

Federal Employees Seeing Increase in Revoked Security Clearances

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence recently reported a 5 percent decline in the number of federal employees who held top secret clearance in the 2010 fiscal year as compared to the previous fiscal year.

The cause for the revocations often stems from problems found on financial screenings done for the security clearances. During the economic downturn, many federal employees have experienced financial hardships such as foreclosures that tarnish their credit reports and result in the loss of a security clearance

, which can cause the employee to lose his or her job.

"During a security clearance reinvestigation financial records are thoroughly checked. If those records are compromised with something like a foreclosure then the government sees that as trouble," said Christopher Graham, a former Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals (DOHA) administrative judge who practices security clearance representation at Tully Rinckey PLLC. "The government views an individual with financial hardships as someone who is more likely to take a bribe or be blackmailed. That's not a person they trust to be on their team."

Top secret security clearances are checked every five years; secret clearances are reinvestigated every 10 years while confidential clearances are supervised every 15 years. After a security clearance is suspended based upon the findings of a reinvestigation, Graham said a federal employee faces a higher risk of losing his or her job.

Graham said he believes that the government should reclassify some of the jobs that require a security clearance

as the current structure has become obsolete in his opinion. According to Graham, "Since 9/11, the government mandated that security clearances were now needed for all of these jobs that never required one before. At the time it made sense but it no longer does because we are better protected."

Federal employees faced with financial troubles must do two things to prevent their security clearance

from being revoked. According to Graham, they should keep all financial records and make good faith efforts to prove to the government that they are paying back their debt or fixing the problem at hand.