

Automated Continuing Evaluation System and Your Security Clearance

By Greg Rinckey Depending on the level of clearance you hold, you will be reinvestigated for your fitness to hold a security clearance either every five, 10, or 15 years. In between the updated background investigations, clearance holders are required to report to their security manager certain issues or problems that arise in their background. Additionally, security managers are required to report to the Central Adjudications Facility any issues or concerns that arise which may affect a clearance holder's continued eligibility for a clearance. This gives the agency insight into whether or not an individual's security clearance eligibility needs to be reviewed sooner than the proscribed updated background investigation. However, this requirement for clearance holders often is not followed. The clearance holder may not actually know that there is a requirement to self report arising issues or problems or the clearance holder may be afraid to report issues that have developed out of fear of suspension or revocation of his security clearance. Automated Continuing Evaluation System

To gain greater insight into an applicant's background between reinvestigations, the Automated Continuing Evaluation System (ACES) was developed. However, this is not a new development. ACES has been around since as early as 2005. It just has not been formally implemented into the background investigation process. With the security clearance process being highly scrutinized, there's a strong possibility that the ACES or a similar system will be implemented in the near future. What does that mean for you

It means that agencies will have the ability to run regular database checks on security clearance holders in search of derogatory information. The database checks would include searching criminal databases, civil court databases, and financial databases. This could be especially problematic for clearance holders who experience financial difficulties and who accumulate a certain level of delinquent debt. Historically, many clearance holders in these situations have probably tried to clear up their delinquent debt before their next reinvestigation in hopes that the financial blemish would not negatively affect their clearance. However, if the use of the ACES is implemented, clearance holders will possibly have very little to no time to resolve their delinquent debts prior to the agency reviewing their clearance eligibility. If an agency determines that the amount of delinquent debt justifies a suspension or revocation of the individual's clearance, this could mean that far more individuals will have to face the appeals process. With respect to individuals who are arrested for some type of criminal conduct requiring a court appearance, the agency could review the conduct before the individual ever attends court. What this means is that even if the charges are unsubstantiated and will likely be dismissed by a judge, an individual's continued security clearance eligibility can come under review prior to his court date. At this point in time, there is no telling how an agency will handle this circumstance. The agency could place any further review in abeyance until the conclusion of a court case or the agency could temporarily suspend an individual's clearance pending the disposition of the charges against him. If ACES is implemented into background investigations, those of you with security clearances need to realize how your

day-to-day decisions and conduct can quickly impact your security clearance eligibility, and quite possibly your job.