



CDSE Pulse

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THIS MONTH'S FOCUS

Mental Health, Mission Readiness, and Your Security Clearance

By Tammi Bush

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to focus on the importance of mental wellness in every aspect of our lives. In the national security community, managing stress and prioritizing mental health is not just a personal matter -- it is a critical component of mission readiness.

However, a myth often stands in the way of seeking help: fear that doing so will jeopardize an individual's security clearance.

On the contrary, seeking help for mental health is considered a sign of strength, responsibility, and a commitment to overall well-being.

An analysis of DCSA metrics from 2020-2026 found that only .0022% of adjudicative actions resulted in a denial or revocation related strictly to psychological issues, and most importantly, none of those cases were denied or revoked simply for *seeking care*.



The primary concern for adjudicators is not whether an individual has sought mental health counseling, but whether a person has an *untreated* condition that could impact their reliability, judgment, and trustworthiness.

When it comes to trust decisions, seeking help is often viewed as a positive course of action, a mitigating factor which demonstrates self-awareness and a proactive approach to managing well-being.



According to Jessica Belschner, a technical lead in the Behavioral Science Branch of Trust Decisions at DCSA, “It is extremely rare for a subject to lose a security clearance for just psychological conditions. If you feel you need help, seek it without fear it will jeopardize your security clearance as seeking treatment is considered favorable, not disqualifying.”

Important factors to keep in mind related to mental health treatment include:

- Treatment in and of itself is considered favorable, not disqualifying.
- Most conditions do not have a nexus to security concerns. Those that do can often be treated effectively; therefore, no conditions are “automatically” disqualifying.
- Failing to seek care or stopping treatment against medical advice are things which can raise concerns, so it is important to follow provider advice and seek a second opinion if you feel that treatment is not helping.
- Self-medicating with alcohol/drugs when one is experiencing a mental health condition is common but counterproductive, especially for cleared

individuals. Failing to get sufficient care for a mental health condition under these circumstances can cause even more problems.

DCSA offers a helpful list of **Frequently Asked Questions regarding Trust Decision Adjudications** that directly address these concerns. Visit the agency external website to find more information on **mental health and security clearances**.

Additionally, CDSE offers valuable resources such as:

- Quick Overview: A 10-minute explanation of the formal criteria used by adjudicators. Watch the CDSE Security Short on **Guideline I: Psychological Conditions**. This video provides a clear overview of what is, and what is not -- a security concern.
- Deeper Dive: For a more comprehensive discussion, the recorded webinar, “**Personnel Vetting: Timely Topics, Mental Health, and National Security Eligibility**,” offers expert insights on this topic.

Mental health is as equally important as physical health. It is essential to prioritize well-being, support colleagues, and utilize available resources. Taking care of yourself enables each individual to take care of the mission.

INSIDER THREAT

Insider Threat Detection Analysis Course (ITDAC)

Stop insider threats in their tracks. In just five days, CDSE's intensive "Insider Threat Detection and Analysis Course" (ITDAC) covers the critical skills to protect our nation from within.

This course is open to all federal insider threat program analysts in Executive Branch departments and agencies and satisfies the training requirements of the 2012 presidential memorandum on National Insider Threat Policy.

Students will learn data analysis, critical pathway theory, and threat response through hands-on, real-world exercises.

Upcoming virtual sessions are listed below. Spaces are limited. Secure your spot today by visiting the [ITDAC page](#).

- May 11 - 15, 2026
- June 8 - 12, 2026
- July 13 - 17, 2026

New Case Study: Michael Charles Schena



Who is Michael Charles Schena? As a 42-year-old U.S. citizen working at the Department of State Headquarters, Schena was an insider with a top-secret security clearance.

Online communication with individuals who claimed to be employees of international consulting companies led to Schena accepting multiple payments in exchange for providing sensitive government and national defense information.

In 2025, Schena was arrested for foreign espionage, charged with conspiracy to gather, transmit, or lose national defense information, and subsequently sentenced to prison.

Learn more about the crime, the sentence, the impact, and the potential risk indicators that, if identified, could have mitigated harm. Access the [case study](#) to review this case.

INDUSTRIAL SECURITY

Getting Started Seminar for New Facility Security Officers (IS121.10)

Stepping into a security position? Gain the foundational knowledge to succeed with the virtual "Getting Started Seminar for New Facility Security Officers (FSO)" course.

Designed for new FSOs, contractor security personnel, and Industrial Security Specialists, this seminar is the perfect opportunity to master critical National Industrial Security Program (NISP) requirements.

Register today and build the skills you need to excel! Virtual classes are offered on the following dates:

- May 12 - 15, 2026
- July 21 - 24, 2026

Refreshed eLearning Course

CDSE released an updated "[Visits and Meetings in the NISP IS105.16](#)" eLearning course. This 1-hour course covers the requirements and procedures for incoming and outgoing classified visits and classified meetings for facilities participating in the NISP. The course also discusses the NISP requirements and best practices for maintaining security controls.



CYBERSECURITY



Assessing Risk and Applying Security Controls to NISP Systems (CS301.01)

CDSE's "Assessing Risk and Applying Security Controls to NISP Systems" course provides a comprehensive review of contractor requirements and critical guidance on applying Risk Management Framework (RMF) policies. It is highly recommended for ISSMs, ISSOs, FSOs, and all personnel involved in managing security programs for cleared industry.

Spaces are limited. [Register today on STEPP](#) to secure your spot. Upcoming in-person sessions in Linthicum, Md.:

- July 21 - 24, 2026
- Aug. 17 - 21, 2026

PERSONNEL VETTING

Virtual Fundamentals of National Security Adjudications (PS101.10)

The integrity of our security framework rests on informed and defensible trust decisions. CDSE's "Fundamentals of National Security Adjudications" course is designed for security professionals tasked with this vital responsibility.

Participate in this virtual training from July 20 – 28 to refine essential skills to adjudicate complex cases and uphold the highest standards of personnel security.

Fulfill your mission with confidence. [Register](#) now.

PHYSICAL SECURITY

Physical Security and Asset Protection (PY201.01)

Master the skills needed to protect critical Department of War assets in the "Physical Security and Asset Protection" intensive instructor-led training course. Learn to apply the risk management process, develop robust security plans for facilities like SCIFs, and justify recommendations to leadership.

Limited seats available! [Register](#) today. Training courses offered in Linthicum, Md. include:

- May 11 - 15, 2026
- June 8 - 12, 2026
- Sept. 14 - 18, 2026

SPECIAL ACCESS PROGRAMS

Back-to-Back Special Access Programs Course Offerings

Twice the fun! Consider signing up for a wraparound option that includes two courses taught back-to-back. The first consist week will of a four-day **"Introduction to SAPs"** course, followed by two days of **"SAP Security Compliance Inspections"** during the second week. Please note attendance for the second course is contingent upon successful completion of the first course.

Option 1 – San Diego, Calif.

- Intro to SAPs: Aug. 4 - 7 (In-person)
- SAP Security Compliance Inspections: Aug. 10 - 11 (In-person)

Option 2 – Cincinnati, Ohio

- Intro to SAPs ILT: Aug. 25 - 28 (In-person)
- SAP Security Compliance Inspections: Aug. 31 - Sept. 1 (In-person)

To attend one of the wraparound options, register for each course individually.



Special Access Programs Courses

"Introduction to Special Access Programs (SAP)" course is the definitive starting point for new SAP security professionals, providing a thorough foundation in the core security requirements of DoD Manual 5205.07.

Be prepared to dive into practical, hands-on exercises that bring the material to life, building confidence and skills to excel in your role.

Choose from course dates below and [register](#) today!

- May 12 - 15, 2026 (Linthicum, Md.)
- June 1 - 9, 2026 (Virtual)
- Aug. 4 - 7, 2026 (San Diego, Calif.)
- Aug. 25 - 28, 2026 (Cincinnati, Ohio)
- Aug. 25 - 28, 2026 (El Segundo, Calif.)

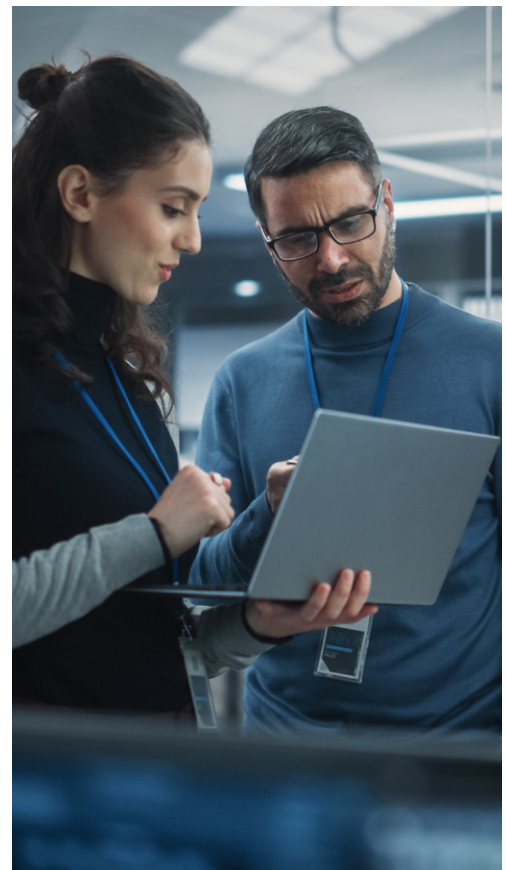
Additional SAP Courses

Orientation to SAP Security Compliance Inspections (SA210.01)

- Aug. 31 - Sept. 1, 2026 (Cincinnati, Ohio)

SAP Mid-Level Security Management (SA201.01)

- July 13 - 17, 2026 (Linthicum, Md.)



BEHAVIORAL THREAT ANALYSIS CENTER

BTAC Bulletin

Don't let evolving security threats catch you off guard. Access expert insider threat guidance with the latest [Behavioral Threat Analysis Center Bulletin](#). Each monthly edition provides authoritative analysis from a team of counterintelligence, law enforcement, and behavioral science experts. Equip your team with the knowledge to protect our mission—view the bulletin today.

FY 2026 UPCOMING COURSES

Registration Now Open

CDSE courses are a great way to gain security knowledge, gain awareness, and expand skill sets. Secure your spot now as classes fill quickly! A comprehensive listing of instructor-led courses can be found [here](#).

Cybersecurity

[Assessing Risk and Applying Security Controls to NISP Systems \(CS301.01\)](#)

- Aug. 17 - 21, 2026 (Linthicum, Md.)

General Security

[DOD Security Specialist \(GS101.01\)](#)

- June 2 - 10, 2026 (Linthicum, Md.)
- Aug. 11 - 19, 2026 (Germany)
- Sept. 15 - 23, 2026 (Linthicum, Md.)

[DOD Security Specialist \(GS101.01\)](#)

- July 6 - Aug. 2, 2026 (Virtual)

Industrial Security

[Getting Started Seminar for New Facility Security Officers \(IS121.10\)](#)

- May 12 - 15, 2026 (Virtual)
- July 21 - 24, 2026 (Virtual)

Insider Threat

[Insider Threat Detection Analysis Course \(INT200.10\)](#)

- May 11 - 15, 2026 (Virtual)
- June 8 - 12, 2026 (Virtual)
- July 13 - 17, 2026 (Virtual)
- Aug. 17 - 21, 2026 (Virtual)
- Sept. 21 - 25, 2026 (Virtual)

Information Security

[Activity Security Manager \(IF203.10\)](#)

- July 26 - Aug. 23, 2026 (Virtual)

Personnel Vetting

[Advanced National Security Adjudication \(PS301.10\)](#)

- June 1 - 11, 2026 (Virtual)
- Sept. 14 - 24, 2026 (Virtual)

[Fundamentals of National Security Adjudications \(PS101.10\)](#)

- July 20 - 29, 2026 (Virtual)

Physical Security

[Physical Security and Asset Protection \(PY201.01\)](#)

- May 11 - 15, 2026 (Linthicum, Md.)
- June 8 - 12, 2026 (Linthicum, Md.)
- Sept. 14 - 18, 2026 (Linthicum, Md.)

UPCOMING WEBINARS

View all upcoming CDSE events [here](#).

[Ethics & Best Practices in Psychological Evaluations for National Security \(3.0 CE\) Webinar](#)

May 7, 2026 | 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm ET

[Behavioral Indicators and Insights for Countering Terrorism](#)

May 21, 2026 | 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm ET

[US Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center: Resources to Support Violence Prevention Efforts](#)

May 19, 2026 | 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm ET

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Staff Spotlight: Aarayon Holly, ST Central Registrar, DCSA Security Academy

By Tammi Bush



Aarayon Holly's work is vital to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of the CDSE registrar's office. Holly is an educational technician with DCSA Security training and serves as an international student coordinator for CDSE's International Student Program.

Holly has contributed to the security training community for 12 years. She began as a contractor in 2014, and her commitment and expertise earned her a civilian position in 2019. She has served as assistant registrar since 2023.

Responsible for a wide array of critical support functions, Holly assists the principal registrar with course publication, student enrollment, and provides guidance to students and faculty. Holly is instrumental in maintaining the accuracy of academic and operational records, evaluating and improving office business procedures, and presenting data-driven reports to faculty and staff in support of CDSE and the DCSA Security Academy.

Her role is a cornerstone of the larger security mission. By providing quality registration services, Holly and her team act as the entryway for Department of War, foreign partners, and federal agencies to access critical

training. The registrar's office administers academic policies to standardize training and maintain high-quality instruction. This standardization aims to build a workforce with a common and reliable foundation of security knowledge.

Holly maintains accurate records, transcripts, and certifications – all vital to verifying credentials and building trust in the workforce's qualifications.

When asked what she enjoys most about her role, Holly emphasized the collaborative spirit of the registrar's office. "We share the workload and divide complex projects based on individual strengths," she said. "This enables tasks to be completed faster and with higher quality."

This year Holly is focused on guiding and supporting the registrar team to ensure operational excellence. Her leadership and dedication are a driving force for her team's success.

A common task in the registrar's office is directing individuals to review **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)** prior to submitting helpdesk tickets. "Many common questions and issues can be easily resolved by consulting the FAQs," Holly explains. Individuals who still need to submit a ticket after reviewing FAQs are encouraged to include all pertinent details such as course name, course iteration and a detailed description to allow the help desk team to promptly address the issue.



ABOUT DCSA

The Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) provides industrial security engagement and counterintelligence support to secure the trustworthiness of the U.S. government's workforce, contract support, technologies, services, and supply chains.

Our Role

We protect America's trusted workforce, trusted workspaces, and classified information. To do so, we have two fundamental missions: personnel security and industrial security. Supporting these two core missions are counterintelligence and insider threat and security training. For over 50 years, our agency has used each of these missions to meet the threats of our nation's adversaries.

How We Serve

DCSA is the largest investigative service provider in the federal government, supporting over 100 federal entities. We oversee 12,500 cleared facilities under the National Industrial Security Program (NISP). We rely on the following directorates to ensure the security of our nation's technologies and information.

Personnel Security

We deliver efficient and effective background investigations, continuous vetting, and adjudications. In doing so, we safeguard the integrity and trustworthiness of the federal and contractor workforce. We conduct background investigations for 95% of the federal government, including 105 departments and agencies. We also adjudicate 70% of the federal government's adjudicative determinations.

Industrial Security

At DCSA, we oversee 12,500 cleared facilities under the National Industrial Security Program (NISP). We make sure companies are protecting their facilities, personnel, and associated IT systems from attacks and vulnerabilities.

Counterintelligence and Insider Threat

Counterintelligence and insider threat supports both our personnel security and industrial security missions. Counterintelligence focuses on foreign insider threat while insider threat is focused on internal threat. In this mission center, we identify and stop attempts by our nation's adversaries to steal sensitive national security information and technologies.

Security Training

Our agency is comprised of nationally accredited training centers. These centers provide security training, education, and certifications for security professionals across the federal government and industry.

CDSE CONTACT LIST

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Linthicum, Md 21090

STEPP (Learning Management System) Help Desk
Submit an online support request ticket or call the Help Desk at 202-753-0845 within the Washington, DC area or toll free at 833-200-0035 on weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

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