

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF REPORTING

How Self Reporting Can Save Your Security Clearance

By: Clearjobs.com

Historically, the personnel security system has relied on the integrity of its applicants – with a pretty high success rate. After an initial investigation designed to ensure the trustworthiness of an individual which varies based on the amount and level of access their position requires, the government depends upon a system of self-reporting to ensure those individuals still merit that access.

Although the implementation of the Continuous Evaluation (CE) Program has been like watching water boil, we are starting to see the first glimpses of the program's abilities. In recent months, we have encountered clearance holders flagged for an arrest, a bankruptcy, and a civil court judgment. None of these things are necessarily disqualifying for a security clearance, but the unifying theme, that the clearance holder failed to self-report the incidents before getting caught, made them more problematic.

The requirement to self-report still exists, but it's now enhanced with the Continuous Evaluation (CE) Program. The government has not been forthcoming about the specifics of its continuous evaluation program, but the assumption is that it is continually pulling from a variety of online sources to track any publicly available information about an individual. That information may include bankruptcies, credit issues, or even online activities on social networks and dating sites. In a recent Department of Homeland Security/National Background Investigations Bureau pilot, investigators confirmed they were also culling the dark web, non-indexed websites where criminal activity is rampant.

What does Continuous Evaluation mean for Self-Reporting?

If you're one of the one-quarter of security clearance holders who are under continuous evaluation (CE), you may falsely assume CE negates your requirement to self-report issues, however, it does not. CE is currently an 'add-on' program, and it doesn't change or negate any requirements under the personnel security program. The good news is you shouldn't be surprised by any information discovered under CE. The audit will be based on the adjudicative guidelines and the information you're already aware is an issue from filling out your initial SF-86.

Where security clearance holders may experience an issue is if they fail to self-report a problem, and then it's flagged under CE. You may not just have issues based on the problem flagged but may face the further character issue of having not reported it. It's critical to remember that many issues from bankruptcy to a DUI may be mitigated. Trying to hide that behavior from the boss or the government is often a greater issue than the behavior itself. The roll-out of CE is a great reminder of the importance of self-reporting issues, as it displays your character and honesty.

YOU MUST SELF-REPORT THE FOLLOWING (REGARDLESS IF YOU ARE/ARE NOT IN THE CONTINUOUS EVALUATION PROGRAM)!

Counter-Intelligence Issues

- Are approached or contacted by ANY individual seeking unauthorized access to classified material
- Become aware of anything regarding a colleague that could be a counter-intelligence concern

Legal Issues

- Are arrested; subject to criminal charges (including charges that are dismissed); receive citations, tickets, or summonses; or are detained by federal, state, or other law-enforcement authorities for violations of the law within or outside of the U.S. (NOTE: Traffic citations/tickets/fines are reportable only if they exceed \$300 and only when the fine is assessed, unless drugs or alcohol were involved. Court fees or other administrative costs associated with the traffic citation/ticket/fine should not be added to the final assessed amount.)
- File for bankruptcy, regardless of whether it is for personal or business-related reasons
- Have your wages garnished for any reason
- Have your home foreclosed upon
- Are named defendant in any civil lawsuit

Citizenship Issues

- Change citizenship or acquire dual citizenship

Life Circumstances

- Have legal action resulting in a name change
- Marry or cohabit with a person (NOTE: A cohabitant is a person who lives with you in a spouse-like relationship or with a similar bond of affection or obligation, but is not your legal spouse, child, or other relative.)
- Are hospitalized for mental health reasons
- Are treated for drug or alcohol abuse
- Use an illegal drug or a legal drug in a manner that deviates from approved medical direction

- You should also consider self-reporting any situations in which you receive a large amount of cash (e.g. inheritance, gambling winnings, etc.) This is particularly true if you work for an intelligence agency or the DEA

Foreign Travel

- Have business-related travel to a sensitive or non-sensitive country (Use common sense as to what constitutes a “sensitive country” and/or consult internal agency publications.)
- Have personal foreign travel to sensitive country
- Hold a Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) clearance and travel to any foreign country (sensitive or non-sensitive) for personal or business

Foreign Interaction

- Have substantive contact with any foreign national not related to you and previously self-reported
- Are employed by, represent, or have other business-related associations with a foreign or foreign-owned interest, or with a non-U.S. citizen or other individual who is both a U.S. citizen and a citizen of a foreign country
- Have an immediate family member who assumes residence in a sensitive country, and when that living situation changes; e.g., your family member returns to the U.S. or moves to another country, sensitive or non-sensitive
- Undertake a foreign adoption or propose to host a foreign exchange student

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