



# *the* **Certified Legal Investigator®**

## **What Is a Certified Legal Investigator?**

An investigation is the careful and systematic gathering of facts to form a cohesive and logical picture of a given situation. Legal investigation is the specialized gathering of facts and evidence pertaining to a matter which is being litigated or is likely to be litigated in a court of law. Certified Legal Investigators may conduct fact-finding inquiries in virtually any matter holding the potential for litigation.

Certified Legal Investigators are licensed professional investigators who specialize in preparing cases for lawyers and their clients. As such, they must possess knowledge of statutory and case law, local rules of court, civil and criminal procedure, forensic sciences, and evidence collection, storage and admissibility.

Certified Legal Investigators have little in common with the popular image of the private detective. Rather, the CLI is a true professional in his or her own right who utilizes specialized knowledge and expertise to seek out and report the tangible facts to which an attorney can apply the law. Inasmuch as the primary aim of the legal process is the establishment of truth, the Certified Legal Investigator must possess unquestioned personal integrity and exhibit the highest standards of professional and ethical conduct.

## **What Do Certified Legal Investigators Do?**

The task of the Certified Legal Investigator is to objectively gather evidence and information which serves to advance various legal theories. In so doing, the CLI

- Interviews Prospective Witnesses and Parties to the Litigation
- Reviews Discovery Materials
- Inspects, Analyzes and Photographs Evidence, Accident and Crime Scenes
- Performs Background Investigation
- Prepares Reports and Demonstrative Evidence
- Coordinates the Use of Experts
- Provides Court Testimony

The Certified Legal Investigator knows that only by having the true facts at hand can an attorney proceed intelligently in the best interest of the client. Thus, the ultimate aim of the CLI is to assemble as complete a factual picture as possible while remaining committed to the pursuit of truth.

## The National Association of Legal Investigators

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The National Association of Legal Investigators, Inc. – NALI – was founded in 1967 in response to the growing need for professionalism and continuing education for lay legal investigators.

Due in part to a lack of national regulation of legal investigators, NALI in 1973 approved a professional certification program in an effort to provide uniform standards for legal investigators. This program now serves as the criteria by which attorneys and the general public can recognize and evaluate the competence of legal investigators.

The NALI certification program is conducted by a professional certification board which confers the designation of Certified Legal Investigator, or CLI, to those investigators who have met the stringent criteria of NALI and the certification program.

## Qualifications of a Certified Legal Investigator

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After meeting specific background, training and experience requirements, all CLI candidates must prepare and submit for peer review a white paper on an investigative topic of the candidate's choosing. The candidate is then required to successfully complete rigorous written and oral examinations, including a practical examination used to assess specific knowledge and skills. These examinations are administered consecutively and typically take several hours to complete.

The exams administered within the CLI program emphasize general and specialized investigative knowledge and technique, ethics, and various bodies, doctrines and theories of civil and criminal law. All CLIs are required to earn a minimum of 50 continuing education hours for each three year period following certification.

The CLI examination is recognized as the most rigorous and comprehensive certification process in the investigative industry. Due to its high standards and longevity, it is likewise viewed as the most prestigious of industry certifications.

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*Adapted in part from Techniques of Legal Investigation, third ed., by Anthony M. Golec, CLI*

### **S. K. NELSON & COMPANY**

CERTIFIED LEGAL INVESTIGATION • CERTIFIED FRAUD EXAMINATION  
2547 W. SHAW, SUITE 115 • FRESNO, CALIFORNIA 93711  
TEL (559) 227-9340 • FAX (559) 227-9343  
LICENSE No. 14408