

Job Vacancy Announcement for CA-AEFM Consular Positions

The Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) sponsors a program to provide Appointment Eligible Family Members (AEFMs) with certification enabling them to work in Consular positions at the overseas post of their direct-hire employee sponsor. CA-AEFMs are assigned to entry-level consular positions, primarily in nonimmigrant visa units. The regular Foreign Service assignments process invariably leaves some overseas Consular positions without sufficient qualified Foreign Service bidders. Under this new program, the Bureau of Human Resources Office of Career Development and Assignments (HR/CDA) will proactively accept applications from CA-AEFMs interested in serving as Consular Professionals in entry-level positions and will work with the Bureau of Consular Affairs Executive Office (CA/EX) to fill these positions.

Position Title:

Consular Affairs - Appointment Eligible Family Member (CA-AEFM)

Job Description:

CA-AEFMs may be assigned to full-time, entry-level consular positions abroad, primarily in nonimmigrant visa units. CA-AEFMs will be hired under a Family Member Appointment (FMA), which is a Limited Non-Career Appointment. The potential to extend such appointments is based on satisfactory performance and the needs of the Foreign Service.

Series and Grade:

FP-06, FP-05, and FP-04.

Benefits:

CA-AEFMs hired under an FMA are eligible for many benefits, including non-competitive eligibility for qualifying service abroad (based on Executive Order 12721), to the extent authorized by 5 CFR § 315.608; Annual and Sick Leave; FEHB; FERS; FEGLI; Thrift Savings Plan; Danger Pay (if applicable); language incentive pay, if appropriate. They may also be in pay status during periods of required training. CA-AEFMs are not eligible for hardship differential or COLA.

Number of Vacancies:

Unlimited

Area of Consideration:

AEFMs who are U.S. citizens and are at least 21 years of age. For purposes of this program, an AEFM is defined as a U.S. citizen spouse or U.S. citizen domestic partner (as defined in 3 FAM 1610) who is on the travel orders or approved Form OF-126, Foreign Service Residence and Dependency Report, of a Foreign Service or Civil Service employee or uniformed service member permanently assigned to or stationed at a U.S. Foreign Service post or establishment abroad, or at an office of the American Institute in Taiwan abroad, under Chief of Mission authority and who does not receive a U.S. government retirement annuity or pension based on a career in the U.S. Foreign Service, Civil Service, or uniformed service. An AEFM is eligible for assignment only to qualifying positions at the sponsoring employee's or uniformed service member's post or office of assignment abroad.

Location:

CA-AEFM assignments can be in any geographic region abroad. A fully certified CA-AEFM candidate should contact the CA-AEFM Coordinator in HR/CDA/EL to discuss potential assignments when the candidate's sponsor begins a bidding cycle. CA/EX and HR/CDA coordinate all assignments of CA-AEFMs to overseas posts, based on the sponsor's assignment. HR/CDA/EL or CA/EX will notify CA-AEFMs of a specific assignment.

Tour of Duty:

HR/CDA will assign the CA-AEFM in most cases to the tour of duty of the sponsor..

Description of Duties:

As noted above, all consular positions for the CA-AEFM program are full-time consular positions. The range of duties and responsibilities reflect those required of entry-level Foreign Service Officers.

Basic duties may include the following:

- A. Obtaining information relevant to provision of consular services by interviewing individuals, reviewing on-line applicants' visa or passport application history, reviewing name searches for visa and passport applicants, and verifying information provided by applicants, as necessary.
- B. Processing visas or passports, including reviewing and reconciling visa, passport issuance, report of birth, and other controlled records and supplies, determining and verifying required clearances prior to issuing visas or passports, and preparing visa revocations, security advisory opinions, and advisory opinions.
- C. Making and reviewing decisions about visa or passport applications including adjudicating visa or passport applications by reviewing cases and applying relevant USG law, regulations, precedent, and relevant agreements, and cooperating with other agencies in applying laws and regulations related to visa applications.
- D. Interacting with those applying for consular services, including explaining entry procedures to persons, dealing fairly but compassionately with all clients, including applicants refused visas, and communicating appropriately with visa applicants, their attorneys or congressional staff.
- E. Investigating potentially fraudulent activities or claims, coordinating and cooperating with other agencies to prevent entry of ineligible aliens into the United States, developing working relationships with appropriate in-country officials for the purpose of sharing and verifying information, and providing documentation of consular decisions.
- F. Using computers and Microsoft Office applications such as Word, Excel, Outlook, and Power Point, and using specialized consular computer systems.
- G. Preparing written materials, such as memos and status reports, as requested.
- H. Communicating with and assisting Department of State colleagues, e.g., assisting colleagues on projects, serving rotationally as duty officer 24/7, attending meetings, supporting high-level visits, and providing information on Consular activities and services, as appropriate.

I. Managing Sensitive and/or Classified Information.

Other responsibilities may include:

- Conducting outreach, pro-actively representing the United States, and promoting U.S. policies abroad
- Participating on boards, committees, and task forces
- Interacting with foreign government officials
- Communicating with non-government organizations/groups
- Monitoring and reporting on developments of interest to the U.S. Government
- Evaluating policies and procedures
- Providing day-to-day oversight of Locally Employed Staff (LE Staff) and/or Eligible Family Members (EFMs)

Special Circumstances:

A U.S. Consular Professional who issues a visa for admission to the United States is required by law to personally certify in writing that he or she has performed the necessary visa lookout check, a process that includes (but is not limited to) reviewing returns from Facial Recognition checks and from Automated Biometric Identification and Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System fingerprint clearances; checking the Consular Lookout and Support System and other appropriate post records; and reviewing nonimmigrant visa and immigrant visa case notes and any other post files for information that would render an applicant ineligible for a visa.

This program is distinctly different from other opportunities for AEFMs to work in consular sections, because the CA-AEFM program is centrally managed by CA and HR. This means that the application process, assessment of interested candidates, and assignment of qualified candidates will be handled by Washington, not posts abroad. For this program only, a CA-AEFM may be appointed under an FMA prior to arrival at post and may be in pay status during consular training and language training, if required, prior to arrival overseas.

The assessment process for AEFMs who wish to be a CA-AEFM is the same as the assessment process for other Consular positions on limited, non-career appointments. This process is administered by the Bureau of Human Resources Board of Examiners (HR/REE/BEX). The list of AEFMs who successfully pass the assessment process will be maintained by the CA-AEFM Coordinator in HR/CDA/EL. An AEFM who successfully passes the assessment process will not need to do so again during the duration of the direct hire spouse's employment with the U.S. Government. Following the bidding and assignment process of the U.S. direct hire, when an AEFM expresses interest on a subsequent position overseas, the AEFM may have to renew clearances, and/or address the language designation of the position. Should the CA-AEFM go five years without an adjudicatory assignment, s/he will be required to re-take PC 530, the Basic Consular Course.

When a CA-AEFM accepts an offer to onboard with the Department of State as a CA-AEFM, HR/REE provides the CA-AEFM with a “Conditions of Employment” form which must be signed and returned to HR/REE.

These conditions are:

- The initial appointment is for a period to complete required training to fill an entry-level consular position abroad to the length of the sponsor’s tour of duty.
- Subsequent appointment extensions are subject to satisfactory performance and the needs of the Service.
- CA-AEFM must pass the basic consular course or the appointment will be terminated.
- CA-AEFMs must pass language training, if required, at the appropriate level of the language-designated job to which assigned, or the appointment may be terminated.
- There is no conversion mechanism to a career Foreign Service or Civil Service appointment.
- CA-AEFMs earn non-competitive hiring eligibility for federal government service for time served overseas in qualifying local-hire positions, to the extent authorized by 5 CFR § 315.608.
- A CA-AEFM’s Family Member Appointment (FMA) may be terminated at any time by the Department of State.
- A CA-AEFM may terminate his/her FMA at any time, but is expected to serve a minimum of one year, or until the transfer date of the sponsoring employee, whichever is shorter. Failure to serve the minimum required period will be presumed by CA to undermine eligibility for any future assignment as a CA-AEFM.
- A CA-AEFM must serve at least one year in the CA-AEFM position prior to being eligible to apply for another position at the same post of employment.
- A CA-AEFM must maintain a Top Secret clearance and any applicable country-specific clearance.
- A CA-AEFM must maintain a medical clearance for the country of assignment.
- All CA-AEFMs will support U.S. Government policy in public overseas regardless of personal views.

Initial Grade/Increase in Grade:

CA-AEFMs will be hired at the FP-06, FP-05, or FP-04 level, based on years of professional, full-time experience and/or education. CA-AEFMs are eligible for a grade increase to the FS-04 level. The grade increase potential is based on the Foreign Service entry level promotion scale:

- FP-06 to FP-05 after 12 months of service in pay status with satisfactory performance as an FP-06 CA-AEFM.

- FP-05 to FP-04 after 18 months of service in pay status with satisfactory performance as an FP-05 CA-AEFM.

The grade increase is applicable only while serving in a CA-AEFM position. CA-AEFMs will be evaluated at least annually on the anniversary date of their arrival at post using the DS-7770 performance evaluation form.

Orientation/Training/Assignment:

As noted above, CA-AEFMs are eligible to be in pay status during required training, prior to arrival at post. Whenever possible, the Department will schedule CA-AEFM training for the time period when the direct hire spouse is also in Washington on travel orders. CA funds required consular training and, in consultation with HR/CDA, may fund recommended orientation or other training at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), based on the direct hire spouse's travel orders.

Qualifications and Specialized Experience:

All CA-AEFM candidates must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Must possess at least a high school diploma (please note that the undergraduate degree requirement was discontinued on April 12, 2017, however, it is acceptable to submit an undergraduate or graduate degree, whichever is the highest, in lieu of a high school diploma);
- Demonstrate a strong command of the English language, including grammar, spelling and punctuation;
- Pass the rigorous testing standard for CA-AEFMs as administered by HR/REE/BEX;
- Obtain and hold a Top-Secret level security clearance; and,
- Pass a Foreign Service suitability review.

Education completed in a foreign high school may be used to meet federal job requirements for this position. The applicant is responsible to provide such evidence when applying for the program. Individuals who have served as a Professional Adjudication Specialist (PAS) in the past five years may use their PAS experience in lieu of the education requirement.

Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other Requirements:

The education, work experience, and other qualifications evaluated for evidence of the following knowledge, skills, abilities, and other requirements have been identified as important to successful job performance as a Consular Adjudicator, based on extensive job analysis research. Not all of these attributes need to be met by a candidate; the attributes will be used as a set to evaluate candidates.

- A. General knowledge of the United States, including customs and culture, society, trends, history, economy, government, political system, and Constitution;
- B. Skill in written and oral communication, including English grammar and usage, techniques for effective interpersonal communication, techniques for handling interviews, complaints, sources of information, and public speaking ability;

- C. General skills in computers, including computer operations, common office software programs (e.g., Microsoft Office), e-mail systems, and Internet. Successful applicants will receive training in specialized Consular software applications;
- D. General subject matters, including psychology and human behavior, interacting with individuals undergoing stress, and basic mathematics.

Skills Required:

- A. Active listening
- B. Judgment and decision making
- C. Critical thinking
- D. Social perceptiveness and interpersonal ability
- E. Service orientation
- F. Good time management
- G. Strong reading comprehension
- H. Active learning
- I. Persuasion
- J. Solving complex problems
- K. Learning strategies
- L. Superior Oral and Written Communication Skills: In order to pass the assessment process, successful applicants must consistently meet a high standard for English, both written (overall structure as well as grammar, spelling, and punctuation) and spoken (overall structure as well as delivery, clarity, and succinctness). Those who fall short of this standard will not be competitive.

How You Will Be Evaluated:

CA-AEFMs are required to pass the Board of Examiners (BEX) assessment process to qualify for certification as a CA-AEFM. CA/EX or the CA-AEFM Coordinator in HR/CDA/EL (hereinafter referred to as “the Coordinator”) will accept applications and check that the minimum qualifications are met. The Coordinator will forward qualified applications to BEX to begin the testing process.

The first step of the BEX assessment process is an online test. This test has four components: General Knowledge, English Language Expression, Situational Judgment, and Understanding Regulations. CA-AEFMs will have the option of completing the online portion of the test in a proctored and controlled setting overseas or completing it in the BEX office in Washington, D.C. Those applicants who pass the online portion must subsequently appear in person in Washington, D.C. to complete the assessment process, i.e., the written case management exercise and the structured interview with a panel that includes a consular expert. Applicants who do not pass the online portion of the test will be required to wait one year from the date that HR/REE/BEX received their application before they are eligible to

re-test. The Department of State will not provide transportation or per diem funding for applicants to fulfill assessment requirements.

Applicants who pass the in-person assessment will then be subject to a security clearance investigation and suitability review. Applicants who do not pass the in-person assessment portion may reapply one year after BEX received their application.

Once BEX determines that a candidate is fully qualified, BEX will then notify the Coordinator. The CA-AEFM certification of qualifications does not expire; CA/EX and HR/CDA/EL will indefinitely keep the name of the qualified CA-AEFM candidate on its list of fully-certified candidates. CA-AEFMs may need to be retrained on consular matters or update security and medical clearances in order to accept a specific assignment overseas.

How to Apply:

Applications must be submitted electronically and sent to AEFM-CA@state.gov. Include the following in the email:

DS-1950

Instructions for Accessing the DS-1950

1. Download the [DS-1950](#).
2. Fill out form entirely, including an ink signature and date on pages 1 and 3
3. Print, sign, save as a .pdf, scan, and email to AEFM-CA@state.gov

Also include:

- Evidence of U.S. citizenship (for example, either provide U.S. passport number and date of issuance or a scanned photocopy of the biographical information page of the U.S. passport)
- Full name of direct hire spouse
- Agency of direct hire spouse
- Current assignment of direct hire spouse
- Evidence of required educational experience: All applicants must attach to the e-mail application a copy of their high school transcripts and evidence that a high school diploma was awarded. Unofficial high school transcripts will be accepted. Please note that you may submit a copy of your highest degree (undergraduate or graduate, whichever is the highest) in lieu of your high school diploma, as the case may apply.

Once the Coordinator has determined that an applicant has met the minimum qualifications, the Coordinator will pass the application to HR/REE/BEX. Each applicant will receive a confirmation email from the Coordinator when the application has been received and determined to have met the minimum qualifications. **HR/REE/BEX will contact the applicant with instructions on the assessment process. Please do not contact them beforehand.**

The Department of State is committed to equal opportunity and fair and equitable treatment for all without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, sexual orientation, disabling condition, political affiliation, marital status, or prior statutorily or constitutionally protected activity. The Department of State provides reasonable accommodation to applicants with disabilities. Applicants requiring reasonable accommodations for any part of the application or hiring process should so advise the Department. Decisions for granting reasonable accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis.

Obtaining certification as a qualified CA-AEFM candidate does not guarantee employment. A CA-AEFM position does not automatically lead to further employment in the State Department.

All questions regarding the application process, eligibility requirements or other issues should be sent to AEFM-CA@state.gov.

For Professional Adjudication Specialists:

Consular Affairs is phasing out the PAS Program in favor of the CA-AEFM Program. AEFMs who are now serving as PAS will be permitted by CA to complete their current assignments in their PAS status. Any PAS who wishes to work again in a consular section in an adjudicatory capacity must submit an application to the CA-AEFM Program. As noted above, a current PAS or former PAS (who has worked as a PAS within the past 5 years) may use their professional consular adjudicatory experience as comparable experience to satisfy the education requirement. One year of current or former service as a PAS satisfies the education requirement in lieu of a high school diploma.

CA/EX has suspended the acceptance of new applications to the PAS Program at this time. AEFMs who wish to have the professional status and adjudicatory responsibilities of an entry-level Foreign Service Officer should apply to the CA-AEFM Program.

The CA-AEFM program does not impact other employment opportunities in consular sections abroad for AEFMs. Job vacancies for non-adjudicatory positions will continue to be advertised and filled at post by the Human Resource Office.