

Decoding a Career in Cybersecurity: Understanding Security Clearances

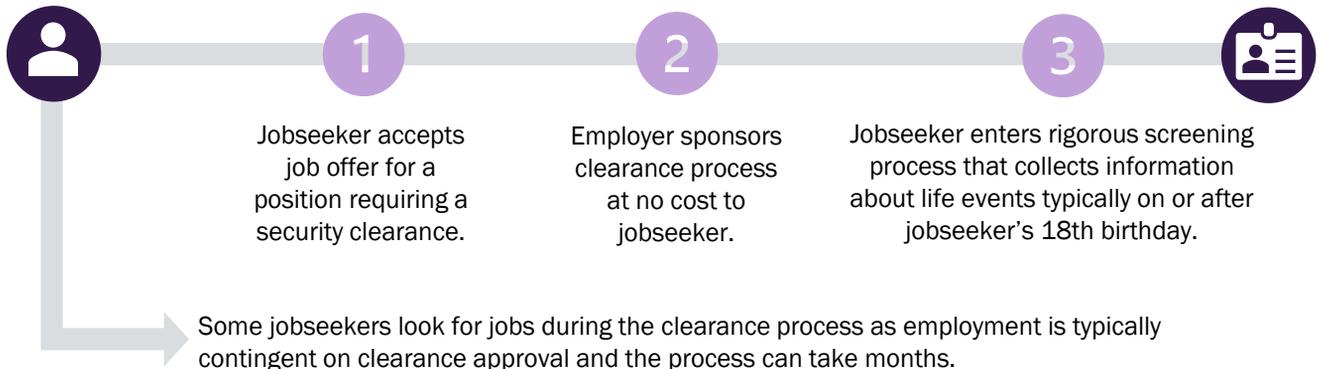
A security clearance provides access to certain jobs with the U.S. Government, military, and associated contractors. Roles outside of government affairs that require the handling of sensitive information will not require a security clearance but may involve a background check.

Do you need a security clearance to be successful in cybersecurity?

Not necessarily. Only **11%** of all cybersecurity job postings **require a security clearance**.¹ Some government agencies, military organizations, and associated contractors may require security clearances depending on the jobseekers' need to access classified information. For example, cybersecurity jobs at the Central Intelligence Agency may involve accessing classified information while cybersecurity jobs of equal salary and title at the Department of Transportation do not require such access. **Cybersecurity jobs that do not require security clearance are equally lucrative when it comes to building skills, experience, and establishing relationships.**

The Process

The process of obtaining a security clearance assesses a jobseeker's trustworthiness to access information that could be damaging to the United States if disclosed or used improperly.



What could prevent you from receiving a security clearance?

It depends. The process collects reliable information about a jobseeker's past and present, as well as evaluates information about personal conduct, financial considerations, criminal activity², and alcohol and drug use. Factors such as the motivation and degree of involvement in such conduct, the frequency and recency of the conduct, and the likelihood of recurrence are also considered.³

Notes

1. Burning Glass, slide 12. (2015). *Job Market Intelligence: CyberSecurity Jobs*. BurningGlass Technologies. CYAI confirmed with Burning Glass that as of January 2021, this is the most current available metric.
2. Jobseekers with a criminal record should research local organizations that provide legal and/or expungement support services to receive counsel about how to prepare for the screening process.
3. Office of the Director of National Intelligence. (2017). *National Security Adjudicative Guidelines*. Security Executive Agent Directive, 4th ed., p. 6. United States, US Intelligence Community, Director of National Intelligence. National Intelligence.

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