



Are you able and willing to safeguard classified national security information?

- ◆ Background investigations are conducted to determine one's loyalty, character, trustworthiness, judgment and reliability.
- ◆ The process includes a review of:
  - past and present employment
  - credit records
  - criminal records
  - school records
  - residences
  - references
  - foreign travel
- ◆ After a conditional offer of employment is made, you will need to fill out the "Questionnaire for

## Security Clearances

### What is a security clearance and why should I obtain one?

- ◆ A security clearance is official permission granted to a U.S. citizen whose work requires access to a secure facility or to information that has been classified for reasons of national security.
- ◆ Any person who works for an organization that requires access to a secure facility or to restricted information more than likely needs a security clearance. Jobs that might require security clearances include high-tech / computers, engineering, security, janitorial, translators, interpreters, cement mason, carpenter, concrete finisher, electrician, clerical, grounds keeper, truck driver, and medical staff.
- ◆ Obtaining a clearance is not based on your grade point average or interest in a high-tech career path. See the back page of this fact sheet for tips and frequently asked questions about obtaining a security clearance.
- ◆ Having clearance, or the ability to obtain one, can open doors to employment opportunities that may not have been opened otherwise.
- ◆ Benefits of having a security clearance include job security, increased advantage of being considered for a position over someone who does not have one, greater job opportunities, and increased salary (approximately 24 percent more).

## Three Basic Levels of Security Classification

### Confidential

- ◆ Access to material which, if improperly disclosed (i.e. shared with or released to others), could be reasonably expected to cause some measurable damage to national security. This level needs to be reinvestigated every fifteen years. Confidential level is

the easiest to obtain.

### Secret

- ◆ Unauthorized disclosure of secret information could be expected to cause serious damage to national security. The secret level is reinvestigated every ten years and may have some amount of military involvement in the clearance

process.

### Top Secret

- ◆ Individuals with Top Secret clearance have access to information or material that could be expected to cause exceptionally grave damage to national security if it was released without authorization. This level is reinvestigated

*This fact sheet and others can be found at [www.mdeid.org](http://www.mdeid.org) and [www.mdworkforcepromise.org](http://www.mdworkforcepromise.org).*

*Questions?*

*Contact Maryland Department of Disabilities*

## Obtaining and Maintaining a Security Clearance

As a general rule, honesty, good decision-making skills, and integrity are three of the main components you should be concerned with. It is important to remember that the decisions you make today can have a tremendous impact on your future.

- ◆ Don't use illegal drugs or excessive alcohol.
- ◆ Don't lie, cheat, or steal.
- ◆ Keep your credit clean.
- ◆ Avoid criminal activity.
- ◆ Be honest and reliable.
- ◆ Be forthcoming with information.

## Frequently Asked Questions from the U.S. Department of State

(source: <http://www.state.gov/m/ds/clearances/c10977.htm#1>)

- ◆ **What is the purpose of a security clearance?**  
The purpose of a security clearance is to determine that a person is able and willing to safeguard classified national security information, based on his or her loyalty, character, trustworthiness, and reliability.
- ◆ **When does the security clearance process begin?**  
Individuals cannot initiate a security clearance application on their own. The Federal Agency that needs you to have a clearance will initiate the process. If the position requires access to classified information, then a personnel security background investigation must be conducted. This is only done after a conditional offer of employment is given to an individual.
- ◆ **Who decides what level of clearance a person receives?**  
The Bureau of Human Resources determines whether a position will require a security clearance, as well as the level required, based upon the duties and responsibilities of the position.
- ◆ **Does having a security clearance guarantee employment?**  
No. The hiring process addresses whether someone will be initially selected for a particular position. The security clearance process does not begin until after a conditional offer of employment is given.
- ◆ **How long does it take to process a typical security clearance?**  
Each case varies, but the general time averages about 120 days.
- ◆ **What can I do in advance to ease the process of my background investigation?**  
A lot of detailed information is required to conduct a background investigation. Information such as complete names, addresses, telephone numbers, and dates of birth for relatives will be required. You can print the Questionnaire for National Security Positions (Standard Form 86) and begin collecting that information so you will have it ready when asked. Download the form from [www.opm.gov/Forms/html/sf.asp](http://www.opm.gov/Forms/html/sf.asp).
- ◆ **What are some tips for the application process?**  
The most important factors in an investigation are the individual's honesty, candor, and thoroughness in the completion of their security clearance forms. Every case is individually assessed, using the following guidelines: allegiance to the United States; foreign influence; foreign preference; sexual behavior; personal conduct; finan-

## Resources

*Project SCOPE (Security Clearance Overview and Preparation Education)*  
An initiative of the Fort Meade Alliance with the support of Anne Arundel Community College  
Website: [www.project-scope.org](http://www.project-scope.org)

*Transition Assistance Online*  
[www.taonline.com](http://www.taonline.com)

*U.S. Department of State*  
*All About Security Clearances*  
Website: [www.state.gov/m/ds/clearances/c10978.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/ds/clearances/c10978.htm)

*U.S. Office of Personnel Management*  
*Getting a Security Clearance, In a Nutshell*  
Website: [www.opm.gov/extra/investigate/](http://www.opm.gov/extra/investigate/)

[security-clearance.asp](http://www.opm.gov/extra/investigate/security-clearance.asp)

*U.S. Office of Personnel Management*  
*Electronic Forms*  
*Questionnaire for National Security Positions (Standard Form 86)*  
Website: [www.opm.gov/Forms/html/sf.asp](http://www.opm.gov/Forms/html/sf.asp)