THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

APR 18 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
ASSISTANT SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DIRECTOR, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT
DIRECTORS OF DEFENSE AGENCIES
DIRECTORS OF THE DOD FIELD ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: Policy Implementation – Mental Health Question, Standard Form (SF) 86, Questionnaire for National Security Positions

The Department of Defense (DoD) successfully advocated a revision to Question 21 on the SF86 regarding mental and emotional health. Effective immediately, DoD Components will distribute the attached letter and the revised Question 21 language to all Service members, and to all DoD Civilians occupying sensitive positions.

Until the updated SF86 (Office of Management and Budget Approval Number 3206-0005) is published later this year, all individuals completing the form will respond to Question 21, whether hard copy or in electronic format, using the revised language. DoD Components must ensure the immediate implementation of this policy. Questions may be directed to Ms. Andrea Upperman at Andrea.Upperman@osd.mil or (703) 604-1112.

Robert M. Gates

Attachments:
1. Memorandum to All Individuals Completing the SF86 Questionnaire for National Security Positions
2. Question 21 – Revised (Feb 08)

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

To: All Individuals Completing the SF86 Questionnaire for National Security Positions

The purpose of this cover letter is to reaffirm that the Department of Defense strongly endorses the practice of seeking professional help to address all health-related concerns, whether mental or physical. The Department considers it a mark of strength and maturity to seek appropriate healthcare, whenever required. This is especially important for DoD, whose members are routinely exposed to traumatic events with psychological and physical impact beyond those encountered in other environments.

The Secretary of Defense has successfully advocated a revised Question 21 of the SF86 Questionnaire for National Security Positions, which asks about mental health treatment. The revised question, which is attached for reference, excludes counseling related to marital, family, or grief issues, unless related to violence by you. It also rules out counseling for adjustments from service in a military combat environment.

Seeking professional care for these mental health issues should not be perceived to jeopardize an individual's security clearance. On the contrary, failure to seek care actually increases the likelihood that psychological distress could escalate to a more serious mental condition, which could preclude an individual from performing sensitive duties.

Thus, we encourage you to seek care when necessary, knowing that getting professional assistance as needed is the best way to sustain one's ability to perform well. A grateful Nation entrusts you with its safety and wellbeing, and counts on you to maintain your mental and physical health.

Sincerely,

James R. Clapper, Jr.
Under Secretary of Defense
Intelligence

David S. C. Chu
Under Secretary of Defense
Personnel and Readiness

Attachment:
Question 21 – Revised (Feb 08)

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

To: All Individuals Completing the SF86 Questionnaire for National Security Positions

Until the Office of Personnel and Management publishes an updated SF86 later this year, all individuals completing the form will respond to Question 21 using the revised language, whether hard copy or in electronic format.

Sincerely,

James R. Clapper, Jr.
Under Secretary of Defense
Intelligence

David S. C. Chu
Under Secretary of Defense
Personnel and Readiness

Standard Form 86, Question 21 – Revised
(Feb 2008)

Mental health counseling in and of itself <u>is not a reason</u> to revoke or deny a clearance.

In the last 7 years, have you consulted with a health care professional regarding an emotional or mental health condition or were you hospitalized for such a condition?

Answer "No" if the counseling was for any of the following reasons and was not court-ordered:

- ***strictly marital, family, grief not related to violence by you; or***
- ***strictly related to adjustments from service in a military combat environment.***

If you answered "Yes," indicate who conducted the treatment and/or counseling, provide the following information, and sign the Authorization for Release of Medical Information Pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).