

A Guide to the Foreign Service

For those new to the Foreign Service



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Introduction

Welcome to the Foreign Service!

This booklet is intended to help employees, their dependents (spouses, partners and children) and any Members of Households (see Chapter One). The Family Liaison Office (FLO) considers all of you to be part of the Foreign Service family. We serve direct-hire U.S. Government employees and their family members assigned to, serving at, or returning from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for Foreign Service employees and family members by identifying issues and advocating for programs and solutions. We provide a variety of client services, and extend these services to overseas communities by managing the worldwide Community Liaison Office (CLO) program. The FLO Office is located in room 1239 at the Harry S. Truman building, also known as HST or Main State, in Washington D.C.

To learn more about our programs and services, we invite you to visit the FLO Internet page at: www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/.

FLO designed *The Spouse and Partner Guide to the Foreign Service* to complement the very thorough *The Foreign Service Assignment Notebook: What Do I Do Now?* produced by the Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) available on the Foreign Service Institute's Transition Center sites: www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/ and <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/>. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) located in Arlington, Va., is where employees receive initial orientation known as A-100 or Specialist training. Most subsequent training occurs at this location.

Before you read the booklet, please take a few minutes to answer the following "self-test" questions to see where you are as you start out. Then take a look at the answers. The booklet is designed to give more information on all of these topics, using the Department of State Internet websites at www.state.gov, and the (OpenNet) intranet at <http://intranet.state.gov/>.

Self Test: What Did You Know or Think Was True When You Signed Up?***Fact or Fiction (see answers on the following page):***

- 1) The Embassy/Consulate will find you a job which matches your qualifications.
- 2) Your housing will be paid for overseas.
- 3) The U.S. Government gives you an allowance to choose your own house overseas.
- 4) The house comes with a maid, paid for by the U.S. government.
- 5) Your partner, fiancé, or parent can go with you to post and have the same benefits as a spouse and children.
- 6) American schools overseas will have the same curriculum as U.S. public schools.
- 7) Since you are with the Embassy, your children are guaranteed a place at the U.S. government sponsored school.
- 8) If you have a special needs child, you will be sent only to where there is an adequate educational program.
- 9) You will be included in the same language and area studies programs as the employee so you are adequately prepared.
- 10) If the situation is unstable at post, the U.S. government will always evacuate you right away.
- 11) The U.S. Government pays to transport your pets to/from post, regardless of the number or type.
- 12) You are entitled to Rest and Recuperation (R&R) and Home Leave trips.
- 13) R&R and Home Leave include both travel and per diem.
- 14) The Embassy or Consulate provides a concierge/tour director who will take care of your needs and wishes.

Answers:

- 1) Fiction. FLO, and post Community Liaison Officers Coordinators (CLO) and/or Global Employment Advisers (GEA) can help facilitate your search for employment, but they are not responsible for finding a job for you. There are many resources and special programs available to help you. Ultimately, however, as with any job search, you will be most successful if you spend time before you go to post researching job possibilities and networking.
- 2) Fact. The government provides housing for employees and their families based on the number of Eligible Family Members (EFMs) at post or provides a Living Quarter Allowance (LQA) or Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA) at posts where there is no official housing. (See definition of EFM, Chapter 1, page 9.)
- 3) Sometimes. Some posts do not have a pool of official government owned housing. At posts where employees receive either a Living Quarters Allowance (LQA) or Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA) you will be able to choose your own house within certain guidelines, including size limitations and safety and security requirements. You will receive an allowance for rent, utilities, and furniture rental, if needed. At non-LQA/non-OHA posts, the Embassy maintains a housing pool and housing assignments are made by a multi-member housing board. Employees can state their housing preferences, but there is never a guarantee that you will get the exact housing you specify.
- 4) Fiction. Employees who have domestic staff must arrange to pay them privately. Ambassadors, DCMs, and Consul Generals pay a percentage of their salary for domestic staff.
- 5) Fact and Fiction. A partner, fiancé, or parent may accompany the employee to post but the type of benefits they will receive depends on their status as an Eligible Family Member (EFM) vs. a Member of Household (MOH). (See Chapter 1)
- 6) Fact and Fiction. Many overseas schools have an American Curriculum and offer the same basic courses as U.S. schools. At some posts, international schools with the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum are the only available option. Transferring between the IB curriculum and the American curriculum can be very challenging, particularly during the high school years. IB schools may not offer courses such as U.S. History and American Government, which are required if your child will graduate from high school in the U.S. Research the curriculum carefully before you go to post. Overseas

schools may have limited opportunities for higher level courses, or they may have very limited resources available for children with even mild learning issues.

Parents should be aware that most overseas schools, even those with an American curriculum, are often culturally more international than American in nature. The student body may be multi-national or overwhelmingly host-culture. The playground language may not be English. Social norms on issues like academic discipline, teen smoking and drinking, and teen curfew will often reflect local culture. All schools with U.S. accreditation will have teachers with U.S. certification, but these teachers may have developed more affinity with the local culture.

- 7) Fiction. Although the U.S. Government provides small grants to many schools through the Office of Overseas Schools, the grants do not guarantee enrollment for every Embassy/Consulate child. Some schools require that the entering student pass an entrance test and most will want to see detailed transcripts before they admit a new student. Sometimes classes are simply too full by the time a family is able to apply. It is important to thoroughly research the school options at your post before you arrive. If you have school aged children, contact the school you are interested in as soon as you can — even before the assignment has been made, if possible.
- 8) Fact, with qualifier. In order for employees with special needs children to be able to go any post, the Employee Consultation Service (ECS) must review the child's case and determine if there are appropriate medical or educational services available at the post. Almost all overseas schools are private, independent institutions equivalent to a U.S. private school. They have no legal mandate, like that of U.S. public schools, to educate special needs children. Very few can accommodate children with moderate to severe learning disabilities. In order to ensure that your child's needs are met, it is essential to make school choice a priority in the bidding process. Contact schools directly and provide them with transcripts, test scores, and Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Be realistic about your child's strengths and weaknesses, and the kinds of support he or she needs to be successful. For special needs children, the stresses inherent in an internationally mobile lifestyle, if combined with a failure to acknowledge and address learning needs, can result in even greater developmental difficulties.
- 9) Fact and Fiction. State Department EFMs may be eligible to enroll, on a space available basis, for training courses. MOHs have access to the Foreign Service Institute's distance language learning, FAST language courses, and Rosetta Stone instruction. FAST courses are on a space available basis.

- 10) The Department of State is very concerned about the safety and security of its employees and family members overseas. Every Embassy has an office dedicated to security, which constantly evaluates the local security situation. In the event of a serious security or safety issue at post, the Embassy Emergency Action Committee and the Department will regularly review the situation to determine if it is necessary and safe enough for an evacuation. Sometimes, it actually may be safer to have employees and families to stay at post until the situation has been resolved. Be aware that MOHs and individuals not on employees official travel orders are not entitled to paid evacuation travel. Those who are U.S. citizens are treated as private Americans and are offered the same evacuation opportunities and assistance as members of the official community, where appropriate and feasible. MOHs who are not U.S. citizens may also receive evacuation assistance.
- 11) Fiction. It is U.S. Government policy not to pay specifically to transport pets. The miscellaneous expense portion of the Foreign Transfer Allowance and the Home Service Transfer Allowance (DSSR sections 241, 242, 251, and 252) provide for reimbursement of "certain extraordinary costs" related to moving to and from foreign posts. The employee may choose to use part of this allowance for pet transport. Such costs may include some expenses associated with shipping a pet.
- 12) Fact, depending on your length and type of tour. It is actually a statutory requirement that employees take home leave, usually at the end of their tour. Depending on where you are posted, you may also be entitled to Rest and Recuperation (R&R) trips during your tour. For State employees, EFMs may choose to go on R&R and Home Leave.
- 13) Fiction. Travel, in accordance with the Foreign Affairs Manual (3 FAM 372) regulations, is covered for State employee and EFMs. Per diem is not, so it is important to factor this into your planning. MOHs or individuals not on employee's official orders must pay their own travel costs.
- 14) Fiction. The Community Liaison Office guides you to resources to empower you to explore your new world. With your help, they may organize activities with and for the community.

You are about to embark on a great adventure. If you are open to exploring new cultures, are flexible about your expectations, and can embrace this life with your eyes open and a lot of creativity, patience and humor, you will have a fascinating and rewarding experience. Like any career, long-term experience, or relationship, there will

be periods when things are going well and some when they may not be so terrific. The bumps in the road can occur within your family, your Embassy or Consulate community, or the country where you are posted.

A Foreign Service life will offer many unknowns, which are part of the adventure. What you can expect is a life very different from what you have had before, and a change of locations every one to three years. Each time, at least to some degree, you will have to re-establish your identity in your new location. It may be that your interests and skills are a great match at country “X” and seem to be no help at all in country “Y”. You will probably feel very frustrated at times and at others amazed at the inner strength, talent, and coping skills you never realized you had. Having a comfortable sense of your own identity in each place is very important and deserves your time and attention—along with helping your loved ones settle in.

If you have children, you will be considering how the Foreign Service life will affect them. You may decide at the outset to create a possible assignment strategy for you and your family. For example, will you try for no more than two consecutive tours overseas followed by one back in the U.S., so you and your family can keep up with life and times at home? Should you try to plan to be in the United States for their high school years? Where would you live if the employee spouse or partner goes on an Unaccompanied Tour right away? There is no one correct answer to these questions or any one ideal strategy to deal with a difficult situation; it depends on your family’s needs and the circumstances at the time. You may find that your appreciation of life in the Foreign Service depends on *having realistic expectations*.

Remember that FLO and the Transition Center at FSI are here to help you as you start out in the Foreign Service and before, during and after all of your assignments, both overseas and domestic. Check FLO’s websites for a full range of topics on the Internet www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/. Also, download all the personal preparation training options available to you at the Transition Center at: www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/. From spouse/partner orientation during A-100 or Specialist training to workshops and the “Going Overseas” seminar series, spouses, partners and MOHs are encouraged to attend as many classes as possible to ease the adjustment to the Foreign Service lifestyle. A quick list of the current class calendar is at: www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/fslstraining/searchbycourse/.

Chapter 1

Who We Are: Spouses and Partners

You may have noticed that we have drawn a distinction between Eligible Family Members (EFMs) and Members of Household (MOHs). It is important that you understand these distinctions because they will have an impact on your life in the Foreign Service. By law, all allowances and benefits that are part of the Foreign Service go to the employee. You may be eligible for these benefits, which include housing, education, medical services, and travel to post, among others, if you meet the definition of EFM under the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), the policy document that defines the structure and operations of the Department of State. However, by law, many of the benefits for which EFMs are eligible are generally not available to MOHs. Note: The term “family member” applies to both EFMs and MOHs. The term “employee” refers to the directly hired individual.

Eligible Family Members (EFM)

An EFM ([14 FAM 511.3](#)) is: a spouse; same sex domestic partner (as defined in 3 FAM 1610); unmarried children under the age of 21; and parents, sisters, or brothers who are at least 51% dependent on the employee or the employee’s spouse for support; are listed on the employees OF-126 (Dependency Report) or on the official travel orders of the employee. **Only EFMs can be on an employee’s travel orders.**

As of June 19, 2009, the Department of State extended the full range of legally available benefits and allowances to declared same-sex domestic partners of members of the Foreign Service sent to serve abroad (3 FAM 1610). The Department also will work with foreign governments to provide same-sex domestic partners diplomatic visas, privileges and immunities, and authorization to work in the local economy, to the extent possible. If a foreign government denies a diplomatic visa to a domestic partner, the Department will authorize Involuntary Separate Maintenance Allowance (ISMA) for the employee, to help defray the cost of maintaining a separate household during that assignment (Department of State Regulation [DSSR] 264.2).

Members of Household (MOH)

A Member of Household (MOH) is an individual who resides with a Foreign Service employee at post, has been declared to post management, but is *not* on the employee’s official travel orders. MOHs may include some domestic partners (who do not meet the definition of an EFM), elderly family members, other relatives of the employee, and adult dependents over the age of 21 who do not have any special needs. A MOH is outside of the Department’s current legal and statutory definition of an EFM.

For additional information on MOHs, including information regarding the accommodations and limitations, see FLO's "Members of Household: Information for Family Members Not on Employee's Official Travel Orders" on the internet at www.state.gov/m/dg/hr/flo/24051.htm. It states that although the Department of State wants to do whatever it can to support all of our employees in keeping their households intact, specific laws, regulations, and legal interpretations require that certain privileges and allowances may only be extended to EFM's. Employees are encouraged to refer to post policies and the definition of a MOH (3 FAM 4181). MOHs are not covered by bilateral work agreements between the Department of State and foreign countries; and, MOHs are ineligible for education allowances, medical services at post, per diem, and travel expenses. MOHs also do not receive the privileges and immunities that flow from diplomatic and consular status. See *Foreign Service Assignment Notebook: What Do I Do Now?*, Chapter 21 on privileges and immunities: www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/22052.htm.

Some posts have created an "[MOH Policy](#)" (available on State Open Net) that details how the mission integrates MOHs into the overall Embassy community. Please contact the posts on which you are considering bidding to request their policy.

MOHs are eligible for all FLO and Community Liaison Office (CLO) services. All spouses and partners also are welcome to participate in year-round spouse/ partner orientation sessions at the Overseas Briefing Center. These full-day briefings bring Department resources together on topics such as bidding and medical and educational concerns overseas, with emphasis on how family members can prepare for this portable, new lifestyle. Contact the Overseas Briefing Center at (703) 302-7276 or FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov for more information about participating in an upcoming scheduled orientation. Additional resources listed at the end of this booklet may also be useful.

Adding Spouses/Same-Sex Domestic Partners to Orders

For guidance on adding a spouse or same-sex domestic partner to the employee's dependency report (OF-126) and travel orders, please review the FLO website at www.state.gov/m/dg/hr/flo/c23168.htm. If you will be getting married overseas, please go to Consular Affairs section on marriage and divorce online at www.travel.state.gov/law/info/marriage/marriage_644.html.

Foreign-Born Spouses

The Foreign Service welcomes each spouse into our diverse community and offers support programs to help foreign-born spouses adjust to the unique way of life.

As a foreign-born spouse, you are invited to join the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) Foreign Born Spouse group www.aafsw.org/ or call (703) 820-5420. Also FSI's Transition Center course called "*Transition to Washington for Foreign Born Spouses*" is a great introduction to the DC area. Contact FSITCTraining@state.gov or (703) 302-7268 to register.

FLO's Naturalization Program Specialist assists direct-hire Department of State employees and their spouses through the Expeditious Naturalization process. Please visit FLO's Internet site on naturalization for more information at www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1966.htm.

Important Things to Know about Expeditious Naturalization from FLO's Expeditious Naturalization Team (FLOAskNaturalization@state.gov):

- The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is the adjudicating authority for all citizenship applications. FLO can only advise direct-hire DOS employees and spouses about Expeditious Naturalization and offer limited assistance with the processing of cases.
- Obtaining U.S. citizenship is not required by the Department of State; however, many job opportunities at U.S. posts overseas require U.S. citizenship.
- The U.S. government will not pay any costs associated with naturalization.
- You must be a legal permanent resident (LPR) of the U.S. to qualify.
- You (employee and applicant) must be stationed at an overseas post or be assigned to and departing for an overseas post. Spouses of Department of State employees on unaccompanied or domestic tours are not eligible. The applicant must be physically present in the U.S. at the time of naturalization.
- If stationed in the U.S. the applicant must go overseas within 45 days of completing naturalization.
- If stationed abroad you must have at least one year left on your overseas assignment at the time of completion of your naturalization.
- Plan ahead. The average processing time is five to seven months after your application reaches USCIS.
- If your U.S. citizen spouse is a Department of State employee, please contact FLO at: floasknaturalization@state.gov for further information.

Chapter 2

What Will My Life Be Like?

To help spouses new to the Foreign Service, some years ago Melissa Hess and Joanne Grady-Huskey wrote “Thriving as a Foreign Service Spouse” (<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/122130.pdf>). From their own experiences, they have observed that while life in the Foreign Service can appear glamorous – travel, introduction to new cultures and experiences, and acquisition of new languages – the reality is often not quite so glamorous. Foreign Service life offers many opportunities and advantages but it also requires accepting and dealing with the disruptions and difficulties that are inherent in a very mobile lifestyle. Though Foreign Service employees also experience these disruptions, they have the continuity of their chosen careers as respected representatives of the U.S. Government, they may have more language training, they have the support of colleagues, and they usually spend much of each day in a familiar, American-style work environment.

For those without a career appointment there is not this level of continuity and often feel like they are starting over with each move. Soon after your arrival, you may find yourself spending considerable time trying to meet your families’ needs in the new city. Things you took for granted at home, like buying groceries, dry cleaning, or making doctor’s appointments can be very difficult and time consuming when you also have to cope with a new language and culture. Although spouses or partners do share in these responsibilities, in many cases you are still the one “out on the street” doing the initial exploration, while your employee spouse/partner is at the Embassy learning his or her new job. If you are interested in working, finding a job can be more challenging than it was before you entered the Foreign Service, and you may find it difficult to use your prior educational and professional experience.

Your reactions to all of this may take the form of mild frustration, temporary depression, attempts to flee the cause of the problem, and, in extreme cases, you may find yourselves considering a separation or even divorce. It is not surprising that as spouses/partners/MOHs you have to work hard to regain a sense of control in your lives. It is essential to remember that you are not alone if you have feelings of isolation and loss of control. An initial sense of frustration or anger is normal, not just at your first post but also subsequent posts. Some of this is due to the initial period of cultural adaptation which happens to all of us. Don’t be too hard on yourself. There are resources at hand to assist you and your family through this period, including your Community Liaison Officer, your post Medical Unit, the Regional Psychiatrist (RMO/P), and, in Washington, the FLO and the Employee Consultation Service (ECS). Don’t hesitate to call so we can help you through this period. We have all experienced some

ups and downs...and ups again, at one time or another.

There are no magic solutions to making adjustments to the Foreign Service life, but there are a few strategies that have proven successful for others:

- Consider your spouse/partner and yourself as part of a team in this adventure: face challenges and make decisions together.
- Play an equal part in the bidding process. Visit the Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) in person or online at: www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c6954.htm or <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/default.asp?Sec=Overseas%20Briefing%20Center> for information on posts, overseas relocation and personal training and preparation for yourself and your family.
- Learn more about the Foreign Service life and resources you can use by visiting FLO's Internet site at www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo. Check the A-Z section to find a topic quickly.
- Learn as much of the language as possible.
- Immerse yourself in the culture of your post.
- Travel as much as possible.
- Set personal goals for yourself, including what you want to accomplish.
- Find ways to keep your career alive.
- Make your home a wonderful place.
- Find something positive to do, such as volunteering.
- Find or create a support network.
- Maintain contact with family and friends.
- Be conscious of your reactions to stress.

As soon as your home is basically set up, and especially if your immediate goal is not to seek employment, try to put structure in your day and week so you can begin regaining your feeling of control in your life. You may want to sign up for additional

language classes once a week or agree to meet a friend for coffee at the same time every week to share your experiences.

During the course of your life overseas, you may need to gently remind your partner, if necessary, that family comes first. Too much ambition can lead to a lonely retirement. Maintaining a good relationship and, if part of your life, raising well-adjusted kids are far more satisfying in the long run for many people. Never assume that your spouse/partner is a mind reader, especially when she/he is having to make many adjustments too. As author Robin Pascoe states in *A Moveable Marriage (2003)*, “Hard work, clear thinking about your own needs, and a willingness to take responsibility for keeping your marriage on track will be required to ensure that a precious relationship doesn’t get broken in transit. Remember, the two of you love each other. Why else, at the end of the day, would you turn your life upside down?”

Try to take everything with a grain of salt and ask questions if things don’t make sense, especially with regard to “regulations”. Sometimes, even well meaning people do not really know what they are talking about. Consider educating yourself through the FSI Transition Center course, *Regulations, Allowances, and Finances in the Foreign Service Context* (MQ 104). A full list of class offerings is available on the Internet at: www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/fslstraining/searchbycourse/.

Whether it is your first or final move to a new post, four generally recognized stages of cultural adaptation, *may* happen to you:

- 1) The first stage is often known as the “**honeymoon**” stage, where everything is exciting and exotic – visiting castles, temples, markets, crafts, different language, different foods, smells, and sounds....
- 2) This is followed by the stage where all those things you initially found quaint are suddenly intensely **irritating** and incomprehensible (different language, different foods, smells, sounds – different way of thinking...). This is the “why can’t they do things *right*, the way *we* do it” stage. If your reaction is severe or you find that you don’t get out of this stage, you may be experiencing “**culture shock**.” The good news is – it’s almost always temporary, and:
- 3) Hopefully, you do get out of this stage and you are well on the way to **adapting**, starting to accept how things work, and managing day-to-day routines.
- 4) The best stage to be in is when you are finally comfortable, you don’t have to consciously think about doing everything, you appreciate the way many things are done in the new country, and you even occasionally prefer some things to your “home” culture – in fact, you have **adjusted**.

How do you know if you're going through culture shock, and how do you get past it if you are? First of all, you should know what some of the common symptoms are so that you can monitor yourself. Secondly, you should already have some strategies worked out. It's very difficult when you're negative and/or depressed to cheerfully come up with positive coping strategies! So, we are including a few basic strategies on which you can build.

Some of the most common *symptoms* of culture shock are:

- marital stress
- too much sleep
- boredom
- loneliness
- stereotyping
- exaggerated cleanliness
- low work productivity
- alcohol/drug/food abuse
- avoiding people
- constant complaints
- physical illness

Everyone needs to develop his/her own approach to coping with “culture shock” or adaptation challenges, but here are a few strategies which most people find helpful:

- Recognize that it's natural and normal - everyone goes through it to one degree or another.
- Become a student again: find out as much as you can about the new culture and new ways of doing things. Venture out, explore, and get lost.
- Find people who like it! People who like the culture and country will be happy to share all the positive aspects with you, and this will help you develop an appreciation for the differences much sooner. Conversely, try to avoid those who are eager to share their complaints and horror stories.
- Find things you like to do - and DO them.

- Take care of your health: eat and sleep properly, exercise regularly.
- If you aren't employed, become active in adult education, exploring the local community, volunteer work - whatever is appropriate to your interests and situation.
- And above all, *maintain a sense of humor!*

Things are never going to be the way there were at home, but if you maintain your sense of humor, stay curious, and go exploring, you will discover that every post has something uniquely wonderful about it. It is your task to discover what it is that will help you grow, give you new experiences, and develop new skills. It may take longer in some posts than in others, but keep looking. It's there somewhere, though you may have to turn your focus inward to see it.

Refer to the resources section at the end of this booklet. Finally, try to keep things in perspective and keep your sense of wonder alive!

Chapter 3

Benefits and Responsibilities

When you join the Foreign Service, by law, all basic benefits and entitlements flow to and through the employee. All family members on the direct hire employee's travel orders enjoy privileges, such as payment for official travel, housing and schooling, etc. while overseas.

It is Department of State's policy to recognize spouses/ partners and other eligible family members (EFMs) as private individuals, not U.S. government employees, thus they are not required to perform official duties, carry out representational responsibilities (hold or attend social events on behalf of the government), or participate in charitable activities, clubs, and social gatherings. Although as an EFM you do not have to participate in these activities, many EFMs and MOHs enjoy spending time in groups and at events of personal interest. These activities may help you to integrate into the community.

Family members cannot be evaluated as part of employees' official performance reports but are required to behave in a manner "which will not reflect discredit on the United States" (*Foreign Service Assignment Notebook: What Do I Do Now?*, Chapter 13, www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/22052.htm).

Family members should be careful not to:

- Accept items of monetary value from people seeking official action by or trying to do business with the Department of State
- Make local investments while at post (including real estate, except for personal occupancy; and, stocks, bonds, or shares in companies headquartered in the country, etc.); or,
- Participate in local partisan or political activities.

For more information contact the Office of Government Ethics: www.usoge.gov/ or the employee can check the L/EMP Ethics and Political Activities homepage on the Department of State intranet site: <http://l.s.state.sbu/sites/emp/Pages/default.aspx>.

Chapter 4

Personal Contingency Planning: Things to Consider as You Prepare to Come to Washington for Training

As soon as you learn that you, or your spouse/partner will be joining the Foreign Service be sure to:

- Establish your own line of credit, if you don't already have one. This will be especially important if you return to the U.S. and need to make a major purchase.
- Set up a joint bank account which you can both easily access. Know your I.D. and pin numbers. *Ensure that your permission must have to be given in writing (and notarized) before your name can be removed.*
- Obtain an ATM card.
- Get general, durable, bank, and medical powers of attorney.
- If you have children, provide for necessary powers of attorney and guardianship for when both of you may be traveling or if anything should happen to you.
- Familiarize yourself with your health, life, and property insurance policies and know where to find them.

Once the employee receives his/her official post assignment notification, you may want to consider the following:

- Prepare a notarized letter authorizing you to take your children out of the country you will reside in. Some countries and airlines will not allow you to take your children out of that country without the permission of the other parent (in some cases the father is specified). In the event of divorce, written authorization by the employee is also required for a child(ren) to leave the post permanently.

- Be aware that if you and your spouse/ partner decide to separate, with the intention of divorce while at post, you may return home early on Advance Travel Orders. The employee spouse/ partner must provide written authorization for you to have access to Household Effects (HHE) from wherever you are posted overseas, and HHE from storage. (See “The Foreign Service Family and Divorce” on the Internet at: www.state.gov/m/dg/hr/flo/c23129.htm . Please note that either the employee’s written authorization or a court order is required to access HHE; it is important to get the former notarized.

Chapter 5

The Bidding Process, Regulations, and Allowances

Just a few days after your spouse/partner begins the entry class (A-100 generalist or specialist class), you may hear her/him talking about “bidding” for an assignment to Embassies and Consulates. With the whole world seemingly before you, bidding for the first time can be an exciting prospect. It can, however, also seem overwhelming because of the various career-related and family-related factors that need to be taken into consideration.

Certain special rules apply for entry-level professionals . The first assignments for both A-100 generalists and specialists are "directed" by the Entry Level Division of the Office of Career Development and Assignments (CDA/EL). In most cases, however, you will still have a wide range of choices and your own preferences and interests are very much considered by the Entry Level Division. There will generally be a few more posts than the number of students in the class. You will rank each post as “high,” “medium,” or “low” preference. In bidding on your second assignment the possibilities will be even greater though, again, considerations related to career development and family will enter into play.

For Foreign Service specialists the process is similar, though the range of posts will vary depending on the number of openings within any specific specialist category. Also, for some specialist categories, the initial assignment may be a domestic posting, though foreign assignments will inevitably follow. Each specialist group has its own unique career path which will be discussed in detail with your spouse/partner and with you by the Career Development Officers (CDOs) in the Entry Level Division.

Once your spouse/partner submits the “bid list,” the excitement builds as you wait to hear where you will be going and begin to imagine your life in a new country. While CDA/EL does try to take your preferences into account, you should keep in mind that your spouse/partner can be sent to any post on the list. Make sure that you are both happy with the manner in which you rank your selections before you submit the list. Also, be sure to take advantage of the opportunity to join with your spouse/partner in meeting with the Career Development Officers (CDOs) in the Entry Level Division in person or by conference call. The CDOs are delighted to meet with spouses/partners and are an invaluable resource for career counseling and mentoring and are a great resource for answering the questions about life and work in the Foreign Service.

The CDA publishes an annual “Instructions on Biddings and Assignments” document that is worth your while to read. Of particular importance is the “bidding tool” (discussed below) that provides helpful information about posts around the world. The CDOs in Entry Level can also offer you a broad understanding of how the bidding and assignment process has evolved to meet the Department’s new focus on transformational diplomacy and meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

R&R and Home Leave

Most entry level assignments are two years (with little possibility of an extension or curtailment) and, at hardship posts, will include at least one Rest and Recuperation (R&R) trip to designated location(s). The purpose of R&R is to give employees relief from challenging conditions at the post of assignment. Approximately 70 percent of all posts worldwide are certified for R&R, with the majority of the non-certified posts located in Western Europe. If a post is R&R certified, employees and their EFM’s are eligible to take one R&R trip during a two-year tour. Employees have the choice of traveling to the designated overseas relief point, to any other overseas location on a cost-constructed basis, or they may elect the option of traveling to any city in the United States. For further information, please see 3 FAM 3720 (intranet <http://arpsdir.a.state.gov/fam/03fam/03fam3720.html>).

EFM’s may also have the possibility of taking Home Leave (HL) back to the United States after your tour. The purpose of Home Leave is to ensure that all employees sent overseas for extended periods to represent the United States undergo periodic reorientation and re-exposure to the United States. All employees must take home leave, as it is a statutory requirement. Home leave can be used only in the United States and is normally taken at the end of the tour. Most tours are 24 to 36 months depending upon the post differential rate. A minimum period of 18 months continuous overseas service, or 12 months for unaccompanied tours, is required to qualify for home leave. The only expense paid by the U.S. Government in connection with home leave is the round-trip air fare (and per diem ONLY while in travel status) for the employee and EFM’s from post to the home leave address of record that is officially documented on the OF-126, Residency and Dependency Report Form. See 3 FAM 3430 for further guidance and regulations.

MOHs are not eligible for R&R or Home Leave benefits.

Bidding Resources

FSI’s Transition Center is your starting point for the bid process. The Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) offers extensive online and print resources at the FSI location and staff are available to answer your questions weekdays from 8:15 am to 5:00 pm.

For further information contact FSI on the Internet at www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/

OBC online resources for family members are accessible on the Internet at www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c6_954.htm. Country-specific information compliments a lengthy list of topics such as pet travel, preparing to go overseas checklists and publications for easy downloading.

Many online resources that are available to employees through the OpenNet may also be shared with family members via email distribution. Post Info to Go (intranet <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/epb/epb.asp>) allows employees to sort through OBC's database of post welcome materials, housing photos, recreation choices, security guidelines, pet importation and school entry requirements. Another OpenNet resource available to employees are Personal Post Insights at: <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/default.asp?Sec=Overseas%20Briefing%20Center&Cat=Personal%20Post%20Insights>. Frank and anonymous insights provide first-person accounts of life at post from any mission member under Chief of Mission authority. Insights peel back the layers of standard info and ask practical daily living questions like: How do security concerns at post impact daily activities? How reliable are Internet connections? What do people do for fun?

If you are near Arlington, Va., you may want to visit the OBC and view any of the 1,200 post videos or books and materials on relocation topics. Additional post videos and some seminars such as "Managing Your Rental Property From Overseas" are also available via B-NET on demand through the OpenNet at: <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/default.asp?id=1345>.

When bidding pay attention to considerations including freedom of movement and availability of entertainment, as well as employment possibilities and schools. These factors will have an impact on your well-being and morale. View Chapter 12 "Post Morale" in the *Foreign Service Assignment Notebook: What Do I Do Now?* at: www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/22052.htm for more details.

FLO suggests that those interested in employment reference the following resources during the bidding process:

- Family Member Employment Report (FAMER) which gives a snapshot of employment at different posts can be accessed by an employee on State OpenNet at <https://hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hronline/circuits/famer/batch/rpt/famer.cfm>, or by contacting FLO directly.
- Employment advising both inside and outside the mission, see the Global Employment Initiative webpage at www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21627.htm.

- Educational issues and advising including special needs, home schooling, and boarding schools: Internet www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm.
- Contingency planning: Internet <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1960.htm>, intranet <http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/Workforce/CommunityLiaisonOffice/Pages/CLOResources.aspx>.
- Preparation for Unaccompanied Tours: internet <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c14521.htm>
- Community Liaison Office (CLO) program office at post (see following section)
- Web resources
- Email FLO@state.gov with specific questions.

Regulations and Allowances

To find out about the allowances which will cover travel, education, cost of living, post differential, danger pay, etc., check the Office of Allowances website on the Internet at <http://aoprals.state.gov/> or on the intranet at <http://aoprals.a.state.gov/>. Under cost-of-living allowances be sure to review the Foreign Transfer Allowance, Education Allowance, and Educational Travel Allowance. If you are considering staying behind at some point in your Foreign Service life or your spouse/ partner goes on an Unaccompanied Tour, you would be eligible for a Separate Maintenance Allowance. There is also an allowance available to Eligible Family Members if they are required to come home on an evacuation. The site includes the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR) which govern the allowances. The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are also very helpful. Check with FSI's Transition Center to see when the next course MQ104: "Regulations, Allowances & Finances in the Foreign Service Context," course geared to employees and family members is offered at <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/fslstraining/searchbycourse/index.htm>.

What about the move itself? Who do you call and when? The Department of State's Transportation Division's *It's Your Move*: intranet http://lm.a.state.gov/index.cfm?fa=user_list_content&Folder_ID=146 can help you with this. See the Resources section in Chapter 10 for more details.

Chapter 6

The Community Liaison Office Program

The Community Liaison Office (CLO) Coordinator develops and manages a comprehensive post program to maintain high morale. “Quality of life” issues related to the Foreign Service lifestyle and the post-specific environment directly affect morale. The CLO Coordinator identifies the needs of the community and responds with effective programming, information, resources, and referrals. Serving as the community advocate for employees and family members, the CLO Coordinator advises post management on quality of life issues, recommends solutions, and advocates effectively for employee and family-friendly post policies.

Once you have received your assignment, it is important (especially if you have not been in contact with the CLO Coordinator) to e-mail the CLO Coordinator with your questions and concerns. When informed of your impending arrival, the CLO Coordinator will send a welcome letter with useful information such as what to ship and notices of employment opportunities at post. The CLO Coordinator will also assign a community sponsor to you usually shortly before you arrive, and encourage you and your sponsor to be in touch. To contact the CLO Coordinator at your post, simply address your e-mail to: CLOPostName@state.gov. Please spell out the entire post name (*no abbreviations*).

When you first arrive at post, the Direct-Hire employee will be required to go through a check-in process, which will include a briefing by the CLO Coordinator. You do not want to miss this briefing!

The CLO Coordinator develops and administers a program plan which is client-driven and responsive to post-specific needs across the following eight areas of responsibility:

Family Member Employment Liaison

- Advocate for family member employment opportunities within the Mission and on the local economy (if there is no Global Employment Initiative or Strategic Network Assistance Program) and recommend policy initiatives to post management.
- Organize and facilitate career planning workshops and employment seminars for family members; encourage and assist family members in applying for functional training.
- Coordinate and maintain post’s Family Member Employment Report (FAMER).

Crisis Management and Security Liaison

- Relay critical security information between post management and the community.
- Represent the interests and concerns of community members when security or crisis situations arise.
- Support communities before, during, and after an evacuation.
- Crisis aftermath - work with post management to rebuild the community.

Education Liaison

- Establish and maintain local liaison with schools used by post families.
- Provide current information and resources on at-post schools and home schooling options. Provide referral on overseas schools, Washington area schools, boarding schools, education allowances, special needs resources, home schooling, distance learning, adult education opportunities and child care issues.

Information and Resource Management

- Gather, maintain and disseminate information to the community, post management, and appropriate functional offices in the Department.
- Establish and maintain a community resource center that includes Internet/ Intranet access.

Guidance and Referral

- Provide confidential support to individuals and groups within the community (divorce, spouse/child abuse, adoption, death, mental health concerns) and recommend referrals as appropriate.

Welcoming and Orientation

- Provide pre and post arrival information and resources to ensure successful acclimation to post environment.
- Organize and maintain an effective sponsorship program and welcome activities.

Community Liaison

- Establish and maintain an effective working relationship with all agencies and sections of the Mission and with community organizations and local resources that can benefit members of the post community.

- Serve as community representative on post committees (e.g. the Interagency Housing Board, the Emergency Action Committee, the Post Employees Committee and the Employees Association)

Events Planning

- Coordinate the development and implementation of relevant programs to enhance post morale for all members of the post community including singles and MOHs, in the following four categories:
 - U. S. traditions
 - Host country culture
 - Social, educational and recreational activities
 - Facilitate and promote morale-enhancing activities organized by other groups or individuals at post.

Chapter 7

Education and Youth

Important Things to Know About Education and Youth from FLO's Education and Youth Team (FLOAskEducation@state.gov)

Educating your children in a mobile international lifestyle is exhilarating, frustrating, and rewarding. Foreign Service children as a group are well-educated, resilient, adaptable, and well-equipped for life in a global economy. You as a parent must be an active advocate for your child as he/she faces new curriculums, new cultures, new languages and new social networks. To support you in this role, the following resource offices exist within the Department. A description of the services provided by these offices, affiliated organizations and helpful publications appear in Chapter 11. Please note that you will generally find more information on the intranet than on the internet.

FLO Education and Youth Office

Tel: (202)647-1067

Email: FLOAskEducation@state.gov

Internet: www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm

A good starting point for any questions on education, FLO can answer your general questions, provide guidance, and refer you to the appropriate office as needed.

The Office of Overseas Schools

Tel: (202) 261-8224

Internet: <http://www.state.gov>

Intranet: <http://aopros.a.state.gov/>

The Employee Consultation Service (ECS)

Tel: (202) 663-1815

Email: MedECS@state.gov

Internet: http://med.state.gov/mentalhealth_ecs.htm

FSI Transition Center/Overseas Briefing Center (OBC)

Tel: (703) 302-7277

Internet: www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/

Intranet: <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/>

Office of Allowances

Tel: (202) 261-8700

Internet: <http://aoprals.state.gov/>

Intranet: <http://aoprals.a.state.gov/>

Foreign Service Youth Foundation

Tel: (703) 731-2960

Email: fsyf@fsyf.org

Internet: www.fsyf.org

American Foreign Service Association (AFSA)

Tel: (202) 338-4045

Internet: www.afsa.org

State Department Federal Credit Union (SDFCU)

Internet: www.sdfcu.org

Tel: (703) 706-5000

Email: sdfcu@sdfcu.org

A few things to remember:

It is important to research the schools at post yourself to learn firsthand if they offer the programs/curriculum you are seeking.

Keep an open mind when weighing the quality of international schools versus U.S. schools. There are advantages and disadvantages to both.

A school which is rated “inadequate” by the Office of Overseas Schools may have a good basic program. Investigate why it is rated inadequate (i.e. privately owned, parochial, etc.).

Make it a priority to meet with your child’s teacher as soon as you arrive at post. Never

assume that a school is aware of your child's needs and abilities, even if you have sent all appropriate records and followed up by phone and email.

If you think it might be a good option for your children at some point, consider boarding schools. There are some excellent boarding schools, both in the U.S. and abroad.

Culture shock, which was mentioned in Chapter 2, will have a big impact on your children's academic continuity. Some things you should know about how culture shock may impact your children and ways you can help:

- It can mimic the symptoms of learning or behavioral disorders.
- Lasts about six months.
- Happens to all of us, no matter how many times we move.
- May require temporary counseling or outside support.
- During the first months at post, focus on loving your children, being available, and listening to them. Reassurance can be far more important than encouragement at this time.
- Consider waiting six months after arriving at post before making changes to your child's academic situation. Make sure that the teacher is aware that your child is new to the school and the country.
- If your child's problems persist after six months, even if they are less intense, it is important to discuss testing with the school and/or post Medical Unit to rule out undiagnosed learning differences.
- The most difficult culture shock is re-entry to the United States. For further information, read some of the literature on "Global Nomads" and "Third Culture Kids".
- When your teen returns to the US to attend university and/or seek employment, he/she will be experiencing re-entry culture shock *in addition to* the normal stresses of independent living. Make sure that he or she has a support network, particularly if you are still overseas.

Chapter 8

Employment and Training

Working outside the home is important to most Foreign Service spouses, partners and MOHs. If it's important to you, you may want to seek employment or use your time overseas to take an online course, start a home business, work on language skills, or consider preparing an alternate skill set that would give you additional employment possibilities.

Many Foreign Service spouses, partners, and MOHs find that it is more difficult than they anticipated to maintain a traditional "career." They find themselves having "lively" discussions about this at home. It is extremely important that you and your spouse/partner communicate frequently, openly, and honestly about how you plan to pursue this life together as a unit. Will you enroll in language and other training classes before you go? Should you look for work right away or wait until you are unpacked and settled?

Important Things to Know About Finding Employment from FLO's Employment Team (FLOAskEmployment@state.gov):

- The FAMER (Family Member Employment Report) gives a snapshot of the employment scene at post. Employees can access the report on State OpenNet at: http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/Benefits_Compensation/Family_Services/Pages/FamilyMemberEmployment.aspx.
- There is also a wealth of employment information on the employment section of the FLO Internet website www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1959.htm.
- "Inside the Mission" jobs are usually support and clerical in nature.
- Three hiring mechanisms are used to hire family members: Family Member Appointment (FMA), Temporary, and Personal Services Agreement (PSA).
- U.S. citizenship is required to be hired to an FMA or Temporary position. To be eligible for a security clearance you must be a U.S. citizen, and you must be offered a position before requesting a security clearance.
- FMA is a five-year appointment that conveys Civil Service (CS) type benefits, including: pension credit, life and health insurance, and Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) eligibility. You also earn non-competitive CS hiring status, Executive

Order 12721 eligibility, after 52 weeks of work overseas.

- There are well over 100 bilateral working agreement treaties around the world and many de facto work arrangements, which can help you obtain work permits more easily.
- Global Employment Advisors at many posts and regionally can assist you with managing your career and locating employment on the local economy.
- Distance Learning (DL) opportunities are available through the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), universities, and Manpower Inc.
- Functional training is provided on a space available basis through FSI (Consular, General Services, Human Resources, Contracting, Information Management).
- Returning to Washington: THE NETWORK is a listserv of job opportunities; Job Seekers Network Group is a support group for family members seeking employment; and the Career Development Resource Center offers assistance for resume writing.
- Volunteering can provide unique opportunities and possibilities.

For more information on employment, please visit www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1959.htm or make an appointment to speak with a FLO Employment specialist by calling: (202) 647-1076 or emailing FLOAskEmployment@state.gov.

Chapter 9

Guidance and Referral

Counseling and Referral

As you will be leaving the extended family, friends, house of worship, doctors, etc. you are used to, you may be wondering where you can go to try to replace this support network. Once you become part of the Foreign Service family, you are eligible for many support services. FLO's Crisis Management and Support Officer (FLOAskSupportServices@state.gov) is available to help you. Eligible Family Members (not Members of Household) are entitled to use the services of the State Department's Employee Consultation Service, which may be contacted at (202) 663-1815 or on the intranet at http://med.state.gov/mentalhealth_ecs.htm. Experienced clinical social workers can help you discuss your concerns and consider options for a variety of situations, including but not limited to:

- Life transitions, new career, pre-post departure and reentry concerns
- School adjustment, parent/child problems
- Single parent/blended family concerns
- Job stress
- Separation, loss and grief
- Acute and chronic medical illness
- Financial concerns

Also, Information Quest (IQ), a fee resource and referral service, is available to State Department employees and family members as part of the Worklife Program. It can be found on the Internet www.worklife4you.com/. This is managed through Human Resources/Employee Relations (HR/ER). You may contact an IQ specialist in any work/life area and receive initial free counseling. To request these enhanced services or any other customized research and referrals, email the Specialist directly at Specialist@LifeCare.com or call IQ:Information Quest's easy-to-remember toll-free number: **1-866-552-IQ4U (4748)** or **TTY/TDD 800-873-1322**. Specialists are available any time of the day or night, every day of the year.

Health and Medical Care

To be placed on official Travel Orders (remember, you must be an official family member to be on orders) and receive medical care at post, EFMs *must* receive a medical clearance from the Office of Medical Services. Most posts have a Health Unit which is staffed by one or more of the following: the Regional Medical Officer (RMO), a U.S. Health Practitioner, a local doctor selected by MED, and often a U.S. or locally trained nurse. It is a good idea to have comprehensive health insurance. If there is an emergency which your post is not able to handle (i.e. emergency surgery, severe burn, etc.) you may be medevaced to a medevac center (i.e. London) or the U.S. Members of Household should consider purchasing Medevac Insurance before they leave the country, as they are not entitled to the same medevac benefits as EFMs.

Parents at Post

Neither the employee's nor the spouse/partner's parents who come to post as an EFM or MOH are covered by Medical Services at the Health Unit. However, some Health Units may provide recommendations for physicians. These parents should not come to post without adequate health care and medevac insurance. Medicare is not available overseas other than in some parts of Mexico and Canada.

Eldercare

For general information see FLO's "Caring for Elderly Parents" (Internet <http://www.state.gov/m/dg/hr/flo/c23133.htm>), which covers eldercare options, insurance, resources, eldercare in the Foreign Service (including putting parents on your orders), Eldercare Emergency Visitation Travel (e-EVT), etc. Emergency Visitation Travel (EVT) allows an overseas employee, spouse or domestic partner (as defined in 3 FAM 1610) to travel to the location of an ill, injured or deceased family member for certain family emergencies. *Only one individual is eligible to travel on EVT at a time*; that is the person directly related to the ill, injured or deceased (for exceptions, see 3 FAM 3744 GENERAL PROVISIONS, paragraphs d. and e.). The Department's Human Relations/Employee Relations (HR/ER) has a full program, including the e-EVT. Also, ECS counselors have considerable experience in helping with eldercare issues.

Pregnancy

The State Department Office of Medical Services (MED) recommends that expectant mothers return to the U.S. approximately six weeks before the due date to have their babies, regardless of the capabilities at post. Despite this recommendation some couples decide to have their babies at post. See <http://med.state.gov/obstetricaltravel.htm> on the Intranet and [Cable 00085679](#) for more details.

Inter-country Adoption

The Office of Children's Issues (Internet: <http://adoption.state.gov/>) is the primary source of up-to-date information, including adopting from individual countries.

Separation and Divorce

Foreign Service life is very exciting and dynamic, but it can also be very stressful on couples/families. Anyone experiencing these difficulties is urged to seek counseling. If that is not successful and you are considering separation you may want to read FLO's "*The Foreign Service Family and Divorce*" (www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c23129.htm.) FLO's Crisis Management and Support Officer and the Employee Consultation Service (ECS) are available to help you with your questions and concerns. For general information on divorce and the state from which you may be filing, consult an attorney through I.Q. For divorce guidance overseas, Consular Affairs has some guidance on their Internet site at http://travel.state.gov/law/family_issues/divorce/divorce_592.html.

Chapter 10

Unaccompanied Tours

Important Things to Know About Considering an Unaccompanied Tour from FLO's Unaccompanied Tours Team (FLOAskUT@state.gov):

In today's Foreign Service, an Unaccompanied Tour is almost certainly going to be part of your partner's career. Some tips for successfully managing the separation:

- Discuss things thoroughly in advance of his/her volunteering. Make sure you both understand how the assignment mechanism affects allowances and benefits. Use FLO's publication "Decision Tree" as a guide to help you decide.
- Be clear about the reasons for going – every officer/family has a different matrix of professional, personal, patriotic, and pragmatic reasons for going.
- Be supportive of your spouse/partner.
- Contact the Family Liaison Office (Internet www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c14521.htm) to access their many services. Suggest new ideas, identify your needs; don't be shy!
- Maintain the contacts in your support network and be willing to lean on people from time to time. Use the Involuntary Separate Maintenance Allowance (ISMA) to pay for someone else to do the chores the absent spouse/partner did and to indulge in occasional stress-busting treats for yourself. ISMA is not intended to provide all your living expenses, just the 'extras' caused by separation.

Additional Resources

The Family Liaison Office (FLO)

Room 1239, Main State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520
Tel: (202) 647-1076 or (800) 440-0397
Email: flo@state.gov
Internet: www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/

FLO serves U.S. government direct-hire employees and their family members assigned, serving, or returning from a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad. FLO's mission is to improve the quality of life for Foreign Service employees and family members by identifying issues and advocating for programs and solutions, providing a variety of client services, and extending services to overseas communities by managing the worldwide Community Liaison Office (CLO) program.

Overseas Briefing Center/Transition Center (OBC/TC)

4000 Arlington Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22204
Tel: (703) 302-7276/7
Email: FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov
Internet: www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/

The Transition Center serves U.S. government employees and family members assigned to diplomatic posts abroad, providing information, training, and referrals, as well as retirement planning services for Department of State and other foreign affairs agency employees. The OBC provides post reports, personal post insights, and information on daycare in the Washington area.

Foreign Service Assignment Notebook: What Do I Do Now?

Internet: www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/22052.htm

Resource book on all aspects of making a foreign service move, complete with a checklist and description of how to prepare for all facets of an international assignment. It is available in the Overseas Briefing Center at FSI.

OBC's "Find Your Way" CD will be a great tool throughout your FS career to help you navigate what is on the internet with regard to what is new in the Foreign Service, going overseas, returning to the U.S. and eventually retirement. It is a Department template which is automatically updated.

Employee Consultation Service (ECS)

Department of State Medical Office
Main Office
Room H246, SA-1
2401 E Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520-2256
Tel: (202) 663-1815
Fax: (202) 663-1454
Email: MEDECS@state.gov

ECS provides confidential employee assistance in the areas of short-term counseling and referral assistance; consultation and support to families with children who have special educational needs; psychosocial and administrative support to families experiencing domestic violence; administrative review and assistance with compassionate curtailments, breaks and extensions of service. ECS is staffed by licensed clinical social workers. This office administers the Special Needs Education Allowance.

Office of Overseas Schools (A/OPR/OS)

Room H328, SA-1
2401 E Street NW
Washington, D. C. 20522-0132
Phone: (202) 261-8200
Fax: (202) 261-8224
Email: overseasschools@state.gov
Internet: www.state.gov/m/a/os/

The mission of the Office of Overseas Schools is to promote quality educational opportunities at the elementary and secondary level for dependents of American citizens carrying out our programs and interests of the U.S. government abroad. Regional Education Officers (REOs) are professional educators who visit the overseas schools on a regular basis and can answer your questions about specific needs.

Office of Allowances

Tel: (202) 261-8700
Internet: <http://aoprals.a.state.gov/>

The Office of Allowances develops and coordinates policies, regulations, and procedures to administer the government-wide allowances and benefits programs abroad under the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR). This includes allowances related to education, special needs, and educational travel.

Human Resources/Employee Relations (HR/ER)

Room H-236, SA-1
2401 E Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20522-0108
Tel: (202) 261-8180
Fax: (202) 261-8182
Internet: <http://169.253.2.74/general/work-life.html>

The Office of Employee Relations (HR/ER) promotes the effective use of Department human resources by developing, implementing and promoting quality of life policy and programs, maintaining human resources regulations, administering the discipline process, and communicating to employees on the work of Department people and programs. Travel, leave, work-life balance programs, “having a baby cable”, and elder-care programs are all under HR/ER.

Career Development Resource Center (CDRC)

Room L321, SA-1
2401 E Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520
Phone: (202) 663-3042.
Fax: (202) 663-3146
Email: CDRC@state.gov.

The CDRC provides comprehensive career development services to help individuals make effective career decisions. The CDRC is available to all State Department Family Members and all Civil Service members. Experienced Career Counselors are available to provide individual, confidential coaching by appointment. A library and computer resources are also available.

Information Quest

Email: Specialist@LifeCare.com

IQ is a free resource and referral service, available to employees and family members as part of the Worklife Program managed by Human Resources/Employee Relations (HR/ER). You may contact a specialist in any work/life area and receive initial free counseling. To request these enhanced services or any other customized research and referrals, email the Specialist directly at Specialist@LifeCare.com or call IQ:Information Quest’s easy-to-remember toll-free number: 1-866-552-IQ4U (4748) or TTY/TDD 800-873-1322. Specialists are available any time of the day or night, every day of the year.

Department of State Intranet and OpenNet

OpenNet Plus is the Department of State's internal network (intranet), providing access to State-specific Web pages, email, and other resources. In addition, users can access the larger Internet via OpenNet Plus. Individual access to OpenNet Plus, which includes Internet, may be granted to EFM's and MOH's of U.S. Direct Hire employees assigned to the post. This is an optional benefit, not a requirement, and all regulations set forth in 5 FAM must be followed.

How to access information from the intranet if you do not have OpenNet access:

1. Ask your employee spouse/partner to print the information for you.
2. If you are overseas at an Embassy or consulate, there may be an OpenNet computer for family members to use. It is frequently located in the CLO office.

Diplopedia

Diplopedia is an online encyclopedia of foreign affairs information. Like [Wikipedia](#), it is a Web site that can be edited with an OpenNet Web browser. Subject to the principles and guidelines for Diplopedia, anyone who can access Diplopedia (on State's OpenNet at <http://diplopedia.state.gov>) is invited and encouraged to contribute his or her experience, knowledge and expertise in the form of articles, discussion or editing of material submitted by others.

Department of State Operations Center (for emergencies only)

Tel: (202) 647-1512

Email: SES-O@state.gov

Department of State Main Operator

Tel: (202) 647-4000

Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW)

5555 Columbia Pike
Suite 208
Arlington, VA 22204-3117
Tel: (703) 820-5420
Fax: (703) 820-5421
Email: office@aafsw.org
Internet: www.aafsw.org/

AAFSW is an independent advocate for its membership, giving members a stronger voice when working on common concerns and a chance to enjoy shared interests. AAFSW represents the changing interests and concerns of spouses and families in today's dynamic Foreign Service.

Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF)

Internet: www.fsyf.org
FSYF sponsors three youth development programs: Around the World in a Lifetime (AWAL) for High Schoolers, Globe Trotters for Middle Schoolers and Diplokids for elementary school age kids. Yearly awards for community service, essay writing, video production and poster art are co-sponsored with other Foreign Service organizations. FSYF yahoo groups include Foreign Service parents, teens, parents of homeschoolers, parent of special needs children, and parents of gifted children.

State Department Federal Credit Union (SDFCU)

Internet: www.sdfcu.org
Tel: (703) 706-5000
SDFCU sponsors scholarships for Foreign Service college students and a yearly poster/art contest with the Foreign Service Youth Foundation.

American Foreign Service Association (AFSA)

2101 E Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20037
Tel: (202) 338-4045 or (800) 704-AFSA
Fax: (202) 338-6820
Email: member@afsa.org
Internet: www.aafsw.org/

AAFSW is an independent advocate for its membership, giving members a stronger voice when working on common concerns and a chance to enjoy shared interests. AAFSW represents the changing interests and concerns of spouses and families in today's dynamic Foreign Service. AFSA also sponsors scholarships and financial aid for Foreign Service college students.

Publications

It's Your Move is a guide to your move from the Transportation Division (A/LM/OPS/TTM) intended to give you a basic understanding of how you and your effects move to and from post, so that you will be better prepared to play your part in this process.

Realities of Foreign Service Life I and II by the Association of American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW), is full of serious and humorous essays on topics ranging from the Nairobi bombing to kids' education, from culture shock to culinary adventures. Order through www.amazon.com, call (202) 362-6514 or email: office@aafsw.org.

A Moveable Marriage: Relocate Your Relationship Without Breaking It, Culture Shock: A Wife's Guide, Culture Shock: A Parents Guide, and Homeward Bound are by Robin Pascoe, a Canadian journalist who put her own career on hold to join her diplomat spouse. Her books are informative, irreverent and enjoyable.

Diplomatic Baggage, The Adventures of a Trailing Spouse by Brigid Keenan, a London fashion journalist who fell in love with a British diplomat and "saw her leave behind the gilt chairs of the Paris salons for a large chicken shed in the forests of Nepal".

Some of us who are foreign born feel just like the title of the book ***Foreign at Home and Away: Foreign Born-Wives in the U.S. Foreign Service*** by Margaret Bender (order from Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training at (703) 302-6990; www.iUniverse.com; or local and on-line bookstores).

"Thriving as a Foreign Service Spouse" Family Liaison Office Direct Communication Project, Paper No. 32, October 1997, Updated January 2008. Written by Melissa Brayer Hess and Joanne Gready-Huskey.

The Art of Crossing Cultures, by Craig Storti, Intercultural Press, Inc., 2007

The Art of Coming Home, by Craig Storti, Intercultural Press, Inc., 2001

Survival Kit for Overseas Living, Fourth Edition: For Americans Planning to Live and Work Abroad, by L. Robert Kohls Intercultural Press, Inc., 2001

Parent Advocacy in International Schools: Supporting Differentiated Instruction for Your Child, a guide for Foreign Service parents by the Office of Overseas Schools (OS), and available on the OS intranet website.

Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds by Ruth Van Reken and David Pollack. Intercultural Press, Inc., 2001