

**IS IT
TIME TO HIRE A
PRIVATE
INVESTIGATOR?**

**A GUIDE FOR WOMEN
SEEKING ANSWERS &
PEACE OF MIND**

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**A GUIDE FOR WOMEN
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BY KEITH TIDWELL

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Disclaimer: None of this is legal advice. Don't accept legal advice from a private investigator. Please speak to an attorney about legal issues.

All of the testimonials and cases referenced in this ebook are used with permission of the client, and made anonymous to protect their identity and privacy.

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT RED KEITH

WHO WE ARE:

Red Keith is a private investigation firm in Bellevue, Washington. Our investigators have decades of experience in law enforcement, military, and civil enforcement backgrounds.

While the majority of our work is helping attorneys with litigation, we also offer deeply discounted services to clients dealing with stalking, harassment, and other personal safety issues.

WHO THIS IS FOR:

We, of course, have clients of different genders, but have found that **women are often under-served by law enforcement** and other private investigation agencies.

We want to help, especially if you are from marginalized racial or ethnic groups, or are a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. We (obviously) think all those people deserve help too.

WHY WE WROTE THIS:

Between the general misogyny in our society, and the all too common apathy of many law enforcement agencies, we wanted to create a guide to help people that might have

questions, and might not know *who* to ask, or even *what to ask*. Our goal is to help you find peace and safety in your life, and if we aren't the right people to help with that, we hope to at least connect you with someone who is.

We want to empower women with the knowledge and guidance to make the best choices as they consider hiring a private investigator. We want you to have the upper hand in a legal battle, or even just trying to live your best life.

Also, please note the special offer, at the end of this ebook, for Washington residents.

A HAPPY CLIENT:

“Keith successfully helped me to locate someone for a child custody case. Even though I could not offer a lot of information, he was still able use his knowledge and network to finish this job with a very reasonable budget. I would like to highly recommend him for his work.” - J.W. in Kent, WA



CHAPTER 1

COMMON REASONS WOMEN HIRE A PI

BACKGROUND CHECKS

A background check can help you determine if your partner is being honest with you. It can help make sure you and your children are safe around a new person in your lives. They are commonly done before entering into a business deal with someone. A typical background check includes things like:

- Address history
- Emails and phone numbers used now, and in the past
- A review of social media postings
- Criminal history checks
- Information about judgments and debts
- Information about a business the target owns, or a professional license they may require for their job

There is no legal way to check a person's credit history without their consent, so *be wary of investigators who tell you they can*. This is also true for specific bank balances, which are not available to any private investigator, without a court order.



The deck can be stacked against women when it comes to personal safety. If you ask us to make sure your new partner

doesn't have a history of violence, that is a reasonable request, grounded in valid concern for your safety. If a man asked us to follow his new partner to see where she lived, that guy will be denied. In our society, **there is nothing wrong with women taking steps to maximize their chances of staying safe.**

CHILD CUSTODY

A very common request our clients make is wanting to know if their kids are safe with their ex-partner, and often, if that person's new partner is also safe.

This type of investigation will be very situational, and should be customized specific to your needs.

It's also important to note there may be people in a better role to help in this situation, like a social worker or guardian ad litem appointed by the court.

But what you can expect from a child custody investigation are things like:

- Background checks on your former partner, as well as their new partner(s)
- Criminal history on your former partner, as well as their new partner(s)
- Sometimes it's appropriate to conduct surveillance, to perhaps identify who the new partner is, and to check on your children's welfare while they are out in public places.
- Issues of spousal and child support are common here, too. An investigator may be able to help get accurate information about your ex's earnings and income.
- Investigators are also an excellent choice to track down the deadbeat ex who isn't paying support, or when you need



to serve them with court orders to get the justice you deserve.

The volatile nature of many divorces and separations can also lead to personal safety issues for you and your family. Which brings us to...

ONLINE HARASSMENT AND STALKING

You deserve to be safe in your home. And you deserve to be safe as you move through your life.



While police and the court system can help with protection orders, anyone who has had to deal with these problems knows that often isn't enough. Especially when the harassment is online, many people have experienced a lack of police effort and willingness to solve this type of crime.

A private investigator can help in a few ways with these problems. First, they can help create a safety plan for you and your family. This might include a survey of your home, with recommendations about security measures to improve your safety.

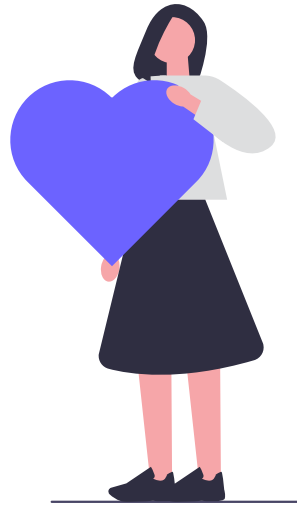
A good PI can also help measure your online footprint, and suggest steps you can take to be harder to find, and harder to harass. Finally, a PI can often teach you some basic counter-surveillance skills, to help spot if someone is following you, giving you time to contact the police or do whatever else is necessary to protect yourself.

Some (but not most) private investigators have the training and equipment to conduct what normal people call “finding bugs and listening devices” but which is officially called Technical Surveillance Counter Measures. If you need to hire someone in your area for that problem, search that term. They can help locate tracking devices, hidden cameras, and other listening devices which may be compromising your safety and privacy.

MISSING PERSONS

Not every problem clients bring to a private investigator is related to relationships. Another common investigation we are hired for is finding missing people. This can range from tracking down your old Little from the college sorority, to a family member who may have fallen off the grid for various reasons, like addiction or mental health issues.

It is critically important to note, ***an ethical private investigator will not reveal anyone’s location information without that person’s consent.***



Sometimes parents want to track down the child who hasn’t spoken to them in a decade. We can’t tell you the (adult) child’s information, without their consent. One exception to this is missing juveniles, or other people unable to legally make decisions for themselves. In those rarer situations, we may provide their location to a parent, caregivers, social worker, or police agency, as appropriate, to protect the vulnerable party.

We would love to tell you all private investigators operate within those ethical guidelines, but we both know better. Be wary of hiring any PI who claims they can find *anyone*, or can provide information about someone who doesn't want to talk with you. This includes parties protected by a court order. ***If you hire a PI to contact someone you can't legally talk to, you are probably still violating that court order.***

INFIDELITY

We want to note up front, our agency does not do infidelity work. But this is by far the most common work many investigators do, so you shouldn't have trouble finding someone to help here.

Our agency avoids these investigations because, here in Washington, courts rarely factor in cheating when making spousal or child support calculations, or when dividing marital assets.



We believe the money you'd give a PI is probably better spent on therapy, attorney's fees, or a deposit on a new place to live. That said, please ask your attorney if proof of cheating will help your case, as rules vary from state to state.

All that said, many people just want proof of their partner's infidelity to find some peace of mind, to prove they actually **were being gaslighted**, or other reasons. These types of investigations rely heavily on surveillance. The most important thing to know about surveillance is that surveillance can be very expensive.

Before hiring anyone to do this work, do your best to narrow the window someone might need to be followed. The less investigator time spent watching, the less you'll pay.

Also, some investigators do this work alone, but proper, **professional surveillance may require a team of two or three people** if it's critically important to keep eyes on a subject.

It is completely reasonable to expect your PI to provide proof they are actually observing your target, and not just running up a bill of your time. Some agencies use software that lets you see where the investigator is, when they are logged to your case. Many do not. Ask for time logs and proof the investigator was on-site.

CHAPTER 2

WHEN IT'S TIME TO CALL A PI

We often say there are “tipping points” when a person decides to look for help with an investigation. Here are four common examples:

1. WHEN YOUR OWN INVESTIGATION REACHES A DEAD END

A very common question we get is “what can you find out that I can’t get in an online search or paying for a people finder record?” And 1,000%, if you can solve your problem by giving \$20 to a service like Spokeo or Peoplefinder, **do that**.

If that fails, most private investigators have access to non-public information through various databases that limit access to investigators, debt collectors, etc. So if Google didn’t help find what you’re interested in, it might be time to contact a private investigator.

Similarly, we all have that friend who can find the “finsta” of that cute guy in less than a minute. But if your tech-savvy friend isn’t getting to the core of what you want to know, ask a PI if they can help.

2. WHEN EMOTIONS MAY BE CLOUDING YOUR JUDGMENT

For certain issues like divorce and custody cases, emotions run high. You've probably heard some variation of the advice "don't send email when you're mad." In the same way lawyers don't represent themselves in court, ***it can be helpful to have some distance between what you need help with, and the desire for revenge that burns like 10,000 suns.***

A private investigator can help give you that distance. They are a neutral party, and they do not have a stake in the outcome. As such they are able to do good work, without being compromised by emotion.

Another common emotion our clients experience is fear and anxiety. This might be

because they don't want to set off a former partner. Or they may not want their friends or family to know they are going through something embarrassing. Or they might just be really terrified of what the next six months is going to look like.

Again, a person with some distance to your problems can help guide you through some of it, and the right investigator should be able to build their investigations around whatever concerns you have. Your feelings are valid, and you often know the target of your investigation better than any PI does. ***Work with an investigator who makes you feel safe, and respects whatever needs you have around safety planning, confidentiality, and anonymity.*** There may be things they



can't do without tipping off the target, but they should explain that so you can work together to make the best choice for *you*.

3. WHEN THERE IS REAL RISK TO THE SAFETY OF YOU OR YOUR FAMILY

If you have an abusive or violent partner, it's completely reasonable to not want to set them off, or give them a reason to come after you (not that they ever needed one). Many investigators have police and/or military training, and experience dealing with out-of-control people, or people in crisis. ***We also find that many men are much more comfortable being violent jerks with their partner, than with someone that is better able to potentially fight back.***

To be clear, don't hire a PI to rough up your ex. But some private investigation agencies offer "executive protection" services, which is just fancy talk for "bodyguard". For example if you have a court hearing, and are worried about your safety on the way, a PI may be able to help protect you. If you're

worried about getting attacked as you leave work, or go to the store, you can often find some short-term help from a PI agency. This type of service can get expensive, but it's worth checking out if you're worried.



The right PI should be able to teach you the basics of counter-surveillance, to help you spot if someone is following you, and what to do if they are. They can help create a safety plan to keep you safe, and some have partnered with their local domestic violence shelters in finding various resources for victims, and can be another good source of information.

If you are ever in imminent danger, call 911. But if you need extra help with keeping you and your family safe, a PI can be a good resource for help.

4. WHEN YOU MIGHT END UP IN COURT

If there's much of a chance your case will end up in court, whether criminal or civil, it's time to work with a professional private investigator. Bad investigative work gets cases thrown out, or can lead to unusable evidence. Really bad investigative work can even be a crime, or a violation of a person's civil rights. As an example, ***just because you can buy a GPS tracker on Amazon, doesn't mean it's legal to place it on someone's car.***

With any court case, your attorney is the first point of contact, and the only person you should ever trust for legal advice. But PIs often work closely with attorneys to make sure their work product is confidential, protected by privilege, and has the best chance of being helpful in a courtroom.



A PI can also help with process serving, especially if the party they are serving is trying to avoid service, or is potentially dangerous or uncooperative. A typical process server is generally a cheaper option for routine service, but they often fall short when dealing with that jerk hiding at his mom's house so he doesn't get served to appear at a child support hearing.

Finally, the right investigator will already have the training and experience to professionally present testimony in court. The other party's attorney will be doing their best to make your witnesses look dumb. Many private investigators have been through this enough to know to remain calm, answer only the questions they were asked, and speak directly to the judge or jury, as appropriate.

Your cousin Mike may have a role in helping you through your problem, but he might not be the strongest witness ever. When your safety and finances are on the line, hire the best.

A HAPPY CLIENT:

“Before beginning our lawsuit we needed to know if it made sense financially. **Keith quickly identified \$5M in assets** and we filed our case. Keith also made sure the other party got served right away, and helped us find an expert witness that made our whole case. I'd recommend him to anyone!” - K.S. in Seattle, WA

CHAPTER 3

WHEN IT'S TIME TO CALL A PI

DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS

Most private investigators offer a broad array of services, but they should ultimately be focused on investigations. We recommend you avoid a PI who claims to do investigations, while also offering five other unrelated services too.

Some PIs will focus on narrow niches, like only doing family law investigations. We even know a PI who only does arson investigations, and who makes a good living. For most people, however, ***your investigator should know a little about a lot, and know a lot about investigations in general.*** But if you can find a PI whose niche is your specific problem, that's great!

There are PI agencies that are international, and there are PI agencies that are one person in a small office down the street from you. As in any industry, they both have their advantages and disadvantages. A larger firm will generally have greater resources, and the ability to better investigate a case that may cross several jurisdictions.

A smaller firm will generally provide better service and be more responsive to your specific needs. The smaller firm will also, typically, have more experience dealing with your local courts, public records offices, and businesses in your area.

They may have more local contacts in the community, and have networks that larger firms may not, as the larger firm covers a much larger geographic area.

For most people reading this, we think a smaller, local agency is generally the best choice, but, full disclosure, we are a smaller, local agency. There is nothing wrong with talking to both kinds when looking for the right investigator.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION TO ASK A POTENTIAL INVESTIGATOR BEFORE HIRING

EXPERIENCE / QUALIFICATIONS

Private investigators enter the industry with a wide variety of backgrounds. Most commonly you'll find some type of law enforcement work history, but that's certainly not a requirement to be a great investigator. Others come from insurance investigation backgrounds, or jobs like anti-money-laundering investigations for banks.

Here in Washington, every PI has to at least pass a test showing basic familiarity with certain laws, and you can't have any criminal convictions that would impact your ability to do the job. Other states have different qualifications.

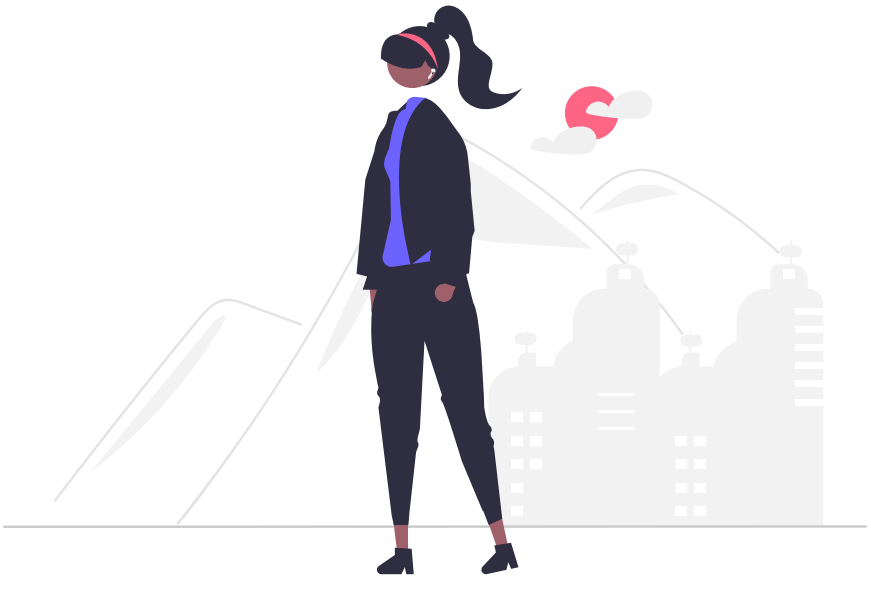
But that's just the minimum, and you should generally look for more than the bare minimum with the person you hire. Ask about additional training the investigator may have had. Ask if their agency has any continuing education requirements. If your investigation will require special skills, like digital

forensic examinations, make sure to ask if they're qualified for that specific work. Don't assume every PI knows these things.

Perhaps, most importantly, your PI should be an excellent communicator. They should be able to communicate well both verbally and in writing. They should be comfortable talking to people from a variety of backgrounds, and get information from people regardless of that person's education, religion, gender identity, race, or economic situation. ***If you feel like your investigator doesn't communicate well, don't hire them.***

LICENSING / INSURANCE

Most states require private investigators to be licensed, and that is true here in Washington. At a minimum please ask your investigator to see a current professional license, as well as a business license for the city they work out of. Rules vary, but those are pretty common things most investigators will readily have available.



Similarly, many states require the investigator to carry a certain amount of insurance, or at least to post a surety bond in some amount. In Washington the bond minimum is only \$10,000, and other states vary.

Most professional investigators carry both liability insurance and errors and omissions coverage in far higher amounts. There is nothing wrong with asking for proof of coverage, and our agency has this information publicly available on our website. We note here our agency has \$5 million of liability coverage, as a metric of what is fairly common for serious PIs, and what to look for.

There are two reasons for you to care about licensing and insurance. If your state requires a PI to have a license, and yours doesn't, any evidence they uncover may be inadmissible in court. More importantly, it's just the most basic way to measure, "am I talking to someone serious or someone who does this as a hobby?"

Liability insurance also helps to protect you in the event your investigator does something wrong, because they are



working on your behalf. So if your PI does something unlawful, and you and your PI get sued, the agency's coverage is helping to protect you and your assets. Like most insurance, we hope to never need to use it, but it's good to have in place if you ever do need it.

FEES AND PAYMENT STRUCTURE

There are a few different ways private investigators get paid.

Probably the most common is hourly billing. If they bill \$80/hour and work 10 hours, you owe \$800.

Often these types of agreements do not include mileage or expenses, so make sure you understand the full scope of your fee schedule. If your investigator

lives 40 miles from the target, are you getting billed for that mileage? Both ways? It's worth knowing ahead of time, rather than getting a big surprise bill down the road. We have seen PIs that break timekeeping down into as small as six-minute increments, but 15 minute chunks are most common. The main advantage to this type of billing is it's easy to adjust as your investigation evolves.

It is normal and expected for the PI to provide you a detailed breakdown of how they used their time. Hourly rates can range from about \$60 to as high as \$150 or more per hour, depending on where you live and the investigator's experience.

Another common pricing method is project-based or flat fee investigations. These have the advantage of you knowing, up



front, what the total cost of your investigation will be. There is no surprise billing. But if your investigator bills like this, ask some questions about when they stop, if the investigation is unsuccessful for too long a time.

Project-based pricing is still based on the investigator making some estimate of the time required, so you should be able to get an answer like “after 10 hours of billable time we would need to stop or talk further about more payment.” The main advantage of project-based costing is it’s easier to understand what your investigation will cost, and allows for easier budgeting.

Ultimately you are in control of your budget, and regardless of how your investigator typically bills, we encourage conversations about other options. ***Cookie-cutter investigations rarely work well, and a good PI will tailor your investigation to your specific needs.*** This can include other types of billing sometimes. You don’t get what you don’t ask for, so advocate for your own budget needs early in the process.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ETHICS

Your investigator shouldn’t share any information about your case, with anyone, for any reason, without your consent. Our agency won’t even confirm if someone is or is not a client without knowing who is asking, and getting permission from our client first. Please ask any potential investigator about their confidentiality policies, and if you don’t feel comfortable, that’s not the PI for you.

Similarly your PI should always act legally and ethically. There are many things we see private investigators do in shows and movies that just aren’t realistic. Many of the things we can’t do





anymore (like obtain banking balances) are because some PI abused the system once upon a time, and we're all still paying for it. Your PI should advocate for you, but should also be comfortable pushing back if you're asking them to do something that isn't legal or isn't in your best interests.

Another important part of keeping your information confidential is data security. It's perfectly reasonable to ask your PI about their data security practices or policies. Smaller agencies may not have explicit written policies, but they should be able to talk about the things they do to protect your information. Sloppy cybersecurity practices aren't an excuse for your information ending up online somewhere. Similarly, it's not okay to leave case files out where anyone coming into an office can read them. ***Part of keeping you safe, is keeping your data safe.***

There are a few niche situations where a private investigator may have to share your information. By far the most likely is in response to a court order. This is similar to any other business

or agency receiving a subpoena or search warrant. Sometimes the work a PI does for an attorney may be considered “attorney work product” and privileged, but just keep in mind that there is always some potential for information release, when compelled by a judge.

The other time you may not be guaranteed confidentiality is when clients try to get a private investigator to engage in a criminal conspiracy. We will just say, don't do that, and you don't need to worry about this exception. But a real-life example would be the respondent of a no-contact order hiring a PI to contact the petitioner of the same order. Don't do shady stuff, and this won't come up.

FEELING SAFE AND TRUSTING YOUR PI

While “vibes” might not be the most professional recommendation we've ever made, if you don't like the vibe of your investigator, find a different one. We wish it wasn't true, but there is no shortage of angry, burned out, misogynistic, racist private investigators. They do, after all, often come from police backgrounds.

Online reviews are one way to check for some of that, but many people who work with a PI don't want their real name tied to a Google review on a PI's page. Compared to say, a restaurant, many PIs have few reviews. So ***you may just need to trust your instincts after meeting your PI, and if they give you the ick, keep looking.***

Another important part of choosing the right PI is how often they communicate with you. Our firm will reach out to every active client, at least weekly, even if it's just to say, “nothing new in your case, we'll check in next week.”

Talk with your PI about how long they typically take to respond to questions, and make sure that works for you. Some PIs work weird hours, and they may not always answer you during business hours. Many engagement letters or client agreements spell out the typical response time.

When searching for a PI, please hire someone with some empathy. You deserve that, and they should certainly provide some. We have all done something stupid at one point. ***You should never feel judged or embarrassed by your investigator.*** People are complicated, and a good private investigator knows that more than a lot of folks.

CHAPTER 4

WHAT TO EXPECT (AND WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR)

The “getting started” process will vary from PI to PI, but generally you will see some version of these five things:

1. INITIAL CONSULTATION

The first step is to reach out to an investigator and talk about your case. Many PIs offer free consultations, although not all do. This is an opportunity to explain your problem, the key players, and what you are hoping to accomplish.

At the end of this consultation you should have an idea if this is the right investigator for you, if they can help, and a rough estimate of the cost.

Private investigators often will ask for a signed contract or engagement letter and some amount of payment before they begin work. You can talk about the time frames for full payment and financing options if that’s relevant in your case. State laws vary, but our agency requires clients to confirm their identity (or for remote clients, a photo of your driver’s license) to help keep everyone safe.

You will then generally be asked to share any other information or documentation that is helpful in your case. If you’ve done a ton of work before hiring your PI, sharing what you have can save them time (and your money) and prevent

them duplicating work you've already done. ***This whole process should feel collaborative, gentle, and free of judgment.***

2. DEVELOPING AN INVESTIGATIVE PLAN

The investigator will then create an investigative plan, which basically outlines the things they plan to do and when, as well as identifying key people or evidence that may be helpful. Some PIs share this with clients, and some primarily keep it as an internal document, but there's no harm in asking to see it.

This plan should also document any safety concerns the client may have, for themselves or other people. ***If you have safety concerns about the investigator contacting you via text, email, or phone, those should be documented.*** If surveillance is part of the plan, it should roughly outline days and times to conduct the surveillance, subject to adjustment in real life situations.



3. COMMUNICATION AND UPDATES

As mentioned earlier, we communicate with clients at least weekly, even when there is nothing to update. You may want to talk to your investigator more often, or less, and it's okay to communicate this to your PI. Most investigators should answer reasonable questions, and only charge for phone calls if the client is abusing the common definition of "reasonable".

4. EVIDENCE AND REPORTING

Nearly every investigation will conclude with some type of written report. This should document the work the investigator did, as well as the general timeline of the investigation. If any physical evidence is collected as part of your investigation, that should be documented and, critically, the chain of custody must be preserved.

You should at least get a copy of the written report. There is often other documentation, like results from records searches, time logs, court records and more. You may not get all that by default, but if it's relevant it never hurts to ask for it. Typically a PI can't share things with personal information like social security numbers, and they may not share internal notes they've taken as part of the case. But for things like court and other public records, you should ask for copies if they're helpful to you. Generally that just means emailing one or more PDFs, so there usually isn't an additional cost associated with this.

Many states require private investigators to keep records for a certain period of time. Here in Washington that's three

years. So if you lose your report you should be able to ask for a replacement within that window, if not longer.

5. MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

While PIs on TV are often breaking into someone's home to find the key piece of evidence, that's not real life. So what are some reasonable expectations when working with a private investigator?

TIMELINES

Your investigation plan should clearly outline major time milestones. These include, at a minimum, when the investigation will start, when it is expected to conclude, when your investigator will contact you, and when they will provide a report at the end of the investigation.

Recognize that some aspects of your investigation may be outside the PIs control. A common example is if part of your investigation relies on a public records request. We have waited nine months for body camera video from the Seattle Police Department, and that's not all that unusual for certain types of records.

So your investigation might take five hours of investigator time, with a "quick" nine month break in the middle while we wait on other people. But your investigator should outline any potential delays that might occur, that at least can be predicted.

OUTCOMES

Sometimes what you want to know just isn't available, or doesn't exist. Sometimes people just can't be found in a

reasonable period of time, or for a reasonable cost. Sometimes investigators fail.

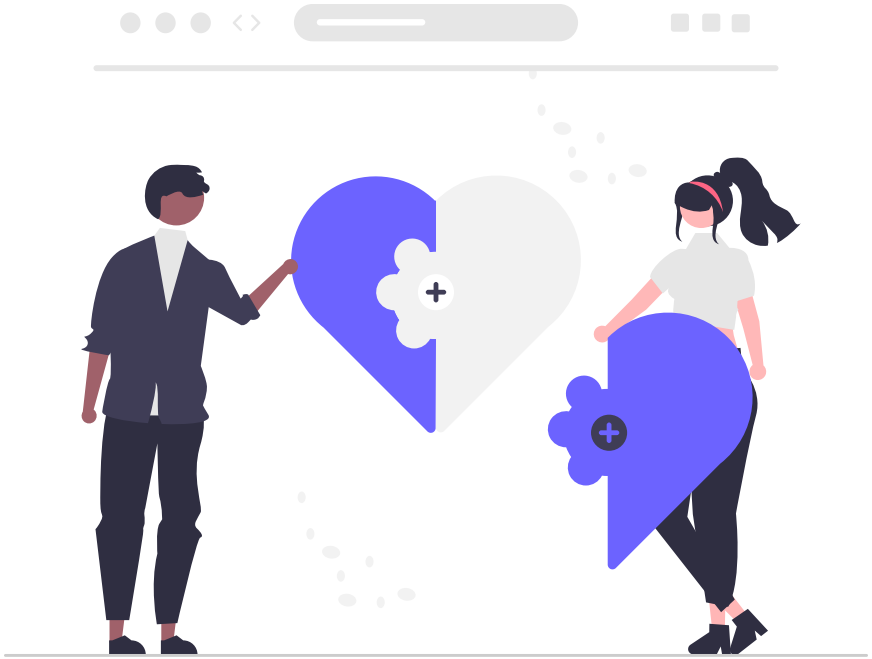
An ethical investigator is a neutral party. While they are working for you, their role is to gather facts and prepare a report of what happened. This can be very different than what the client may think happened. An investigator may spend hours tracking down a missing person, find them, and then have to tell their client the missing person wants no contact with the client. Ever.

Sometimes clients don't get the results they are seeking, but you are paying for the investigation, and not the outcome. Please keep this in mind as you seek out your own PI. There are no guarantees, and be wary of a PI who promises results. We do our best, but sometimes cases just can't be solved. Even the FBI drops the ball sometimes, and your project probably has a lower budget than they do.

YOUR CASE IS UNIQUE

Our agency knows how much we generally charge for a background check, but until we talk to you about your specific case we can't be sure what your case may cost. Be careful to avoid cookie-cutter packages that don't take your individual needs into account.

Similarly, you should expect your investigator to care about your individual needs. If you have safety concerns about starting an investigation against an abuser, for example, those should be factored into your investigation plan. If you're investigating, say, a co-worker, and you want to make sure they never find out, your investigator should factor that in, even if it may compromise their ability to do their best work. At the very least they should acknowledge your concerns, explain where they might disagree, and then act in your best interest.



A HAPPY CLIENT:

“Working with Keith made hiring a PI and getting the information I needed for court a quick and easy process at an excellent price! He was totally on top of communication and made himself available for every question I had. I’m so thankful for his help in what had felt totally daunting and impossible before.” - J.D. in Bellevue, WA

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDIES OF REAL CLIENTS, AND REAL RESULTS

As we mentioned in the Introduction, *these cases are used with permission of the client, and identifying information has been changed* to protect their identity and confidentiality. They are presented here as examples of successful investigations we've completed, and representative of what you can expect other investigators to (potentially) perform.

CASE #1 - KEEPING LEAH SAFE

THE CHALLENGE

Lauren was a single mother in her late 30s, with a 6-year-old daughter named Leah. After a very contentious divorce she was granted joint custody along with her former husband, Mark. Before long, Lauren noticed Leah would come home behaving weirdly after spending time with Mark.

Leah was having nightmares, started becoming very anxious, and seemed withdrawn from things she normally enjoyed. Lauren told us she thought Leah was being neglected, but she didn't have any proof. She had spoken with the staff at Leah's school, and while they confirmed they had seen some

changes, the school administration didn't seem able or interested in doing more.

THE SOLUTION

When Lauren contacted us, she was worried about Leah, but also very worried about upsetting Mark and creating more legal bills she couldn't afford. We opened a discreet investigation, focused on Mark's behavior and Leah's living situation at his house. Our investigators were able to identify several instances of apparent neglect.

Mark appeared to ignore Leah for long stretches, leaving her to play alone outside, while he played on his phone or talked with friends. While eating in a restaurant Mark left Leah alone for more than 20 minutes, while taking a phone call outside, asking a hostess to "keep an eye on my kid" as he walked out.

After talking with Leah's teacher, and presenting our concerns as an outside and unbiased party, the teacher agreed to provide Lauren with a short written statement. She wrote that Leah often came to preschool with an inadequate lunch, dirty clothes, and certain aspects of her hygiene neglected.

We were also able to identify a neighbor with a similarly-aged child, and with Lauren's agreement, discreetly contacted the neighbor for any information she had about Mark or Leah. She told us she let her son go over one time to play, and when she came to pick him up she found the house dirty and unsafe, including seeing an unsecured firearm within potential reach of the children. She said she no longer allowed her son to go there.

THE OUTCOME

Lauren presented our written report to her attorney, and the court later found her evidence to be “very persuasive”.

Eventually Lauren was able to gain primary custody and decision-making authority, with Mark’s visitation to be supervised for at least one year.

Over time Leah’s mental health improved, and she began to thrive in her new school. Lauren found some peace of mind, knowing she did all she could to protect her daughter, as well as growing more confident in her willingness to stand up to Mark in the future, if needed.

CASE #2 - SILENCING THE CYBERSTALKER

THE CHALLENGE

Jasmine was in her late 20s when she began streaming content on Twitch, and other online platforms. Within a few years she had a significant following and earned a full-time income from this work.

An anonymous person began threatening her on her social media accounts, and even went so far as to contact other people she knew in real life. Jasmine was finding the harassment to be very stressful, and she feared for her safety, as well as wanting to protect her reputation in her community. She reported the harassment to her local police department, but, she said, “they blew me off saying the stalker was anonymous and to just block him and move on with my life.”

THE SOLUTION

Jasmine said she never liked bullies and contacted us to help her. We began a detailed analysis of the stalker's online activity, including gathering information about IP addresses, usernames and handles on various platforms, and eventually using a ruse to contact the stalker directly.

THE OUTCOME

After confidently identifying the stalker, including photos, his full name, and address, Jasmine was able to obtain a restraining order from the court, making it much easier for the police to pursue criminal charges if the stalking continued. When confronted, the stalker removed nearly all of his social media accounts, including those that attacked Jasmine. She was also able to work with an attorney to pursue a defamation case.



The stalker ceased the harassment almost immediately after being contacted directly. ***Jasmine was able to protect her online reputation and regained confidence in herself and her work.*** More importantly, she told us: “I feel so confident now! I’m glad I stood up to this [person] and fought back.”

CASE #3 - WHY WOMEN CHOOSE THE BEAR

THE CHALLENGE

Lydia was a 32-year-old accountant in Seattle who recently started dating a good-looking man named Jacob. Lydia described herself as “smitten” but she had also had a history of abusive partners in the past and was worried she had a blind spot with Jacob.

She noticed some inconsistencies in his stories, and he was sometimes vague about the work he did as a consultant. Lydia told us her friends also had suspicions about his honesty, and she hired us to make sure she wasn't getting hustled.

THE SOLUTION

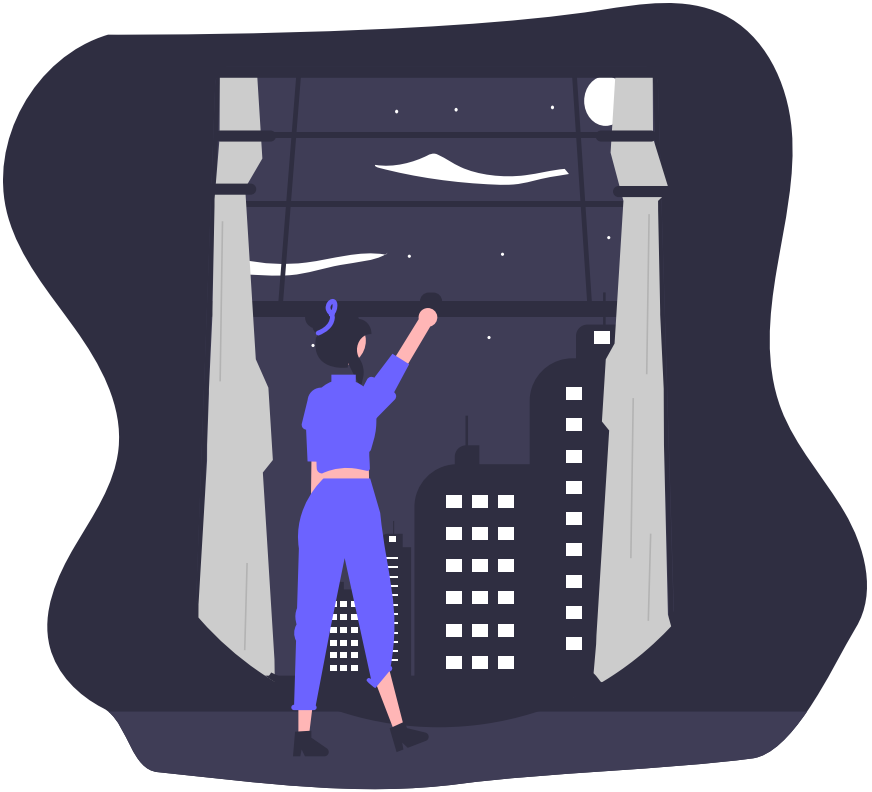
We began with a thorough search of Jacob's employment history, residence history, and online footprint including his social media accounts. We later conducted a few hours of surveillance to further develop our investigation.

THE OUTCOME

Not surprisingly, Lydia was right to trust her instincts. Our investigation found evidence of a bankruptcy Jacob had never disclosed, but more importantly, an arrest out of state for felony domestic violence, which he also failed to mention. Our surveillance also showed that when Jacob was at “work” he was at least sometimes in a local dive bar.

After reading our investigation Lydia ended her relationship with Jacob. While frustrated with having to “go back on these stupid dating apps” she was grateful to find her instincts were correct, and potentially saved herself from emotional and physical harm.

While she told us she was initially embarrassed about running a background check on a potential partner so soon in a relationship, she later said ***she was proud that she prioritized her safety early in a relationship.***



CONCLUSION

REACH OUT IF YOU NEED HELP

In this ebook we've done our best to help you understand what a private investigator can (and can't) do, and offer some tips for hiring the best investigator in your area.

Our firm is committed to supporting women through difficult situations, and we are happy to answer questions you may have about this ebook, or hiring an investigator in general. We don't know much about licensing rules outside of Washington, but we always try to help find the right person for you to talk to. ***Our inbox is always open.***

If you feel ready to talk to an investigator, and you're here in Washington, find us at redkeith.com and schedule a free consultation. Or just send an email with questions to keith@redkeith.com.

If you're elsewhere, most states have a professional organization for the PIs in the state, and that's a good place to start looking for someone to help in your area. If you're already working with an attorney, they may have a reliable investigator they already work with. At the very least they can tell you who to avoid.

You're not alone. You're not the only person that's had to deal with your problem. Find an experienced investigator to help you get to where you want to be.

Thank you for reading our ebook, and again, please reach out to us if you think we can help.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Keith worked as a journalist in the Army for about eight years. After that he worked as a police officer in California, and has other work experience ranging from 911 operator at the University of Washington, to teaching Pilates to injured people.

Keith started Red Keith to help people find justice when the system has failed them. You deserve an investigator who will take the time to follow up on leads, try to recover your lost property, and work to make our little piece of the world a bit better.