

Employment Network Security and Suitability Business Process Guide



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Introduction

This business process guide documents the Social Security Administration's (SSA) suitability process for Employment Network (EN) personnel.

A background investigation is required any time personnel require any type of access to an SSA facility, site, system, or information, whether or not a Personal Identity Verification (PIV) credential is required.

SSA personnel may not allow EN personnel access to a facility, site, information, or system until SSA's Center for Suitability and Personnel Security (CSPS) issues a current, favorable suitability determination for the specified award (e.g., agreement, contract, grant, etc.). A suitability determination letter issued by CSPS is valid only for performance on the SSA award specified in the letter. Even if an individual previously worked on an SSA award, they must still go through the suitability process to return to work on the specified award or work on a new award (see [EN Personnel Workflow](#) for the applicable steps and stages).

The Company Point of Contact (CPOC) must submit the appropriate, required paperwork **at least 30 business days** prior to the date personnel are to begin work. The suitability process will not begin until CSPS receives accurate and complete documents.

We recommend the CPOC review the entire business process guide prior to bringing EN personnel to work.

Failure to follow the chronological process, as detailed in this document, will result in delays and/or personnel not allowed to work on SSA awards.

Process Overview

The following is a high-level overview of the SSA security and suitability requirements for EN personnel. Please see the [EN Personnel Suitability Workflow](#) charts below for the full step-by-step security and suitability requirements.

1. The **CPOC** submits the suitability package to DCHR.OPE.Suitability@ssa.gov and ENService@ssa.gov via [secure email](#):
 - a. An Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing (e-QIP) Applicant Listing, including the award number, award points of contact, and information on the applicants identified to work on the award;
 - b. Completed Optional Form (OF) 306, Declaration for Federal Employment;
 - c. Completed Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) Authorization Form; **and**
 - d. Work authorization documentation for non-U.S. born applicants, if applicable.
2. **CSPS** verifies if the EN personnel (applicant) already has the appropriate background investigation on record, or, if applicable, initiates the applicant in e-QIP. **CSPS** emails the e-QIP invitation and instructions for electronic fingerprinting to the **CPOC and ENService@ssa.gov**.
3. **CPOC** forwards e-QIP invitation link to the **applicant**.
4. **Applicants** have 10 business days to complete e-QIP and submit electronic fingerprints.
5. **CSPS** makes initial suitability determination (as applicable, reviews form submissions, resolves any discrepancies, and releases investigation to Office of Personnel

Management (OPM)) and releases the applicable suitability determination letter to the CPOC and ENService@ssa.gov.

6. OPM completes the full background investigation. CSPS reviews and adjudicates the background investigation.

EN Personnel Suitability Workflow

New Applicants

Timeframes below are estimates for completing the activity.

Step	Responsible Party	Activity	Timeframe	Tips and Follow-Ups
1	CPOC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provides the OF-306 and FCRA forms to the applicant to complete and return to CPOC. 2. Requests work authorization documentation for non-U.S. born applicants, if applicable. <p>Fair Credit Authorization Form</p> <p>Declaration for Federal Employment</p>		<p>Name on forms must match the legal name, including middle name or initial (if initial only) as it appears in SSA's official record.</p> <p>Forms must be complete and accurate.</p> <p>The I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification list includes examples of acceptable work authorization documentation for non-U.S. born applicants.</p>
2	Applicant	<p>Completes and returns the OF-306, FCRA form, and work authorization documentation (if applicable) to the CPOC.</p> <p>Applicants must complete the OF-306 accurately, thoroughly, and honestly. "Yes" answers to questions 9 - 15 must be explained in the #16 Remarks field.</p>		<p>All Applicants (including females) must answer all questions, including the Selective Service and the Military Service questions.</p> <p>Failure to answer questions accurately and provide required details will result in CSPS contacting the applicant for additional clarification, which may delay the process and may be grounds for finding the applicant unsuitable.</p> <p>Question instructions detail the information required.</p>
3	CPOC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submits a completed e-QIP Applicant Listing form with the scanned, 		<p>CPOC should review these forms to ensure they are</p>

Step	Responsible Party	Activity	Timeframe	Tips and Follow-Ups
		<p>completed OF-306(s), FCRA(s), and work authorization documentation (if applicable).</p> <p>2. Saves scanned documentation as a PDF with the naming convention of <i>Last name, First name 306 or Last name, First name FCRA</i>.</p> <p>3. Sends Applicant Listing with 306(s) and FCRA(s) to DCHR.OPE.Suitability@ssa.gov and ENService@ssa.gov via a secure or password encrypted email.</p> <p>e-QIP Applicant Listing</p>		<p>complete and signed before scanning them.</p> <p>Note: SSA can only receive up-to 10MB in a single email.</p> <p>On the subject line, enter: <i>New EN - Applicant Listing and Forms (Award # _____)</i></p> <p>See Encrypted Email Procedures for details on securely emailing these documents.</p> <p>Use E and last 4 digits of your award number (e.g., E1234) for the password.</p>
4	CSPS	<p>1. Determines if applicant has a suitable investigation on file. If so, issues preliminary suitability determination letter at this stage. See Step 7.</p> <p>2. If not, initiates applicant in e-QIP. Releases e-QIP invite with e-QIP registration codes, e-QIP instructions, and electronic fingerprinting services information to ENService@ssa.gov and CPOC for release to applicant.</p>	Within 4 business days	<p>The e-QIP invitation email will be sent from the SSA Contractor Suitability System (CSS), dchr.ope.css@ssa.gov mailbox. This mailbox is NOT monitored.</p> <p>If the CPOC does not receive the e-QIP link within 5 business days, send a follow-up to DCHR.OPE.Suitability@ssa.gov with email Subject line: <i>e-QIP invite follow-up request</i>. Attach the prior email with the e-QIP Applicant Listing and forms.</p>
4a	OPM System (automated process)	Emails e-QIP registration code to applicant's email account as indicated on the e-QIP Applicant Listing.	1 day (within 24 hours from step 4)	The e-QIP registration code will be sent from do-not-reply@e-qip.opm.gov or on behalf of do-not-reply@registration.opm.gov .
5	CPOC	<p>Notifies applicant of the requirement to:</p> <p>a. Complete the e-QIP form (provides the e-QIP registration code) and</p> <p>b. Submit fingerprints electronically.</p>		

Step	Responsible Party	Activity	Timeframe	Tips and Follow-Ups
6 Preferred Method	Applicant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completes e-QIP form, electronically signs, and releases form. 2. AFTER completing and releasing their form in e-QIP, makes appointment with electronic fingerprint services provider and submits fingerprints. Fingerprint Scheduling 	Up to 10 business days from step 4	<p>Go to: https://nbib.opm.gov/e-qip-background-investigations/ for “click to sign” instructions and e-QIP guides.</p> <p>In e-QIP, complete the very last screen and click on the Release button so it is released to CSPA. If the release button is not clicked, CSPA will not be able to access the form.</p> <p>For assistance with e-QIP, call 1-844-874-9940 between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Eastern time.</p> <p>e-QIP application will time out if it is not completed timely.</p> <p>Retain user name and password exactly as entered in order to return to e-QIP later, if needed.</p>
6a Alternate Fingerprint Option	Applicant	<p>Visits the local sheriff’s office or police department to be fingerprinted on paper form FD-258 and mails the form via priority delivery to:</p> <p>Social Security Administration Security and Suitability Office Attn: Personnel Security Officer 6401 Security Boulevard 2246 Annex Building Baltimore, MD 21235</p>		<p>This option will add considerable delays and is not preferred.</p> <p>This option is used if the applicant does not use SSA’s electronic fingerprint services contract. The envelope must include the Cover Sheet.</p> <p>The applicant should also notify DCHR.OPE.Suitability@ssa.gov with a cc to their CPOC and ENService@ssa.gov that the fingerprints are being mailed.</p>
7	CSPA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviews all provided documentation and makes an initial suitability determination. 2. Follows up with applicant on any discrepancies or issues. Issues suitability determination letter (suitable or unsuitable). 	Up to 15 business days from release of e-QIP form and submission of electronic fingerprints	<p>For status checks after 15 business days, call CSPA’s Hotline at 1-844-874-9940.</p> <p>Applicant must submit any additional requested supporting documentation (e.g., federal debt payment</p>

Step	Responsible Party	Activity	Timeframe	Tips and Follow-Ups
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. If suitable, releases investigation request to OPM/NBIB. 4. If unsuitable, cancels e-QIP. 		plans, payment history, etc.).
8	OPM/NBIB	Conducts subject interview, if applicable (Tier 2 (Standard Form (SF)-85P or SF-86) investigations and higher) and completes full background investigation.	Up to 1 year from step 7 above.	As applicable, an OPM/NBIB Investigator will contact the applicant to schedule an investigative interview.
9	CSPS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirms if the applicant is still active on an SSA award. 2. Reviews and takes necessary actions to adjudicate the background investigation. 	Up to 90 days from the date OPM completes the investigation	<p>If there are any issues with the OPM investigation, CSPS will first contact the applicant.</p> <p>If CSPS is unable to reach them or resolve the issue after two attempts, CSPS will contact ENService@ssa.gov for assistance.</p> <p>Applicants must comply with CSPS requests and inquiries to ensure a timely determination. Failure to do so may result in an unfavorable determination and removal from any SSA awards.</p>

Current Contractor/EN Personnel Moving to Another Award (Rollover Request)

If current contractor/EN personnel are to perform work under a new award, CSPS must review the applicant's suitability to work on the new award. As applicable, CSPS will issue a suitability letter for the new award, or notify the CPOC and the COR-COTR of any additional required steps for the suitability review.

Step	Responsible Party	Activity	Timeframe*	Tips and Follow-Ups
1	CPOC	Submits a fully completed, legible Contractor Rollover Request Form to the COR-COTR of the new award.		See How to Send Encrypted Emails for details on securely emailing these documents. *If the COR-COTR is ENService, you may skip step 2 and include ENService@ssa.gov on the email submission to DCHR.OPE.Suitability@ssa.gov . Utilize password E and last 4 digits of your award number (e.g., E1234) On the rollover form, just use ENService@ssa.gov for the COR-COTR information.
2	COR-COTR	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviews the form to ensure it is complete and accurate. 2. Removes password encryption and forwards to CSPS POC with a cc to DCHR.OPE.Suitability@ssa.gov. 		It is very important that the form has the correct award number. See Contact Information for a list of the CSPS POCs.
3	CSPS	<p>Reviews applicant to ensure they have the appropriate background investigation to perform work on the new award.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If suitable, releases a suitability determination letter for the new award. b. If the applicant does <u>not</u> have the proper investigation on record, CSPS will notify the CPOC and COR-COTR of the requirement to go through the full suitability process. 	Within 5 business days	If CSPS notifies you the applicant does <u>not</u> have the proper investigation for the new award, see step 1 of the suitability process above to begin a new suitability review for that applicant.

Unsuitable Determinations

When an applicant is determined unsuitable, CSPS will send a letter notification to EN Service and the CPOC to be issued to the applicant. There is **no** appeals process; however, the applicant may request clarification. Details are provided in the letter.

The applicant must submit requests for clarification for unsuitable determinations in writing within 30 days of the date of the unsuitable determination to the email mailbox or address listed below. Applicants must file their own requests; award POCs may not file requests on behalf of the applicant.

dchr.ope.hspd12appeals@ssa.gov

OR

Social Security Administration
Center for Suitability and Personnel Security
Attn: Suitability Program Officer
6401 Security Boulevard
2246 Annex Building
Baltimore, MD 21235

Through the Freedom of Information Act process, the applicant can request in writing a copy of their investigation from OPM. The written request must prominently note "Freedom of Information Act Request" and describe in detail the records needed. This will assist OPM with locating the records in a reasonable amount of time.

Name Change Process

CPOC should notify DCHR.OPE.Suitability@ssa.gov and ENService@ssa.gov once the individual has legally changed their name, including reporting to a local SSA field office to update SSA's mainframe record.

Re-Investigations

EN Personnel may be subject to re-investigations every 5 years from the date of their last completed background investigation. CSPS will notify ENService@ssa.gov and the CPOC when an individual is due for re-investigation.

EN personnel must comply with any requests from CSPS in order to remain active on an SSA award. The notification from CSPS will detail the steps and requirements for the re-investigation.

Notification Requirements for EN Personnel

The CPOC shall notify ENService@ssa.gov and DCHR.OPE.Suitability@ssa.gov within one business day if any EN personnel:

- Is arrested or charged with a crime during the term of their award
- Has any other change in the status of individual (e.g. leaves the company, no longer works under the award, the alien status changes, etc.) that could affect their suitability determination.

The CPOC must provide in the notification as much detail as possible, including, but not limited to: name(s) of individual whose status has changed, award number, the type of charge(s), if

applicable, date of arrest, the court date, jurisdiction, and, if available, the disposition of the charge(s).

If the individual separated and the background investigation is in process, CSPS will cancel the investigation.

Reference Information

Glossary

Award Number

EN personnel are affiliated with an SSA award (e.g., SSA contract, grant, or agreement) number for processing.

Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing (e-QIP)

An OPM system used for entering and submitting all information into the electronic SF 85, 85P, and 86.

I-9 Documents

The Department of Homeland Security's official list of acceptable documents used for proof of identity (including work authorization documentation). The names on the documents provided must match each other and SSA's mainframe record.

Key Participants

Company Point of Contact (CPOC)

Representative for the awarded Employment Network.

Contracting Officer Representative - Contracting Officer Technical Representative (COR-COTR)

Representative authorized and designated in writing to perform *certain technical or administrative* functions as they relate to an award.

Contractor (EN) Personnel

Employee(s) of the awarded company, employee(s) of the subcontractor, any consultant retained by the contractor or subcontractor, any volunteer or intern of the contractor or subcontractor, and if the contractor or subcontractor is a sole proprietorship, it refers to the sole proprietorship.

EN Service

The designated lead for all Employment Network agreements and personnel. Send general EN questions to ENService@ssa.gov.

Office of Human Resources, Office of Personnel, Center for Suitability and Personnel Security (DCHR, OPE, CSPS)

Screens SSA employees, contractors, and affiliates. Initiates background investigations and makes suitability determinations. Point of contact for form completion, the OPM investigation process, fingerprint responses from FBI, name discrepancies between identification documents and SSA's records, e-QIP issues, final adjudication upon completion of the OPM investigation,

and ongoing assessments as necessary. Send questions related to these topics to DCHR.OPE.Suitability@ssa.gov.

Office of Personnel Management (OPM), National Background Investigations Bureau (NBIB)

The federal agency that conducts the background investigation after the completion of e-QIP.

Contact Information

CSPS

- **Hotline at 1-844-874-9940** – Status inquires on pending suitability requests and e-QIP assistance. Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EST, excluding all Federal holidays.
- DCHR.OPE.Suitability@ssa.gov and your CSPS POC– Questions on SSA’s suitability process, the OPM investigation process, and name discrepancies between identification documents and SSA’s records.
- CSPS Sites:
 - [CSPS Intranet Site](#) (SSA Intranet site for those with SSA systems access)
 - [CSPS COTR SharePoint Site](#) (SSA Intranet site, COR-COTR access only)

CSPS Points of Contact

Boston (Region I): Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont	Samuel.Brown@ssa.gov
New York (Region II): New York & New Jersey and the territories of Puerto Rico & U.S. Virgin Islands	Sheila.Custis@ssa.gov
Philadelphia (Region III): Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia	Tamara.Jefferson@ssa.gov
Atlanta (Region IV): Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee	Kim.Campbell@ssa.gov
Chicago (Region V): Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Minnesota	Robert.Freeman.Jr@ssa.gov
Dallas (Region VI): Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas	Lori.Sizemore@ssa.gov
Kansas City (Region VII): Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska	Robert.Medeiros@ssa.gov
Denver (Region VIII): Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming	Wanda.Spellman@ssa.gov
San Francisco (Region IX): Arizona, California, Nevada & Hawaii and the territories of Guam, American Samoa, & Saipan	Shalise.L.Smith@ssa.gov
Seattle (Region X): Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington	Marcia.Hawkins@ssa.gov

References and Guides

Encrypted Email Procedures

Secure emails may be sent via:

1. An SSA email account or SSA secure partner email account
2. A Government Services Online (GSO) email account
3. Password protected email (detailed instructions below)

To Encrypt a File using WinZip

1. Save the file to your hard drive
2. Open Windows Explorer and locate the file
3. Right click on the file
4. Select "WinZip"
5. Select "Add to Zip File"
6. An Add box pops up. Near the bottom of the box you will see an "Options" area
7. Click the "Encrypt added files" check box
8. Click the "Add" button
9. Check the "Hide Password" checkbox if not already checked
 - a. Enter the password of **E and last 4 digits of your award number (e.g., E1234)**
 - b. Select the 256-Bit AES encryption radio button
 - c. Click "OK"
10. You have successfully encrypted the new Zip file that can now be attached to an email

Sending an encrypted Zip File via email:

1. Compose a new message
2. Attach the Zip File
3. Send message

E-QIP User Guides - <https://nbib.opm.gov/e-qip-background-investigations/>

Forms

[e-QIP Applicant Listing](#)

A form completed by the CPOC and submitted to CSPS to initiate suitability screening/background investigations on applicants in order to work on an SSA award.

[Declaration for Federal Employment \(OF-306\)](#)

A form completed by an applicant and submitted to CSPS. Required for SSA's assessment of an applicant's suitability for access to federal systems, information, data, or premises and required for an OPM background investigation.

[Fair Credit Reporting Act \(FCRA\) Authorization Form](#)

A consent form completed by an applicant and submitted to CSPS to authorize the collection of credit information associated with the background investigation.

[Contractor Rollover Request Form](#)

If personnel authorized to work on an SSA award are to perform work under a new award, the CPOC must submit this form to the COR-COTR (e.g., ENService@ssa.gov) of the new award. The COR-COTR must then submit the form to CSPS for processing. CSPS will notify the CPOC and the COR-COTR of suitability to work on the new award.

[Cover Sheet](#)

If an applicant does not use SSA's electronic fingerprint services option, they must use this

cover sheet to mail hardcopy fingerprint cards to CSPA. Mailed fingerprint cards will result in a delay in processing.