




Texas Justice Court Training Center

## Investigative Support Unit and Legal Requirements

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Investigator – Investigative Support Unit



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### Disclaimer



Points of view or opinions in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Center for Human Identification, the UNT Health at Fort Worth, or the University of North Texas System.

All content is intended for informational and educational purposes for law enforcement agencies, crime scene technicians, and related professionals engaged in human identification and institutional policy.

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### Where to Find Us

Located in the heart of **Downtown Fort Worth**, the UNT Health campus houses the Center for Human Identification — a state-of-the-art public forensic laboratory dedicated to resolving missing persons and unidentified decedent cases nationwide.

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## Who We Serve



The Center for Human Identification provides forensic DNA services to law enforcement agencies and other authorized entities across Texas and the nation — supporting investigations involving missing persons, unidentified remains, and criminal casework.



### Major Cities:

- DALLAS
- FORT WORTH
- HOUSTON
- SAN ANTONIO
- AUSTIN

22,000,000 Est. Population

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## Focus of Capabilities



### State-Funded DNA Lab

Committed to reducing Texas SAK and criminal casework backlogs — the single-largest contributor of DNA profiles to CODIS

### Skeletal Remains

Specialized examiners of skeletal remains with expertise in degraded evidence, kinship testing, mtDNA, and Y-chromosomal analysis

### Advanced Research

Leading researchers in forensic genetics, microbial forensics, and molecular autopsy — pushing the boundaries of identification science



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## What is an Investigative Support Unit?



First of its kind unit, separate from lab operations

Comprised of former **detectives** and on-staff seasoned **genetic genealogists**

Completion of FGG casework for UHRs, specializing in **Indigenous Populations**

Investigator serves as a **liaison** for LEAs, MEs, JPs, DAs and the lab, as well as a case manager for all FGG cases

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## Statutory Requirements for Law Enforcement



### CCP 63.009

- Investigation begins with *due diligence*
- Within 2 hours - enter in **NCIC**
- Within 48 hours - put out *200-mile radius bulletin*
- Within 60 days - enter in **NamUs**

### CCP 63.057

- Within 30 days of a report of high-risk missing person - offer family members the opportunity to provide DNA *family reference samples*, **or** provide a *personal item* from the MP which has a *single-source sample of their DNA* on it

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## Statutory Requirements for Justice of the Peace



### CCP 49 – you SHALL:

- Inquest into the identity of the decedent, in addition to cause and manner of death (*Art. 04 Sec. a*)
- Record & maintain all information on burial location for no less than 10 years **NCIC**
- Sign the death certificate (*Art. 16*)
- Report death to Missing Persons Clearinghouse and National Crime Information Center (NCIC) no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> working day after inquest begins (*Art. 04 Sec. d*)
- Enter all available information of the unidentified into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> working day after the date that one or more identifying features of the UHR are determined, or the 60<sup>th</sup> day after the date the investigation began, whichever is earlier (*Art. 04 Sec. e*)

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## Statutory Requirements for Justice of the Peace



### CCP 63 – you SHALL:

- On the request of a justice of the peace...shall collect samples of unidentified human remains. The justice of the peace, coroner, medical examiner, or other law enforcement entity shall submit DNA samples collected to the University of North Texas Center for Human Identification (UNTCHI) for identification purposes. (*Art. 056 Sec.a*)

DNA testing and uploads are **NO COST** to the entire state of Texas

DNA profiled by CHI will be uploaded to the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) at the state and national levels, when eligible

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### Contacts for Entry



- Missing Children and Missing Person Information Clearing House and NCIC, operated by the Department of Public Safety

**Heidi Prather**

Manager, TxDPS Missing and Unidentified Persons / DNA Unit  
Texas Ranger Analytical Support – Crimes Against Children  
**512-424-2814**  
**Heidi.prather@dps.Texas.gov**

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### Contacts for Entry



National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs)

**Jessica A. Ruiz**

NamUs Regional System Administrator – Central Region  
Contractor Supporting OJP/NIJ  
**817-735-0553**  
**jruiz@rti.org**  
**Web: <https://namus.nij.ojp.gov>**

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### On Site Assistance



- Our Forensic Anthropology Unit offers assistance with the search, location, and field recovery of forensically-significant human remains, including the **excavation** of clandestine graves anywhere in Texas
- Skeletal remains analysis, which may include: the assessment of **forensic significance**, **documentation of remains**, and the **creation of estimated biological profiles**; comparisons with medical/dental records to support identifications; and the **analysis of skeletal trauma**
- In addition to forensic casework, the Forensic Anthropology Unit provides professional training to law enforcement agencies and forensic pathology fellows upon request

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## Forensic Anthropology Assistance



**Mark Ingraham**  
Assistant Director, Forensic Anthropology Unit  
**940-206-4465**  
**Mark.Ingraham@unhealth.edu**

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## Emails and Attestations



### Initial inquiry for FGG Testing

Greetings,  
We are reaching out to you regarding the following UHR (unidentified human remains) case(s):

UHR Case #	FGG Case #	UHR Case #	Family #	Date Found	Date Submitted	Circumstances

The Center for Human Identification is ANAB accredited for Massively Parallel Sequencing of Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (MSP) and we have identified this case as a candidate for forensic genetic genealogy (FGG) testing.

If these decedents are **still unidentified** and your agency is interested in this new tool, we would like to proceed with testing using the Illumina Infinium® Global Screening Array-24 and GEDmatch, which allows analysis of approximately 650,000 SNP markers across the human genome and is compliant with entry into the GEDmatch™ PAF. All laboratory testing and genealogy investigation would be performed in-house via state funding, so there is **no cost to your agency for these services.**

Once testing is complete, your agency will receive a detailed report of the amount of SNP data obtained and whether or not the data is eligible for entry into GEDmatch PAF™. If we upload a SNP profile to GEDmatch PAF™, our Investigative Support Unit genealogists will conduct research to locate genetic relatives. Your agency will then receive a genealogical report including an investigation based with additional recommendations, or an investigative lead indicating that although genetic relatives were found, the SNP profile will continue to be investigated and searched in GEDmatch PAF™.

- Please request regarding your agreement to allow us to conduct all testing and investigative genetic genealogy at our facility.
- Please confirm that all reasonable means of identifying the UHR have been exhausted.
- Please complete and return the attached attestation form, which confirms your acknowledgment of our terms of service and those of GEDmatch/GEDmatch PAF™.

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## Emails and Attestations



### Attestation for FGG Testing

As the **medicolegal authority** over the unidentified human remains, it is our policy for you to not only be aware of a DNA or FGG testing request, but to also provide approval.

Our attestation form verifies that the submitting agency has approval from the investigating agency, submitting agency, and the medicolegal authority.

In forensic cases or when a surreptitiously obtained sample is obtained for comparison, we also require approval from the prosecutor.

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