 **ASFP**

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[**www.theasfp.org**](http://www.theasfp.org)

ASFP Communication- Getting Involved

I was asked by one of our newer members for some advice on how to get involved in the field and that often means association with local law enforcement. This is a fairly common concern and it will be addressed to the entire membership.

While some of these points may seem basic to some, please remember that we have different levels of knowledge and experience in our organization. If anyone has any other ideas, recommendations, or suggestions, please do not hesitate to convey them to the membership.

One very important prerequisite prior to initiating any type of contact is knowledge of forensic subjects. This is, of course, in addition to one’s podiatry expertise. Probably the most important books/sources recommended (see attached recommended references list) are DiMaggio and Vernon’s “Forensic Podiatry- Principles and Methods” and Rich’s and Thompson’s books, both with chapters on Forensic Podiatry. Dwane Hilderbrand’s, “Footwear-The Missed Evidence” discusses the footwear examiners duties including evidence/crime scenes, and techniques by laboratory personnel. Many techniques presented relative to footwear are applicable to pedal evidence. Safferstein’s and Eckert’s books are good for general knowledge relative to the crime scene, photography, etc. and are important for ones’ library.

The easiest first step would be to know someone who is in the Police Department or the Crime Laboratory. My first case developed through a patient I was treating who was a County Attorney.

Otherwise, who does one contact?

It somewhat depends on the size of the police department in your area. If it is a relatively small municipal department or sheriff's department, I would call them and ask who the appropriate person is to contact relative to your interests. In some cases the laboratory will do minimal examination and refer most out either to a larger city department or state crime lab. You may decide to go one of two ways- either contact the police first or the crime lab. Sometimes it makes sense to contact the laboratory director first. Explain that you are a podiatrist interested in pedal evidence and the analysis of footprints and evidence related to the foot. Explain briefly that it may involve bloody footprints, footprint impressions, and sizing/ownership/predominant wearer issues. Footwear is often a component with pedal evidence and our examination may involve the sock liner foot image or impression, outsole wear pattern, and upper wear relative to foot pathology. In many cases you will find the lab director more than willing to discuss matters and he/she most likely will be happy to meet with you in person to discuss things further. If there is a footwear examiner in their lab then I am sure they would put you in contact with that individual also. The lab personnel are always interested in obtaining the best representation for examination purposes and sometimes we can discuss with them the use of an alternate light source or laser light source for enhancement of sock liner foot images, etc. Topics like this are discussed in some of the references that are available for review. There are also articles relative to different techniques and laboratory analysis specifically for forensic podiatry that have been distributed or recommended reading to the membership previously.

If you contact the police department you might inquire who would be the appropriate person to approach relative to offering your services. A letter of introduction to that individual would be appropriate prior to any meeting.

Once they know of your availability and interest, you may be invited or offer to lecture to the detectives, homicide squad, etc. Association with a Police Department or Laboratory department is valuable and something that hopefully will become more common as we progress. For example, many forensic odontologists and anthropologists are consultants for police departments or medical examiners, etc.

Another suggestion for volunteering assistance and getting involved is advising them that you are working with the ASFP in acquiring a bare footprint database for case use, research, etc. You might suggest that you would be willing to take bare footprints of the recruits in the police academy. They are generally young and healthy individuals whose type footprints we don't always acquire (easily) since we deal with mostly problematic feet in our practices. This is an excellent source to add numbers to the data base but also to make contacts and educate law enforcement personnel. The protocols for a bare footprint project are available from the ASFP upon request.

Of course, the ASFP is your organization, and all veteran members are willing to help, including mentoring services. Getting more involved in the functioning of the Society and volunteering to do study projects or research is always possible.

Membership in other forensic organizations like the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and International Association for Identification (I.A.I.), which has a Forensic Podiatry Section, and their related local organizations (State or regional) allows the opportunity for making contacts, etc.

As a member of the ASFP one has a good chance of being accepted for membership in the I.A.I. Please consider applying for membership. Contact: [theiai.org](mailto:theiai.org). for an application. Any of the Board members would be happy to act as a reference for membership to the I.A.I.