

The Complete Transcription Vendor Evaluation Checklist

A Practical Guide for Research, Procurement, Legal, and Records Teams

To serve as reliable evidence, **there are four non-negotiable requirements that must be carefully investigated when choosing a transcription service for confidential data:**

1. Accuracy and Deliverability
2. Security & Confidentiality
3. Customizations & Fees
4. Legal Defensability

Make a copy of this checklist for each vendor you are considering and ask the questions below to ensure they meet the operational, legal, and compliance standards required.

Prospective Vendor Name: _____

Accuracy and Deliverability

Question	Why It Matters	Yes / No
1. Do you use 100% human transcription , with no AI-driven automated speech-to-text?	Artificial Intelligence (AI) hallucinations can be costly and are not easily identified. Human-only workflows ensure the highest accuracy.	
2. Are all transcribers based in the United States ?	Offshore labor increases legal exposure, jurisdictional uncertainty, and risk of costly errors.	
3. Are your transcribers experienced in multi-speaker, subpar audio quality, high-stakes recordings?	Research interview recordings are not 100% clear, and often include technical language that demands higher knowledge to understand.	
4. Will you assign a dedicated transcription team to us (rather than a work pool)?	Rotating transcriptionists compromise quality and consistency and hinder accountability.	
5. Do you guarantee turnaround times on scheduled work ?	Transcription delays can stall investigations, impact decisions, and disrupt court deadlines.	

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Security & Confidentiality

Question	Why It Matters	Yes / No
6. Have your security and confidentiality procedures been independently audited and verified (e.g., SOC-2 certification), and include documentation of:	Third-party, objective verification ensures systems meet established standards - and that security claims are more than empty marketing messages on a website.	
7.		
A. CJIS-compliance	Improper handling of criminal justice data can jeopardize investigations and lead to evidence being thrown out in court.	
B. HIPAA-compliance	Compromised handling of abuse-related details can expose victims' private information and open the department to lawsuits and/or public backlash.	
8. Are the transcribers prevented from downloading files to their computers? If so, explain how.	Files saved on personal computers (anywhere) are vulnerable to a confidentiality breach.	
9. Will you guarantee that our data will never leave the United States for any reason?	Ensures compliance with subpoena rules, FOIA statutes, and data protection policies.	

Customizations & Fees

Question	Why It Matters	Yes / No
10. Do you offer 24-hour turnaround for no additional charge ?	Delays in delivery beyond 24 hours for daily work could impact cases and indicate a shortage of manpower.	
11. Will you format to our exact requirements with no additional charge ?	Saves time and ensures consistency with internal records, training materials, and evidence preparation.	
12. Do you offer time stamps and line numbering with no additional charge ?	Allows rapid navigation of large files during legal review, FOIA processing, or investigation.	

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13. Do you offer anonymization/de-identification for no additional charge?	Essential for FOIA responses, PII/PHI removal, and internal privacy protocols.
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Legal Defensibility

Question	Why It Matters	Yes / No
14. Do you guarantee that AI will never touch our data for any reason?	Even partial reliance on ASR can compromise transcription credibility, both in terms of quality and confidentiality.	
15. Do you have documented compliance measures for legal or court use if needed?	Transparency of third-party verified security and confidentiality protocols supports audit readiness and litigation preparedness.	
16. Do you carry cyber liability insurance coverage?	Cyber liability coverage adds critical legal protection if a data breach leads to a claim. It also shows the vendor takes accountability seriously.	

Total # of "No" answers _____

Final Assessment

If a vendor answers "No" to more than one of the above questions, they likely cannot meet the demands of law enforcement transcription, where transcriptions are not just for reference, but function as legal evidence and affect lives.

Research Transcriptions Meets 100% of These Standards

- ✓ 100% human transcription
- ✓ 100% U.S.-based law enforcement transcription specialists
- ✓ SOC-2 certified security infrastructure
- ✓ No artificial intelligence (AI). Ever.
- ✓ Fully customizable formatting
- ✓ Optional keyword indexing and anonymization
- ✓ Built for agencies that require confidentiality, accuracy, and control

Research Transcriptions guarantees complete transparency on all company details and processes. Contact [Rob Foley](#) for further information.

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