



Checklist for Hiring a Private Investigator

- ✓ **Active license in the state the person went missing from, including license number and licensing authority contact information, for verification.**
- ✓ **Professional liability insurance or bonded**
- ✓ **Physical address, email, phone number and website. Take a moment to google the name of the PI or agency to look for reviews.**
- ✓ **3 References of past missing person clients**
- ✓ **Affiliation with Agencies and Associations. Most states have private investigation associations and/or The National Council of Investigation and Security Services or a variety of other specialized associations.**
- ✓ **Read contract thoroughly and make sure the following are addressed:**
 - ✓ **Confidentiality** Information is confidential, unless others have a right to receive it. You entrust investigators with conducting an investigation, therefore a confidentiality clause in the contract is absolutely crucial. It is an investigator's ethical obligation to maintain strict confidentiality to all information that relates to the investigation.
 - ✓ **Payment Terms and Fees** The payment terms and fee section of the contract should establish the investigator or agency's fee schedule. If a retainer is required, the amount of the initial retainer to be collected should be noted. It should indicate how many hours of investigative time has been agreed upon and paid for.
 - ✓ **Scope of Service** A detailed and clearly defined scope of services, written into the contract and communicated to you, helps investigators stick to the services they promised to provide you and understand your objective in the investigation.
 - ✓ **Additional Costs** Rates for any additional services or expenses that may be needed during the course of the investigation and are not included in the specified investigation, such as skip tracing, GPS or additional equipment expenses, hotel charges, meal charges, database charges, etc. Rates or fees for court appearances, expert testimony, or depositions.
 - ✓ **Communication:** How will the agency or PI communicate with you and how often? By phone? Email? Is texting appropriate?
 - ✓ **Final Reporting** How will the final investigative summary report be delivered to you and when?
 - ✓ **Non Guarantee** Common in most contracts, even the best investigators cannot always guarantee the results or outcome of an investigation. There are always unforeseen factors involved.
 - ✓ **Limitation of Liability** This clause is often inserted into a contract to exclude or limit liability for breach of contract or negligence. The willingness of courts to enforce the limitation of liability clause varies from state to state.
 - ✓ **Termination** A termination clause is obviously the portion of a contract that explains the rights of the parties to terminate, or cancel the contract and how this is to be done.
- ✓ **If in doubt, please consult an attorney.**