



24 August 2010



MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Aligning OPM Investigative Levels With Reform Concepts

Among the security and suitability reform goals is the requirement to establish reciprocity between security clearance and suitability determination investigations, to the extent possible, to reduce unnecessary investigation when individuals move between positions in the federal and contract workforce. The Office of Management and Budget, Office of Personnel Management, Office of the Director for National Intelligence and Department of Defense leaders developed a strategic framework document¹ to incrementally implement the capabilities needed to achieve this and other reform goals. Among the deliverables that will specifically address the reciprocity goal is the requirement to "Align OPM investigative levels (existing products) with Reform concepts" by October 2010.

The investigative levels detailed in the enclosure are based on existing regulations and standards that are themselves under revision. While it is fully expected that the regulations and standards revisions will result in future modifications to these investigative levels, the enclosed provides the first step forward in achieving alignment. These aligned OPM investigative levels have been simplified by eliminating some investigative levels, standardized by providing one level of investigative coverage for each level of risk and/or sensitivity identified, and enhanced by incorporating enhanced subject interview and expandable focused investigation concepts into all background investigations and for those investigations conducted to support Secret or Confidential national security clearance determinations.

This memorandum forwards the Security and Suitability Executive Agents endorsement for the FY2011 aligned OPM investigative levels and directs agency compliance in using the appropriate standard form questionnaire to request the appropriate investigation for the risk and/or sensitivity of the assigned position. Standardizing our investigative processes is necessary if we are to achieve the reciprocity goals of reform, and agencies should work towards aligning their request processes with this guidance during the coming year.

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Enclosure: OPM FY2011 Investigations & Standardized Request Procedures

¹ Security and Suitability Process Reform Strategic Framework, February 16, 2010.

Office of Personnel Management FY2011 Investigations and Standardized Request Procedures

Investigations-

Beginning in October 2010, OPM's Federal Investigative Services will make adjustments to existing investigative products, enhancing coverage to provide more information to support timely adjudicative assessments. The changes will include enhanced subject interviews in all cases when a subject interview is required, providing a common framework for the complete collection and full development of favorable, unfavorable, and explanatory information. The changes will also include expandable focused investigation, focusing resources on "flagged" cases to fully resolve all known and developed issues. The "flags" that will be universally established for all background investigations (based on the special interview criteria in OPM issuances), resulting in significant enhancements to those investigations requested for noncritical-sensitive position determinations and/or those positions requiring access to Secret or Confidential Classified information. The FY2011 changes and enhancements are outlined as follows:

| Purpose | FY2011 Investigation Products | Coverage | Comparison with current products | Security and Suitability Reform Concepts supported |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Low Risk/Non-Sensitive/HSPD-12 Credential (SF85) | National Agency Check with Written Inquiries (NACI) -SF85 is the only form that will be submitted to request NACI's | NACI | - Same content as current NACI - Requests will only be accepted on the SF85 (No waivers) | -This investigation will provide the basic coverage included in most all other initial products – supporting the reform concept of investigations building on each other - Additionally, the NACI investigations will only be requested on SF85, the basic investigative request form - supporting the reform concept of request forms building on each other and standardized investigative content |
| Initial Secret/Confidential Security Clearance/Non critical-Sensitive Position (SF86) | ANACI – Civilians for suitability and Contractor employees when needed for fitness determination NACLCL-Military and Contractor employees - No Priority Service -No Special Coverage -SF86 is the only form that will be submitted for these requests | ANACI/NACLCL with triggered ESI (based on DoD SPIN criteria) for all customers. -Additional SPIN to resolve any items triggered after ESI will be included -One level of "expedited" service will be offered for both products | -Same content as current DoD triggered issue resolution (SPIN criteria) will be provided to all customers -Subject interview enhanced to ESI standards providing full issue resolution | -These investigations will provide issue triggered enhanced subject interviews, with added issue resolution on those infrequent occasions when triggers develop later in the investigation. -These investigations provide standardized content (to the extent possible using current standards and products) for all OPM customers, forwarding reciprocity. |
| Reinvestigation Secret/Confidential/ Noncritical-Sensitive (SF86) | NACLCL -No Priority Service-- No Special Coverage (impacts some customers eg. IRS) -SF86 is the only form that will be submitted for these requests | NACLCL with triggered ESI (based on DoD SPIN criteria) for all customers. -Additional SPIN to resolve any items triggered after ESI will be included | -Same as above for initial -We will check for previous coverage to build on by not duplicate in current investigation | -This investigation will provide issue triggered enhanced subject interviews with added issue resolution, on those infrequent occasions when triggers develop later in the investigation. -This investigation will provide standardized content for all OPM customers, forwarding reciprocity. |

| Purpose | Proposed FY2011 Investigation Products | Coverage | Comparison with current products | Security and Suitability Reform Concepts supported |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Initial Moderate Risk Public Trust (SF85P) | Moderate Risk Background Investigation (MBI) -Minimum BI (MBI) replaced by Moderate Risk BI (MBI) -LBI eliminated - SF85P will be used to requests moderate risk public trust MBI's, however, the SF86 will also be accepted if Secret clearance is required | The new MBI will include ANACI with ESI for all customers. -The additional follow-up to resolve any items triggered (based on SPIN criteria) after ESI will be included in price | -Content enhanced to provide the basic expansion of the current ANACI product (based on the SF85P) - ESI same - Additional issue resolution if triggered after ES | -The "Minimum Background Investigation" has been redesigned to become the Moderate Risk Background Investigation. -The multilevel investigations for this level of risk were replaced with this single, enhanced product, which will provide issue triggered enhanced subject interviews with added issue resolution, if triggered, to fully satisfy suitability and public trust adjudications for all moderate risk positions. -This investigation provides standardized content (to the extent possible using current standards and products) for all OPM customers, forwarding reciprocity. |
| Reinvestigation Moderate Risk Public Trust (SF85P) | NACLC (draft) (Pending 5 CFR Part 731 regulation changes) | Basic NACLC -No issue resolution or ESI - RSI to add work, as needed - No Priority Service | -Compares to basic NACLC currently requested by non-DoD agencies | -This new investigation will satisfy the reform goals for reinvestigation of public trust positions, providing a standardized product supporting reciprocity |
| Initial High Risk Public Trust (SF85P) | BI -PTSBI will be eliminated -SF85P will be used. When access to classified is also required, the SF86 will be used to request an SSBI | BI with ESI Style subject interview) -The additional follow-up to resolve any items triggered (based on SPIN criteria) after ESI will be included | -Coverage is the same as today's BI but enhanced by added follow-up on occasion | -The multilevel investigations for this level of risk were replaced with this single product, which will provide issue triggered enhanced subject interviews with added issue resolution, if triggered, to fully satisfy suitability and public trust adjudications for all high risk positions. -This investigation will provide standardized content for all OPM customers, forwarding reciprocity and t provides expandable investigation to resolve triggered issues |
| Reinvestigation High Risk Public Trust (SF85P) | PRI (draft) (Pending 5 CFR Part 731 regulation changes) -PRIR will be eliminated | PRI with ESI -The additional follow-up to resolve any items SPIN triggered after ESI will be included | -Coverage same as today's PRI but enhanced by added follow-up as needed | -The multilevel investigations for this level of risk will be replaced with this single product, providing standardization and supporting reciprocity. -This product will expand to resolve issues if triggered |
| Initial Top Secret/SCI/ Critical Sensitive/ Special Sensitive (SF86) | SSBI (Aligns with tier 4) | -SSBI with enhanced (ESI style) subject interview -The additional SPIN to resolve any items triggered after ESI will be included | -Coverage same as today's SSBI for DoD with added triggered issue resolution following ESI, as necessary | -This investigation builds its content from lower level investigations. -This investigation will be expanded to resolve triggered issues -This investigation will provide standardized product content for all OPM customers, forwarding reciprocity |
| Reinvestigation Top Secret/SCI/ Critical Sensitive/ Special Sensitive (SF86) | SSBI PR | SSBI-PR with ESI Additional SPIN to resolve any items triggered after ESI will be included | -Same content as currently provided to DoD - Additional SPIN to resolve any triggered items that develop after ESI for all | -These investigations will provide issue triggered enhanced subject interviews with added issue resolution, on those infrequent occasions when triggers develop later in the investigation. -These investigations provide standardized content (to the extent possible using current standards and products) for all OPM customers, forwarding reciprocity. |
| | PPR | PPR | Same | |
| Periodic Assessment (for Continuous Evaluation) Top Secret/SCI/ Critical Sensitive/ Special Sensitive (OFI86C) | CE Optional Product | NCIC FINCEN CREDIT SII | -Same as special requests today - RSI permitted to add work, as needed | -Optional product to forward the goals of continuous evaluation -May be used at agency discretion to support continuous evaluation goals |

Standardized Request Procedures-

The Position Designation System was developed by the Office of Personnel Management to guide agencies in determining the proper level of investigation and screening required based on an assessment of risk or national security sensitivity.

Based on the position risk or sensitivity designation, OPM investigations are expected to be requested using the appropriate standard form questionnaire for the designated position.

- The Standard Form (SF) 85, "Questionnaire for Non Sensitive Positions" is used to request investigations to support Non Sensitive/Low risk positions. It is also used for "non designated" positions (those not covered by 5 CFR Parts 731 and 732) requiring only a credentialing determination for access to government facilities or systems. The single investigation appropriate for this level of risk is the "National Agency Check with Inquiries" (NACI).
- The SF 85P, "Questionnaire for Public Trust Positions," is used to request investigations to support determinations on Moderate or High Risk Public Trust Positions when there are no national security considerations. The investigations that may be requested for these levels of risk are the "Moderate Risk Background Investigation" (MBI) for moderate risk designed positions and the "Background Investigation" (BI) for high risk designated positions. The reinvestigations for these levels of risk are pending regulation changes, but will also be requested using the SF85P when finalized.
- The SF 86, "Questionnaire for National Security Positions," is used to request investigations to support determinations on all national security sensitive positions. The investigations that may be requested are the "Access National Agency Check with Inquiries" (ANACI) for civilian positions designated as Noncritical-Sensitive with a low risk, the MBI for positions designated as Noncritical Sensitive with moderate risk, the "National Agency Check with Local Agency and Credit" (NACLC) for undesignated positions (ex. For military personnel) requiring access to Secret and/or Confidential classified national security information.
- The SF86 is also used to request the "Single Scope Background Investigation" (SSBI) to support determinations on persons being assigned to Critical-Sensitive or Special-Sensitive designated positions regardless of the level of risk, and to support determinations for High Risk Public Trust designated positions with national security position sensitivity requirements at any level. The reinvestigations for these levels of sensitivity and risk include the SSBI Periodic Reinvestigation (PR) and the Phased Periodic Reinvestigation (PPR).

Based on the position risk and/or sensitivity designation, agencies will work during the coming fiscal year to establish policies and procedures to support standardization in the investigation request processes as follows:

| For this Position Designation: | You will use this request format: | To request this investigation: |
|---|--|---|
| Risk/Sensitivity Level | Standard Forms | FY 2011 OPM Investigative Products |
| Non-Sensitive Position Low Risk/HSPD-12 Credential | SF 85 (Questionnaire for Non Sensitive Positions) | National Agency Check and Inquiries (NACI) |
| Moderate Risk Public Trust Position (No national security sensitivity) | SF 85P (Questionnaire for Public Trust Positions) | Moderate Risk Background Investigation (MBI) (Limited Background Investigations (LBI) will be eliminated. After October 1, 2010 requests for LBI will be converted to MBI.) |
| High Risk Public Trust Position (No national security sensitivity) | SF 85P (Questionnaire for Public Trust Positions) | Background Investigation (BI) (Public Trust Special Background Investigations (PTSBI) will be eliminated. After October 1, 2010 requests for PTSBI will be converted to BI.) |
| Secret/Confidential (Undesignated –eg. Military/Contractor) | SF86 (Questionnaire for National Security Positions) | National Agency Check with Law and Credit (NACLC) |
| Noncritical-Sensitive Position and/or Secret/Confidential Security Clearance (Low Risk) | SF 86 (Questionnaire for National Security Positions) | Access National Agency Check and Inquiries (ANACI) |
| Noncritical-Sensitive Position and/or Secret/Confidential Security Clearance (Moderate Risk) | SF 86 (Questionnaire for National Security Positions) | Moderate Risk Background Investigation (MBI) |
| Critical-Sensitive Position and/or Top Secret (TS) Security Clearance (Any level of risk) | SF 86 (Questionnaire for National Security Positions) | Single Scope Background Investigation (SSBI) |
| Special-Sensitive Position and/or TS Security Clearance with Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) (Any level of risk) | SF 86 (Questionnaire for National Security Positions) | Single Scope Background Investigation (SSBI) |
| Position Sensitivity (any level) with High Risk Public Trust | SF 86 (Questionnaire for National Security Positions) | Single Scope Background Investigation (SSBI) |