

Student Guide

Guideline K: Handling Protected Information

Objective	To help the learner identify Handling Protected Information security concerns as outlined in the Adjudicative Guidelines for Determining Eligibility for Access to Classified Information, December 29, 2005.
POC	PersonnelSecurity.Training@dss.mil
Estimated Completion Time	20 Minutes

Screen 1

Meet Jennifer Dudek. She is a 34-year old Linguistic Analyst employed by a U.S. Government contractor.

Jennifer applied for and recently accepted an analyst position. Her new position requires Top Secret eligibility and access.

Jennifer submitted the required paperwork to initiate her security background investigation through her security office.

Now, your task is to review Jennifer's completed background investigation files and make an eligibility determination. Please note that other adjudicative guidelines may apply. In this case you will focus only on Guideline K: Handling Protected Information.

Screen 2

The most important part of an adjudicator's job is to examine a sufficient period of a person's life to determine whether or not the person is an acceptable security risk.

This task should never be taken lightly as cleared personnel may eventually have access to classified information.

Adjudicators take into consideration all relevant information, both favorable and unfavorable from a person's past and present to form the "whole-person" concept, when making an eligibility determination.

Screen 3

In evaluating the relevance of an individual's conduct, the adjudicator should consider the following factors:

- The nature, extent, and seriousness of the conduct;
- The circumstances surrounding the conduct to include knowledgeable participation;

- The frequency and recency of the conduct;
- The individual's age and maturity at the time of the conduct;
- The extent to which participation is voluntary;
- The presence or absence of rehabilitation and other permanent behavior changes;
- The motivation for the conduct;
- The potential for pressure, coercion, exploitation, or duress; and
- The likelihood of continuation or recurrence.

Screen 4

Guideline K: Handling Protected Information states that deliberate or negligent failure to comply with rules and regulations for protecting classified or other sensitive information raises doubt about an individual's trustworthiness, judgment, reliability, or willingness and ability to safeguard such information, and is a serious security concern.

While reviewing Jennifer's investigative file, you read that in her previous position, she had stored classified information improperly.

Click on the folder to review the details in Jennifer's file.

(File folder information.)

Jennifer Dudek: Investigative File

- Jennifer had Secret eligibility and access in her previous position.
- Four months ago, Jennifer voluntarily resigned from her former position after she was placed on paid administrative leave.
- Employment records indicated she was placed on administrative leave after her supervisor discovered two classified documents marked "Secret" in her unlocked desk drawer and reported the incident to the company Facility Security Officer (FSO). She refused to attend additional training and resigned.
- During the subject interview, Jennifer stated that she had stored classified documents in her desk drawers on other occasions because it made it easier for her to accomplish her work. She stated she always kept the drawer locked. She could not remember the exact number of times she had stored classified documents in her desk.
- Jennifer indicated that she had been counseled regarding this practice and was directed to receive additional training from her former company's FSO. She stated she never did this because she was too busy at work. She also stated that although she knew that storing documents in her desk drawer was a security violation, she felt confident that keeping the drawer locked was sufficient protection. Jennifer also disclosed that shortly after resigning from her former position she found several classified documents locked in her home office

desk. She stated that she had completely forgotten about them. She did not know what to do with the documents, so she burned them in her fireplace. She was fearful she would get in trouble for having them at her home even though they were locked in her desk. She feels that it really shouldn't be a big deal, since she no longer works for the company and she always kept them locked up and never gave them to anyone, or let anyone look at them. She feels that she should be trusted as she has received training on the proper handling of classified documents, and now knows what to do.

Screen 5

Does the information in Jennifer's file raise a valid security concern under Guideline K: Handling Protected Information?

Click on the file folder to review the file and select the disqualifier(s) that apply to Jennifer's case.

Then click on the Submit button.

Screen 6

Jennifer's failure to protect classified information is a security concern, but each Adjudicative Guideline has specific mitigating conditions that sometimes allow an applicant to be cleared in spite of the concern.

Do any mitigating conditions apply to Jennifer's case?

Click on the file folder to review the file and select the mitigator(s) that apply to Jennifer's case.

Then click on the Submit button.

Screen 7

The information from Jennifer's background investigation raised a concern under Guideline K: Handling Protected Information.

Jennifer's failure to protect classified information by storing it in her locked desk drawer on an unspecified number of occasions, and her continued lax security practices despite training, raises questions about her ability or willingness to comply with laws, rules, and regulations.

Handling Protected Information disqualifying conditions cannot be mitigated in Jennifer's case and the information is sufficient to warrant an adverse eligibility determination.

Even though we cannot mitigate the security concern under Guideline K: Handling Protected Information, her case still needs to be adjudicated against all the Adjudicative Guidelines.

For more information on the other Adjudicative Guidelines, please see the other Shorts developed by CDSE.

To review Guideline K: Handling Protected Information, click the Job Aid button.