

Security Clearance Guidelines

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OPM's Federal Investigative Services (FIS) is responsible for providing investigative products and services for over 100 Federal agencies to use as the basis for security clearance or suitability decisions as required by Executive Orders and other rules and regulations. Over 90% of the Government's background investigations are provided by OPM.

Background Investigations are conducted for:

- National security
- Public trust
- Basic suitability/identity verification
- Positions regulated by the Government

Investigations are conducted on:

- Federal applicants and employees
- Active military personnel
- Government contractors
- Private sector employees in positions regulated by the Government

The Security Clearance and Investigation Process:

Step 1: You are offered a position requiring a security clearance and complete the questionnaire to initiate the investigation.

Step 2: The investigation is conducted.

Step 3: The investigation is adjudicated and clearance is granted.

Step 1: Selection and Form Submission

You are selected for a position that requires a security clearance
Security clearances are granted on a need-to-know basis when there is a demonstrated need for access to classified information
The employing or sponsoring Federal agency decides the level of clearance needed and requests the appropriate level of investigation

Types of Security Clearances and Background Investigations

Clearance	Investigation	Years of Coverage
Top Secret; Department of Energy (DOE) "Q"	Single Scope Background Investigation (SSBI)	10 years
Confidential/Secret; Department of Energy (DOE) "L"	National Agency Check with Law and Credit (NACLC) or Access National Agency Check	5 years

Special Access Programs, including Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI), are usually based on the SSBI and may also include a polygraph examination and psychological evaluation.

Completing the Security Questionnaire

The employing or sponsoring Federal agency will have you complete the Standard Form (SF) 86 – Questionnaire for National Security Positions (you can get the form at www.opm.gov/forms), releases, certification form, and fingerprint card.

The SF 86 is completed by using the Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing (e-QIP) system. Fingerprints may be submitted by hardcopy or electronically.

Questions on the SF 86:

You will be required to provide information about residences, employments, military service, education, spouse, relatives, and associates. You will be asked questions relating to mental health, criminal activity, drug/alcohol use, credit, and allegiance to the United States. You will also be asked to sign a form allowing the investigator to access personal records.

Remember:

Provide true, complete, and correct information when completing the SF 86. Failure to do so may delay the investigation or the adjudication of the case, and may raise questions concerning eligibility for a security clearance. You may also be denied employment, fired from the job, or debarred from Federal employment for making false statements.

Step 2: The Investigation

Single Scope Background Investigation (SSBI):

Used to support a Top Secret clearance
Covers the last 10 years of a person's background
Includes a Personal Subject Interview (PRSI) and interviews with neighbors, employers, educators, references, and spouses/cohabitants
Also includes record checks with local law enforcement where the individual lived, worked, or went to school in the past 10 years

National Agency Check with Law and Credit:

Used to support a Secret security clearance
Includes record checks with local law enforcement where the individual lived, worked, or went to school in the past five years
May include a special interview with the subject of the investigation to resolve issues developed in the investigation

Step 3: Adjudication and Clearance Granted

Results of the investigation are sent to the requesting agency's security office for adjudication
The employing or sponsoring agency is responsible for determining an individual's eligibility for a security clearance
Interim vs. final security clearance decisions are made

Adjudicative Guidelines for Determining Eligibility for Access to Classified Information:

- a) Allegiance to the United States
- b) Foreign influence
- c) Foreign preference
- d) Sexual behavior
- e) Personal conduct
- f) Financial considerations
- g) Alcohol consumption
- h) Drug involvement
- i) Emotional, mental, and personality disorders
- j) Criminal conduct
- k) Security violations
- l) Outside activities
- m) Misuse of Information Technology Systems

Reinvestigation

Clearance	Investigation	When the Re-investigations Occur
Top Secret; Department of Energy (DOE) "Q"	SSBI-Periodic Reinvestigation (SSBI-PR) or the Phased Periodic Reinvestigation (PPR)	Every 5 years
Confidential/Secret; Department of Energy (DOE) "L"	NACL or ANACI	Every 10 years

Reciprocity

Agencies are required to accept a security clearance granted by another Federal agency.

This ensures background investigations are only conducted to grant new security clearances
Agencies record their security clearances in central databases

How long will the investigation take?

The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA) included timeliness requirements for the security clearance process

By December 2009, 90% of initial security clearance determinations must be completed within an average of 60 days

- 40 days for investigative phase
- 20 days for adjudicative phase

What can be done to expedite the investigation process?

Collect the information needed on the security questionnaire in advance (go to www.opm.gov/forms to download SF 86)
Provide true, correct, and complete information on the forms and during the interview
Respond to investigator's request for information promptly
Keep the agency and/or investigator aware of your current address and contact information

Can I pay for my own investigation?

There are no procedures in place to allow individuals to request or pay for their own background investigation
Clearances are granted on a need-to-know basis when there is a demonstrated need for access to classified information
The employing or sponsoring agency decides whether the position requires a security clearance and the level of investigation needed

Who can I contact for the status of my OPM investigation?

Contact OPM's Freedom of Information/Privacy Act (FOI/PA) Office

- Phone: (724) 794-5612, ext 7000
- Mail: Include full name, address, date and place of birth, and social security number

OPM-FIS-FOI/PA, PO Box 618, Boyers, PA 16018-0618
FAX: (724) 794-4590
Check with the employing or sponsoring agency's security office

- Contractor personnel can also check with their company's Facility Security Officer (FSO)

Contact Information

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Federal Investigative Services
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PO Box 618
Boyers, PA 16018-0618
(724) 794-5612
www.opm.gov
www.usajobs.opm.gov
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