LIS SOLUTIONS

SECURITY MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

For decades, mental health has been a huge concern among millions of Americans. Many people have experienced it themselves or know someone who suffers from mental illness. The process of understanding the differences between perceived mental illness behaviors, and the actual clinical diagnosis of mental illness is not that simple as there are no universally-recognized tests to do so.

If mental health behaviors or signs are not addressed, there can be multiple negative health outcomes including physical illness. Each illness has its own symptoms, but common signs of mental illness in adults and adolescents can include but are not limited to the following:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable "highs" or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulties understanding or relating to other people
- Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy
- Changes in eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Changes in sex drive
- Difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations, in which a person experiences and senses things that don't exist in objective reality)



- Inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior or personality ("lack of insight" or anosognosia)
- Overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing "aches and pains")
- Thinking about suicide
- Inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance

Reaching out to a health insurance advocate, primary care doctor or state/county mental health professional is a first step to addressing the presence of one or several of these symptoms. At any time, do not be afraid to reach out.

Learning all you can about mental health is very important. Being aware of warning signs can help let you or others know if you need to speak to a professional. For a lot people, getting a diagnosis is a step in the right direction to determining the necessary steps to execute an effective treatment plan. A highly-trained health care provider can help develop a treatment plan that could help you or someone you love with direction on the right medication to use, therapy or other lifestyle changes.



STATISTICS:

- 1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year
- 1 in 20 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year
- 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged
 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year
- ▶ 50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% by age 24

THE TRUTH ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AND SECURITY CLEARANCE ELIGIBILITY:

Seeking mental health services does not affect an individual's ability to gain or hold their clearance eligibility. DCSA Consolidated Adjudication Services (CAS) Adjudicators will take into account individuals actively seeking the necessary mental health treatment as a positive step in the security clearance process.

Section 21 of the e-APP/SF86: Psychological and Emotional Health

"The U.S. government recognizes the critical importance of mental health and advocates proactive management of mental health conditions to support the wellness and recovery of Federal employees and others. Everyday



individuals with mental health conditions carry out their duties without presenting a security risk. While most individuals with mental health conditions do not present security risks, there may be times when such a condition can affect a person's eligibility for a security clearance. Individuals experience a range of reactions to traumatic events. For example, the death of a loved one, divorce, major injury, service in a military combat environment, sexual assault, domestic violence, or other difficult work-related, family, personal, or medical issues may lead to grief, depression, or other responses. The government recognizes that mental health counseling and treatment may provide important support for those who have experienced such events, as well as for those with other mental health conditions. **Nothing in this questionnaire is intended to discourage those who might benefit from such treatment from seeking it.** Mental health treatment and counseling, in and of itself, **is not a reason to revoke or deny eligibility** for access to classified information or for holding a sensitive position, suitability or fitness to obtain or retain Federal or contract employment, or eligibility for physical or logical access to federally controlled facilities or information systems. Seeking or receiving mental health care for personal wellness and recovery may contribute favorably to decisions about your eligibility."

However, it is important for the cleared contractors and employees to know that there are no automatically disqualifying conditions or treatments. For individuals suffering from psychological conditions, seeking and participating in a treatment plan helps demonstrate integrity and trustworthiness and may contribute favorably to decisions about eligibility. Finally, avoiding necessary care, in contrast, can raise security concerns.

Reference:

- (n.d.). Mental Health Awareness Month. https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Mental-Health-Awareness-Month
- (n.d.). PERSONNEL VETTING WEBINAR. Mental Health Care and Your Security Clearance 20 JAN 2022. https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/webinars/DCSA_CDSE-Mental-Health-Care-Webinar.pdf

