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American Board of xxxxx

11/6/17

Dear xxxxxx,

As an official of one of the boards accredited by us, you likely already know that the Forensic Specialty Accreditation Board (FSAB) developed new Standards for the accredited conformity assessment boards (CABs). Those new Standards were approved February 11, 2017. In order to facilitate the changes, the FSAB has established a transition plan and will be implementing the conversion to the new Standards over the next four years.

The purpose of this letter is to explain the transition plan and encourage each accredited board to perform a gap analysis to identify the tasks that the board will need to complete to maintain compliance with FSAB Standards. Remember that the purpose for revising the Standards and for the contemporaneous revision of FSAB's own Policies and Procedures is to allow FSAB accredited CABs to become compliant with ISO 17024 and to allow FSAB itself to be compliant with ISO 17011.

The transition plan approved by FSAB as of March 9, 2017 is as follows:

Transition Plan

Purpose: To transition to ISO IEC 17011 compliance for the Forensics Specialties Accreditation Board (FSAB), and to FSAB-required ISO IEC 17024 compliance for the Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) currently accredited by the FSAB and for CABs applying for accreditation.

Impact: The transition will require significant procedural changes for the FSAB and those CABs accredited or applying for accreditation.

Plan: To facilitate those changes the FSAB Directors voted on March 9, 2017 to establish the following transition plan.

1. The FSAB application for accreditation by Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) based on the new standards will be available in February 2018.
2. CABs applying for initial accreditation after the release of the new application must meet the new standards.

3. CABs reaccrediting in 2021 and thereafter must meet the new standards.
4. CABs reaccrediting prior to 2021 are encouraged to meet the new standards.
5. CABs reaccrediting before 2021 under existing standards must meet the new standards by February 2021 and confirm compliance on their April 2021 Annual Report.

A natural question from the leaders of CABs is, “What do we have to do to meet the new Standards?” This question can only be comprehensively answered following by a gap analysis comparing the new FSAB Standards to each CAB’s current Standards. FSAB suggests that the leaders of each CAB begin with such a gap analysis. When FSAB started on this path to update Standards and Policies and Procedures, we began with a gap analysis of the FSAB Standards vs. ISO IEC 17024 and the FSAB Policies and Procedures vs. ISO IEC 17011.

There are some general principles that underlie the changes to the Standards. There is more emphasis on documentation of activities. For every aspect of a CAB’s organization, there must be a defined individual (by position, not by name) responsible for that function, including a description of what is to be done, documentation of what has been done, and demonstration that necessary improvements and corrective actions are being taken to maintain and improve the certification program.

Some CAB’s may find it challenging to work with the new requirement that all examination be proctored. FSAB requires that there be some sort of examination in the certification process, although other types of evaluations are certainly allowed in addition to the examination. The new standards require that all examinations must be proctored. This may require some challenges and changes for CABs. Consequently, the transition plan allows time for such changes to be made.

Perhaps the single biggest change is the new requirement for Site Visits as part of each accreditation/reaccreditation review. FSAB has conducted two trial site visits and is analyzing the CAB’s feedback to refine a process that is transparent, reasonable, and that minimizes the cost to the greatest extent possible. Our new website will be up and running later this Summer, and the Site Visit Procedures and Checklists will be publicly posted, as will all of the Standards and Policies/Procedures documents.

If you have any questions about your CAB’s program or the new Standards during this transition period, please feel free to contact me, or any FSAB Director.

Sincerely,

Emily J. Will, D-BFDE
Vice-President, FSAB