SAMHSA Drug Testing Advisory Board (DTAB)

“The Supportability of the Hair Specimen for Federal Workplace Drug Testing”

Pursuant to Public Law 92–463, notice is hereby given that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) Drug Testing Advisory Board (DTAB) met on July 15, 16, and 17, to discuss proposed revisions to the Mandatory Guidelines for Federal Workplace Drug Testing Programs.

The SAMHSA Drug Testing Advisory Board (DTAB) met in open session on July 15th, 2015 and devoted the entire day to a discussion of the scientific status of hair testing for drugs of abuse with the intention of addressing the potential of including hair testing in the Federal and DOT regulated drug testing program. DTAB has historically been challenged with evaluating all scientific and forensic aspects of drug testing and identifying those that meet the standards to be included in the programs under federal oversight.

Meeting minutes and transcripts of the open session will be posted on the SAMHSA website: http://nac.samhsa.gov/DTAB/meetings.aspx soon.

The science of hair testing has been undergoing continual evolution and refinement since it was first proposed for inclusion in the Federal program in 2004. This proposal was ultimately withdrawn for evaluation at a later date. That later date has arrived and oral fluid testing has already been proposed for inclusion in the federal program, and hair testing, as of this meeting is under evaluation.

There were eight public comments at the meeting, all strongly in favor of including hair in the federal program. Commenters included large national motor carriers in strong support of hair testing who quoted proprietary statistical data demonstrating the effectiveness of hair testing. The commenters agreed to provide the statistical data to DTAB for review and consideration. There also was one comment from Theodore Shults that attempted to put into perspective the high standards of the federal program and comparable high standards that need to be met by any technology before it can be included in the program.

We at FSSolutions use hair testing and believe in the benefits of hair testing for workplace testing and especially for PHM applications. We believe it is a good adjunct to a strong forensic urine testing program. We look forward to its inclusion in the federal testing programs once the science has achieved the “bulletproof” status enjoyed by the current federal urine testing program. For this status to be obtained, the DTAB will have to establish standards that address appropriate cutoffs, laboratory wash, extraction, testing procedures and reporting standards that can be duplicated from lab to certified lab. Split specimen testing procedures will need to be in place for hair as they are for urine and are expected to be for oral fluid.
We at FSSolutions also look forward to the pending creation of a national clearinghouse for drug test data that will allow employers access to all DOT drug testing results for their applicants and employees. This clearinghouse is long overdue and should be used and available along with the mandatory background checking program currently in use. We encourage federal regulators to allow inclusion of company program drug testing data, along with DOT-required drug testing data, in the clearinghouse.