

UNCLASSIFIED

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE  
WASHINGTON, DC 20511

ES 2016-00751

MEMORANDUM FOR: Distribution

SUBJECT: Revisions to the Psychological and Emotional Health Questions on the Standard Form 86, Questionnaire for National Security Positions

REFERENCE: A. Revised Instructions for Completing Question 21, Standard Form 86, "Questionnaire for National Security Positions," ES 2013-00242, 12 April 2013

In my role as the Security Executive Agent, I am pleased to announce the enhancements to the psychological and emotional health questions covered by Section 21 (S21), often referred to as Question 21, of the Standard Form 86 (SF-86). The revisions represent the culmination of extensive work among the Office of the Vice President, National Security Council, Office of Management and Budget, Office of Personnel Management, Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Justice, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Office of the Director of National Intelligence staff. The resultant changes will better emphasize the importance of the mental health and wellness of our Federal workforce and others while simultaneously protecting our national security interests.

The revision efforts focused on adjusting the psychological and emotional health related questions to avoid any potential negative impact the questions and security clearance process could have on individuals seeking mental health treatment, if those individuals thought that seeking such treatment would negatively impact their ability to receive a security clearance. As background, concerns were expressed during ongoing efforts to update the security clearance process about the SF-86 questions related to an applicant's mental health as contained in S21 of the form. Specifically, concerns were raised as to whether the S21 (as drafted at the time) adequately identified the issues for evaluation in the course of a background investigation or had the potential to discourage applicants from seeking treatment altogether. While it also included follow-on caveats that accounted for victims of sexual assault and combat related trauma, I agreed that this question needed to be updated to further address concerns about the perceived disincentives to seeking treatment for mental health conditions. I want to make clear that an individual's decision to seek mental health treatment and/or counseling will not, in and of itself, adversely impact his or her ability to obtain or maintain a national security position, or alone form the basis for a denial or revocation of a security clearance. Seeking personal wellness and recovery demonstrates responsible behavior and may be considered favorably when evaluating a person's eligibility for a national security position. In the interest of encouraging all people to obtain the mental health services they need, please reiterate to your workforce the Employee Assistance Programs, treatment, and/or services available through your respective Departments and Agencies (D/As).

UNCLASSIFIED

SUBJECT: Revisions to the Psychological and Emotional Health Questions on the Standard Form 86, Questionnaire for National Security Positions

I continue to advocate on behalf of victims of sexual assault and combat related traumas who have had or intend to receive mental health counseling. These individuals are not required to provide information about voluntary treatment unless they have a condition that substantially adversely affects their judgment, reliability, or trustworthiness. The new S21 includes similar questions about ordered treatments and hospitalizations, but rather than beginning by asking about the “fact of” an individual consulting a health care professional regarding a psychological or emotional health condition, the revised version of S21 (attached) asks if the responding individual has:

- a) been declared mentally incompetent by a court or administrative agency;
- b) been ordered to consult with a mental health professional by a court or administrative agency;
- c) been hospitalized for a mental health condition;
- d) been diagnosed by a physician or other health professional with specifically listed diagnoses; and/or
- e) a mental health or other health condition that substantially adversely affects judgment, reliability or trustworthiness.

These questions shift the focus from whether an individual has sought treatment to whether an individual has a condition that may affect his or her eligibility for access to classified information (security clearance) or for eligibility to hold a sensitive position. In addition, the revised version of S21 also inserts new, explanatory language at several points throughout, in order to: reiterate that the question is asked in the narrow context of the security clearance process; make clear that the government recognizes the positive value in seeking counseling and treatment when needed for any reason; and otherwise avoid the potential of discouraging an individual who may have dealt with, or who is currently experiencing, mental health conditions from seeking treatment. The National Background Investigations Bureau, in concert with the DoD, is currently establishing the technical implementation of S21 revisions into the Electronic Questionnaire for Investigative Processing (eQIP) system. In the interim, I strongly encourage all D/As to ensure that your staffs are appropriately trained and familiar with the contents of the revised S21 to facilitate an orderly implementation upon the release of the new S21 via eQIP. Thank you in advance for your support to this critical initiative. If you should have any questions or require assistance, please email my staff at [SecEA@DNI.gov](mailto:SecEA@DNI.gov).

  
James R. Clapper

  
Date

Attachment:

1. Revised Questionnaire for National Security Positions, Section 21: Psychological and Emotional Health



SUBJECT: Revisions to the Psychological and Emotional Health Questions on the Standard Form 86, Questionnaire for National Security Positions

Distribution:

Secretary of State  
Secretary of the Treasury  
Secretary of Defense  
Attorney General  
Secretary of Commerce  
Secretary of Energy  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Secretary of Agriculture  
Secretary of Transportation  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
Secretary of the Interior  
Secretary of Education  
Secretary of Labor  
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
Executive Office of the President  
Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Director, Office of Personnel Management  
United States Trade Representative  
Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations  
Director, National Economic Council  
Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy  
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
Chairman, Federal Reserve Board  
Director, General Services Administration  
Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
Archivist, National Archives and Records Administration  
Chairman, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Chairman, U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission  
Chairman, National Credit Union Administration  
Director, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau  
Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency  
Chairman, Broadcasting Board of Governors  
Chief Executive Officer, Corporation for National and Community Service  
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission  
Chairman, Federal Maritime Commission  
Chairman, Federal Trade Commission  
Chairman, Federal Election Commission  
Chairman, International Trade Commission  
Chairman, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

SUBJECT: Revisions to the Psychological and Emotional Health Questions on the Standard Form 86, Questionnaire for National Security Positions

Director, National Science Foundation  
Director, Office of Government Ethics  
Director, U.S. Peace Corps  
Director, Selective Service System  
Administrator, Small Business Administration  
Commissioner, Social Security Administration  
Administrator, United States Agency for International Development  
Director, White House Office of the National Drug Control Policy  
Board Chair and CEO, Farm Credit Administration  
Chairman and President, Export-Import Bank of the United States  
Chairman, National Labor Relations Board  
Chairman, Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board  
Chief Postal Inspector, United States Postal Inspection Service  
Director, Consumer Financial Management Bureau  
Office of Board of Governors, United States Postal Service  
Special Counsel, Office of Special Counsel  
Director, Central Intelligence Agency  
Director, Defense Intelligence Agency  
Director, National Security Agency  
Director, National Reconnaissance Office  
Director, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency  
Deputy Chief of Staff, G-2, U.S. Army  
Director of Naval Intelligence, U.S. Navy  
Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, A2, U.S. Air Force  
Director of Intelligence, U.S. Marine Corps  
Executive Assistant Director, Intelligence Branch, Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Assistant Commandant for Intelligence and Criminal Investigations, CG-2, U.S. Coast Guard  
Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, Department of Defense  
Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State  
Assistant Secretary, Office of Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Treasury  
Chief, Intelligence Division, Drug Enforcement Administration  
Under Secretary, Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security  
Director, Office of Intelligence and Counterintelligence, Department of Energy  
Joint Staff Director for Intelligence, J2, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff