

Instructions for Completing SF-86 On-line

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requires all candidates being offered positions of employment at U.S. government agencies or departments, to complete their Questionnaires for National Security Positions (SF-86) on-line via the electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing (e-QIP). To streamline the employment process, the Department of State asks that you fill out the SF-86 electronically, certify and electronically sign the release forms, and print a copy of the full SF86 and the release forms with you to your Oral Assessment.

DO NOT RELEASE OR SUBMIT THE SF-86 FORM AT THIS TIME.

Please bring a hard copy of the SF-86 and release forms to your Oral Assessment. If you pass the Oral Assessment, a Diplomatic Security investigator will review the SF-86 with you and indicate when you are ready to submit the electronic version.

Starting the e-QIP Application

Before you begin work on your SF-86, please thoroughly read and follow the instructions before completing the SF-86 to prevent any unnecessary delays in the processing of your security clearance request.

- To start work on your SF-86, go to the e-QIP web-site by clicking <http://www.opm.gov/e-qip/browser-check.asp>. Your web browser will be tested for compatibility with the e-QIP application. Please follow the on-screen instructions if your web browser is not compatible; otherwise click "Continue".

Logging Into e-QIP

The e-QIP application sets up a secure connection to protect your personal information. To logon, you will provide your Social Security Number and answer three "Golden" security questions.

- **The very first time you login to e-QIP**, you will need to register for a username and password. When you choose this option, you will need to provide your Social Security Number. Afterwards, you will be prompted to answer three default questions. **When asked for your city of birth, please respond with "Unknown."** You will be able to correct the response to reflect your actual place of birth after you enter the application. When choosing a username and password, please be sure to create responses that you will be able to remember as it often takes candidates multiple days to complete the form.
- **If you have previously used the e-QIP application** (the system was updated in June 2012) you will now be required to create a username and password.
 - If you last used the system before June 2012, then you may not be registered in the updated system; you should register for a username and password. If you get a message

indicating that your SSN is already in use, email FSOQuestions@state.gov indicating that you are having trouble logging into e-QIP. Provide your first and last names and the last four digits of your SSN. Let us know that you cannot remember your username.

- If you remember your username, but have forgotten your password, you can create a new password for yourself by clicking on “Forgot password” on the e-QIP login page. Most of the information previously entered will be in the e-QIP system, and will be available for editing until you certify your current SF-86 form.

Do not certify the SF-86 until you are certain that all information is current and complete. After certification you will still be able to log into e-QIP to release/submit your SF-86. **Do not release/submit your SF-86 until after you pass the Oral Assessment.**

If you encounter difficulty with logging into e-QIP, please contact FSOQuestions@state.gov and provide the following: your full name, last four numbers of your SSN, and your career track.

Completing Your SF-86

Be completely honest and forthright when answering all questions on the SF-86. If necessary, provide any clarification or explanation for how you answered a particular question in the comments or continuation section. When in doubt, provide an explanation.

Please list not only your current spouse, fiancé(e), or cohabitant of a romantic nature, but also any former spouse(s); also include in-laws.

You must provide your residential addresses for the last 10 years, do not leave any gaps in time. If you split your time between multiple residences during a time period, you must list all residences, not just the permanent address. You are not required to list temporary locations of less than 90 days that did not serve as a permanent or mailing address. If a residence was in an apartment complex, include the name of the complex and the unit number. If your name was not on the lease, then include the name of the individual who was on the rental or lease agreement. Also, include residences while in college.

Do not list education before your 18th birthday, unless it is needed for the two year minimum education history.

You must provide your employment history for the last 10 years, do not leave any gaps in time. List all full or part-time employment, in chronological order. If you had a period of unemployment or were a full-time student, list that as period of “Unemployment”, along with reference information for someone who can verify your activities during that time. If the government or a large organization was your employer, identify the specific department, bureau, division, section, or unit where you actually worked.

Physical addresses, not post office boxes, are required so our Regional Security Officers can properly locate your residence.

If you have spent time overseas, provide references who are in the United States now and who can corroborate or verify your overseas activities. If necessary, this information can be added in the continuation section of the SF-86.

For question 14, for any foreign relatives or associates (if in doubt, list them), please also provide the following information either in the continuation section of the SF-86 or on an attached piece of plain bond paper that is submitted with your release forms:

- a) the person's occupation,
- b) current employer,
- c) whether they now or in the past have worked for a government agency, police, security or intelligence organization, and if so, for which specific agency/organization and government(s) and
- d) the types of contact you have with them (phone, email), as well as the frequency and date of your last contact.

(Also remember that the Supplemental Questions and the Supplemental Form for Public Trust Positions (SF-85P and SF-85PS) are needed, signed by the foreign spouse, foreign cohabitant, or foreign national. See <http://careers.state.gov/resources/downloads>, "What to prepare and bring to the Assessment Center (For Foreign Service Generalist and Specialist candidates)" to download forms.)

For male candidates, if you do not know your selective service number, you can obtain it by calling the automated system at 1-847-688-6888 or via their website at <http://www.sss.gov>. Include information for any prior security clearances issued. If uncertain of the type or date(s), at a minimum provide the agency that granted it.

Certifying your e-QIP

Certifying your SF-86 is your way of swearing that all of the information in the form is correct, complete and up-to-date, so only certify the form if you are certain that this is true. This is different from "releasing" your SF-86. Releasing your SF-86 allows the Department of State to review the information you have put into your form and conduct a background investigation.

NOTE: After you certify the e-QIP, you will NOT be able to edit it the form. Once the form is released you will not be able to print it.

You will need to complete, E-sign and date all of the signature forms, including the Fair Credit Reporting Disclosure and Authorization.

- **EXCEPTION:** The Mental Health Release should be returned only if you answered "yes" to question 21.

After reviewing your application for accuracy, click the "yes" box and then the "Begin Request Certification Process." Continue with the following steps:

- **Signature Option #1:** Clicking the box that indicates that you agree to utilize the "click-to-sign" release forms option will allow you to electronically sign your SF-86. If you DO NOT wish to do

utilize the “click-to-sign” form, you will need to print out signature forms that you will sign when in front of the DS agent at your Oral Assessment.

- **Signature Option #2:** If you DO utilize the “click-to-sign” form, you will then be prompted to enter your e-QIP password. After entering in your password, click “Continue.” You should now see your first release form. Scroll down and click the “Click Here to Sign” button. This will sign and date the form automatically. You will then be given the option to print and/or save a copy of the release receipt for your records.
- Simply repeat the “Signature Option #2” process described above for the remaining release forms.

Upon e-signing your release forms, you will see “Instructions for Signature Pages, Attachments, and Archival copy.” Follow the instructions to verify that the release forms are e-signed, to print off an archival copy of your SF-86 for your own records and finally, to attach any additional documents to the e-QIP submission. **NOTE: This will be your ONLY chance to print the Archival copy of your SF-86.** (Reminder: Your spouse, estranged spouse, fiancé(e), or cohabitant of a romantic nature needs to sign the DS-7601, Authorization to Conduct Criminal History Inquiry for Spouse or Cohabitant.)

Save the electronic document, which is available only to you until you release it into the system. If you pass the Oral Assessment, a Diplomatic Security officer will review it with you and then request that you submit it.

Not preparing the form in advance will delay the processing of your security clearance

REMEMBER: The information is secure until you authorize release.

AFTER downloading and/or printing your archival copy of your SF-86, the system will prompt you to “Release Request/Transmit to Agency”. **DO NOT RELEASE THE e-QIP.** You will do this once you pass your Oral Assessment and meet with a DS agent.

When you pass the Oral Assessment you will be fingerprinted on-site. It is not necessary to bring completed fingerprint cards.

Additional material may be shipped via Fed Ex, UPS, DHL, or TNT (these are the only mail carriers that are accepted by at the DS Headquarters) to:

*U.S. Department of State
DS/SI/PSS Routing/Intake Dept. – 10th Floor
1801 North Lynn Street
Arlington, VA 22209*

OR

Mailed via United States Postal Service (USPS) to:

Department of State

P.O. Box 13285

Arlington, VA 22219

Resolving Problems

If you encounter any problems while completing the SF-86, please contact the Office of Personnel Security and Suitability's Customer Service Center (CSC). The CSC is staffed Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays, from 6:00 AM until 7:00 PM Eastern Time. They can be reached toll-free within the U.S. at (866) 643-INFO (4636), or at (571) 345-3186. You can also email securityclearance@state.gov.