Q: If I choose not to apply for a security clearance, will I still be informed about counterterrorism issues important to my jurisdiction?
A: Absolutely. If the FBI receives information relevant to terrorism which may impact your jurisdiction, you will be informed by your local Field Office, through the Law Enforcement On-Line network, via NLETS, and through other available mechanisms which are approved for the transmission of unclassified information. Most terrorism-related information can be provided in an unclassified form.

Q: Are there any other advantages or disadvantages to receiving unclassified or classified terrorism-related information?
A: An additional advantage of receiving unclassified terrorism-related information is that there may be fewer restrictions on your ability to further disseminate it within your jurisdiction. Classified information may only be disseminated to other cleared persons, who also have a need-to-know.

Q: What is the difference between an interim and a full security clearance?
A: Interim clearances are granted in exceptional circumstances where official functions must be performed before completion of the investigative and adjudicative processes associated with the security clearance procedure. There is no difference between an interim and a full security clearance as it relates to access to classified information. However, when such access is granted, the background investigation must be expedited, and, if unfavorable information is developed at anytime, the interim security clearance may be withdrawn.

If you have any additional questions, and/or wish to apply for a security clearance, please contact your local FBI field office.
**SECRET CLEARANCES**

A Secret security clearance may be granted to those persons that have a “need-to-know” national security information, classified at the Confidential or Secret level. It is generally the most appropriate security clearance for state and local law enforcement officials that do not routinely work on an FBI Task Force or in an FBI facility. A Secret security clearance takes the least amount of time to process and allows for escorted access to FBI facilities.

The procedure is as follows:

FBI performs record checks with various Federal agencies and local law enforcement, as well as a review of credit history.

Candidate completes forms SF-86 and FD-258. Once favorably adjudicated for a Secret security clearance, the candidate will be required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

**TOP SECRET CLEARANCES**

A Top Secret clearance may be granted to those persons who have a “need-to-know” national security information, classified up to the Top Secret level, and who need unescorted access to FBI facilities, when necessary. This type of clearance will most often be appropriate for law enforcement officers assigned to FBI Task Forces housed in FBI facilities.

In addition to all the requirements at the Secret level, a background investigation, covering a 10-year time period, is required.

Once favorably adjudicated for a Top Secret security clearance, the candidate will be required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A):**

**Q:** Who should apply for a security clearance?

**A:** State or local officials whose duties require that they have access to classified information, and who are willing to undergo a mandatory background investigation.

**Q:** What is the purpose of a background investigation?

**A:** The scope of the investigation varies with the level of the clearance being sought. It is designed to allow the government to assess whether a candidate is sufficiently trustworthy to be granted access to classified information. Applicants must meet certain criteria, relating to their honesty, character, integrity, reliability, judgement, mental health, and association with undesirable persons or foreign nationals.

**Q:** If an individual occupies an executive position with a law enforcement agency, must he or she still undergo a background investigation in order to access classified information?

**A:** An Executive Order (EO), issued by the President, requires background investigations for all persons entrusted with access to classified information. The provisions of the EO are mandatory, cannot be waived, and apply equally to all federal, state, and local law enforcement officers. This is true of both Secret and Top Secret security clearances.

**Q:** How long does it normally take to obtain a Secret security clearance?

**A:** It is the goal of the FBI to complete the processing for Secret security clearances within 45 to 60 days, once a completed application is submitted. The processing time for each individual case will vary depending upon its complexity.

**Q:** How long does it normally take to obtain a Top Secret security clearance?

**A:** It is the goal of the FBI to complete the processing for Top Secret security clearances within 6 to 9 months, once a completed application is submitted. The processing time for each individual case will vary depending upon its complexity.

**Q:** If I have a poor credit history, or other issues in my background, will this prevent me from getting a security clearance?

**A:** A poor credit history, or other issues, will not necessarily disqualify a candidate from receiving a clearance, but resolution of the issues will likely take additional time. If the issues are significant, they may prevent a clearance from being approved.