read-only mode. You can look at results, but you can not change anything unless you first use the **Clear Report Releasable** command. The **Clear Report Releasable** command can only be performed by discipline supervisors or the laboratory Manager.

4.7 Final Report Window

To open this window, select a service in the **Requests** view of Main Case View and Choose **Edit Findings** from the Requests menu.

GENERAL ANALYSIS MODULE –Biological screening, Latent prints, DNA , Firearm/Toolmarks

Case Tree View - This view will show you the relationship between the case, the selected request, and the corresponding pieces of evidence. Results can be tied to the request or the evidence item. Highlight the item you want to link to a result.

Result Type - Use the drop-down list to select Answer. Other result types listed are used by Firearms.

Type your results, conclusions, opinions in the Results field.
ANALYTICAL MODULES – Drug Analysis, Toxicology.

Some of the analytical modules include specialized report modules which open automatically when you access the Edit Findings command. These allow you to enter information in special windows to document the types of examinations performed and the results of those examinations.

4.8 Draft Complete

Once the analyst has entered all appropriate information into the analytical module or entered the findings in the **Edit Findings** window, they will set the **Milestone** as **Draft Complete**. This locks the request **Edit Findings** window as read-only. The analyst can print a copy of the report using the **Print Final Report** command. "**Draft: Not for Release**" will appear on the bottom right of the report until the report has been administratively reviewed. The analyst will now forward the work packet and report for Technical and Administrative

reviews.

4.9 Assigning Technical Reviews

Reports must be technically reviewed prior to the results being released. The LIMS system is configured to allow the assignment of these reviews. Assignments can be for multiple cases or for individual requests.

The analyst assigned the Technical Review can view the list of cases for which these reviews have been assigned by accessing the **System Reports** menu, choosing the **My Current Workload** report, and clicking on the **Technical Reviews** button. The system will not allow an analyst to technically review their own reports.

Once the Technical Review is conducted, if no problems are found, the reviewer will update the case **Milestone** to **Technical Review**.

If a problem is found during the Technical Review, the reviewer will remove the **Draft Complete** milestone from the request. The report and work file may then be returned to the analyst for corrections. The analyst will make whatever corrections, additions, edits, etc. necessary and begin the process again by marking the **Milestone** of **Draft Complete**.
The **Tech Review** milestone should **ALWAYS** be set before the **Admin Review** milestone.

4.10 Assigning Administrative Reviews

The procedure for setting the **Admin Review** milestone is very similar to that for **Tech Review**. Problems noted during the Administrative review can be handled in the same manner as described for Technical Reviews.

4.11 Final Report

Once the report is complete and all reviews have been conducted, the report will become static. This occurs when the report is marked as **Admin Reviewed** in LIMS. All information concerning this request will now appear in read-only mode. No changes can be made to the information entered concerning this request unless the request is first unreleased.

4.12 Amended Reports

The report can not be edited after it is marked as **Admin Reviewed**. If a situation arises where the report needs to be changed then a new Report should be produced.

Create a new request (or a child request) and list in the Requester notes that THIS IS AN AMENDED REPORT. If the amendment is minor, the original results can be re-entered under this new request along with the corrections or amendments. The amended report will then be forwarded for routine reviews.

5.0 LABORATORY MANAGEMENT

5.1 Activity Tracking

LIMS allows you to keep track of time spent on various activities. These activities can fall into two categories: Non-case-related activities and Case-Related activities.

Case Related activities affect a particular case but not a specific request.

To access this function, begin from the **Case Info** Tab on the Main Case View.

With your cursor anywhere on the Case Info screen (except over the Synopsis field), right click to open its menu. Select **Case Activities.**

All performed activities will be listed in the tree view. If no activities have been entered, this will be a blank screen. You can add new or edit and delete existing activities from the tree-view.

Click the **Add** button on the bottom of the Performed Activities tree-view to add an activity to this case.

The Lab Activity for Case No ##### dialog will be presented.

You can filter the activities that will display under **Activity Information** by selecting **Context** information by Laboratory, Department, or Service level. Notice that the dialog's title will change as each filter is selected. By selecting these criteria, the Activities in the **Activity** field drop-down list will be filtered to display only activities defined at the selected level(s).

The activities list for Case-Related Activities include:

Court Testimony
Pre-trial Conference
Verbal communication
E-Mail communication

5.2 Crystal Reports

Crystal Reports can be accessed from LIMS by clicking on the Administration Menu and choosing Crystal Reports and the Generate Reports. A list of available reports is then listed. Highlight the report to be run and click print. Enter the data it requests and the report will print to the screen

5.3 Training Records

The training module is intended to electronically store all training-related documents and information for laboratory staff members. Managerial approval of all training received is also documented within the module. The training records screen allows staff members, or their supervisors, to add, edit and delete training records. Images may be attached to training records. Images may be added from disk, or from a scanner to allow paper documents to be scanned and attached to any training record completion certificate.

To add a new training record, click the **Add Training Record** button (plus button). Clicking this button will move the cursor in to the **Topic** field to allow you to add the appropriate course title or certification.

TAB to the **Dates** and **Duration** fields then click **Apply**. The record will appear in the tree view.

Once a course has been attended, the trainee should click the **Trainee Acknowledged** checkbox then click **Apply**.

Once a training record has been entered, images can be added to the training record to track certificates or syllabi to verify participation.

Once a trainee marks a record **Trainee Acknowledged** checkbox, an email is sent to the trainee's supervisor informing the supervisor that there is a training record pending approval.

Once a manager has marked a training record as approved by checking the **Manager Approved** checkbox, an email will be sent to the trainee notifying them of the approval.

6.0 ANALYTICAL MODULE ADMINISTRATION

The analytical modules available in LIMS offer opportunities for automating and standardizing routine analytical functions within the laboratory. The basic steps of an analysis are the same whether you use an analytical module or not. The analytical module administrator maintains the standards used in the department and sets the parameters for automated data entry.

7.0 SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION

7.1 System Passwords and PINs

Employees utilizing LIMS are issued a user name and allowed to set a personal password and personal identification number (PIN) for system access. This allows the employee to gain access to the system and allows the system to track employee input into the system.

Employees should never share their password and/or PIN with other individuals. Do not write or display your password and/or PIN where it can be viewed by others.

When you finish a session on LIMS, you should sign off the system to prevent others from entering information under your user name. Never allow other personnel access to the system under your user name.

7.2 Employee Barcodes

Employees are provided barcodes which are required to conduct evidence transfers in the system. This barcode should be maintained by the employee and available at all times while at work. Do not allow other employees to use your barcode. Lost or damaged barcodes should be reported to the Discipline Supervisor.

7.3 Storage Locations

LIMS allows for the designation of evidence storage locations and the ability to control electronic access to those locations. For the main storage areas, access to these areas should be limited to technicians responsible for maintaining these areas. The same applies to storage areas in the various departments. By limiting electronic access to these areas, an employee of that department is required to electronically transfer items into or out of that storage location.

7.4 Security Levels

LIMS-plus Role-Based Security creates User roles that provide access to functionality in the system. Users are assigned to the appropriate role, granting access to features, departments, services, and storage locations.

8.0 New Case Creation

When a new case is received by the laboratory, it shall be entered into LIMS.

1. Click on the **New Case** icon or select **File, New.** The Agency case number search dialogue box will open.
2. Select the submitting agency from the drop down menu. If the submitting agency is not listed, contact the system administrator to have it added.
3. Enter the agency's case number and click OK. The system will search to check if a case already exists.
    a. If a case already exists, then update the existing case.
    b. If an existing case is not found in the system, click **New Case.** The **Main Case View** will open with a temporary laboratory case number**.**
4. Click **Apply** to generate a Laboratory Case Number, which replaces the temporary number.
5. Select the **Offense** tab and add offenses listed.
    a. If the Domestic Violence box is checked on the RLS, add the offense Domestic Violence.
6. Select the **Individuals** tab and add individuals.
7. Select the **Evidence** tab and enter the evidence received.
8. Select the **Request** tab and create the appropriate requests. For technicians entering cases in evidence, the following guide should be followed,:
    a. Tox Holding
        i. For blood alcohol, toxicology, beverage alcohol
    b. Latents Pending
        i. Any latent print comparison/processing request.
    c. FB Case
        i. Any biological screening or DNA request.
    d. CS Case
        i. Any controlled substance analysis request.
    e. Fire Debris
        i. Any fire debris (arson) analysis request
    f. FATM
        i. Any Firearm/Toolmark request
9. Select the **Camera** icon to open the imaging module
    a. Select the **Case Images** folder by clicking on it.
    b. Scan the RLS as an uncompressed tiff image and name as RLS-X where X references the first through n^{th} RLS.
    c. Any supporting documents (Case information, DRE) should also be scanned as an uncompressed tiff to the **Case Images** folder and named appropriately (DRE, Case Info)

Appendix A
Revision History

Newly controlled manual- no revision history