CDSE
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PULSE

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THIS MONTH'S FOCUS

Mental Health's Impact on Security Clearances

By Isaiah Burwell

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and it is important to remember that people living with a mental health condition sometimes face stigmas that deter them from seeking help or admitting they have an issue. Security professionals with mental health conditions may feel additional pressure because of fears that their condition could ruin their ability to earn or maintain a security clearance. This article will give you the facts about mental health care and security clearances, so you will no longer need to worry about rumors or stigmas.

The first fact is that you will not lose or fail to gain a clearance just because you sought mental health treatment. Seeking mental health care is a positive course of action and a sign of sound judgment. It is the most common way to mitigate mental health issues and is recognized as a positive step during the personnel vetting process. But not all mental health issues are created equal, so which ones do you need to report?

For initial clearance requests, clearance candidates should follow current guidance regarding reporting instructions. The issues of potential concern are legal findings of mental incompetence, court-ordered mental health care, in-patient mental health

care, certain diagnoses which may impair judgment or reliability, and self-appraised mental health concerns that could affect judgment or reliability. Actively cleared individuals who experience one of the examples cited above should report this information to their security office if they have not already. But what happens after you report the information?

Investigators may request the opinion of your current or most recent health care professional to determine whether your condition possibly affects your reliability, judgment, trustworthiness, and capacity to perform sensitive national security duties. Depending upon the concern, the investigator may request a summary or hard copies of your medical records. In some cases, individuals may be asked to take part in an independent psychological evaluation with a government-approved evaluator. The Center for Development of Security Excellence (CDSE) hosted a webinar last year called "Mental Health and National Security Eligibility," which expanded on the topics covered in this article.

The webinar featured panelists from Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency's (DCSA) Adjudication and Vetting Services (AVS) and DOD Insider Threat Management and Analysis Center (DITMAC), as well as the Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals. The event was one of many DCSA efforts to support Mental Health Awareness Month. "Promoting mental health is not just a wellness issue, it is a human issue that affects our entire workforce," said DCSA Director David Cattler. "It's important that all gatekeepers take care of themselves; mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and socially. All employees should know that if you need help, you should get it." Click **here** to access a recording of the webinar. There is even an option to view the recording and receive a CDSE Certificate of Training at the end.

One of the most important takeaways for this year's Mental Health Awareness month is that there are no automatically disqualifying conditions or treatments. Security professionals have demonstrated the ability to manage work effectively with appropriate treatment, even for reportable psychological conditions When necessary, seeking mental health care helps demonstrate integrity and trustworthiness and may contribute favorably to decisions about eligibility.

Mental Health and Your Security Clearance

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and an important time to raise awareness on the importance of a person's overall health and well-being. CDSE and DCSA, along with adjudications, are working to raise awareness that seeking mental health services does not affect one's ability to gain or hold a security clearance. For more information, refer to the DCSA Adjudications "Mental Health and Security Clearances" **fact sheet** or watch the CDSE **webinar**, "Mental Health and Your Security Clearance Eligibility."

COUNTERINTELLIGENCE

Psychology and Counterintelligence: A Mission Critical Intersection Webinar

The CDSE Counterintelligence team is co-hosting a webinar on Thursday, May 22, "Psychology and Counterintelligence: A Mission Critical Intersection," from 1-2:30 p.m. In this webinar, a panel of subject-matter experts will discuss psychology-based research and consultation centered on why trusted insiders are vulnerable to foreign intelligence recruitment. This unclassified webinar will be hosted exclusively on the CDSE Adobe Connect online virtual platform. Registration for the webinar can be found **here**.

INSIDER THREAT

Insider Threat Detection and Analysis Course

Want to sharpen your skills by identifying insider threat indicators? Secure your spot now for the upcoming session on June 23-27, 2025.

This 5-day course enables attendees to apply critical thinking skills and applicable structured analytic techniques to potential insider threat indicators. Participants will work with CDSE experts to obtain and use holistic data in conjunction with the application of critical pathway theory. Additionally, students will be taught how to apply Executive Orders, DOD, and Intelligence Community (IC) authorities in data gathering, receive instruction on constitutional and privacy rights, and learn the processes for conducting and reporting response actions from intake of an initial potential threat to mitigation of the threat.

The 2025 course schedule is as follows:

June 23-27, 2025 (Virtual)
July 21-25, 2025 (Virtual)
Aug. 18-22, 2025 (Virtual)
Sept. 22-26, 2025 (Virtual)

Register for the ITDAC course and view the full list of prerequisites.

Artificial Intelligence and the Insider Threat Job Aid

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) allow for a wide range of applications. The increasing availability of AI, such as Chat GPT, has made technology more accessible to the average person and despite its positive uses, AI can also pose a threat to national security through cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and the manipulation of critical infrastructure systems. Understanding how AI and ML impact your organization is critical to heeding the potential harm that it can cause when misused. Learn more about AI, how to mitigate AI threats, types of AI-driven attacks, and best practices for preventing AI-related attacks with the **AI and IT job aid**.

2025-2026 Insider Threat Vigilance Campaign

Reinforcing insider threat awareness training regularly is an effective way to ensure the workforce is prepared to recognize and respond to insider threat risks. The response could include options on how to support a colleague in need of assistance or how to report concerning behaviors. Use the Insider Threat Vigilance Campaign as a tool to increase communication and awareness through resources on the **Insider Threat Toolkit**.

PERSONNEL VETTING

New Personnel Vetting Process Webcast Series

Check out CDSE's highly anticipated and newly released Personnel Vetting (PV) Webcast Series! This three-episode series introduces the process that a newly hired federal civilian, military member, or contractor will experience as part of the PV process. This series targets all federal and contractor employees who seek eligibility to access classified information or who hold a sensitive position and need to understand their PV requirements and processes.

Tune in **here** for episodes one, two, and three as we explore the Pre-investigation, Investigation, and Adjudication stage of the PV Process.

Personnel Vetting Seminar

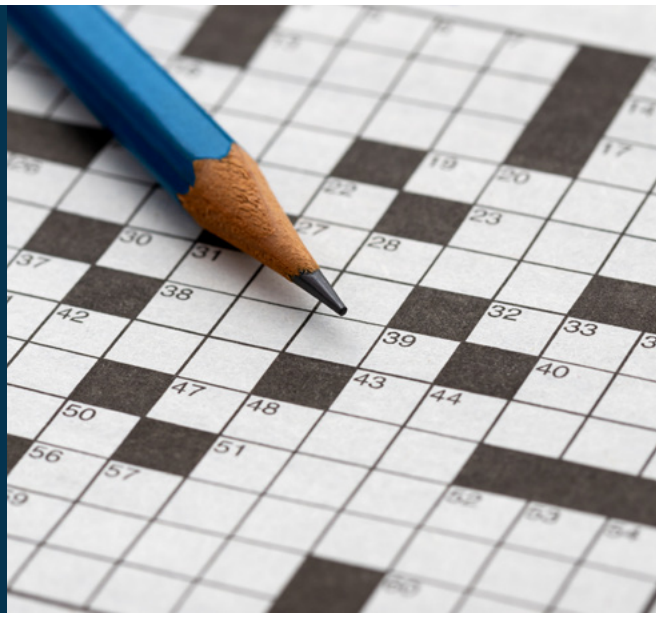
CDSE is presenting the "Virtual Instructor-led Personnel Vetting Seminar" on August 5-6. This seminar addresses the requirements associated with the reform of the Federal Government's personnel vetting system, known as Trusted Workforce 2.0 (TW 2.0). This course will aid personnel vetting practitioners in DOD, federal agencies, and private industry to understand TW 2.0 requirements, identify gaps between current and future procedures, and support implementation.

The seminar covers end-to-end personnel vetting operations, including the Federal Background Investigations Program, National Security Adjudications, and Continuous Vetting in a collaborative environment. The course consists of two half-days and targets U.S. Government security practitioners, military personnel, cleared industry Facility Security Officers, and other federal personnel performing personnel vetting security-related duties and personnel executing security programs for cleared industry. Visit the **course page** to learn more and register.

Security Awareness Games

Test your knowledge and encourage security awareness at your organization with CDSE Personnel Vetting newly released security awareness games. **Download** and play the following new games today:

- National Security Adjudications Crossword
- Continuous Vetting Crossword
- Personnel Vetting Scenarios Crossword



New Information Resources Available: Customer Service Request and Incident Report Management

On April 1, CDSE, in coordination with DCSA Adjudication and Vetting Services (AVS), posted an information resource on **cdse.edu**. The **Customer Service Request (CSR)** and **Incident Report (IR) Management** resources provide clarification and guidance on submissions of CSRs and IRs to DCSA AVS.

The materials are part of a larger effort across the DOD to improve the Personnel Vetting mission, or "Pathfinder Initiative." AVS has provided individual CSR and IR guidance on an ad hoc basis to customers. However, until now, the guidance has never been publicly available. The **new materials** will answer customer requests for specific information on CSR and IR submission and incorporate customer feedback. As a result, this will enable customers to submit timely, quality-improved CSR and IR information for adjudication. View the **products** and receive more information.

SPECIAL ACCESS PROGRAMS

Introduction to Special Access Programs (SAPs)

Seats are still available for CDSE's Intro to SAPs Course May 13-16 in Linthicum, Md. Learn the basic requirements to implement security for a DOD SAP. This course will cover DoDM 5205.07, DoDI 5205.11, and DoDM 5205.07 vols 1-4, as well as how to perform duties as a SAP security professional. The focus of this course will be on providing entry level SAP security professionals the tools needed to implement DOD policies in their programs. Participants will learn about security enhancements such as the SAP Nomination process, SAP facility construction requirements, Risk Management Framework, and other security enhancements as outlined in the DOD policy.

The 3-and-a-half-day course is geared towards new U.S. Government SAP security professionals to include civilian, contractor, military, as well as those in other Federal agencies that work with DOD SAPs. Visit the **course page** to learn more and register.

Introduction to Special Access Programs (SAPs) (SA101.01)

This **Introduction to Special Access Programs (SAPs)** course focuses on the Department of Defense (DOD) Special Access Program (SAP) fundamentals and is designed to prepare students to become SAP Security Professionals. The 3.5-day instructor-led lessons address security enhancements across all security disciplines, compliance inspections and their requirements, annual reviews, and audits. The course is administered through eLearning prerequisites and synchronous elements using the collaborative learning environment (CLE) STEPP. Class activities include group and individual practical exercises, quizzes, a team capstone, and a final course exam. The prerequisite eLearning courses/exams that provide a comprehensive introduction to SAP must be successfully completed prior to requesting enrollment into the instructor-led course.

The course teaches students how to apply SAP policy documents, apply the requirements of the National Industrial Security Program and the DD Form 254, how to identify SAP cybersecurity procedures, and much more.

The next course will be offered on May 13-16 in Linthicum, Md.

Special Access Program (SAP) Training

From April 1-4 the Special Access Program (SAP) team conducted training at a Lockheed Martin facility in Sunnyvale, Calif. (see photo on left). CDSE delivered the Introduction to SAPs course to 30 military, civilian, and DoD contractors covering foundational SAP policy. Students engaged in traditional learning along with various practical exercises that covered SAPF wall requirements, as well as marking, DD 254s, and security incidents. The course culminated with the groups creating and delivering an annual training presentation on specified SAP topics. This course was well received by the students and the hosts with 34 students in attendance which included five students from partner countries (4 UK and 1 AUS).

DOD photo credit: Dan Norris

Orientation to Special Access Program (SAP) Security Compliance Course

Learn the processes and procedures for conducting compliance inspections for DOD SAPs in CDSE's Orientation to SAP Security Compliance course May 19-20 in Linthicum, Md. This course will cover the DoDM 5205.07 vols. 1-4 and provide students with an opportunity to provide ratings in a mock team inspection.

The 2-day course is geared towards SAP security professionals with an understanding of fundamental SAP security practices and a firm grasp of the DoDM 5205.07 vols. 1-4 to apply this knowledge during the mock inspection portion of the course. Visit the **course page** to learn more and register.

FY25 COURSES

Upcoming FY25 Courses

Interested in earning professional development units (PDUs) toward maintenance of Security Professional Education Development (SPēD) Program certifications and credentials? CDSE's instructor-led training (ILT) or virtual instructor-led training (VILT) courses are the perfect opportunities for you to receive free training online. Select courses even have the American Council on Education (ACE) CREDIT recommendations that can earn you transfer credits at participating universities.

Classes fill quickly, so start planning now for your FY25 security training. Below is a list of available ILT/VILT courses.

Cybersecurity
Assessing Risk and Applying Security Controls to NISP Systems (CS301.01)
- September 22 - 26, 2025 (Linthicum, Md.)

Industrial Security
Getting Started Seminar for New Facility Security Officers (FSOs) VILT (IS121.10)
- August 5 - 8, 2025 (Virtual)

Information Security
Activity Security Manager VILT (IF203.10)
- July 28 - August 24, 2025 (Virtual)

Insider Threat
Insider Threat Detection Analysis VILT (INT200.10)
- June 23 - 27, 2025 (Virtual)
- July 21 - 25, 2025 (Virtual)
- August 18 - 22, 2025 (Virtual)
- September 22 - 26, 2025 (Virtual)

Personnel Security
Personnel Vetting Seminar VILT (PS200.10)
- August 5 - 6, 2025 (Virtual)

Physical Security
Physical Security and Asset Protection (PY201.01)
- August 18 - 22, 2025 (Linthicum, Md.)

Special Access Programs
Introduction to Special Access Programs (SA101.01)
- August 5 - 8, 2025 (Lexington, Mass.) (MIT)
- September 9 - 12, 2025 (Rolling Meadows, Ill.) (NGC)

Introduction to Special Access Programs VILT (SA101.10)
- June 2 - 10, 2025 (Virtual)

Orientation to SAP Security Compliance Inspections (SA210.0)
- August 11 - 12, 2025 (Lexington, Mass.)

SAP Mid-Level Security Management (SA201.01)
- July 14 - 18, 2025 (Linthicum, Md.)

EDUCATION & TRAINING

CDSE Education Division's Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Program

CDSE's Education Division's **Post-Baccalaureate Certificate (PBC)** program offers graduate-level courses designed to broaden DOD security specialists' knowledge and understanding of the security profession and prepare them for leadership positions and responsibilities.

The program includes five asynchronous, post-baccalaureate security certificates in Risk Management, Security Leadership, Security Management, Security (Generalist), and Systems and Operations at no cost to eligible participants.

Each certificate requires the completion of four, 16-week courses. The American Council on Education (ACE) has evaluated each course for credit recommendations, allowing students to transfer credit to colleges and universities for further education.

CDSE Education Division Fall 2025 Semester

The CDSE Education Division is preparing for the Fall 2025 semester beginning August 18-December 14. Registration will open on June 18, 2025, in STEPP, and close on August 18. Classes fill quickly, so please register early to secure your spot. There will be 15 virtual instructor-led courses running 8-week and 16-week duration. During the semester students will engage in collegiate-level reading, research, discussion forums, and group projects. Students can earn 80 or 160 Professional Development Units (PDU). For more information contact the **CDSE Education Division**.

CDSE Embraces the Future of Learning Recognition with Digital Badges

The Center for Development of Security Excellence (CDSE) took a significant step into the future of learning recognition in March 2022 by adopting digital badges for their American Council of Education (ACE) college credit recommended courses. This move reflects a growing trend among educational institutions and organizations to embrace digital credentials as a verifiable and shareable way to recognize achievements.

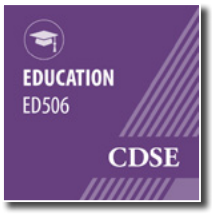
What are Digital Badges?
Digital badges are essentially digital representations of skills and achievements earned. More than just a digital certificate, they contain verifiable metadata that provide detailed information about the credential, including the issuing organization, criteria earned, and relevant skills acquired.

How CDSE Badging Works:
CDSE has partnered with Credly, a leading digital credentialing platform, to manage and issue its badges. The process is straightforward:

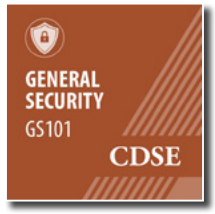
1. **Course Completion**: Upon successful completion of an eligible CDSE or DCSA Security Academy course, the Security Training Registrar's Office uploads the roster to Credly.
2. **Badge Issuance**: Credly issues a digital badge to each student.
3. **Student Acceptance**: Students receive an email notification prompting them to create a free Credly account and accept their badge(s).
4. **Sharing and Recognition**: Once accepted, students can easily share their badges on social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, X, and job search websites like ZipRecruiter, increasing their visibility to potential employers.

Benefits Beyond Recognition:
The benefits of CDSE's digital badging system extend beyond simply showcasing achievements.

- **College Credit**: Credly offers a transcript self-service for courses with ACE college credit recommendations. Students can send these transcripts to their chosen institutions, potentially earning college credit for their CDSE training and education.
- **Skills Mapping**: When CDSE creates a badge, they map it to specific skills and standards. This mapping links to Credly's real-time job market data, showing students the demand for their newly acquired skills and related career paths.
- **Data-Driven Insights**: CDSE utilizes Credly's analytics dashboard to track badge issuance, acceptance, sharing, and engagement. This data provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of their programs and helps identify areas for improvement.



Impressive Early Adoption:
Since implementing digital badges in 2022, CDSE has issued 2,543 badges, with a 65% acceptance rate by students. This positive response, coupled with a 39% sharing rate on social media, demonstrates the value and appeal of digital credentials for learners.



Looking Ahead:
CDSE's adoption of digital badges signifies their commitment to providing students with valuable, portable, and easily recognizable credentials. As the use of digital badges continues to grow, CDSE is well-positioned to lead the way in recognizing and promoting the achievements of its learners in the digital age.

CDSE & DCSA NEWS

CDSE Hosts Sweden International Reciprocal Visit

Leadership from the Center for Development of Security Excellence (CDSE) welcomed the Sweden Delegation to the Security Training Directorate, in Linthicum Md. for a day of learning sessions on May 7. The Sweden Delegation conducted reciprocal security site visits throughout the National Capital Region and met with senior leaders from Defense Technology Security Administration, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence & Security - Physical Security, Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency, and Raytheon.

DOD photo credit: Joseph Deluco

2025 Virtual DCSA Security Conference for Industry Recordings Now Available

The 2025 Virtual DCSA Security Conference for Industry was held on April 23-24. The conference was a great success and more than 2,500 participants had the distinct pleasure to hear from panelists discussing policy and operational updates, personnel security updates, and industrial security integration updates from the U.S. military. This year's theme – "The Power of Partnership: Trust in People, Facilities, Systems, and Data" emphasized the important role of trust and building strong partnerships across the defense industrial base. Conference recordings are now **available**.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Meet Stephanie Langlais, Industrial Security Instructor

Stephanie Langlais

Stephanie Langlais is a Training Specialist on the Industrial Security team for the DCSA Security Academy. Her role focuses on the needs of external stakeholders like Facility Security Officers (FSOs), government security specialists, as well as anyone in cleared industry. Prior to joining the DCSA nearly two years ago, Ms. Langlais served in the Army as an Intelligence Analyst and worked in cleared industry in various security positions.

Ms. Langlais' role includes the development and management of Industrial Security courses, job aids, toolkits, games, videos, and shorts. You can access products Ms. Langlais supports **here**. Most recently, she developed a new job aid and **Industrial Security Flyers** to help to provide security reminders to individuals operating within the National Industrial Security Program (NISP).

She also instructs lessons on Industrial Security topics within virtual and in person training, and looks forward to serving as the Course Manager for the **Getting Started Seminar for New FSOs** (IS121.10) on June 9, 2025, at this year's NCMS Annual Training Seminar in Kissimmee, Fla. The course is a great refresher for experienced FSOs to stay current on security guidance and emerging trends, as well as a way for new FSOs to learn the fundamentals.

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.

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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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