

Quick Reference Guide for e-QIP Applicants (courtesy of OPM)

What is e-QIP?

e-QIP is a web-based automated system that was designed to facilitate the processing of standard investigative forms used when conducting background investigations. e-QIP allows you to electronically enter, update, and transmit your personal investigative data over a secure internet connection to a requesting agency. The requesting agency will review and approve the investigative data.

Why am I being required to have a background investigation?

The U.S. Government conducts background investigations to determine if applicants or employees meet the suitability or fitness requirements for employment, or are eligible for access to Federal facilities, automated systems, or classified information. All persons must be properly investigated and adjudicated to be issued a credential and to be authorized access to classified information.

The scope and type of background investigation varies depending on the duties and access requirements for the position, as does the amount of time it takes to be completed. The employing or sponsoring agency is responsible for determining the appropriate level of investigation to be conducted based on current rules and procedures.

Is completing the form mandatory in order to get a position in the Federal Government?

Providing the information requested on the form is voluntary. However, if you do not provide the information requested, you will not meet the requirements of the job and therefore will not be considered further. If you are already employed by the Federal government, your appointment will be terminated.

Be completely honest and forthright when answering all questions on the form. If necessary, provide clarification or explanation for how you answered a particular question in the Optional Comment section provided in e-QIP.

How much time do I have to complete the form?

Be as timely as possible in completing your investigation request. You should earnestly try to meet the deadline your agency has established for you to complete this form. For most agencies this is within 3-7 days.

What happens to all the personal information I enter into e-QIP? Is it safe?

Security is of major concern whenever you're dealing with personal information. This concern has been addressed by specific Federal guidelines implemented to safeguard Personally Identifiable Information (PII). PII is defined as information that can be used to discern or trace a person's identity; and alone, or combined with other information, can be used to compromise the integrity of records relating to a person by permitting unauthorized access to or unauthorized disclosure of these records.

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Several security measures have been built into e-QIP to help minimize unauthorized access to your information:

- e-QIP uses layered security to stop hackers and limit access to personal data. Transport Layer Security (TLS) and its predecessor, Secure Socket Layer (SSL), are cryptographic protocols that provide security for communications over networks such as the Internet. TLS and SSL encrypt the segments of network connections at the application layer to ensure secure end-to-end transit at the transport layer. All internet-based data transmissions are encrypted using 128-bit encryption provided through common browser SSL technology.
- e-QIP requires that TLS 1.0 be enabled in the user's browser. Without this setting, users get a "Page Cannot be Displayed" error.
- To log in to e-QIP, each user must answer a series of unique questions, referred to as Golden Questions.
- Only persons with active investigation requests can log in to e-QIP.
- e-QIP has been tested through the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Certification and Accreditation process and is compliant with all requirements.

It is OPM policy to ensure that all information technology (IT) systems that collect, maintain, or disseminate information in an identifiable form have Federally mandated controls in place to protect and prevent the breach of PII. Learn more about OPM's privacy policies.

Before you Begin

What do I need in order to complete the form?

To complete your e-QIP investigation request form you will need access to a computer with an internet connection and a web browser. You should also gather the following information:

- Proof of citizenship, if applicable, such as: passport, Citizenship Certificate, Naturalization Certificate, or Alien Registration Number. You may be able to obtain assistance with lost or unknown information at the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website](#). (external link)
- Employment history
 - Current and previous work location addresses
 - Supervisor names, addresses, and contact information
- Personal residence(s)
 - Name, address, and phone number of a person who knew you at each address.
 - **Note:** All contact information must include a physical address. PO Boxes are unacceptable. APO/FPO is allowed. For assistance in locating address information refer to [Google Maps](#). (external link)
- Three personal references
- Relatives' citizenship information, aliases, employer, and foreign activities
- Selective Service ID number, if applicable. If you need your Service Number call 1-847-688-6888 or visit the [Selective Service System website](#). (external link)

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Note that for each of the categories listed above, you will need provide information covering the amount of time specified in the question on the form or to your 16th birthday, whichever is shorter. In most categories the instructions will state that you should not list information before your 18th birthday unless necessary to provide a minimum of two years history. Please follow the specific instructions for each question.

Configuring Your Browser

e-QIP is designed to be accessible from any computer, anywhere in the world. You can use your personal computer at home or at the office. e-QIP is compatible with most well-known browsers including [Microsoft's Internet Explorer](#), [Mozilla Firefox](#), and [Apple Safari](#). The following procedures are provided as a guide for configuring your browser to work with e-QIP.

Configuring Internet Explorer

To use Microsoft Internet Explorer (IE) to access e-QIP, you must have version 6.0 or higher. To check your version, open Internet Explorer and select Help > About Internet Explorer. For the latest version and updates, visit the [Microsoft website](#). ([external link](#))

Note: If you use AOL, make sure you open Internet Explorer in a new window outside of AOL.

To set the Security options for IE

- 1 Select **Tools** in the menu bar.
- 2 Select **Internet Options**.
- 3 Select the **Security** tab.
- 4 Select the **Custom Level** button.
- 5 In the Settings list box, scroll down to the **Scripting** section.
- 6 Under **Active Scripting**, select the **Enable** radio button.
- 7 Click **OK**.
- 8 Select **Yes** on the confirmation dialog box.
- 9 Select the **Advanced** tab.
- 10 In the Settings list box, scroll down to the **Security** section.
- 11 Select the check box for each of the following options:
 - a **Do not save encrypted pages to disk**
 - b **Empty temporary Internet Files Folder when browser is closed**
- 12 Click **OK**.

TLS and SSL encrypt the segments of network connections. e-QIP requires that TLS 1.0 be enabled in your browser. If you do not enable this setting, you will get a "Page Cannot be Displayed" error.

To enable TLS 1.0 in IE

- 1 Select **Tools**
- 2 Select **Internet Options**
- 3 Select the **Advanced** tab
- 4 Scroll down to the **Security** section

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- 5 Select the **Use TLS 1.0** check box
- 6 Click **OK**

Configuring Mozilla Firefox

To use Mozilla Firefox with e-QIP, you must have version 1.0 or newer. You can find out which version of Firefox you have by selecting Help > About Mozilla Firefox. To get the latest version, visit the [Mozilla website. \(external link\)](#)

Although security settings may be preset to default to appropriate settings, you should verify that they are configured as follows.

To configure Firefox

- 1 Select **Tools**
- 2 Select **Options...**
- 3 Select the **Advanced** icon
- 4 Select the **Encryption** tab
- 5 Under **Protocols**, select the check boxes for **Use SSL 3.0** and **Use TLS 1.0**
- 6 Select the **Privacy** icon
- 7 In the **Firefox will** drop-down list box, select **Use custom settings for history**
- 8 Make sure the following options are selected:
 - a **Accept cookies from sites**
 - b **Clear history when Firefox closes**
- 9 Make sure the following options are de-selected:
 - a **Remember search and form history**
 - b **Remember what I have downloaded**
- 10 Click **OK**

Configuring Apple - Safari

Use the following instructions to configure your Safari browser to access e-QIP:

To configure Safari

- 1 Select **Edit** in the menu bar
- 2 Select **Preferences...**
- 3 Click the **Advanced** icon
- 4 Select the **Show Develop Menu in Menu Bar** check box
- 5 Click **Close**
- 6 Select **Develop** in the menu bar
- 7 Under **User Agent**, select an appropriate browser: Internet Explorer for PC or Firefox for Mac
- 8 If needed, type www.opm.gov/e-QIP into the address field to re-connect to the e-QIP website

Configuring JAWS Screen-Reading Software

Job Access with Speech (JAWS) is a vocal screen-reading software program that enables visually impaired users of e-QIP to complete their forms. It accomplishes this by providing the user with access to the information displayed on the screen via a text-to-speech system. This system converts normal language text into speech or by means

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of a Braille display and allows for comprehensive keyboard interaction with the computer.

To use the JAWS Screen-Reading Software with e-QIP, you must use Internet Explorer 6.0 or later and JAWS 10.0 or later. For more information, use the JAWS resource at the [Freedom Scientific website](#). ([external link](#))

Getting Started

Access the e-QIP Login Screen

To begin completing the form in e-QIP, you must first access the e-QIP login screen.

To access the e-QIP Applicant Login Screen

- 1 Open your internet browser and navigate to the following URL: www.opm.gov/e-QIP/. The e-QIP Application Page will appear.
- 2 Click the button labeled **Enter e-QIP Applicant Site** (or) click the **Applicant Site** option in the left navigation bar.
- 3 e-QIP automatically tests your browser for compatibility and displays the results on a page entitled "Testing Your Web Browser for Compatibility."
 - a If you have followed the steps included in this guide to configure your browser, you should show a green "OK" checkmark for each option.
 - b If any options show a red warning, follow the on-screen instructions to change your browser settings. e-QIP will not display unless these settings are enabled.
- 4 Click **Continue**.
- 5 If a Security Alert dialog box displays, click **Yes**.

Note: If an error message displays saying "Page Cannot Be Displayed," you have not enabled TLS 1.0. Go back to section 4.0 of this guide, Configuring Your Browser, for more information.

Log into e-QIP

Once you have accessed the e-QIP login screen, follow the steps below to log into e-QIP.

To log into e-QIP

- 1 Type your Social Security Number (SSN) into the **Social Security Number** field
- 2 Press the **[Tab]** key to move to the next SSN field
- 3 Click **Submit**

Answer the Golden Questions

If you entered your SSN correctly, you should next see a screen that asks you to answer three "Golden Questions." If this is your first time logging into e-QIP, the "default" Golden Questions display. These ask for your **last name**, **city of birth**, and **four digit year of birth**. Once you answer these correctly, the system will prompt you to create three new Golden Questions and Answers.

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If you have logged into e-QIP at some other time, your previously created personal Golden Questions will display.

Note: If questions other than the “defaults” (listed above) are displayed, you have either entered your SSN incorrectly, not yet been initiated in e-QIP, or exceeded the timeframe for logging in after your request was initiated. Please try again. If you continue to experience an issue, you must contact your sponsoring agency for assistance.

To answer the Golden Questions

- 1 Type the answer to each question in the **Answer** field
- 2 To see the responses as you type, click the checkbox above the questions labeled **Allow me to see my Golden Answers as I type them**
- 3 Click **Submit**

Create a New Set of Golden Questions (First Login Only)

The first time you log into e-QIP, the three default Golden Questions display. Once you answer these correctly, the system will prompt you to create a set of three new Golden Questions and Answers.

Golden Questions are one of several security measures that have been built into e-QIP to help minimize unauthorized access to your information. Golden Questions enable e-QIP to verify your identity. Create a combination of Golden Questions for which only you will know the correct answers. It is best to use a one word answer to minimize login error.

To create a new set of Golden Questions

- 1 Select a set of questions that only you know the answers to. Keep in mind these guidelines:
 - a Do not repeat any of the defaults
 - b Questions can be phrases
 - c Answers must have at least three characters
 - d Capitalization does not matter; spelling and punctuation must match exactly
 - e Each answer must be unique
 - f You cannot leave a question or answer area blank **Remember!** It may be several years before you return to the e-QIP system to complete a reinvestigation, so it is recommended that you use responses that you will remember in the distant future.
- 2 If you wish, click the checkbox above the questions labeled **Allow me to see my Golden Answers as I type them** to see the responses as you type
- 3 Note: Do not allow anyone to see your computer screen while your answers are on the screen.
- 4 Type each question into the **Question** field
- 5 Type the corresponding answer into each **Answer** field
- 6 Click **Submit**

It is your responsibility to remember your Golden Questions. It is also important to protect the answers to your Golden Questions. These are your “password” to the e-QIP

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system.

Note: If you cannot remember the responses to your Golden Questions, or if you encounter any other issues with logging in, you must contact your sponsoring agency to have them reset your Golden Questions.

Completing the Form / Questionnaire

After you have successfully logged into e-QIP by entering your SSN and answering the Golden Questions, you'll see the "Complete an Investigation Request" screen.

- 1 Verify your personal data displayed at the top of the Select Investigation Request screen.
- 2 When you are ready to begin completing the form, click the link that says **Enter Your Data**.

Note: If you have been sponsored by multiple agencies within e-QIP at the same time, you may have multiple e-QIP request numbers here. Make sure that you select the correct link for the request you want to complete.

Reviewing the Form Completion Instructions

Prior to entering data for the first time, you must read the instructions on the "Form Completion Instructions" screen.

- 1 Confirm that you have read and understand the form completion instructions and disclaimer by clicking **Continue**
- 2 You will also be shown a disclaimer screen that provides additional instructions required by Executive Order 12968. You must indicate that you have read and understand the additional instructions by clicking the corresponding button at the bottom of the page in order to proceed.

You are now ready to complete your questionnaire.

Tips for Completing the Questionnaire (Standard Form 85, 85P, or 86)

Note: If you are filling out the Standard Form 86, a more detailed guide is available: [e-QIP Guide for National Security Positions - SF 86 \(PDF file\) \[1.35 MB\]](#).

- Read the entire form thoroughly and answer the questions truthfully.
- Use the [Tab] key to navigate through fields and complete the questions. **Do not** use the browser's Forward or Back buttons or the system will log you out as a security precaution
- Click the Reset this Screen button at any time prior to clicking the Save button if you make a mistake and want to start over on a screen. This clears all of the information you entered on that page.
- Click Save or Save/Continue at the bottom of each page to move forward when you are finished and ready to proceed. Your information will be submitted and the next screen will appear. Continue until all information screens have been completed.
- You may also use the Navigation drop-down menu located at the top of the screen to

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go to any section of the form in any order. Select the section and click Go. Then navigate to the specific subsection desired.

- Click the “Add Optional Comment” button when it appears to provide additional comments if desired.
- You can review a copy of the form at any time by clicking the Display link in the upper left corner.

Handling Error Messages and Warnings

In order to ensure the completeness of your data, a validation routine runs each time you click **Save** or **Save/Continue**. The validation routine will point out any Errors or Warnings and provide detailed instructions on how to satisfy each missing item. You will only receive validation messages if you have not answered a question appropriately. *For example:* The required input for a telephone number is 10 numeric digits. If you enter anything less or greater than 10 digits, or entered a non-numeric character, the validation will reject your data and show an error at the top of the screen explaining the issue and prompting you to make a correction.

- For validation “**Error**” messages, please follow the instructions that the Error message provides you on the screen.
- You may correct your data by scrolling to the appropriate field and making your corrections.
- Click the **Save** button at the bottom of the page to save your changes.
- Error messages must be corrected before final validation and certification occurs.
- For validation “**Warning**” messages, you should provide the requested information.
- In some cases you may check the box “**I do not know this information,**” if applicable. If so, an additional explanation is required if the check box is used.
- After choosing an action, click the **Save** button to save your changes.
- Warning messages must be corrected before final validation and certification occurs.
- When you reach the Validate, Review and Certify section towards the end of the form, a list of Errors and Warnings may appear here if any issues were not corrected.
- When the validation results show no more Errors or Warnings, click **Continue**.

Validating, Reviewing, and Certifying

When you are satisfied that your form is complete and no validation errors are present, you have the option of reviewing a display copy of your form before certifying it. You can also review the Display copy at any time as you complete the form.

To review the form before certifying:

- 1 Click **Display** in the upper left corner of the next screen to view the document. A .html document will open in a separate browser window. When you have finished reviewing the form, close the window.
- 2 You may navigate back to previous sections of the form at this time if you need to make any changes.
- 3 If you do not have any changes, click **Continue**.
- 4 Again, if you do not have any changes to the information you previously provided, click **Certify Investigation Request** button to complete your form.
- 5 **Important!** Once you certify the form, your answers will be locked and the form will

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- become unavailable for editing. You will be unable to make any further changes.
- 6 A pop-up dialog box displays informing you that the process will take 20-30 seconds.
 - 7 Click **OK**.

Note: Do not click the Certify Investigation Request button more than once.
Follow the instructions provided carefully below in the order they are provided. Once you certify your form, there are a few additional steps before you can release the information to your sponsoring agency.

Completing the Signature Release Forms

The final release of your request is completed in several steps.

- Print or save an Archival Copy of the entire form
- Print the signature forms that you will sign and send to your sponsoring agency
- Add attachments
- Release and transmit the investigation request to the requesting agency

Step One: Instruction for Signature Pages, Attachments, and Archival Copy

Review the instructions for printing the signature pages, attaching files and printing a copy for your records.

Step Two: Archival Copy

Print and/or save an electronic copy of the information you provided on the form for your records. If you do not have printer access, logout of e-QIP and go to a computer with printer access. Then log back into e-QIP to print the forms.

To save an electronic .pdf version of this Archival Copy, you may right-click on the link shown "Display the Archival Copy of the Investigation Request for Printing" and follow the steps to save the document in an appropriate location.

- 1 To print, click **Display the Archival Copy of this Investigative Request for Printing**. The archival copy will open in Adobe Reader.
- 2 **Note:** The archival copy and signature pages display as PDF files. You must have the free Adobe Reader to view them. You can download Adobe Reader from the [Adobe website. \(external link\)](#)
- 3 In the Adobe Reader software, click the **print icon**.
- 4 Close the Acrobat Reader window by clicking the **X** button in the upper right corner.
- 5 You may also save an electronic copy of this .pdf file for your records.
- 6 You must print and/or save the Archival Copy at this point, as you will not be able to access it at a later time once you release the form.

Step Three: Signature Forms

Signature Forms are a required part of an investigation as they authorize your Investigation Service Provider (ISP) to obtain necessary information. These are the forms you must sign and then send to your sponsoring agency by fax, mail or uploading via e-QIP. You must follow instructions provided to you by your sponsoring agency as to which option to choose to transmit these signature forms to them.

Note: The Fair Credit Report is a release form that must be submitted with all SF 86

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forms to allow requests for credit checks and other financial data.

- 1 Click the **Signature** Forms link displayed under Step Two Signature Forms for Printing.
- 2 This will open the signature pages in a separate window.
- 3 If you do not have printer access, logout of e-QIP and go to a computer with printer access. Then log back into e-QIP to print the forms.
- 4 In the Adobe Reader software, click the **print icon**.
- 5 Sign and date the release forms and certification statement:
 - a Use black ink
 - b Sign your name exactly as it appears in e-QIP (e.g., "John David Smith")
 - c Sign and date inside the signature box
 - d Any corrections or overwrites must be completed using a new signature form or by drawing a single line through the error and initialing the correction
- 6 Close the Acrobat Reader window by clicking the **X** button in the upper right corner

Step Four: Upload or Fax Attachments

The attachments are the Signature Forms and any other information, such as a resume, that you would like to provide your sponsoring agency as a part of your investigation. Because there are multiple options, you must follow instructions provided to you by your sponsoring agency as to which option to choose to submit these attachments to them.

Note: Contact your sponsoring agency if you have any questions or need fax numbers or mailing addresses.

e-QIP has multiple attachment options. You could:

- Fax attachments to e-QIP directly by printing a bar-coded cover sheet for each item and then faxing to the number listed on the cover sheet.
- Upload documents you have scanned or saved to your computer directly.
- Fax documents to the sponsoring agency's fax machine, if they provided you a number.
- Send documents through regular mail to the address your sponsoring agency provided you.

Depending on if you are ready to attach, fax, or send your documents to your sponsoring agency:

- 1 Select Yes or No to indicate if you want to work with attachments
- 2 Click Next

One option is to upload a file:

- 1 Select **Upload File**
- 2 Click **Next**
- 3 Click **Choose File**
- 4 Select the file you want to upload
- 5 Ensure the file shows up in the attachment block and type a description in the **Description** field

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6 Click **Upload Attachment**
Repeat to add other attachments

Another option is to fax attachments directly to e-QIP:

- 1 Select **Direct Fax**
- 2 Click **Next**
- 3 In the **Fax Attachments to e-QIP Directly** section, enter the number of pages for your document. Do not include the fax cover sheet in your number
- 4 Each separate Signature Form or other document you are attaching must be itemized separately and each has its own fax cover sheet
- 5 Type your phone number into the **Sender's Contact #** field
- 6 Click **Create Fax Cover Sheet** This will create a fax cover sheet that will include your Request Number, Contact information, and a Barcode which will route the attachment to the correct Request in e-QIP. **Note:** The fax cover sheet is active for only seven days. You will not be able to fax that cover sheet after that date has expired.
- 7 Print the fax cover sheet
- 8 Fax the cover sheet and the indicated document to the number provided on the cover sheet
- 9 Again, each separate item must have its own fax cover sheet
- 10 If the attachment is faxed successfully, you will see it appear in the Attachments Summary screen.

Another option is to send items by regular fax or mail:

- 1 Select **Expected**
- 2 Click **Next**
- 3 Provide a description for your attachment
- 4 Indicate how many pages it is
- 5 Select a method of transmission
- 6 Click **Add Expected Attachment**

Step Five: Release and Transmit

Important! You will not be able to access your investigation forms after you click "Release Request/Transmit to Agency." Be sure you have printed and/or attached all required forms, including signature forms, before clicking "Release Request/Transmit to Agency."

- 1 Click **Release Request/Transmit to Agency**
- 2 If a confirmation screen appears, you are logged out of e-QIP and your information has been transmitted to your sponsoring agency.

Congratulations! You have completed and submitted your investigation request. If you have any questions about your investigation status, please follow up directly with your contact at your sponsoring agency.

What happens next?

Your sponsoring agency will carefully review your submitted form. In the event your information or attachments are incomplete, the sponsoring agency may return the

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information you provided in e-QIP and contact you to make corrections to the form. In the event you are contacted to make corrections to your form, you will need to:

- Log into e-QIP
- Review the details of the request and make corrections via the e-QIP system
- Re-certify and print a new archival copy of the form
- Print, sign and attach new signature pages
- Re-release your form to the agency

Once the investigation has been scheduled, you may be contacted by an investigator to schedule your personal interview, if required. In the event an interview is necessary, you will be required to provide photo identification, such as a valid state driver's license. You may be required to provide other documents to verify your identity, as instructed by your investigator.