

Evidentiary Continuity

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Discussion

Evidentiary continuity concerns the preservation of evidence and its traceable relationships throughout the full information-processing lifecycle.

In regulated data interpretation environments, evidence may pass through multiple stages, including:

- Submission
- Intake
- Persistence
- Extraction
- Observation
- Interpretation
- Validation
- Analysis
- Review
- Reassessment

Evidence may also cross component, system, organizational, and jurisdictional boundaries. At each stage, the architecture preserves the identity, integrity, provenance, version context, and relationships of the evidence so that later processing does not obscure or sever its connection to the original source.

Evidentiary continuity depends on explicit and stable relationships among:

- Source artifacts
- Reported facts
- Observed facts
- Interpreted or derived facts
- Validation and assessment outcomes
- Applicable semantic definitions
- Rules, parameters, and interpretive context

Evidentiary continuity does not require every system to store the same copy of an artifact. It requires the architecture to preserve sufficient identity, integrity, provenance, and traceability to reconstruct the evidentiary chain reliably.

Definition

quality of preserving the identity, integrity, provenance, and traceable relationships of evidence throughout its lifecycle

Source

- Federated Data Interpretation Systems Reference Architecture (FDIS-RA)
- Standard Business Report Model (SBRM)
- ISO/IEC 27037, Information technology — Security techniques — Guidelines for identification, collection, acquisition, and preservation of digital evidence

Note

Evidentiary continuity differs from provenance. Provenance records the origin and history of an artifact or result. Evidentiary continuity concerns the preservation of the evidentiary chain and its relationships across processing stages, versions, systems, and organizations.

Evidentiary continuity also differs from chain of custody. Chain of custody focuses primarily on possession, control, transfer, and handling of evidence. Evidentiary continuity includes those concerns where applicable but extends to the semantic, interpretive, and processing relationships that connect evidence to derived outcomes.

Example

A regulator preserves evidentiary continuity when a validation result remains linked to the original filing, the extracted observation, the applicable semantic definition, the rule version, the processing history, and the resulting assessment throughout later review and reassessment.

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Last update: 2026/07/18 12:33

