

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-24-107117](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

SCIFs are the only facilities authorized for storing, using, discussing, and processing highly classified information. The Director of National Intelligence, whose organization sets policy for the design, construction, and management of SCIFs, stated that she expects agency leaders to remove barriers to equal opportunities for their workforces, including for people with disabilities.

GAO was asked to review federal agencies' efforts to manage SCIFs and ensure accessibility. This report, among other things, assesses the extent that selected agencies provide physical access to SCIFs and assistive technologies or medical devices in SCIFs. GAO reviewed ODN guidance, obtained data, visited nine facilities with SCIFs, and conducted interviews. This is a public version of a sensitive report that GAO issued in September 2023. Information ODN deemed sensitive has been omitted.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations, including that the Director of National Intelligence develop guidance for agencies that identify minimum specifications for common accessibility concerns, address accessibility in inspections, and include consistent procedures for agencies to evaluate assistive technologies or medical devices. ODN did not provide formal comments on the recommendations.

View [GAO-24-107117](#). For more information, contact Alissa H. Czyz at (202) 512-3058 or [CzyzA@gao.gov](mailto:CzyzA@gao.gov).

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## FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY

### Improved Data and Access Needed for Employees with Disabilities Using Secure Facilities

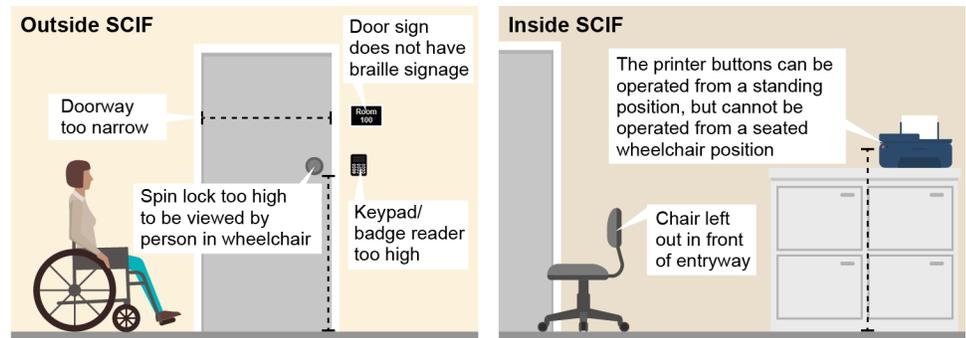
## What GAO Found

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) and selected agencies have taken some steps to address physical access barriers to sensitive compartmented information facilities (SCIF), such as adding automatic door openers. However, additional barriers remain, including:

- Inaccessible entry doors and interior workspaces
- Challenges with electronic door locks and intrusion detection systems
- Absence of tactile signage

ODNI has not issued guidance identifying minimum specifications for common accessibility concerns and addressing accessibility in inspections. Without such guidance, agencies could miss opportunities to strengthen the federal workforce by enhancing accessibility for employees with disabilities.

#### Physical Barriers to Sensitive Compartmented Information Facilities (SCIFs) at Selected Facilities That GAO Visited



Source: GAO observations and analysis of accessibility guidance; elenabsl/stock.adobe.com (illustrations). | GAO-24-107117

ODNI and selected agencies have enhanced access to assistive technologies and medical devices for people with disabilities working in SCIFs, such as expanding videophones and interpretation services. However, agencies still face challenges ensuring access to these technologies and devices. These challenges include:

- Variation in SCIFs
- Reciprocity with other agencies
- Evolving technologies

ODNI has provided agencies with limited guidance to evaluate options to use assistive technologies and medical devices in SCIFs. Additional guidance would better ensure that people with disabilities can have access to the devices they need to fully and appropriately perform their jobs in SCIFs.