



## The Society of Forensic Toxicologists (SOFT) Regional Toxicology Liaison Project

In September, SOFT was awarded the Regional Toxicology Liaison (RTL) Demonstration Project grant by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). This cooperative agreement aims to benefit state toxicology programs through increased support, communications, resources, criminal justice system coordination; decreased processing time of toxicology samples; and better data reporting. The project will support the establishment of Toxicology Liaisons that support states in NHTSA regions 5, 7, and 9 (<https://www.nhtsa.gov/about-nhtsa>), to assist with training, collaboration, and the standardization of testing across state labs and the reporting of data to better understand the scope of the drug-impaired driving problem.

The SOFT members chosen for the RTL positions are:

Region 5: Sabra Jones ([sabra@soft-tox.org](mailto:sabra@soft-tox.org))



Sabra Jones is a Forensic Toxicologist and board-certified as a Diplomate by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology. Sabra has worked in transportation safety at the Federal Aviation Administration and driving impairment, in addition to other areas of forensic toxicology, at the Tarrant County Medical Examiner's office. For the past seven years, she has served as an Assistant Professor and graduate student mentor at Boston University School of Medicine's Biomedical Forensic Sciences program. She conducts research in the areas of forensic toxicology, analytical chemistry, and impairment. Sabra earned her Master of Science degrees in Drug Chemistry and Forensic Toxicology from the University of Florida as well as undergraduate and graduate degrees in Criminal Justice from the University of Central Oklahoma. Sabra is currently working on her PhD at Oklahoma State University, Center for Health Science in Forensic Science.

She serves as Chair and on the Executive Board of the National Safety Council's Alcohol, Drugs, and Impairment Division. She serves as Vice-Chair of the Academy Standards Board's Toxicology Consensus Body. Sabra is active in a number of professional organizations such as the Society of Forensic Toxicologists, Northeastern Association of Forensic Scientists, and the American Academy of Forensic Sciences where she currently serves as Chair of the toxicology section. Sabra was appointed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's Governor Charles Baker to serve on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Forensic Oversight Board and the Special Commission on Operating Under the Influence and Impaired Driving.

Region 7: Chris Heartsill ([chris@soft-tox.org](mailto:chris@soft-tox.org))



Chris Heartsill is currently certified by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology as a Diplomate - Forensic Toxicology and received his B.S. degree in Chemistry from East Central University in 1991. Chris has been working in analytical chemistry for over 30 years with more than 27 years of forensic toxicology experience including the areas of human performance forensic toxicology, postmortem forensic toxicology, and forensic laboratory quality management. Chris was most recently the Quality Manager for the Dallas Police Department Crime Scene Response Section. Prior to coming to the Dallas Police Department, he served as the Quality Manager for the Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office in Fort Worth, Texas and the Toxicology Supervisor, Toxicologist, Quality Manager, and Breath Testing Technical Supervisor at the Dallas County Medical Examiner's Office in Dallas, Texas. Chris is an active member of the Society of Forensic Toxicologists, currently serving as the Secretary, Chair of the Membership Committee, member of the Policies and Procedures Committee, member of the Finance Committee, and Associate Editor of ToxTalk. Other professional organizations include the Southwestern Association of Toxicologists, serving two individual terms as President, Grant Committee Chair, and Historian, the Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors, the Association of Forensic Quality Assurance Managers, and the National Safety Council Alcohol, Drugs & Impairment Division, serving on the Executive Board and performing duties as the Chair of the Administrative Committee.

Chris enjoys promoting education in forensic toxicology through participation in workshops and numerous scientific session presentations in organizations including the Society of Forensic Toxicologists, California Association of Toxicologists, Southwestern Association of Toxicologists, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, law enforcement training academies, and the Texas District & County Attorneys Association. The focus of many of these presentations included educating law enforcement, the legal community, and toxicologists in the chemical testing and enforcement of DWI and driving under the influence of drugs.

Chris has served on several committees regarding the advancement of forensic science from a local and national perspective including serving on the Texas Forensic Science Commission Licensing Advisory Committee and currently serving the Organizational Scientific Area Committees Toxicology Subcommittee as an affiliate member. He has actively been involved in the accreditation of forensic laboratories through activities with the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB) and has served as a Lead Assessor for ANAB.

Region 9: Kristen Burke ([kristen@soft-tox.org](mailto:kristen@soft-tox.org) )



Kristen has worked in the Toxicology field for over 24 years. Most recently, she worked as the Laboratory Director for CA Department of Justice, Bureau of Forensic Services – Toxicology Laboratory (over five years). Her toxicology program provided services to 46 of the 58 counties in CA. In addition, she was responsible for oversight of the forensic alcohol program and breath alcohol program throughout nine different regions. Prior to state employment, she worked as a Toxicologist in private sector for 7.5 years in Portland, OR. In 2005, she left private sector to work for Sacramento County Crime Laboratory in CA, where she worked as a Criminalist in the Toxicology unit for 8 years and as a Supervising Criminalist/Quality Manager for three and a half years. Kristen has provided numerous presentations regarding Toxicology DUID/DRE at training seminars such as California District Attorneys Association Conferences, NHTSA/CA Office of Traffic Safety Meetings, and CHP DRE Recertification Training Sessions. She is a member of California Association of Toxicologists and Society of Forensic Toxicologists. In addition, she has provided testimony regarding the analysis/effects of alcohol and drugs on the human body in the areas of human performance and postmortem throughout her career.

Kristen has served as a lead for one of the six sub-committees (Toxicology) to assist CA Office of Traffic Safety to develop a DUID Blueprint that identifies challenges and effective countermeasures for DUID in CA. Additionally, she is a member of the Federal Drug Testing Advisory Board for SAMHSA, a committee member of the CA Impaired Driving Task Force (IDTF) Committee, and served as the Committee Chair for the Technology, Research, and Data Subcommittee of the IDTF. She has served as both a Toxicology Technical Assessor and Lead Assessor for ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB) previously ASCLD. Kristen received her Bachelor of Science degree in Biology (Micro/Molecular) from Portland State University in 1997, her MBA from the University of Southern California (USC) in 2021 and is currently a MS Candidate for Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine at Maharishi International University.

In 2020 Kristen was a recipient of the NHTSA Public Service Award for her leadership and expertise implementing toxicology best practices, drug testing and expanded screening in California. This award led to further recognition by USC Marshall OMBA- Education for Tomorrow's Leaders. In addition, she was interviewed by the Select Science Magazine regarding the CA DOJ Toxicology Laboratory's "One Stop Shot Method."

Past President Amy Miles will serve as the Project Manager.

We are looking forward to working with SOFT members and their laboratories throughout this project!