

*Chapter 16***EDUCATION FOR
FOREIGN SERVICE
CHILDREN****EDUCATION ALLOWANCES**

You may choose whichever type of school best suits your family. There are allowances to support

- home schooling
- school at post
- school away from post
- special needs children

Supplementary instruction allowances are also available. See DSSR 276.9 (<http://aoprals.state.gov>)

The Foreign Service provides an education allowance for children from kindergarten through grade 12 when the family is living outside of the United States. The amounts of these allowances vary from post to post, so please verify before making any important decisions. This allowance is intended to provide an education similar to what you would receive free in the States if your children were attending public schools. Parents are expected to pay for preschool or college costs, just as they would in the U.S. You can find these allowances explained in the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR) 270 posted on <http://aoprals.state.gov>. Education allowances by post are also listed online. There is also an Educational Travel Allowance, DSSR 280, which pays for college-age students to visit their families overseas. (See Chapter 3, "Allowances.")

EDUCATION AT POST

Many Foreign Service children accompany their parents to a post abroad and receive their education there. Options may vary from home school to an American school to a school that follows the curriculum of another country and is not taught in English—or anything in between.

With the exception of the few Department of Defense schools, the schools most children attend abroad are usually non-profit, independent

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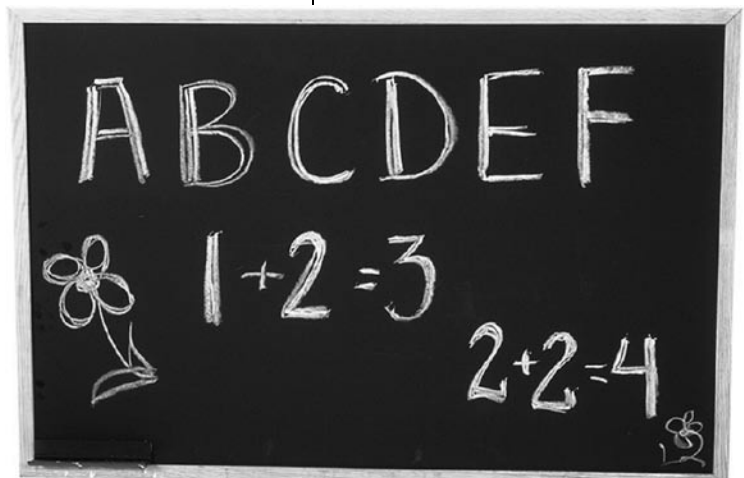
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RESOURCES

Foreign Service children. This office provides resources, encourages support networks, and can help you sort out your educational options. It has information on international schools, boarding schools, private and public schools in the Washington, DC, area, home schooling, allowances, college admissions, third culture kids (TCKs), and more. It also maintains an extensive website devoted to educational issues with links for more information.

The CLO Coordinator at your post of assignment will have a wealth of information on the available schools at that post and likely could put you in touch with other parents who have children of a similar age.

BOARDING SCHOOL

You may not be able to imagine considering a boarding school for your child, but the time may come when it is your best choice. When the school at post is not adequate (as based on the above definition) there will be an away from post allowance, commonly referred to as the boarding school allowance. This amount varies from post to post since it is based on an average of 30 boarding schools' costs and three round-trip airfares to the nearest place where American curriculum boarding schools exist. If the school at post is deemed "adequate," then the away from post allowance is based on the amount authorized for local schooling. Parents may use the school at post allowance toward the cost of boarding school, but will have to pay out of pocket for the remaining expenses. For more information on boarding schools and making these choices, see the FLO paper, *The Boarding School Option* (<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/14686.htm>). The FLO Education and Youth Officer is the resource for boarding school information.

If you make the decision to send your child to a boarding school, two very important issues should be discussed in advance: communication and finances.

Communication

Parents overseas should develop alternate systems for communicating with their children while they are abroad. A family friend or relative can be identified as the person to contact if the parents cannot be reached. If the student is under 18, parents should

consider leaving a power of attorney with this adult to arrange for hospital admission, give permission for an operation, or otherwise act for the parent in matters involving health or school-related questions. Some boarding schools also require you to leave permission with them to act in loco parentis in case of emergency.

Other sources of assistance in emergency situations could include the Family Liaison Office, the country desk officer (with permission), or the school's Dean of Students. Parents should be sure to provide—and update—emergency contact numbers with the school.

Finances

A clear discussion of finances and financial expectations can foster a student's independence and resourcefulness, as well as forestall serious misunderstandings.

The distance from "home" and the inaccessibility of parents may make the school's recommended student expense allowance insufficient. Parents need to set up emergency access to funds: leaving money with a friend or relative, establishing a custodial bank account, or providing the student with a credit card or ATM card. The State Department Federal Credit Union (SDFCU) will open an account in the name of any dependent of a Foreign Service member. A paycheck allotment can be deposited automatically to the student's account, ensuring a regular cash supply regardless of any delay or cutoff in communication. No matter how careful a student may be, overdraft protection for the account is valuable peace of mind.

Choosing the most appropriate method of providing emergency funds must take into consideration the student's reliability and experience in the use of money and credit. Clear parental guidelines should help prevent misunderstandings.

Miscellaneous Precautions

Students should be briefed on key elements of Department of State regulations that apply directly to them, such as the importance of making advance plans for overseas travel, staying long enough at post



to qualify for U.S. Government-reimbursed travel back to school, arranging for their personal effects to be brought to school with them, and knowing how to get a visa and keep it up-to-date.

The family should discuss in advance where the student will spend short holidays or periods when the school closes early for some reason.

If the student does not have a driver's license to serve as identification, other identification should be obtained. Many state drivers' license divisions provide identification cards for non-drivers. In many situations, passports are not accepted as identification, and students will need to produce their original birth certificate and Social Security card.

Students should be prepared for medical emergencies by holding cards showing their health insurance plan and entitlement. Parents should not necessarily rely only on school-sponsored health insurance plans. Some clinics are closed on holidays, have limited commitment to the student during certain types of illnesses or accidents (specifically, automobile accidents), or provide no emergency services.

Students will need names and addresses of those who can give advice when the student faces the normal problems of being away from home. Telephone calls to post can be expensive or logistically difficult, given differences in time zones, and e-mail does not provide personal contact. An important question to ask a prospective boarding school is what forms of support it offers students. Often there will be a counselor, mentor, or advisory group available. Parents should know who their child's advisor is and maintain close contact with that individual.

SPECIAL NEEDS

If you have a child with special needs, you will need to do additional research both before bidding and before going to post. You will need to complete and track extra paperwork to obtain an official evaluation and special clearance for your child. On the positive side, you may benefit from special education allowances. Further resources are available on the FLO Internet site (<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/9856.htm>) and the Office of Overseas Schools' special

needs section (<http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/27909.htm>). Both sites are essential reading for Foreign Service families with children who have or might have special needs.

Overseas schools may offer small class sizes and individual attention, which could benefit your special needs child. However, these schools, even those assisted by the Department of State, are not covered by U.S. legislation requiring public schools to provide a comparable education for children with special needs (Public Law 94.142). Some may be hesitant to accept children with anything more than mild learning difficulties. Even when the U.S. mission holds a seat on the board, schools do not have to accept students they feel they cannot serve. It is critical for parents to research post options and to allow enough time for the relevant Department of State offices (Employee Consultation Service, Office of Allowances, Office of Overseas Schools, Family Liaison Office, and Human Resources) to complete their parts in helping to find a workable solution that meets the needs of the child.

Evaluation Process

In order to apply or qualify for the special needs education allowance, the Employee Consultation Service (ECS) must agree that the child meets the special needs definition. This office is a good starting point in the process of obtaining assistance. ECS staff helps parents arrange evaluations, which may include psychological, educational, speech/language, occupational therapy, and/or psychiatric assessments.

If a child is due for a medical clearance examination, the evaluations can be authorized by ECS as part of the clearance process. If potential problems are identified while the family is abroad, the special needs education allowance can cover diagnostic testing and the travel of a child and one parent to a testing site. Testing cannot be authorized if the family is posted to the United States unless it is part of the pre-clearance process, since U.S. public schools provide evaluations of children with special educational needs. Overseas, the mission health unit, CLO Coordinator, or Administrative Officer can help you begin this process. Testing can be a trying time for parent and child alike. If possible, look for professionals using a "team approach," in which they are all located at the same

facility and coordinate their work. Going to one location for all evaluations can make the process easier.

Clearance Process

Evaluation reports become part of the child's medical records and are used in determining medical clearance. The Office of Medical Services will only give clearance for posts where the child's developmental needs can be met. Parents are required to obtain written confirmation that a school at the proposed post of assignment can meet the child's needs. The child will not be cleared for a specific post until that information is provided to the Office of Medical Services.

If an evaluation is completed while the employee is in mid-tour, the child will be cleared to return to post. Before the child is cleared for an onward post, however, a letter from the proposed newschool will be required.

Special Education Allowances

Once a child's special needs have been properly identified in conjunction with a medical/educational authority, the overseas employee becomes eligible for the special education allowance on behalf of the child. Benefits are available from birth through the school year in which the child turns 21, if still in secondary school. A child less than three years old must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or the equivalent prepared by a medical or educational professional in order to qualify for any education allowances. Parents are strongly encouraged to get regular ECS review and concurrence on the IEP.

The special education allowance can be used to fund services specified in the child's IEP or equivalent. Allowable expenses could include: school tuition, transportation, periodic diagnostic testing, rental of specialized equipment, individual tutoring, and so on. Regulations on special education allowance benefits can be found in the DSSR Section 276.8 (the DSSR is posted at <http://aoprals.state.gov>).

Before Bidding

Although it is time consuming, it is essential that you thoroughly investigate resources and schools before bidding on posts. Do not assume that adequate services exist everywhere.

The Office of Overseas Schools puts together a list of schools that offer support for children with special needs, available on the intranet (http://aopro.state.gov/3_Special%20Needs/specialneeds.doc) or by request. It includes self-reported information on overseas special needs programs (including programs for highly gifted children). Contacting the Office of Overseas Schools' regional education officers could also be helpful.

Families with special needs children should also be in touch with the Employee Consultation Service about services available at potential posts. ECS maintains the Post Capability Database, which gives additional information about resources available at post.

After doing initial research, you may wish to contact potential schools directly with questions. Remember that, if your child has been evaluated as having a special need, he or she will only be cleared to go to post if you have confirmed that a school at post can meet his/her needs. Your potential post will be thoroughly scrutinized before your child is given a clearance. *The intent is to be sure that a child's needs can be met at the next post BEFORE the assignment is finalized to avoid any unhappy consequences.*

On a less official level, you may want to investigate posts to find out if there are any local prejudices or attitudes that could make your child's life difficult. Find people to contact at post (possibly through the CLO coordinator or Management Officer) or use the Overseas Briefing Center's returnee file to find people who have recently returned. E-mail groups such as Livelines, sponsored by the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, or Foreign Service Special Needs may also be helpful if you are looking for anecdotal information from Foreign Service members. To subscribe to FS Special Needs, send an e-mail to fsspecialneeds-subscribe@yahoo.com, or for Livelines, send one to livelines-subscribe@yahoo.com, or go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fsspecialneeds/> or <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/livelines/>. This

RESOURCES

Office of Overseas Schools

(A/O PR/O S)
 Room H328, SA-1
 Columbia Plaza
 2401 E Street, NW
 Department of State
 Washington, DC 20522-0132
 Tel: (202) 261-8200
 Fax: (202) 261-8224
 Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/>
 Intranet: <http://aopros.a.state.gov>
 E-mail: OverseasSchools@state.gov
 REO contact information:
<http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/c1686.htm>

Family Liaison Office

(M/DG HR/FLO)
 Room 1239, Harry S Truman Building
 2201 C Street, NW
 Washington, DC 20520-7512
 Tel: (202) 647-1076 or (800) 440-0397
 Fax: (202) 647-1670
 Intranet: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/index.html>
 Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/>
 E-mail: flo@state.gov for general questions
FLOAskEducation@state.gov for education questions
www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm
 Extensive papers and resources on education

Employee Consultation Service

(M/MED/EC S)
 Office of Medical Services Main Office
 Room H246, SA-1
 Columbia Plaza
 2401 E Street, NW
 Washington, DC
 Tel: (202) 663-1815
 Fax: (202) 663-1613
 E-mail: MEDECS@state.gov

**American Foreign Service Association
 Scholarship Program**

2101 E Street, NW
 Washington, DC 20037
 Tel: (202) 944-5504
 Fax: (202) 338-6820
 Internet: <http://www.afsa.org/scholar/index.cfm>

**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: <http://www.aafsw.org>

The Associates of American Foreign Service World-
 wide (AAFSW) and the American Foreign Service
 Association (AFSA) provide merit-based scholarships
 to high school seniors for their freshman year in col-
 lege. AFSA also provides need-based financial aid for
 undergraduates.

**Foreign Service Institute Transition Center
 (M/FSI/TC)**

George P Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training
 Center (SA-42)
 Washington, DC 20522-4202
 Physical location: 4000 Arlington Blvd., Arlington, VA
 (do not send mail to this address)
 Intranet: <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc>
 Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc>

Directions, maps, parking and other information
<http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c16687.htm>

Overseas Briefing Center

(M/FSI/TC/OBC)
 Room E2126
 Tel.: (703) 302-7277
 Fax: (703)302-7452
 OBC e-mail: FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov
 Intranet Post Info To Go, which include Personal Post
 Insights: <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/epb/epb.asp>

**Transition Center Training Division
 (M/FSI/TC/T)**

Foreign Service Life Skills Training
 Tel: (703) 302-7268
 E-mail: FSITCTraining@state.gov
 The Transition Center offers resources for parents
 and children through the OBC and the Training
 Division. OBC keeps files on post schools, including
 handbooks, newsletters, personal comments, and
 yearbooks. They have videotapes or DVDs for some
 schools.

Office of Allowances

(A/O PR/ALS)
Room L314, SA-1
Columbia Plaza
2401 E Street, NW
Department of State
Washington, DC 20522-0103
Tel: (202) 261-8700
Fax: (202) 261-8707
Intranet: <http://aoprals.state.gov>
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/als/>
E-mail: AllowancesO@state.gov

State Department Federal Credit Union

1630 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2745
or
Room 1827, Harry S Truman Building
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC
Tel: (703) 706-5000 (both locations)
Toll-free: (800) 296-8882 in the U.S.
Fax: (703) 684-1613
TDD: (703) 519-8360
Internet: www.sdfcu.org
E-mail: sdfcu@sdfcu.org

IQ: Information Quest

Tel: (800) 222-0364 or (800) 262-7848 (TDD)
Internet: <http://www.worklife4you.com>.
New users enter company code: `statedepartment`
User ID is: `FirstnameMiddleinitialLastnameMMDD`,
(Month and Day—four digits from your birthdate)
e.g., `JaneCDoe0927`. Other U.S. Government employees should check with their agencies about how to access these services.
Use this service to find summer camps, private schools, preschool programs, and more.