

THE INVESTIGATOR'S BALANCE · RESOURCE 2 OF 7

Human-Centered Fact-Finding Principles

Seven working principles for investigators who refuse the false choice between care and rigor. Warm in method; strict in inference.

A DEFAULT WORKFLOW YOU CAN REPEAT



THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES

- 1 Treat people with dignity, and make the process clear.** Safety, respect, and clear expectations are not favors to one side. They produce fuller, more reliable accounts and make outcomes easier to accept.
- 2 Validate feelings, not facts.** Acknowledge that something was hard to experience or describe without accepting any allegation as established. "I can see why this was difficult" — not "I believe that happened."
- 3 Interview with open, non-suggestive questions.** Use rapport-based, non-coercive prompts. Let the person tell their account in their own words before you test it.
- 4 Separate voice from weight of evidence.** Everyone is heard fully; no one's account decides the result on its own. Compare each account to records, timing, consistency, motive, opportunity, and corroboration.
- 5 Apply standards evenly to every party.** Use the same credibility checks and the same threshold for contradiction across complainant, respondent, and witnesses.
- 6 Install friction against a tidy story.** Actively test alternative explanations and contradictions. A compelling narrative is a reason to verify more, not less.
- 7 Document reasoning, uncertainty, and corrections.** Record what you concluded, what remains unresolved, and what you would revisit. Manage conflicts openly and recuse when judgment is threatened.

Warm in method. Strict in inference. Even-handed in standard.

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