

Personnel Vetting at a Glance

Introduction:

This short provides an overview of:

- Personnel Vetting Policies
- Concepts
- Role it plays in a trusted workforce

Federal Personnel Vetting Core Doctrine sets forth the defining elements of a successful program for vetting individuals who make up a trusted federal workforce.

Course Objective

Take a moment to review the course-learning objective:

Given the instructional material, the learner will be able to recognize the Personnel Vetting Models of National Security, Suitability/Fitness, and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12) Common Access Card Credentialing.

Point of Contact

dcsa.cdsetraining@mail.mil

Introduction

Meet Richard.

Richard is a federal employee with the Army; and recently promoted to a Program Analyst position requiring regular access to classified information.



Now, consider Jennifer.

Jennifer is a new federal employee with the social security administration. Jennifer's position is non-sensitive high-risk public trust not requiring access to classified information.



And finally, meet Susan.

Susan is a contract employee working at an Army installation. Susan requires physical access to the installation and logical access to her Government information system.



ALL personnel require vetting prior to working with the Federal Government.

National security requires that all persons privileged to be in the departments and agencies of the Government shall be reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character, and of complete and unswerving loyalty to the United States.

Before we further examine these candidates and their situations, we will discuss the importance of Personnel Vetting (PV) and its role in maintaining a trusted workforce.

PVs Role in Maintaining a Trusted Workforce

It is important that the Federal Government's workforce, which includes civilians, military service members, and contractors, are trustworthy and can effectively perform the mission, provide excellent service, and demonstrate effective stewardship of taxpayer funds. Establishing and maintaining trust is the core goal of the federal Personnel Vetting program.

Traditionally, the Federal Government vets individuals for trustworthiness with an initial background investigation and subsequent periodic reinvestigations.

(PV) describes the process that individuals undergo through investigation, evaluation, and adjudication to occupy federal positions or obtain federal credentials.

- Security Determinations
- Suitability/Fitness Determinations
- Access Determinations

Policy/Regulation

The policies that shaped Personnel Vetting include:

Executive Order, or E.O. 10450

All employees are subject to an investigation prior to federal appointment.

Security requirements for Government employment establishes investigation requirements for appointment of each civilian officer or employee in any department or agency of the Government. The scope of the investigation is determined according to the degree of damage the occupant of the position can do to national security.

E.O. 13467

The Office of the Director National Intelligence (ODNI) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) are the primary entities responsible for policy and oversight of the Federal Government's PV process.

This E.O. establishes that reforming processes related to suitability for Government employment, fitness for contractor employees, and eligibility for access to classified national security information calls for a consistent, unified Personnel Security Program (PSP). This order designates the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), as the "Security Executive Agent" with responsibility over security and public trust clearance processing, and the OPM as the "Suitability & Credentialing Executive Agent."

E.O. 13764

The different aspects of this E.O., such as processes for security clearances, suitability and fitness for employment, credentialing, and related matters modernize the executive branch enterprise. They also ensure that all persons performing work for, or on behalf of the Government, are and continue to be reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character, and loyal to the United States, This order applies to the PV of all covered individuals.

Personnel Vetting Concepts

The overarching purpose of vetting personnel is to ensure that all individuals working within the Federal Government are loyal, trustworthy, and of good conduct.

PV is successful when it provides a trusted workforce based on an evaluation of an individual's conduct, integrity, judgment, loyalty, and reliability.

PV is the evaluation of reliable and relevant information from background investigations and other trustworthy sources to determine if an individual is eligible or suitable to:

- access classified information or perform sensitive duties
- perform work on behalf of the government
- access federal facilities or information systems.

Adjudication

In order to access classified information, perform sensitive duties, work in the competitive or excepted federal service, or receive credentials to access DOD-controlled facilities or information systems, DOD employees and contractor personnel must undergo investigation and adjudication by trusted Government personnel.

PV concepts include National Security, Suitability/Fitness, and HSPD 12, Common Access Card (CAC) Credentialing.

National Security Adjudication

Now, let's examine how PV concepts apply to each of our candidates.



Remember our candidate Richard?

Richard's new position within the Army is critical sensitive and requires access to classified information.

Employees, like Richard, requiring initial or continued eligibility for access to classified information, or initial or continued eligibility to hold sensitive positions, are evaluated under the National Security Adjudication Personnel Vetting concept.

National Security Adjudication is a PV process that seeks reasonable assurance that persons granted access to classified information, or who hold sensitive positions, are loyal, trustworthy, and reliable.

National Security Adjudications take into account a person's stability, trustworthiness, reliability, discretion, character, honesty, and judgment.

After the prerequisite background investigation based on the Federal Investigative Standards (FIS) is complete, the information goes to the Consolidated Adjudicative Facility (CAF).

The CAF evaluates the background investigation information in the context of the “**Whole Person Concept.**”



In Richard’s case, the Whole Person Concept examines all available information about his past and present, favorable and unfavorable, and circumstances that may mitigate the unfavorable information.

When evaluating information, Adjudicators utilize 13 National Security Adjudicative Guidelines and nine factors found in the Security Executive Agent Directive 4 (SEAD-4). This may or may not be a security concern when reaching a determination that Richard is an acceptable security risk.

Everyone’s case is judged on its own merits, and the final determination remains the responsibility of the authorized adjudicative agency.

Once Richard receives a favorable National Security Adjudication, he will be subject to **Continuous Vetting (CV)**. The CV process utilizes real-time automated records checks (ARCs) to review Richard’s background at any time to determine if he continues to meet the applicable requirements of his National Security Adjudication.

A fundamental security principle of CV is that all doubts concerning personnel having access to classified or sensitive information shall be resolved in favor of national security.

Suitability and Fitness Adjudications



Now, let's learn more about Jennifer's scenario.

Jennifer is a new federal employee with the social security administration and will serve in a non-sensitive high-risk public trust position. Because Jennifer is a new federal employee and her position is non-sensitive, her PV concept is the Suitability and Fitness Adjudication process.

To ensure Jennifer is appropriate for employment within the Federal Government, her agency will utilize the Suitability adjudication vetting concept and criteria established by OPM. Suitability refers to identifiable character traits and conduct that indicate Jennifer is likely to be able to carry out the duties of a federal job with integrity, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Although Jennifer may have the necessary skills to perform the job, she may not demonstrate appropriate character traits and conduct that indicate she is likely to carry out the duties of a federal job with integrity, efficiency, and effectiveness. Suitability applies to government applicants; appointees employed less than one year, and employees of the federal competitive service.

Suitability adjudications are not “**security determinations.**” A favorable suitability determination does not mean that an individual is automatically eligible to hold a national security sensitive position or eligible for access to classified information.

In some cases, an individual faces adjudication for both national security and suitability. In these cases, the Suitability adjudication occurs first to ensure that the individual is suitable for employment before valuable time and resources go toward a National Security adjudication.

Fitness Determinations

Along the lines of Suitability adjudications, Fitness determinations ensure that individuals working in excepted service positions, Non-appropriated Fund (NAF) positions, or as defense contractors are suitable to hold those positions.

Similar to National Security Adjudications, Jennifer will undergo a background investigation commensurate with her position designation. Once the prerequisite background investigation is complete, the information goes to the CAF for review.

Suitability Criteria

The adjudicator compares their findings to OPM's eight suitability factors and seven additional considerations. The seven additional considerations are somewhat similar to the nine adjudicative factors used in National Security Adjudications, but there are differences found in section 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 731.

An adjudicator uses the whole person perspective while looking at Jennifer's past and present, and favorable and unfavorable information. The results are examined in the context of the eight suitability factors and the seven additional considerations.

Once Jennifer is deemed suitable for federal employment, she will be reinvestigated at predetermined intervals.

For more detailed information on the Suitability/Fitness Personnel Vetting process, please check out the Intro to Suitability eLearning course.

HSPD-12 CAC Adjudications



And finally, let's re-visit Susan's scenario.

Susan is a contract employee working at an Army installation. Susan requires physical access to the installation and logical access to her Government information system.

Susan's scenario will require vetting under the *HSPD-12 Adjudication* Personnel Vetting concept.

HSPD-12 adjudications determine who may receive credentials for physical access to federal-controlled facilities or access to federal-controlled information systems, also referred to as "logical" access.

The primary purpose of HSPD-12 vetting is to ensure that individuals are not known or suspected terrorists, do not provide an avenue for terrorism, and do not pose an unacceptable risk to employees or DOD assets.

Within the DOD, this identity credential is the CAC, a trusted credential for use across the Federal Government.

Investigation

Susan will undergo an investigation that complies with FIS requirements. If an applicant also requires a Suitability or National Security Adjudication, a separate HSPD-12 adjudication is not required since the CAC determination is an inherent decision in either, and those adjudications have higher-level investigative standards.

Adjudication

Similarly, an adjudicator applies credentialing standards when evaluating favorable and unfavorable information from Susan's past and present, taking the whole person into consideration.

There are 13 credentialing standards, consisting of six basic standards and seven supplemental standards, that may be reviewed during the HSPD-12 adjudication process. . All adjudications must apply the basic standards.

Applying the credentialing standards to the information allows the adjudicator to determine whether the applicant is a known or reasonably suspected terrorist, would provide an avenue for terrorism, or poses an unacceptable risk to DOD employees, information, or property and, in turn, determine whether the applicant is eligible for a CAC.

If it is determined that Susan is eligible for a CAC, then she has completed the HSPD-12 Personnel Vetting process. For more information about HSPD-12 credentialing, check out the eLearning course Intro to HSPD-12 CAC credentialing.

Knowledge Check #1

Now, let's review what you've learned.

What model of Personnel Vetting applies to an individual who does not hold a sensitive position or require access to classified information, but will work in a high-risk position within the Federal Government?

Select the correct answer.

- National Security Vetting
- Suitability/Fitness Vetting
- HSPD-12 Vetting

Knowledge Check #2

What model of Personnel Vetting applies to an individual that only requires physical access to federal facilities?

Select the correct answer.

- National Security Vetting
- Suitability/Fitness Vetting
- HSPD-12 Vetting

Knowledge Check #3

What model of Personnel Vetting applies to an individual who occupies a sensitive position or requires access to classified information?

Select the correct answer.

- National Security Vetting
- Suitability/Fitness Vetting
- HSPD-12 Vetting

Conclusion

As a closing reminder, the PV processes are in place to ensure we have a properly vetted and trusted United States Government workforce.

To access more information on this Introduction to Personnel Vetting short, please visit the [Course Resources](#).