



University of Maryland University College

# Security Clearances: What You Need to Know

**Kristin Schrader**

Assistant Director, InternPLUS

**Nicole Allen**

Director of Industrial Security and Facility Security Officer  
DELTA Resources, Inc.



January 19, 2017

# Meet Tonight's Speakers

---



**Kristin Schrader**

Assistant Director, InternPlus  
UMUC



**Nicole Allen**

Director of Industrial Security and  
Facility Security Officer  
DELTA Resources, Inc.



# Share Your Thoughts...

---

- **Why are you joining us today?**
  - What do you hope to learn?

Please type your response  
in the “Chat” box.



# Topics for Today

---

- **What is a Security Clearance?**
- **Types of Clearances**
- **Behind the Scenes:** The Security Clearance Process
- **Clearance Investigation Factors**
- **Tips for Success**



# What is a Security Clearance?

---

- **A designation by the US Government that an individual is allowed to access classified information**
- **What investigators are looking for:**
  - Loyalty to the US
  - Character, honesty, judgment
  - Freedom from conflicting allegiances
- **How do I get one:**
  - The agency or company who hires you will sponsor you
  - Determined by the duties and responsibilities of the position
  - You can't get one on your own



# What is a Security Clearance?

---

## •Jobs That May Require a Clearance:

- Federal Government such as:
  - Department of Homeland Security
  - CIA
  - FBI
- US Military including civilian military agencies (e.g. DIA, DSS)
- Defense Contractors

## •When is the background investigation completed?

- After a conditional offer of employment has been given
- After completing security questionnaire (e.g. [SF 86](#)) and other paperwork



# A Few Other Frequently Asked Questions

---

- **Is my clearance transferable to other agencies?**

- Typically yes if:

- Investigation was within past:

- 5 years for Top Secret

- 10 years for Secret

- No break in service of more than 2 years

- If there has not been any significant changes in your situation

- **What about if I leave the federal government?**

- Depends on agency

- E.g. State Dept. will revalidate within 2 years



# A Few Other Frequently Asked Questions

---

- **Will my family be subjected to a security check?**

- If going for a Top Secret, your spouse or cohabitant will be investigated (with their permission)
- Additional investigations may be conducted if spouse/cohabitant is a foreign national

- **If I'm denied, is there an appeal process?**

- You will be notified of the reasons
- You can address derogatory information and correct or clarify it if you wish

- **Can I get help with completing my security package?**

- [State Department provides assistance](#)





# Types of Clearances

---

- **Confidential**

- Information that could reasonably cause damage if disclosed
- Most basic level of clearance

- **Secret**

- Information that could reasonably cause “serious” damage if disclosed
- Could take a few months to process

- **Top Secret**

- Information that could reasonably cause “exceptionally grave” damage if disclosed
- Could take a year or more to process



# Wait...How Long Will It Take?

---

- **As of December 2016:**
  - Initial Secret: 166 days
  - Initial Top Secret: 246 days
  - Periodic Reinvestigations: 222 days
- **Does having a clearance in the past help expedite things?**
  - No
- **How about if I have a family member with a clearance?**
  - No
- **But here's some good news:** It varies by the agency



# Who Conducts These Investigations

---

- **National Background Investigation Bureau (NBIB)**

- A division of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)
- Created in January 2016
- Conducts 95% of all background investigations
- Hired 400 new investigators in September

- **Contractors**

- CACI (attending UMUC's January 27 recruiter session)
- Keypoint
- CSRA (attending the UMUC Spring Career Fair)
- Securitas



# The Security Clearance Process

## STEP 1: VALIDATE NEED

Company determines that an employee or candidate for employment requires a personnel security clearance to access classified information.

- [The National Industrial Security Program Operating Manual \(NISPOM\)](#) **Section 2: Personnel Security Clearances** gives contractor's guidance on what requirements are needed in order to process background investigations.
- Contractors are allowed to issue **contingent offer letters** in order to initiate a background investigation prior to a potential employee officially onboarding with the contractor (NISPOM 2-205. Pre-employment Clearance Action.)

## STEP 2: VERIFY CITIZENSHIP

A birth certificate is the primary and preferred means of citizenship verification.

- A passport, current or expired, is acceptable proof of citizenship.
- Certificate of naturalization is acceptable proof of citizenship.
- If citizenship was acquired by birth abroad to a U.S. citizen parent or parents, the following are acceptable evidence:
  - Certificate of Citizenship
  - Report of Birth Abroad
  - Certificate of Birth



# The Security Clearance Process

## STEP 3: INITIATE BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION

- Facility's Security Officer (FSO) initiates the **e-QIP** using the Joint Personnel Adjudication System (JPAS)
- FSO will provide the e-QIP account user instructions (including the PIN / Registration Code) and the applicant will **access the SF86** via the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) e-QIP system.
- FSO will also provide the applicant with instructions on obtaining and submitting **electronic fingerprints**. Once the electronic fingerprints are captured, the FSO will submit the fingerprint file to OPM .
- Applicant **completes the e-QIP** and digitally signs their certification.
- **FSO reviews the security clearance package** for completeness and provides the employee with written notification that review of the security questionnaire is for adequacy and completeness and the information will be used for no other purposes within the company in accordance with the National Industrial Security Program Operating Manual (NISPOM).
- **FSO submits the security clearance package** via JPAS to the Personnel Security Management Office for Industry (PSMO-I),
- **PSMO-I reviews all security clearance packages** for completeness prior to forwarding to the organization that conducts the investigation.



# The Security Clearance Process

---

## **STEP 4: AWAIT POSSIBLE INTERIM DETERMINATION AND ADJUDICATION**

**Interim Secrets and Interim Top Secrets** can only be granted based on the following criteria:

- Scheduled investigation
- Favorable Review of the SF-86
- Favorable fingerprint check
- Proof of U.S. citizenship
- Favorable Review of the Local Records, if applicable

Once the Advanced NAC results are returned from OPM, PSMO-I will then make an interim determination.

The Investigation Service Provider (ISP) reviews the security clearance package for completeness to open the investigation.



# The Security Clearance Process

## **STEP 4 (CONTINUED): AWAIT POSSIBLE INTERIM DETERMINATION AND ADJUDICATION**

After an investigation has been completed, a certified Adjudicator reviews the results of the investigation and compares it to established qualifying criteria for eligibility for access to classified national security information. **The adjudicator considers the following factors** when evaluating an individual's conduct:

- The nature, extent and seriousness of the conduct
- The circumstances surrounding the conduct, to include knowledgeable participation
- The frequency and recency of the conduct
- The individual's age and maturity at the time of the conduct
- The extent to which participation is voluntary.
- The presence or absence of rehabilitation and other permanent behavioral changes
- The motivation for the conduct
- The potential for pressure, coercion, exploitation, or duress; and
- The likelihood of continuation or recurrence of the conduct

While the **majority of applicants are granted a clearance**, complicating factors may delay a decision or result in a denial or revocation of a security clearance.

Cases may be forwarded to the Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals, in the Defense Legal Services Agency, to determine whether it is clearly consistent with the national interest to grant or continue a security clearance for the applicant.



# Share Your Thoughts...

---

- **What kinds of background checks are conducted as part of a security clearance investigation?**

Please type your response  
in the “Chat” box.





# Clearance Investigation Factors

---

- **FBI Record Check**
- **Police Record Check**
  - Where you've lived
  - Where you've worked/gone to school
- **Credit Record Check**
  - Biggest reason people are denied a clearance
- **(Possible) Interviews with Coworkers, Neighbors, etc.**
- **(Possible) Interview with You**



# Tips for Success

| Do's                                                                                                       | Don'ts                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Review the SF86 to know what the government is looking for – consider completing it now to prepare         | Don't rush – it can slow down the process |
| Run an <a href="#">FBI check</a> and State Police check                                                    | Don't omit required information           |
| Run a <a href="#">credit report</a> from all 3 credit bureaus                                              |                                           |
| List the contractor who is submitting your application and your anticipated start date                     |                                           |
| Provide <b>LOTS</b> of <b>ACCURATE</b> details (phone numbers, addresses, financial account numbers, etc.) |                                           |
| Be honest                                                                                                  |                                           |



# Share Your Thoughts...

---

- **What are some of the common reasons that you think security clearances are denied?**

Please type your response  
in the “Chat” box.



# Common Reasons a Clearance is Denied

---

- **Arrests**

- List all as required – don't lie!
- Be truthful if interviewed

- **Drug Usage/Alcohol**

- Stop using immediately!!!!
- List all usage/involvement – don't lie!
- Explain why you used/were involved
- Be truthful

- **Intentional Omission or Falsification**

- List everything as required
- Don't lie!!!



# Common Reasons a Clearance is Denied

---

## •Financial Problems

- Review credit reports:
  - Equifax
  - Experian
  - TransUnion
- Contact creditors to arrange for payments
- Keep records of everything that's being fixed
- If applicable, bring documentation to interview
- Explain why you had issues (loss of job, medical problems, etc.)



# Common Reasons a Clearance is Delayed

---

- **Incomplete security packages**
  - Fill out all of the forms completely
  - Write legibly
- **Poorly collected fingerprints**
  - Check out [these guidelines](#)
- **Extensive foreign travel or overseas activities**
  - Provide stateside references to verify foreign activities



# But What If...

---

- **Disclose you have “no future intention” of...**
- **Foreign Travel**
  - Disclose where you’ve traveled
  - If traveling to an area where there’s known terrorist activity, that could be a red flag
- **I’m not a US Citizen**
  - Rare to be granted a security clearance
  - Exceptions are sometimes made



# What About Social Media?

---

**Under Security Executive Agent Directive 5, agencies may “collect, use, and retain...social media information” during a background investigation.**

- **Keep in mind:**

- Purpose of the background investigation
- No passwords are to be given/requested
- Does not include email or phone conversations
- Program is currently in a pilot stage

- **To learn more:**

- [Summary Article](#)
- [Security Executive Agent Directive 5](#)





# Share Your Thoughts...

---

- **If I have a Facebook, Twitter, etc. account, what should I do to help ensure it will not negatively effect my background investigation?**

Please type your response  
in the “Chat” box.



# To Learn More

---

- **Helpful Agencies:**

- [Office of Personnel Management: NBIB](#)
- [State Department: FAQ's](#)

- **Information about the Process:**

- [Defense Security Service](#)
- [Step-by-Step Outline of the Process](#)
- Documentation: [SF 86](#)

- **Miscellaneous:**

- [Get Your Free Credit Reports](#)
- [FBI Investigation](#)
- [Fingerprint Collection](#)
- [Background Investigations and Social Media](#)





University of Maryland University College

# Thank you!

**Kristin Schrader**

Assistant Director, InternPLUS  
UMUC

**Nicole Allen**

Director of Industrial Security  
and Facility Security Officer  
DELTA Resources, Inc.

**UMUC Career Services and Alumni Relations**

UMUC Academic Center at Largo (Suite 1500)

**Phone:** (240) 684-2720

**Emails:** [careerservices@umuc.edu](mailto:careerservices@umuc.edu), [alumnirelations@umuc.edu](mailto:alumnirelations@umuc.edu)

**Websites:** [www.umuc.edu/careerservices](http://www.umuc.edu/careerservices), [www.umucconnect.org](http://www.umucconnect.org)