

The National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS) systematically collects results from drug analyses conducted by forensic laboratories. The data these forensic laboratories share with NFLIS is routinely collected by these laboratories for their own purposes. These facilities have laboratory information management systems (LIMS) that handle their data and are used for routine laboratory operations. While there are several LIMS vendors that sell off-the-shelf products to laboratories, a few laboratories have developed their own LIMS. With a LIMS, the laboratories can simply perform a data extraction to submit their data. This extraction and submission may be manual (the person extracts selected files and submits) or automated (the person pushes a button and data files from a pre-determined time frame are sent to NFLIS). Due to the variation in the manner each LIMS collects the data sought by NFLIS (e.g., grams versus milligrams, Excel versus Access), the data is standardized by NFLIS staff once it is received. Below are the core data elements NFLIS collects.

- **Laboratory case number.** Unique identifier assigned to a submission by the laboratory.
- **Laboratory item number.** Unique identifying number assigned by the laboratory to each integral component of physical evidence within a submission or case that is examined and individually specified in a laboratory report.
- **Submission date.** Date physical evidence submitted to the laboratory for analysis. If this date is unknown, date physical evidence received by the laboratory for analysis.
- **Location of the submitting agency.** County, city, zip code of the submitting agency.
- **Form of material.** Description of the physical form (i.e., crystal, powder, liquid, tablets, capsules, caplets) of each item within a submission or case received for analysis.
- **Quantity.** For each item within a submission or case received for analysis, quantity of material in grams (weight), milliliters (liquid), or units (tablets, capsules).
- **Completion Date.** Approximate date analysis completed.
- **Controlled substance(s) identified.** For each item within a submission or case received for analysis, all controlled substances that are identified by laboratory analysis.