

## THE INVESTIGATOR'S BALANCE · RESOURCE 5 OF 7

# Recusal Decision Guide

When a conflict, prior commitment, or role contamination is present, deciding whether to proceed, add safeguards, or step aside is part of the method — not a failure of it.

**How to use this:** Work the three steps in order at the start of a matter, and again any time something changes. Document the outcome either way — a reasoned decision to proceed is as important to record as a decision to recuse.

## 1 Screen for conflict

CHECK ALL PRESENT

- ☐ Prior or ongoing personal relationship with a party.
- ☐ Reporting line or power relationship with a party.
- ☐ Personal stake in the outcome or in a party's reputation.
- ☐ Prior public or internal position on the issue or people involved.
- ☐ Strong emotional alignment with, or aversion to, a party.
- ☐ Prior involvement in the underlying events or earlier complaint.

## 2 Decide the response

CHOOSE ONE

**No boxes checked in Step 1:** proceed, and clarify role, scope, and confidentiality up front.

**Any box checked:** a conflict may be present — choose the most protective workable option below.

- ☐ **Proceed** — no meaningful conflict; document the screen and continue.
- ☐ **Proceed with safeguards** — conflict is manageable with the controls in Step 3.
- ☐ **Escalate for a decision** — refer to leadership, legal, or HR to decide who should investigate.
- ☐ **Recuse** — the conflict is significant; hand the matter to a neutral investigator.

## 3 If proceeding with safeguards

PUT CONTROLS IN PLACE

- ☐ Disclose the relationship/stake in writing to the appropriate authority.
- ☐ Add a neutral co-investigator or reviewer.
- ☐ Use a fixed question set and evenhanded corroboration for all parties.
- ☐ Pre-commit to documenting uncertainty and alternative explanations.
- ☐ Schedule a mid-investigation neutrality check.

### DECISION RATIONALE

DECIDED BY

DATE

MATTER / CASE NO.

***Recusal is not an admission of bias. It is a safeguard for the integrity of the result.***

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