

# Preparation For Going Overseas

## Part I – Researching Posts and Preliminary Preparations

### ONLINE RESOURCES

- **Preparing to Go Overseas** checklist:  
[www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c49333.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c49333.htm)
- **Foreign Service Assignment Notebook:**  
[www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c49274.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c49274.htm)
- **Success Overseas:** [www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c19618.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c19618.htm)
- **Transition Center e-News:**  
[www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c49685.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c49685.htm)
- **Overseas Crisis Readiness Training Module:**  
[www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/ocr](http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/ocr)
- **Realities of Foreign Service Life** (free online training):  
<http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c57361.htm>
- **TC/OBC Resources:** <http://tc.fsi.state.sbu>

#### SUMMARY:

Prepare to go overseas with an OBC checklist for tasks including post research, preliminary preparations and a departure timeline for leaving the United States.

#### CATEGORIES:

Preparing for Your Post  
Logistics

#### INTERNET:

<http://go.usa.gov/cCR74>

#### INTRANET:

<http://snip.state.gov/cpg>

*Most of the above sites can also be found by typing them into a search engine, such as Google. The last resource (the TC/OBC Resources) can only be accessed through OpenNet.*

### POST RESEARCH *(Things to Consider When Bidding)*

#### Learning About Post

Overseas Briefing Center  
4000 Arlington Blvd. (FSI)  
Arlington, VA 22204  
Building E, Rm. 2126

- Study Post Briefing Box
- Post Info to Go (online)
- Personal Post Insights (online)

- Visit the Post's websites
- View Post Profile
- Research cultural information (CultureGrams)

#### Family Member Employment

- Check the Post's Family Member Employment Report (FAMER)

- Review opportunities for inside the Mission and local employment
- Contact the Family Liaison Office (FLO) for guidance

### **Schools at Post**

- Consider/ask whether the school offers IB or AP at the high school level?
- If your child has a learning challenge/difference, work with the MED/ECS to identify appropriate schooling options
- Determine how to fill prescriptions

### **Post Health/Medical Information**

#### **Pet Entry Requirements**

- Use OBC's Pet Import Restrictions database a

#### **Living Conditions**

- Review Post Report, pre-arrival welcome booklet, Personal Post Insights, and post video

<h2><b>PRELIMINARY PREPARATIONS</b> (Things to do while waiting for an assignment)</h2>
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### **Enroll in Training (Including Spouses/Partners)**

- Transition Center Foreign Service Life Skills classes (Protocol, Logistics, Realities, Basics for Overseas Employment, etc) find them at: <http://tc.fsi.state.sbu> or on Handout #36: *FSI/TC Course Schedules*
- Security Overseas Seminar (SOS)
- Distance Learning options

### **Obtain Moving Logistics References**

- Foreign Service Assignment Notebook (OBC)
- It's Your Move (Transportation)
- Plan email and mail changes

### **Take Care of Medical Needs**

- Appointments—medical, dentist, etc.
- Request copies of records
- Medical Insurance

### **Prepare Important Papers & Records**

- Draw up powers of attorney
- Update will/letter of instruction/beneficiaries
- Create a medical directive ("Five Wishes")
- Scan important papers (e.g., tax returns)
- Photocopy scrapbooks/photos
- Consider a safe deposit box (with family access)
- Collect school and medical records

### **Consider Real Estate Options**

- Rent or sell? Interview real estate agents and/or property managers
- Managing Rental Property workshop/DVD
- Clean, paint, repair

### **Organize Household Effects**

- Sort and eliminate
- Obtain certified appraisals for high value items
- Arrange cleaning and repair

## Confirm Banking Arrangements

## Review Insurance Coverage

# ONCE YOU HAVE AN ASSIGNMENT (Also see Part II of this handout)

### Learn More about Post & Language

- Language, Area Studies
- Use OBC resources (Post-to-go, Post videos, etc.)
- Write to the person whose position you are replacing and the Community Liaison Office (CLO) for more info. This information can usually be found in a post-to-go.

### Apply for Visas

### Plan for Shipment of Pets

- Contact post to confirm entry requirements
- Arrange required shots and certificates
- Purchase supplies

### Follow up on Employment

- Contact the Family Liaison Office (FLO) and the Community Liaison Office (CLO)
- Update your resume
- Research opportunities
- Search: [www.worklife4you.com](http://www.worklife4you.com), which is an agency-paid service to help you and your family find employment  
Screen Name: statedepartment  
Password: infoquest

### Continue Medical/Health Preparations

- Schedule immunizations and exams
- Plan how to get prescriptions/extra glasses
- Check insurance and change if needed

### Make Real Estate Arrangements

- Ensure lease includes a “diplomatic clause”
- If renting your home, change insurance policy to “rental”

### Schedule Pack-out

- Meet with Transportation Counselor
- Set a time for a prepack survey

### Register Children for School of Choice

### Go Shopping

- Consumables
- Electric appliances, if needed
- Business cards (ask post)

### Plan for Shipment of Automobile

- Check restrictions with Management Office
- Select appropriate auto and transit insurance
- Renew driver’s license/obtain international permit
- Schedule car delivery to shipper

### Write Letters to Post

(should arrive no earlier than six weeks before you do)

### Change Address

- Submit post office change of address form 30 days before move
- Send change-of-address forms for businesses

- Make sure friends and relatives can reach you
- Update contact info with Employee Services Center
- Check absentee voting procedures and request an absentee ballot here: <https://www.overseasvotefoundation.org/vote/home.htm>

## WITH TRAVEL ORDERS IN HAND

### Arrange Finances

- Travel allowance
- Advance of Pay Allowance
- Plan for initial expenses at post
- Obtain traveler's checks or currency if needed

### Prepare Luggage

- Carry important papers and valuables with you
- School and Medical Records, if needed

### Apply for Passports

### Confirm Travel Arrangements

- Request and pick up airline tickets
- Notify post of flight, arrival date and time (and if traveling with a pet)
- Double check pet shipping plans

### Pack Out

- Separate air freight, HHE, and storage
- Get help for packing days
- Arrange for childcare, if needed
- Check with Transportation before leaving town and make sure they have contact information

## PART II – Departure Checklist Timeline for Leaving the United States

You have received your Assignment Notification (TM ONE) and are ready to start planning your departure from the United States. Departing is a lengthy and complicated process; it should not be a last minute exercise. Here are some hints for staying focused and organized.

### 120 DAYS (4 MONTHS) BEFORE DEPARTURE

- **IF YOU OWN PROPERTY AND ARE RENTING OUT YOUR HOME:** Identify a property management company about 4 months before departure. Conduct an initial visit to the residence about 3 months before departure so they can recommend any necessary repairs and touch-ups before putting the property up for rent. Discuss the timeline for advertising the rental and projected occupancy.

- **MEDICAL CLEARANCE:** Schedule your physical exam with MED. Your medical examination is important for obtaining a medical clearance. All members of your family, who are on your orders traveling to post, will need a medical clearance.
  - Email: [MEDClearances@state.gov](mailto:MEDClearances@state.gov)
  - Phone: (202) 663-1591

## 90 DAYS (3 MONTHS) BEFORE DEPARTURE OR ONCE YOU HAVE YOUR ASSIGNMENT CABLE

- **TMTWO** (Proposed Itinerary) provides CDA with pertinent travel information and confirms/proposes changes to the timing of the transfer as originally outlined in the Assignment Notification. It is subject to approval by the gaining post and your CDO. Your TMTWO is to be filled out and submitted to HR as soon as possible in order to avoid delays in getting your Travel Authorization (also known as the TM FOUR or Travel Orders) from Washington.
- **OTHER MEDICAL EXAMS:** Get all routine medical check-ups taken care of before leaving.
- **SHOTS:** Obtain whatever shots are required for the country of your assignment. Make sure that all of your shots are up to date. Remember to hand carry your yellow WHO card.
- **PASSPORTS:** Arrange for diplomatic or required passports. Check validity of your tourist passport. Contact the Passport Office for assistance. Phone: (202) 485-8200

## 60 DAYS (2 MONTHS BEFORE DEPARTURE)

- **PACKING AND SHIPPING:** Schedule with Travel and Transportation pack-out of HHE, UAB, and POV. Two days of Administrative Leave are authorized when packing-out. Read Travel and Transportation's "It's Your Move," a practical guide to shipping and pack out on the internet at [www.state.gov/m/a/c8026.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/a/c8026.htm) (updated March 2017)
- **TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS:** Make travel reservations by visiting the Travel Office (Carson Wagonlit Government Travel, Ph: 1-866-654-5593). If you have pets, ensure that flight space reservations are made and note that the shipment of pets is the total responsibility of the employee. Contact the Overseas Briefing Center for advice with pet shipping at 703-302-7277. You must have travel orders before tickets are issued.
- **PETS VACCINATIONS:** Schedule necessary vaccinations and health inspection of pets with your veterinarian. Confirm which permits and health certificates are required for pets to leave the U.S. and enter your post of assignment.
- **COMPLETE A CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM** with the U.S. Post Office. Send your new address at post to friends, magazine subscriptions, organizations of which you are a member, credit card companies, mortgage companies, and banks.
- **WRITE AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER:** Write to the ambassador of the post to which you have been assigned, as well as to your future supervisor. Guidelines are located at

[www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/1876.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/1876.htm). Past letters are also accessible in-person from OBC computers.

- VISAS:** Start procedure to obtain visas for your next assignment (if required). Do this for all family members traveling with you.
- SHIPPING AND/OR BUYING CARS:** Contact GSO shipping and customs personnel at your new post to make sure all procedures for bringing your vehicle are complete.
- PRE-PACK SURVEYS:** Arrange with your shipping company for a pre-pack survey.
- SCHOOL RECORDS:** If you have school-age children, notify school of your intention to withdraw your child(ren) and provide date of departure. Request official transcripts and pick them up or have the school send them to the new school.

### 30 DAYS BEFORE DEPARTURE

- BEGIN YOUR SIGN OUT SHEET! RETURN ITEMS TO OBC!**
- CHECK YOUR TMFOUR (TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION):** Check carefully for mistakes and ask for changes immediately if your travel plans change. All must be corrected before you depart.
- ARRIVAL NOTIFICATION:** Contact post (your assigned office, the MGT section / Community Liaison Office) to make sure they also have your arrival plans.
- IF YOU ARE SHIPPING A POV:** If you are shipping a car, take it to your mechanic/car dealer to have general maintenance checks. Buy any necessary spare parts to include in your HHE. Depending on the post where you are going you might want to get new tires (all-weather versus summer and winter in Eastern Europe, etc.). Before your vehicle is picked up for transport, make sure the gas tank is below one-fourth.
- REVIEW ALL INSURANCE POLICIES:** Obtain insurance for shipping of HHE and POV. Cancel current home owners insurance and convert to renter's policy (if applicable).
- CONSUMABLE POSTINGS:** If you are shipping consumables, shop for food items and arrange for pick up by shipper.
- CANCEL OUTSTANDING MEMBERSHIPS AND ACCOUNTS:** Return library books, cancel gym membership, cancel utility bills, and cancel any other recurring charges on credit cards.
- MAKE ANY CHANGES TO HEALTH INSURANCE:** Permanent Change of Station (PCS) is a life-changing event and allows you to change your health insurance provider.
- GET A SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX:** Scan (and put on thumb drive/CLOUD) and/or store important documents -- legal, financial, medical -- in a safety deposit box. Leave a spare key with a trusted family member (if appropriate) and keep one key with you.
- REGISTER FOR ABSENTEE BALLOT.**
- MAKE SURE ALL HR FORMS ARE UP-TO-DATE:** Check to make sure beneficiary forms and others are current.
- REGISTER WITH THE EMPLOYEE SERVICES CENTER'S Employer Locator Form.**  
<https://esc.a.state.sbu>
- DESIGNATE SOMEONE** (i.e., your agent/family member) to handle your affairs and your bills if you cannot from overseas.

- CONTACT YOUR CELL PHONE / TABLET PROVIDER:** Contact your cell phone / tablet provider and request “international dial” capability during your trip and first week of arrival at post, before receiving a country-specific cell phone or switching to another provider. Nowadays, you can also download phone apps that allow for communication over internet/wi-fi, such as Whatsapp, WeChat, or Facebook Messenger.
- SAYING GOODBYE:** Make opportunities for visits from friends and relatives before departure and for your child(ren) to say goodbye to teachers and friends.

## 15 DAYS BEFORE DEPARTURE

- PACK-OUTS:** To minimize stress and allow time to solve the unexpected, pack-outs should be scheduled a minimum of 2 weeks prior to final departure. Remember that summer is the busiest time, so book early to beat the competition.
  - What Goes Where:** Identify suitcase items first. Identify airfreight items next. All else goes sea freight. For the personnel transferring to a post that receives only airfreight shipments of household effects, you must be sensitive to possible overweight issues relative to shipping allowances.
- CLEANING OF RESIDENCE:** If you are staying in a leased apartment, you are expected to leave the apartment in a clean and tidy condition. Schedule time to clean before you depart!

## ONE WEEK BEFORE DEPARTURE

- ARRANGE TRANSPORTATION TO THE AIRPORT:** How are you getting there with all of your luggage, pet(s), etc?
- PAY ALL OUTSTANDING BILLS.**
- CONFIRM ARRIVAL INFORMATION WITH POST:** Confirm again with your receiving post that they have your arrival information.
- PROVIDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION:** Make sure all family members (if appropriate) have your contact information for your new location overseas, as well as emergency contact information for the Department of State.
- CONTACT YOUR CREDIT CARD COMPANY AND BANK:** Alert your card company and bank to your pending international travel so accounts will not be frozen when a foreign transaction is processed.
- PICK UP PLANE TICKETS.**

## TAKE WITH YOU TO THE AIRPORT

- Plane tickets**

- Passports**
- Immunization records** (needed at new embassy/consulate Health Unit and for child(ren) enrollment in new school)
- Prescription medicines** (and prescriptions)
- Credit or debit card** (or other method for cash)
- Address and phone number of the U.S. Mission where you are heading**
- Contact information for **who is meeting you at the airport**
- A copy of your **travel orders**
- Copies of **pet immunizations and shipping paperwork**
- Hand carry important documents** (prescriptions | school records for children | a listing of important contacts | spouse/partner employment information, etc.)
- An **extra set of eye glasses** (if appropriate)
- An **extra set of clothes** in your carry on (in case of lost luggage)
- If traveling with children, hand **carry games, books, favorite toy**
- If traveling with a pet, **carry extra pet food** in case of airport delays or an unexpected overnight due to canceled/delayed flights.
- Keep jewelry and valuables in your carry-on luggage.**
- Take **U.S. cell phone and charger.**