THIS MONTH'S FOCUS

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

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MENTAL HEALTH CARE AND NATIONAL SECURITY ELIGIBILITY

Millions of Americans face the reality of struggling with mental health, manifesting itself in different ways for different people. May is Mental Health Awareness Month, which aims to help fight mental health stigma, provide support, educate the public, and advocate for policies. The theme for 2022's **Mental Health Awareness Month** is: "Back to Basics." This issue of the Pulse will highlight mental health care in the context of the national security workforce, as well as some mental health resources.

Several studies have found cleared personnel are fearful that seeking behavioral health treatment will result in a loss or denial of national security eligibility. It is important to note that mental health concerns are very common. Based on **2020 statistics**, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) noted that 11.3 percent of adults aged 18 and older reported regular feelings of worry, nervousness, or anxiety during the year. Another 4.5 percent regularly experienced feelings of depression. When cleared individuals experience symptoms like these, they usually do not raise security concerns. However, certain mental health conditions or symptoms can result in concerning behaviors that warrant further investigation or inquiry. Nevertheless, it is important that cleared employees understand that their wellness is a priority and that seeking mental health care, when needed, will not put their national security eligibility in jeopardy.
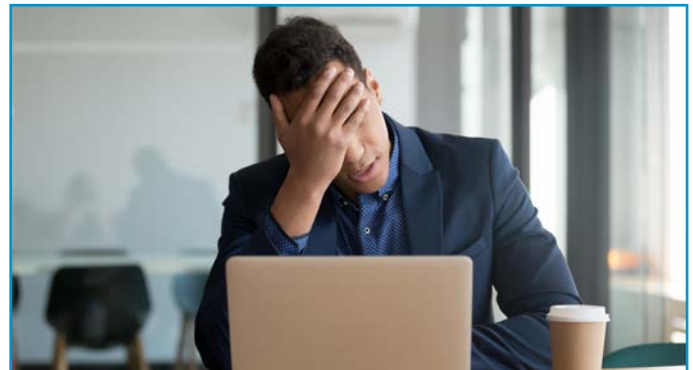
In January of this year, CDSE hosted a live webinar with policy experts from the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) Adjudications with the hope to de-stigmatize mental health in relation to national security eligibility. They discussed whether seeking behavioral health treatment could result in a loss or denial of eligibility as well as other stigmas and concerns surrounding mental health in the adjudicative process. View the recordings and handouts from that webinar **here**.
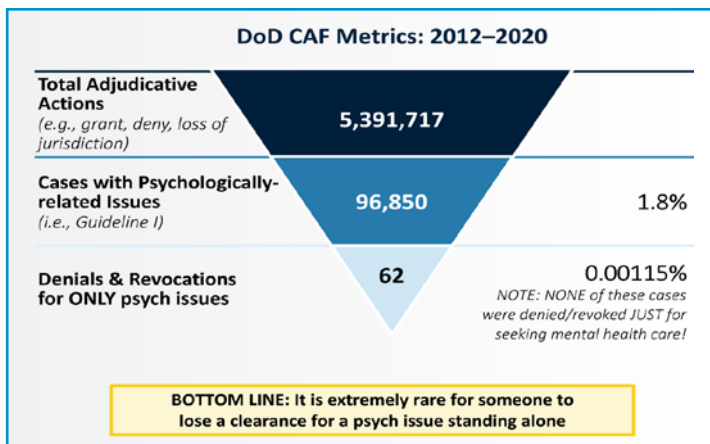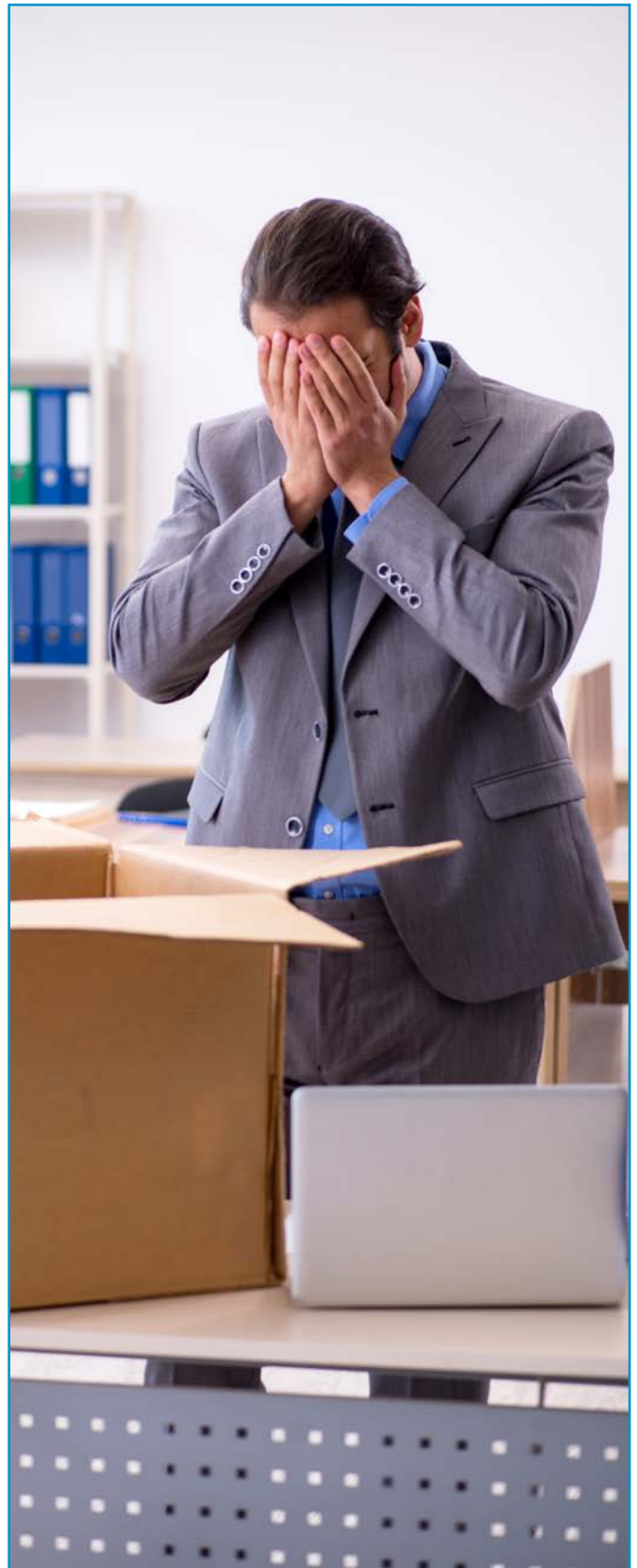
REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

One of the biggest questions surrounding mental health and security is what actions are reportable in association with Section 21, Psychological and Emotional Health, of the Standard Form 86, Questionnaire for National Security Positions. The DOD Manual 5200.02, Enclosure 11 and Security Executive Agent Directive 3 outlines possible thresholds for what would merit reporting:

- Declarations of mental incompetence by a court or administrative agency.
- Court ordered mental health care or evaluation (inpatient or outpatient).
- Hospitalizations for mental health conditions (voluntary or involuntary).
- Diagnoses of the following conditions by a health care professional:
  ◦ Psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, or delusional disorder.
  ◦ Bipolar mood disorders.
  ◦ Personality disorders such as borderline personality disorder or antisocial personality disorder.
  (please note that there is NO diagnosis that is considered automatically disqualifying)
- Developing a mental health or other health condition that substantially affects judgment, reliability, or trustworthiness.

It is important to have factual data to counter the myth that an individual is likely to lose or fail to gain national security eligibility after seeking mental health care or experiencing mental health symptoms. The denial and revocation statistics in the graphic above show that this is not the case. To learn more, view the DCSA Mental Health and Security **Fact Sheet** and the **FAQs**.

DoD CAF Metrics: 2012–2020

Total Adjudicative Actions (e.g., grant, deny, loss of jurisdiction)	5,391,717	
Cases with Psychologically-related Issues (i.e., Guideline I)	96,850	1.8%
Denials & Revocations for ONLY psych issues	62	0.00115% NOTE: NONE of these cases were denied/revoked JUST for seeking mental health care!

BOTTOM LINE: It is extremely rare for someone to lose a clearance for a psych issue standing alone

MENTAL WELLNESS

Avoiding treatment hurts readiness and increases security risks. Seeking behavioral health treatment is a positive course of action that often mitigates security concerns. Practicing mental wellness ensures that security personnel are able to carry out their duties effectively. With solid coping skills, drawing upon ways to both take care of emotions in a given situation and solve the problem with which one is faced (when the problem is soluble) will allow personnel to feel and perform better when under stress.

Behavioral health resources* are available for cleared individuals who need them:
- Seek support and assistance when needed, such as through the organization's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or similar programs. Remember: merely seeking mental health care will not impact national security eligibility.
- Mindfulness and meditation are two excellent emotion-focused coping techniques. There are many excellent books, apps, and even a program called "Headspace," **currently streaming** which can help develop these skills.
- In addition to the EAP and other programs mentioned above, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence has an **interactive resource** to help walk through mental wellness and what it can mean for the individual.

*Resources and information provided by psychologists at DCSA

UPCOMING WEBINARS

DCSA invites you to join an unclassified webinar:

"China's Threat to U.S. Critical Technologies"
Thursday, May 19, 2022
1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Register today

NEW PSAs AVAILABLE

CDSE has two new Public Service Announcements (PSAs) available to share and download on the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service. You can also view all the past PSAs in our **Electronic Library**.

Certificates vs. Certifications

CDSE Platforms

FALL EDUCATION REGISTRATION NOW AVAILABLE

Registration is open for the fall semester of advanced and graduate-level CDSE Education classes that will run from August 22 to December 18, 2022. Classes fill quickly, so please register early to secure your spot in the fall semester.

CDSE Education program offers:
- Tuition free & flexible 100% virtual instructor-led courses
- Five Security Education Certificate programs
- Highly qualified instructors
- Real-world practical assignments
- Virtual networking with professionals throughout the security community

You can learn more about the classes and register for them by accessing the links located here: **https://www.cdse.edu/Education/Courses/**

To register, log into STEPP via: **https://cdse.usalearning.gov/local/pwt_privacy_policy/view.php**

If you have any questions, or need additional information, send inquiries to: **dcsa.cdseeducation@mail.mil**

JUNE DOD SECURITY SPECIALIST COURSE

The next DOD Security Specialist Course (SSC) is scheduled to start June 21, 2022 and is entirely virtual! The four-week, virtual SSC provides students with a baseline of fundamental knowledge to perform common DOD security tasks and practices. It incorporates industrial, information, personnel, and physical security disciplines to understand their interrelationships, related policies, programs, and procedures.

To learn more, register, and view the required prerequisites, visit **https://www.cdse.edu/Training/Virtual-Instructor-led-Courses/GS101/**

VIRTUAL DCSA SECURITY CONFERENCE FOR INDUSTRY RECORDINGS

The recordings from February's conference are now available!

If you attended the virtual conference or if you registered but were not able to attend, you have been pre-registered to retrieve the recordings. Visit **https://cdse.acms.com/vdsci22recording/event/login.html** to view anything you may have missed/want to revisit.

WHAT THE SECURITY COMMUNITY IS SAYING

The "**Mental Health and Your Security Clearance Eligibility**" webinar was our highest attended webinar to date. Over 1,000 security professionals attended and were able to ask questions live.

97.8% of participants who completed the after-webinar poll "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" the webinar was "Directly Relevant to My Area of Responsibility."

CDSE NEWS

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https://www.cdse.edu/news/index.html.

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