Private Investigation Case Intake & Scope Checklist

A practical intake worksheet for defining the assignment, authority, boundaries, communications, timing, and later scope changes before investigative work expands.

Client / organization	
Primary contact	
Contact information	
Case / matter reference	
Date received	
Investigator responsible	

1. Original Assignment

- ■ Record the client’s stated objective in plain language.
- ■ Identify the specific question(s) the investigation is expected to address.
- ■ Record known subjects, locations, organizations, accounts, vehicles, or other relevant identifiers.
- ■ Separate confirmed facts from client assumptions, allegations, or preliminary leads.
- ■ Identify the expected work product: verbal update, written report, affidavit, evidence package, invoice detail, or other deliverable.

Assignment objective / question(s) to be answered

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Scope, Authority & Constraints

2. Scope Included

- ■ Surveillance or field observation is specifically authorized where applicable.
- ■ Records research / database research is within the agreed scope.
- ■ Interviews or statements are within scope.
- ■ Evidence collection, preservation, copying, or review is within scope.
- ■ Photography, video, mapping, or scene documentation is within scope.
- ■ Other specialist work or subcontracted services have been identified and authorized.

Scope included - describe locations, people, systems, time periods, and limits

3. Scope Excluded / Requires New Authorization

- ■ Activities the client has not authorized are recorded explicitly.
- ■ Geographic or jurisdictional limits are documented.
- ■ Budget, hours, expenses, travel, or surveillance limits are documented.
- ■ Any legal, licensing, privacy, safety, property-access, or client-policy constraints are identified for professional review.
- ■ The investigator knows who can approve additional work and how approval will be documented.

Exclusions / constraints / work requiring additional approval

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Communications, Timing & Case Controls

4. Communications & Reporting

- ■ Primary decision-maker and alternate contact are identified.
- ■ Preferred communication method and secure channel are agreed.
- ■ Update frequency or milestone reporting is agreed.
- ■ Urgent-notification triggers are identified.
- ■ Final-report audience and distribution restrictions are identified.

Authorized decision-maker	
Preferred update method	
Update schedule	
Urgent notification triggers	
Final report recipient(s)	

5. Timing, Budget & Administrative Controls

- ■ Target start date, key deadlines, and known external dates are recorded.
- ■ Fee structure, retainer, rate, expense handling, and approval threshold are confirmed.
- ■ Travel or third-party costs requiring advance approval are identified.
- ■ Conflict / independence check is complete where applicable.
- ■ Client-supplied materials are logged before investigative conclusions are formed.

Special instructions / timing / billing notes

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Scope Change Log & Intake Review

6. Scope Changes

When the client changes the assignment, record the change as a new authorization rather than silently rewriting the original scope.

Date / time	Requested change	Requested by	Approved by / method	Effect on cost / timing

7. Intake Review Before Work Begins

- ■ Original assignment is understandable without relying on memory or an email thread.
- ■ Authority, scope, limits, and deliverables are documented.
- ■ Known client-provided facts and materials are distinguishable from investigator-developed information.
- ■ Approval path for additional work is clear.
- ■ Case record has a unique reference and a place to retain later changes.

Professional-use note: This checklist is a general case-management aid. It does not determine legal authority, licensing requirements, admissibility, privacy obligations, or investigative methodology for a particular matter or jurisdiction.

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