
Frequently Asked Questions

Independent Investigations

1. What do GRACE Investigations look like?

GRACE investigators are regularly asked by institutional leaders, survivors, individuals accused of wrongdoing, church members, and many others, what can I expect in an investigation? What does a GRACE investigation typically look like? These are great questions. Below are answers to some of the most commonly asked questions.

2. What is a third-party GRACE investigation?

GRACE conducts independent third-party investigations devoted to pursuing the truth. As investigators, we follow the facts wherever they may lead. Being independent means that GRACE investigators are never directed or controlled by any person or institution, including the institution that requests the investigation. We listen to individuals who have relevant information, synthesize that data, and transparently present our findings along with our recommendations. These findings and recommendations are based on GRACE's decades of experience in investigations and utilizing best practices in the field.

3. What does a GRACE Investigation Team typically look like?

GRACE can assemble a multidisciplinary team of trained investigators to address a range of potential misconduct. Our teams have included specialists such as psychologists, social workers, former prosecutors, Title IX attorneys, pastors, counselors, and former law enforcement officers. We conduct investigations for institutions such as colleges and universities, boarding schools, churches, mission agencies, youth-serving organizations, orphanages, youth camps, and more. Investigations have covered a range of issues such as child sexual abuse, adult sexual assault, sexual harassment, physical and emotional abuse, including how the institution responded to known reports of alleged misconduct.

GRACE investigators have a wide range of experiences and backgrounds, but all have investigative experience and are trained to understand trauma. We understand the nature and dynamics of trauma, the context in which it may occur, how it impacts victims and their families, and importantly, how these dynamics intersect with and impact faith communities. We also understand offender dynamics, including how and why many offenders exploit communities of faith.

Utilizing a trauma-informed approach to evaluating misconduct does not mean that as investigators we automatically believe we will find misconduct in every situation. Rather, evaluating reports of misconduct through a

trauma-informed lens means that investigators are trained to recognize, evaluate, and respond to the issues in question in a manner which is thorough, fair, and consistent with best practices, regardless of who the reported victim or the suspect may be.

4. What does the scope of an investigation usually cover?

The scope of a GRACE investigation depends upon the type of investigation undertaken. Investigations can be broad and/or narrow in focus. For example, some institutions ask GRACE to evaluate the institution's culture and environment, which includes understanding how the institution has historically responded to allegations of misconduct over time. Other times, an investigation is more narrowly defined in scope and GRACE is asked to investigate specific allegations about a particular person or a particular set of circumstances at a specific point in time. In either case, we provide feedback and analysis relevant to the scope of the investigation, including whether the institution knew of any alleged misconduct and how it responded.

5. What is the investigative process? Who is named in a report? Who receives a copy of the report?

¹ GRACE does not have subpoena power. We rely on the voluntary cooperation of individuals to share information relevant to the scope of the investigation.

² Every Engagement Agreement defines who receives a copy of GRACE's final report. Transparently sharing our findings with those who are impacted by the report is of primary importance to GRACE.

After defining the specific scope of an investigation, GRACE enters into Phase 1 of the investigation: the data collection phase. During this time, investigators utilize various tools to gather information which may include conducting a survey, interviewing witnesses, and collecting and reviewing a wide variety of documents, electronic data, written statements, photos and any other type of available information or evidence.¹

After investigators complete the data collection phase of the investigation, Phase 2 of the investigation begins: the report-writing phase. Our final reports never reveal the names of reported victims. Due to the fact that every investigation is different, the GRACE investigative team decides about whether or not to name an alleged offender in the final report on a case-by-case basis.

GRACE's final report is shared with the institution, with the reported victim(s) who interviewed with GRACE, and with any person(s) named in the scope of the investigation accused of misconduct.² The final report also includes GRACE's recommendations. Recommendations are specific to the findings and tailored to meet the needs of the institution as well as the individuals who have been impacted by the events that were the subject of the investigation.

Some Engagement Agreements provide for an implementation phase of the investigation. In this phase, GRACE works with the institution to implement the recommendations provided by GRACE.

The implementation phase can include assisting the institution with a number of issues such as policy review, training, survivor care, physical property inspections, and more.

6. What can I expect as a witness in a GRACE investigation?

GRACE believes that every interviewee should be treated with dignity and respect. GRACE conducts in person interviews and phone interviews. In person interviews are conducted at a neutral location so that interviewees have a safe environment in which they may be heard. Investigators realize

that meetings of this nature-- particularly those involving difficult subjects such as sexual misconduct or any other form of abuse-- are stressful and emotional for all. Interviews are therefore conducted in a manner that encourages each witness to share any and all relevant information in a comfortable and conversational environment. In addition, witnesses are permitted to bring a support person to the interview if desired.

We fully recognize that investigations usually raise uncomfortable, dark, and/or painful issues for all. Though investigations usually bring about hard moments in the lives of all impacted by these difficult issues, we do investigations because we believe that faith communities reflect Jesus by exposing darkness, pursuing justice, and loving the wounded. Without question, communities that shine a light on darkness become the safest places for the most vulnerable.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR CONCERNS,
PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US AT:

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