



**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEFENSE OFFICE OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS**



In the matter of:)
)
) ISCR Case No. 19-01404
)
)
Applicant for Security Clearance)

Appearances

For Government: Andrew Henderson, Esq., Department Counsel
For Applicant: *Pro se*

January 14, 2020

Decision

CEFOLA, Richard A., Administrative Judge:

Statement of the Case

On July 26, 2019, in accordance with DoD Directive 5220.6, as amended (Directive), the Department of Defense issued Applicant a Statement of Reasons (SOR) alleging facts that raise security concerns under Guideline F. The SOR further informed Applicant that, based on information available to the government, DoD adjudicators could not make the preliminary affirmative finding it is clearly consistent with the national interest to grant or continue Applicant’s security clearance.

Applicant answered the SOR on August 13, 2019, and requested a hearing before an administrative judge. (Answer.) The case was assigned to me on September 3, 2019. The Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals (DOHA) issued a notice of hearing on September 3, 2019, scheduling the hearing for September 24, 2019. The hearing was convened as scheduled. The Government offered Exhibits (GXs) 1 through 5, which were admitted without objection. Applicant testified on her own behalf. The record was left open until November 15, 2019, for receipt of additional documentation. Applicant presented a packet of documents, which I marked Applicant’s Exhibits (AppX)

A, and admitted into evidence without objection. DOHA received the transcript of the hearing (TR) on October 2, 2019.

Findings of Fact

Applicant admitted all the allegations in the SOR. After a thorough and careful review of the pleadings, exhibits, and testimony, I make the following findings of fact.

Applicant is a 43-year-old employee of a defense contractor, currently on medical leave. (TR at page 5 lines 15~16, and at page 26 line 21 to page 31 line 14.) She has held a security clearance since October of 2011. (GX 1 at pages 32~33.) She is divorced, and has no children. Applicant attributes her current financial difficulties to periods of unemployment, and to medical issues. (TR at page 12 line 9 to page 15 line 25.)

Guideline F - Financial Considerations

1.a. Applicant admits that she has a past-due debt to Creditor A in the amount of about \$15,087. Despite having an additional month to submit documentation to show she is addressing this admitted debt, Applicant has only submitted undated correspondence from Creditor A showing this debt is still past due. (TR at page 16 line 13 to page 19 line 22, and AppX A at pages 1~2.) This allegation is found against Applicant.

1.b. Applicant admits that she has a past-due debt to Creditor B in the amount of about \$14,132. Despite having an additional month to submit documentation to show she is addressing this admitted debt, Applicant has only submitted correspondence from Creditor B showing this debt is still past due. (TR at page 19 line 23 to page 23 line 4, and AppX A at page 3.) This allegation is found against Applicant.

1.c. and 1.d Applicant admits that she has past-due debts to Creditor C in an amount totaling about \$7,690, and has submitted documentation show she has addressed these debts. (TR at page 23 line 5 to page 24 line 12, and AppX A at pages 4~6.) These allegations are found for Applicant.

1.e. Applicant admits that she has a past-due debt to Creditor E in the amount of about \$1,966. Despite having an additional month to submit documentation to show she is addressing this admitted debt, Applicant has only resubmitted correspondence from Creditor E showing this debt is still past due. (TR at page 24 line 13 to page 25 line 16, Answer at page 4, and AppX A at page 7.) This allegation is found against Applicant.

1.f.~1.i Applicant admits that she has past-due medical debts in an amount totaling about \$3,073. Despite having an additional month to submit documentation to show she is addressing these admitted debts, Applicant has only resubmitted correspondence from these creditors showing these debts are still past due. (TR at page 25 line 17 to page 26 line 14, Answer at pages 5~10, and AppX A at pages 8~14.) These allegations are found against Applicant.

Policies

When evaluating an applicant's national security eligibility, the administrative judge must consider the adjudicative guidelines (AG). In addition to brief introductory explanations for each guideline, the adjudicative guidelines list potentially disqualifying conditions and mitigating conditions, which are to be used in evaluating an applicant's national security eligibility.

These guidelines are not inflexible rules of law. Instead, recognizing the complexities of human behavior, administrative judges apply the guidelines in conjunction with the factors listed in AG ¶ 2 describing the adjudicative process. The administrative judge's overarching adjudicative goal is a fair, impartial, and commonsense decision. According to AG ¶ 2(a), the entire process is a conscientious scrutiny of a number of variables known as the whole-person concept. The administrative judge must consider all available, reliable information about the person, past and present, favorable and unfavorable, in making a decision.

The protection of the national security is the paramount consideration. AG ¶ 2(b) requires that "[a]ny doubt concerning personnel being considered for national security eligibility will be resolved in favor of the national security." In reaching this decision, I have drawn only those conclusions that are reasonable, logical, and based on the evidence contained in the record.

Under Directive ¶ E3.1.14, the Government must present evidence to establish controverted facts alleged in the SOR. Directive ¶ E3.1.15 states the "applicant is responsible for presenting witnesses and other evidence to rebut, explain, extenuate, or mitigate facts admitted by the applicant or proven by Department Counsel, and has the ultimate burden of persuasion as to obtaining a favorable clearance decision."

A person who applies for access to classified information seeks to enter into a fiduciary relationship with the Government predicated upon trust and confidence. This relationship transcends normal duty hours and endures throughout off-duty hours. The Government reposes a high degree of trust and confidence in individuals to whom it grants access to classified information. Decisions include, by necessity, consideration of the possible risk the applicant may deliberately or inadvertently fail to protect or safeguard classified information. Such decisions entail a certain degree of legally permissible extrapolation as to potential, rather than actual, risk of compromise of classified information.

Section 7 of Executive Order (EO) 10865 provides that adverse decisions shall be "in terms of the national interest and shall in no sense be a determination as to the loyalty of the applicant concerned." See *also* EO 12968, Section 3.1(b) (listing multiple prerequisites for access to classified or sensitive information).

Analysis

Guideline F - Financial Considerations

The security concern relating to the guideline for Financial Considerations is set out in AG ¶ 18:

Failure to live within one's means, satisfy debts, and meet financial obligations may indicate poor self-control, lack of judgment, or unwillingness to abide by rules and regulations, all of which can raise questions about an individual's reliability, trustworthiness, and ability to protect classified or sensitive information. Financial distress can also be caused or exacerbated by, and thus can be a possible indicator of, other issues of personnel security concern such as excessive gambling, mental health conditions, substance misuse, or alcohol abuse or dependence. An individual who is financially overextended is at greater risk of having to engage in illegal or otherwise questionable acts to generate funds. Affluence that cannot be explained by known sources of income is also a security concern insofar as it may result from criminal activity, including espionage.

The guideline notes several conditions that could raise security concerns under AG ¶ 19. Three are potentially applicable in this case:

- (a) inability to satisfy debts;
- (b) unwillingness to satisfy debts regardless of the ability to do so; and
- (c) a history of not meeting financial obligations.

Applicant has significant past-due indebtedness to numerous creditors. The evidence is sufficient to raise these disqualifying conditions.

AG ¶ 20 provides conditions that could mitigate security concerns. I considered all of the mitigating conditions under AG ¶ 20 including:

- (a) the behavior happened so long ago, was so infrequent, or occurred under such circumstances that it is unlikely to recur and does not cast doubt on the individual's current reliability, trustworthiness, or good judgment;
- (b) the conditions that resulted in the financial problem were largely beyond the person's control (e.g., loss of employment, a business downturn, unexpected medical emergency, a death, divorce or separation, clear victimization by predatory lending practices, or identity theft), and the individual acted responsibly under the circumstances;

(c) the individual has received or is receiving financial counseling for the problem from a legitimate and credible source, such as a non-profit credit counseling service, and there are clear indications that the problem is being resolved or is under control; and

(d) the individual initiated and is adhering to a good-faith effort to repay overdue creditors or otherwise resolve debts.

Although Applicant can attribute her financial difficulties to medical issues and to periods of unemployment, her financial problems are ongoing. She has only addressed two of the admitted past-due debts. She has not demonstrated that future financial problems are unlikely. Mitigation under AG ¶ 20 has not been established.

Whole-Person Concept

Under the whole-person concept, the administrative judge must evaluate an applicant's eligibility for a security clearance by considering the totality of the applicant's conduct and all relevant circumstances. The administrative judge should consider the nine adjudicative process factors listed at AG ¶ 2(d):

(1) the nature, extent, and seriousness of the conduct; (2) the circumstances surrounding the conduct, to include knowledgeable participation; (3) the frequency and recency of the conduct; (4) the individual's age and maturity at the time of the conduct; (5) the extent to which participation is voluntary; (6) the presence or absence of rehabilitation and other permanent behavioral changes; (7) the motivation for the conduct; (8) the potential for pressure, coercion, exploitation, or duress; and (9) the likelihood of continuation or recurrence.

Under AG ¶ 2(c), the ultimate determination of whether to grant eligibility for a security clearance must be an overall commonsense judgment based upon careful consideration of the guidelines and the whole-person concept.

I considered the potentially disqualifying and mitigating conditions in light of all facts and circumstances surrounding this case. I have incorporated my comments under Guideline F in my whole-person analysis. Some of the factors in AG ¶ 2(d) were addressed under those guidelines, but some warrant additional comment. Overall, the record evidence leaves me with questions and doubts as to Applicant's eligibility and suitability for a security clearance. For all these reasons, I conclude Applicant failed to mitigate the Financial Considerations security concerns.

Formal Findings

Formal findings for or against Applicant on the allegations set forth in the SOR, as required by ¶ E3.1.25 of the Directive, are:

Paragraph 1, Guideline F:	AGAINST APPLICANT
Subparagraphs 1.a. and 1.b.:	Against Applicant
Subparagraphs 1.c. and 1.d.:	For Applicant
Subparagraphs 1.e.~1.l.:	Against Applicant

Conclusion

In light of all of the circumstances presented by the record in this case, it is not clearly consistent with the national interest to grant Applicant national security eligibility for a security clearance. Eligibility for access to classified information is denied.

Richard A. Cefola
Administrative Judge