

What We Know

ARTICLES & INSIGHTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Do I need a private investigator?

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Do I need a private investigator? I get that question all the time. When clients come in to consult with me at the outset of their separation or impending separation, it is one of the recurrent questions on their checklists.

Deciding whether to hire a private investigator depends upon the facts and issues of each particular case. One of the most common uses of a private investigator in a domestic situation is to confirm or deny an extramarital affair. Private investigators are also helpful in gathering information related to child custody matters, substance use and abuse, cohabitation issues, and to help monitor whether a party is complying with a court order or agreement made between two parties. Private investigators can help in many other ways, too, and one should evaluate whether it would be helpful to have a private investigator involved in any given case.

Deciding whether to hire a private investigator is often a business decision. One must weigh the expense associated with hiring a private investigator with the potential benefits that can come from such an investigation.

Generally speaking, it is worth it to spend money to hire a private investigator when the outcome of the investigation may provide a significant financial benefit for the client. For example, a person who might otherwise be entitled to receive alimony may lose that right if he or she commits certain acts of a sexual nature during the marriage with a person who is not his or her spouse. Using a private investigator to determine the likelihood that those acts are occurring or have occurred during the marriage could save a person from having to pay alimony. There are multiple other examples of how the outcome of a private investigator's investigation could yield significant financial gains for a person, and it is advisable to consider these other examples with your attorney.

Also, it is usually worth it to spend money on a private investigator to ensure the safety of your children. When a parent is concerned about the safety and care of the children when they are in the custody of the other parent, a private investigator can be helpful in determining whether there is really a danger to the children and confirm what the other parent is doing during his or her custodial time.

However, sometimes hiring a private investigator does not make financial sense; in

other words, when a client's legal or financial position would not be made better by gathering information that a private investigator can obtain. In those cases, it is up to the client how he or she wants to proceed. If a private investigator can provide definitive answers to a client about something that is concerning him or her or bring about peace of mind, then it may be worth spending the money, even though the results may not bring about a financial return on that client's investment.

I can recommend a number of private investigators in the Raleigh area and throughout North Carolina who are professional, reputable, and reasonable with their fees. Usually, the more information you have to provide to the private investigator at the outset of their investigation, the more efficient that investigator can be.

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