DOD personnel reviewed a sample of case files for investigations and adjudications, (3) data on the timeliness and quality of processes, (2) examined agency relevant statutes, federal guidance, part of that work, GAO (1) reviewed and government-wide suitability and personnel security clearance program.

This statement is based on GAO work previously granted by other agencies. Agencies to honor clearances reciprocity, which is the decision of investigators; and (3) the extent of reject clearance requests based on branch agency officials to grant or determinations made by executive branch agencies. Adjudicators from requesting agencies use the information from these investigations and federal adjudicative guidelines to determine whether an applicant is eligible for a clearance. Further, individuals are subject to reinvestigations at intervals based on the level of security clearance.

Executive branch agencies do not consistently assess quality throughout the personnel security clearance process, in part because they have not fully developed and implemented metrics to measure quality in key aspects of the process. For more than a decade, GAO has emphasized the need to build and monitor quality throughout the clearance process to promote oversight and positive outcomes such as maximizing the likelihood that individuals who are security risks will be scrutinized more closely. GAO reported in 2009 that, with respect to initial top secret clearances adjudicated in July 2008 for the Department of Defense (DOD), documentation was incomplete for most of OPM’s investigative reports. GAO independently estimated that 87 percent of about 3,500 investigative reports that DOD adjudicators used to make clearance eligibility decisions were missing some required documentation, such as the verification of all of the applicant’s employment, the required number of social references for the applicant, and complete security forms. In May 2009, GAO recommended that OPM measure the frequency with which its investigative reports met federal investigative standards to improve the completeness—that is, quality—of investigation documentation. In January 2014, DNI officials said that metrics to measure quality of investigative reports had not been established.

GAO reported in 2010 that executive branch agencies do not consistently and comprehensively track the extent to which reciprocity is occurring because no government-wide metrics exist to consistently and comprehensively track when reciprocity is granted. The acceptance of a background investigation or personnel security clearance determination completed by another authorized agency is an opportunity to save resources and executive branch agencies are required by law to grant reciprocity, subject to certain exceptions, such as completing additional requirements like polygraph testing. GAO’s 2010 recommendation that the leaders of the security clearance reform effort develop metrics to track reciprocity has not been fully implemented.