

What is the FMA?

The Family Member Appointment (FMA), introduced on May 24, 1998, is a Department of State hiring mechanism used to employ appointment-eligible family members (AEFM) accompanying career employees on assignment abroad. The FMA allows AEFMs working in positions at U.S. embassies and consulates to earn benefits. The FMA is a 5-year limited, non-career appointment.

Who qualifies for an FMA?

An AEFM for FMA purposes is a U.S. citizen spouse or an unmarried dependent child at least 18 years old, but under age 21, on the travel orders of an American Foreign or Civil Service employee or military service member permanently assigned to a U.S. Foreign Service post abroad. The AEFM must be resident at the sponsoring employee's or military member's overseas post of assignment.

What are FMA positions?

Qualifying positions are appointive local hire positions (including FSN positions; excluding temporary positions). Both part-time (16 hours to 32 hours per week) and full-time schedules qualify. Examples of FMA positions are:

- Community Liaison Office Coordinator
- Professional Associate
- Consular Associate
- Administrative Assistant
- Information Management Assistant
- General Services Assistant
- Office Manager, and many others

Positions that support on-going work for the mission qualify. Seasonal or surge-need positions do not qualify for an *initial* FMA, but an FMA appointee on Intermittent No-Work Status (INWS) could be activated for short term assignments.

How to apply?

Job announcements are published at post and may be listed on the Family Member Employment Report (FAMER) Bulletin Board on the FLO Intranet website at <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/employment/famer.html>.

All qualified AEFMs will compete on an equal basis with all other qualified AEFMs for State positions at posts abroad, whether or not a particular family member is on a FMA.

The Post Employment Committee (PEC) reviews applications and may interview candidates. Hiring preference must be given to AEFMs (regardless of FMA status) on the qualified list. Guidelines for hiring and preference are published in 3 FAM 8200. If both the position and the selected candidate meet the FAM criteria, a Family Member Appointment is made.

What are the benefits?

During periods of active duty (an AEFM earns credit and receives benefits only while actually in a position), FMA benefits include:

- annual leave
- sick leave
- Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS)
- Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)

- Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)
- Thrift Savings Plan
- Executive Order Eligibility 12721

EFMs who have performed a total of five or more years of service in a former PIT or other temporary USG civilian appointments (not PSC) prior to 1987 may be entitled to make a choice for current retirement coverage between FERS and CSRS-OFFSET. EFMs should check with the Department's Office of Retirement to evaluate the options.

EFMs who worked in any PIT position before 1989, regardless of the length of service, might wish to check with the Office of Retirement about the possibility of making a deposit to purchase full retirement credit for the pre-1989 temporary appointive service.

Under FERS, there is currently no provision for purchase of retirement credit for PIT or other temporary USG service performed after 1988.

What happens between jobs?

If the job comes to an end before the appointment expires, the family member is put on INWS status (the family member's security clearance, if any, must be revalidated upon entering a new position and will be subject to an updated security background investigation every five years). Benefits will cease while no salary is earned. Upon appointment to another FMA, benefits will resume.

Candidates with Executive Order Eligibility and on INWS (which holds the security Clearance) may apply for certain categories of Department of State positions.

Does being on a FMA guarantee employment?

No. Although the FMA is a 5-year appointment, posts can establish a post employment policy requiring that positions filled by family members be open for competition periodically.

What about allowances?

FMA appointees are not authorized overseas allowances (housing, temporary lodging, transfer, education or separate maintenance). These allowances are derived from the sponsoring employee. However, FMA appointees are eligible for danger pay.

Termination of FMA

An FMA will be terminated if:

- The employee in INWS status does not begin work in another position by the time the 5-year limit on the current appointment is reached. However, the AEFM can be appointed into a new FMA upon entry into another qualifying position.
- Upon retirement or upon other separation of the sponsoring career employee
- Upon loss of AEFM status (e.g., spouse divorces, child marries or reaches age 21.)
- Failure to maintain the security clearance level required for any encumbered position.
- Acceptance of an offer of employment under a PSC or other contractual relationship with the U.S. Government. (AEFMs can be appointed under a new FMA after the contract ends and before

entry into a qualifying position at a post abroad.)

- Other conditions as determined by post or agency management.

For more information

The Family Liaison Office

Room 1239 HST

U.S. Department State

202-647-1076/800-400-0397

Internet: www.state.gov/www/flo

Intranet: <http://hrwebhr.state.gov/flo/index.html>

Provides detailed information on the FMA and general eligibility requirements.

The Office of Overseas Employment

202-261-8130/8131

Provides information on policy and procedures for processing personnel actions.

The Office of Retirement

202-261-8960

Health Benefits/Life Insurance Coordinator

202-261-8180

Reminder: Hand-carry all personnel documents during transfers.

Please note that the information covered in this brochure is an introduction to the FMA and is not meant to replace a thorough reading of the regulations. All personnel matters depend on the unique work history of each employee. Family members are advised to seek professional personnel guidance.

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The Family Liaison Office

The Family Member Appointment

An Introduction

U.S Department of State