



Greg Rinckey and Nicole Smith write about the differences between verifiers and references on the SF86.

Security Clearance Verifiers and References on the SF86

Security clearance background investigations can be time consuming. Providing all the pertinent and relevant information on the SF86 Questionnaire when you complete it facilitates the expeditious completion of your background investigation, especially if it covers activities in two or more states. Specifically you should ensure that you list proper references and verifiers for various activities on the SF86. Verifiers

There is a difference between a verifier and a reference. A verifier is someone who has direct knowledge of a certain activity in your background. For example, Section 11, "Where you Have Lived," on the SF86 requires you to list your residential addresses for the last ten years. In this section, you must list a verifier

for the residences in which you lived for the last three years. This should be a direct neighbor. An investigator is generally required to interview at least two neighbors at each location you resided in within the last three years. If you are unable to provide the names of any direct neighbors, then the next best verifier is someone who visited you at your residence, preferably a non-relative. Relatives are generally interviewed as a last resort when no other verifiers can be obtained. The next section in which you may be required to list a verifier is Section 12, "Education." Here you must list verifiers for schools that you have attended within the last three years. Again this should be someone who has direct knowledge of your attendance such as a classmate or professor. If you are unable to provide the names of any direct verifiers then you should list the name of an individual who is aware of your attendance at that particular school and more preferably, someone who can verify your dates

of attendance, whether you attended full or part time, and whether you had any problems at the educational institution. The employment section, Section 13, is straight forward. You must list a supervisor that you had at each place of employment within the last ten years. For Top Secret clearances, investigators are generally required to interview at least two coworkers at each job location in which you worked for six months or more. Job location rather than employment is specified because if you held a position in which you changed job locations then more than just the typical two verifiers will be interviewed. Although you are not required to list names of coworkers on the SF86 an investigator will ask you during your subject interview for these additional names. As such you should be prepared and bring the names and contact information of these individuals to your interview with an investigator.

References

You are then required to list references in Section 16,0 "People Who Know You Well." These should be friends, peers, and/or colleagues who are essentially aware of what you do in your spare time. While not specifically stated on the SF86, these people should be individuals who socialize with you outside of work. The three individuals, collectively

must cover the last seven years. What this means is that you don't have to list three people who have each socialized with you for the last seven years. You can list one individual who has socialized with you for the last two years, one individual who socialized with you in three through five, and one individual who socialized with you in years six through seven. On the SF86, there are various sections which can elicit derogatory information in your background such as criminal conduct, drug and alcohol abuse, and financial issues. Although you are not required to list on the SF86 the names of individuals who can directly verify these issues, you will be asked for names during an interview with an investigator. For top secret clearances an investigator will be required to interview individuals who have direct knowledge regarding derogatory issues in your background. For instance, if you engaged in illegal drug use, an investigator will want to interview an individual who has observed you illegally using drugs. For financial issues, an investigator will usually interview your spouse (if you are married) as a spouse generally has the most knowledge regarding your financial responsibility. To summarize, you should be prepared to provide an investigator with the "best" verifiers and references in order to prevent an investigator

from having to try to develop or obtain these names during the course of the investigation. Consult with a security clearance representation attorney if you are not sure whom you should identify as a verifier or reference. Greg Rinckey, Esq. is the Managing Partner of Tully Rinckey PLLC, one of the largest federal sector employment law firms in the country. Mr. Rinckey is a recognized leader in the military and federal employment law sectors. Nicole Smith, Esq., a Tully Rinckey PLLC Associate, represents government employees and contractors in a wide range of security clearance matters, to include providing security clearance application assistance and working with clients going through appeals processes for denials, revocations and suspensions. Ms. Smith spent nine years as a national security background investigator.