

# Chain of custody analysis essay



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The documentation and maintenance of chronological history of a specimen from a source of scene has been a serious challenge since time immemorial. In deed identifying a specimen from point of collection and reporting it while still maintaining its integrity is not a guarantee.

Specimens are suppose to provide real facts rather than mere fabrication about the acc used to encourage fairness. Bowers, & Bell, (1995), states that, “ specimens being importance source of evidence in a court of law there is dire need for secure and controlled channel coupled with analytical techniques of collecting and disseminating them to reporting centre”. This will help in improving justice on the course of judgment as it will minimize chances of passing a fraudulent verdict on the accused. The aim of this paper to create discusses chain of custody policy that reflects on the proper procedures for accepting and handling evidence. Kaye, (1997), defines Chain custody “ as systematic documentation that guarantees the identification and integrity of specimen from scene of collection all through to reporting of test results”. It is the only surest way of documenting and maintaining chronological history of specimen to guarantee their validity. The acceptable chronological way that ensures validity involves six steps. The first step involves sampling preparation while the second step is sampling operations. The third step is transportation of the sample. The third steps involve receipt, storage, and transfer. The fifth step is the analysis of the sample. The sixth and final step involves sample-data recordkeeping. For a comprehensive chain custody analysis, below is my suggestion on the best policy in chain custody and forensic analysis. Sampling Preparations This involves assembling necessary reagents and materials vital for the real

sampling process. The materials and reagents used should be carefully chosen since they may become part of the sample. It therefore demands for the highest level of competency on the preparer to maintain the acceptable methods.

In other words both methods and competency should not be legally questioned during court proceedings. It requires that the preparer keeps proper records which include when preparation was done that is the exact date, where the materials and reagents are obtained that is the location and finally by whom was the preparation done that is the name of the preparer. "Sampling Operations" This is the onset of the chain of custody process and it involves collaboration among a lab-sample custodian, a laboratory technician and a field-sample custodian" (Eckert, 1997). A laboratory technician prepares and avails reagents and materials upon request by a lab-sample custodian. A lab-sample custodian keeps the prepared materials and reagents in a locked storage until that time they are needed by a field-sample custodian. Storage facility should only be accessible by the lab-sample custodian. However, all these roles can be performed by one person. Turvey, (2008), illustrates that, " chain of Custody Form (COC) for Reagents and Supplies is required for proper documentation change of possession of reagents and supplies to avoid challenging the authenticity of evidence".

Form is filled in duplicate using a permanent ink. This is to ensure that a source of reference is available in times of need. Original is kept under lock in the laboratory in project file while another copy is supplied together with reagents and supplied to field. Field-sample custodian then gathers evidence and records in field-sampling data sheets for transportation to court clerk for

sealing. Before transportation sample shipping form has to be filled and accompanied by specimen. A package tracking information should also be included in this form for easy tracking. Field-sample custodian must remain with of this form including other shipping documents. Specimen is then timely analyzed by qualified analyst to uphold its integrity.

An analyst also maintains the chain of custody procedure by filling analytical data sheets. Analyzed specimen should be kept locked up limited-access storage. Finally proper sample-data recordkeeping should be maintained by the lab-sample custodian. In this process the all procedures including forms, notes, calculations, test reports and chain of custody records are documented in Archive Master File Record and Archive Contents. " The data should be in non-erasable markings and should contain the parameter measured, location, date and time, how the measurement was conducted and finally the signature of the sampler" (Chayko, Gulliver, & Macdougall, 1991). Specimen then remains in containers until it is required. This helps to curb allegations of tampering with evidence that might compromise a case. During legal proceedings, prosecution presents the specimen with an aim of establishing that a defendant was indeed in possession of the specimen.

Technological advancements in forensic has made it easy to collect and document evidence and this has improved the quest for justice in the society. My policy on Chain of custodyThe recent modern time has created unlimited technological, social and economic potential to humankind. This follows a number of inventions that have been made and to adequately tap the benefits of man power, proper training of generations to come must be the center stage in the global context. Forensic studies should be at the

center stage in the fight for crimes and the realization of justice. Chain of custody requires a well thought policy for implementation. Chain of evidence should be safely collected with all the information, documented and safely kept for lab analysis. This will go a long way in ensuring that evidence is not tampered with before it is presented in a court of law. Evidence collection and documentation should only be handled by experts in the field of forensic.

All the information collected at the crime scene should be sealed and tagged with this information: case type, date of evidence collection, location of collection, item description, police case number, a serial number or garment identifier, the collectors name and education information and analysis location. Chain of command in handling the evidence collected should be followed to the letter. This will prevent confusion. A chain of custody is therefore process that ensures the validity and authenticity of evidence. The chain must be maintained unbroken at all cost to avoid discrepancies that may make a defendant go scot-free. This calls involvement of few people in the entire process to avoid incidences of specimen tampering during collection and handing in of samples.