



Security Sensitive Biological Agents Regulatory Scheme

SSBA – Fact sheet 15 – National Health Security checks

October 2019

This fact sheet provides an overview of the National Health Security (NHS) checks conducted under the Security Sensitive Biological Agent (SSBA) Standards.

What is a National Health Security check?

A National Health Security (NHS) check is a background check, conducted for the purposes of the SSBA Standards, consisting of a national criminal history check and a national security assessment.

National criminal history checks assess a person's criminal history information against a list of health security relevant offences. This list can be found at Appendix 1 of the SSBA Standards. A national security assessment determines if an individual has any known links to politically motivated violence, terrorism or other high risk groups.

Why are NHS checks needed?

NHS checks provide another layer of security to reduce the risk of persons with malicious intent gaining access to SSBA, a facility or to sensitive information.

Who are NHS Checks for?

NHS checks are **mandatory** for all persons who will be authorised to handle Tier 1 SSBA, access facilities handling Tier 1 SSBA or access sensitive information relating to Tier 1 SSBA.

NHS checks are **recommended** for authorised persons handling Tier 2 SSBA, accessing facilities handling Tier 2 SSBA or accessing sensitive information relating to Tier 2 SSBA.

A person who holds a current national security clearance of Negative Vetting Level 1, Negative Vetting Level 2 and Positive Vetting (previously Confidential, Secret or Top Secret) is not required to undergo an NHS check.

Applying for an NHS check

All NHS checks will be co-ordinated by AusCheck. A person's consent is required prior to them undergoing an NHS check and this is included in the application forms.

The entity will upload the information supplied on the application form into the AusCheck database. Applications will need to include a recent digital photograph taken by the entity (such as a security pass photograph) of the relevant individual.

Digital photographs must conform to the following:

- Recommended dimensions are 480x600mm.
- Accepted formats are JPG, GIF, BMP, PNG and TIF.
- Recommended file size is 5-100kb when uncompressed.
- Maximum file size is 1MB and images over 1 MB will be rejected.

Timeframes

- For an entity/facility with a new initial registration:
 - Applications must be submitted within four weeks of notification by AusCheck that access to the AusCheck system has been granted.
- For entities and facilities who already have access to the AusCheck system:
 - As these entities/facilities will already have authorised persons in place, it is up to the entity/facility when they submit a new application. In this circumstance, a person who is to undergo an NHS check as part of the process to become authorised will need to be an approved person until the result of the NHS check is received.

AusCheck will correspond directly with the entity or the individual applying for the NHS check. No information about the NHS check will be supplied to the Department of Health (Health).

AusCheck will provide an information pack with full details on how to apply for an NHS check when notifying an entity that it can submit applications.

Reporting changes

It is a requirement of the SSBA Standards that if a person who has undergone an NHS check changes their name (for example, by marriage) or receives a new conviction against health security relevant offences, this must be reported to AusCheck.

The entity must ensure that there are policies and procedures in place to enable this reporting and must require that this new information is reported to the entity. The entity must then report this new information to AusCheck within two business days.

Working for more than one facility/entity

Working in more than one registered facility of the same entity

A person who works for more than one registered facility for the same entity does not need to undergo an NHS check for each facility as the results of the NHS check will be valid for all facilities in this entity.

Working for more than one entity or moving to a new entity

A person's status as an authorised person is limited to the entity in which it is given as training procedures will be specific to that entity. However, if a person holds a current NHS check result, then the result may be used by another entity when making a decision to authorise the person without the need to apply for a new NHS check.

The result of an NHS check can be obtained through AusCheck. The person's consent to release information about the NHS check must be sought before any application to AusCheck is made.

Provisional arrangements

Entities will not be able to submit applications to AusCheck until they have been provided with access to the AusCheck's system. AusCheck will begin the process of providing access following contact by Health.

Provisional arrangements have been made for entities or facilities applying for initial registration.

Under these arrangements, persons can still be authorised if they:

- meet requirements (d) to (h) of clause 3.3 of the SSBA Standards; and
- an NHS check is commenced within four weeks of notification by AusCheck that applications can be submitted; and
- the relevant facility has no authorised persons under clause 3.3 already in place.

A provisional authorisation ceases on receipt of the results of the NHS check.

Further information

[SSBA Standards](#). *Part 3 – Personnel*.

[AusCheck](#).