



FOREIGN SERVICE ASSIGNMENT **NOTEBOOK**

U.S. Department of State
Foreign Service Institute
Transition Center
Arlington, VA



FOREIGN SERVICE ASSIGNMENT NOTEBOOK

What Do I Do Now?



Foreign Service Institute
Transition Center
George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center
United States Department of State
Washington, D.C.

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MISSION STATEMENTS



FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) is to deliver world-class diplomatic training and provide the career-long learning opportunities that U.S. government foreign affairs professionals need in order to excel in today's global arena, advance U.S. foreign policy, and deliver on behalf of the American people. To fulfill these critical responsibilities, the personnel we serve require a unique combination of specialized expertise, operational skill sets, and a broad capacity for innovative and visionary leadership. FSI training and resources promote substantive, regional, and linguistic expertise, leadership finesse, personal resilience and problem-solving.

FSI is comprised of the School of Language Studies, the School of Professional and Area studies, the School of Applied Information Technology, the Leadership and Management School, the Office of the Historian, and the Transition Center.

TRANSITION CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Transition Center is to prepare the U.S. Department of State community for competence and success in U.S. foreign affairs through transition training, resources, and information. Our vision is a resilient foreign affairs community that successfully manages repeated career transitions and stands ready to execute U.S. foreign policy goals across a full career span.

ABOUT FSI

As the U.S. government's premier foreign affairs training provider, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) is dedicated to ensuring the career-long learning opportunities required for success in today's global arena. FSI promotes substantive, regional, and linguistic expertise, leadership finesse, personal resilience, and innovative problem-solving. FSI is proud to serve the U.S. Department of State and the entire U.S. government foreign affairs community as a strategic enabler of diplomatic excellence.

The 21st century has brought unprecedented global change. Effective diplomacy is more essential than ever as we evolve to meet current challenges and future opportunities. FSI serves as a catalyst for that evolution. Employing cutting-edge educational technology, the latest advancements in cognitive research, and the work of innovative thought leaders from around the world, FSI challenges

our professionals to explore new individual strengths, to broaden organizational capacities, and to strive for better outcomes for our country and the world.

Established in 1947, FSI is located at the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center in Arlington, Virginia. Situated in a campus-like setting of 72 acres, the Shultz Center is a 10-minute drive from the main Department of State building in Washington, D.C. FSI conducts training in both the United States and overseas, offering approximately 800 courses (nearly 600 classroom/virtual classroom and 250 via distance learning platforms) with over 225,000 enrollments annually.

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PREFACE



The Foreign Service Assignment Notebook (FSAN) offers an overview of preparations for an official overseas move. It guides U.S. Government foreign affairs employees and their eligible family members through a process that, while often exciting, can be confusing and overwhelming.

The FSAN is organized temporally. It begins with an introduction to the foreign affairs lifestyle, then moves into bidding considerations, preparing for your post, and life at post, and concludes with logistical and administrative topics that apply throughout. The FSAN draws on expertise from a variety of Department of State offices and provides references and resources for further information.

DISCLAIMER: This publication provides an overview of the moving process and foreign affairs lifestyle. It should not be construed as legal, tax, or investment advice. Consult a professional when needed. Some chapters contain information that changes rapidly and could be time sensitive. Always double-check regulations before taking actions that could have legal or financial consequences. The U.S. Government does not endorse any commercial products or services. Any listings found in this publication are for informational purposes only and in no way constitute an endorsement, expressed or implied, by the Department of State. Links to websites outside the U.S. federal government or the use of trade, firm, or corporation names are for the convenience of the user and do not constitute an official endorsement or approval of any private sector product, service, website, or privacy policy.

FOREWORD



An assignment overseas on behalf of the United States government is an exciting, sometimes confusing, perhaps even daunting life event for an individual, those who will accompany, and all those who care about their wellbeing. In effect, those embarking on assignments are agreeing to give up significant parts of their lifestyles for an experience that can't be entirely foreseen. Will I do well in the assignment? Will my family be happy? Will my extended family understand, support, and stay in contact with us? There are a great many details that cannot be known in advance, and the only certainty is that it will take some time, effort, and adjustment on everyone's part to regain a sense of agency - that you can control your life, and familiarity - so that you can feel comfortable and effective. The innumerable questions that come up range from the very existential "Am I doing the right thing? Is this who I want to be? Is this right for us?" to the much more mundane decisions about what to ship and what to store and what to pack, with hundreds of needed pieces of information and decisions in between.

The Foreign Service Assignment Notebook is a labor of love and the product of generations of employees and family members who have contributed their expertise, their wisdom, and their hard-won realities in an effort to help you make sense of your own journey - to make it as predictable, enjoyable, and stress-reduced as possible. It is a survival compendium, carefully vetted and arranged to help you to try to make sense of this transition in your lives and connect you to the various offices that can help along the way. Like any such effort though, it is unlikely to provide you with absolutely everything you need to know. Instead, it will help make the transition intelligible, predictable, and manageable, and give you starting points to continue your fact-finding and preparations that are specific to you and your needs, and those who will accompany you - in person, or in spirit.

Our hope is that you use this resource to create success in your career and in this life transition for you and your family. If the old adage about the real value of information lying in reducing the anxiety of the unknown is true, what you are offered here is the best, most relevant information that we assemble for you without knowing who you are or where you are going. Our hope is that you make good use of it. Good luck, good health, and thank you, and your family, for your willingness to embark on this adventure on behalf of our nation.

Ray Leki, Transition Center Director

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The Foreign Service Assignment Notebook owes much of its content to the collaboration between many offices in the Department of State as well as outside partner organizations, including:

- Bureau of Medical Services
- Career Development Resource Center
- Employee Consultation Services
- Foreign Service Youth Foundation
- Human Resources Office of Retirement
- Independent consultants
- Office of Allowances
- Office of Casualty Assistance
- Office of Diplomatic Law and Legal Litigation
- Office of Logistics Management
- Office of Mail and Diplomatic Pouch Services
- Office of Mental Health Services
- Office of Overseas Schools
- The American Foreign Service Association
- The Association of the American Foreign Service Worldwide
- The Child and Family Program
- The Global Community Liaison Office
- The Transition Center at the Foreign Service Institute
- Transportation

Foreign Service Institute Transition Center

SECTION 1 SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS LIFESTYLE



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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF A U.S. MISSION



THE ORGANIZATION

A U.S. mission exists to manage U.S. diplomatic and consular activities within a country. A mission may consist of an embassy, consulate general, consulates, and other offices. Where the United States does not have full diplomatic relations with a nation, it may be represented by a liaison office or interests section. More than one U.S. mission may exist in a country if the United States has a multilateral mission, which is a delegation to an international organization such as the United Nations. Since ambassadors also head multilateral missions, two or more U.S. ambassadors might

work in the same country but in different missions. The United States maintains more than 270 embassies, consulates general, consulates, and special missions in over 190 countries.

The U.S. embassy is the basic unit for conducting U.S. diplomacy overseas. The chief of mission (usually an ambassador) personally represents the President of the United States, while reporting to and receiving instructions through the Secretary of State. The chief of mission directs all U.S. programs and personnel, except for those under the command of a U.S. area military commander, under the authority of another U.S. diplomatic post, or detailed to an international organization. The chief of mission thus carries ultimate responsibility for executing U.S. foreign policy goals and coordinating and managing all U.S. government functions in the host country.

THE STAFF

At an embassy or special mission, if the ambassador leaves post even temporarily, the person acting in the ambassador's place is called the chargé or chargé d'affaires. At consulates and consulates general, the consul or consul general is in charge and reports to the ambassador at the embassy in country. Heads of consulates are also known as principal officers.

The deputy chief of mission (DCM) is the second most senior person in the mission. The DCM has primary responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the mission and coordination between the various agencies at post under chief of mission authority.

Ambassadors manage the work of a mission through the country team, which is made up of the heads of each Department of State section and representatives of all other agencies. The country team meets regularly to discuss local conditions and mission activities, review management and security issues, coordinate programs, and plan and evaluate progress on meeting mission goals.

The number of people assigned to an embassy or consulate usually depends on the size of the foreign country and depth and breadth of U.S. bilateral relations with that country. In addition to the head(s) of the mission, staff includes employees from the four foreign affairs agencies - the Department of State, Agency for International Development, Department of Commerce, and Department of Agriculture - and other U.S. government agencies. The largest group of employees by far consists of locally employed staff (LES), hired within the country. U.S. missions employ eligible family members (EFMs) of foreign affairs agency employees, U.S. citizens living in the host country, and citizens of other countries, known as third country nationals.

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE AT A U.S. MISSION

The Department of State is the lead institution for the conduct of U.S. diplomacy and is comparable to the ministry of foreign affairs in many other countries. Every mission includes at least one U.S. citizen employee from the Department of State.

Management Section

The management section provides the support that allows the other sections and agencies to do their jobs. Management handles areas such as:

- Human resources
- Financial management
- Information management, including radio, mail services, telephone, and computers
- General services (buildings, maintenance, purchasing, supplies, customs and shipping, and transportation)
- Health and medical provisions
- Community issues, often through the community liaison office (CLO) coordinator

Consular Section

The consular section provides services and assistance to U.S. citizens living in or visiting the country. It also issues visas to citizens of other countries who seek entry to the United States for the purposes of work, travel, business or immigration. Consular duties include issuing and renewing passports, reporting births, deaths, and marriages of U.S. citizens, registering Americans who are in the country, visiting U.S. citizens who have been arrested, assisting in emergencies such as deaths or natural disasters, and providing U.S. voting and tax information.

Political and Economic Sections

The political and economic sections analyze political, social, and economic developments within the host country and region. Employees working in these sections meet with political parties and non-governmental organizations, make recommendations on foreign policy, and work with foreign government officials to promote U.S. interests.

Public Affairs Section

The public affairs section administers cultural and educational exchange programs, manages information research centers, and serves as the official media contact point, handling all inquiries from the local news media.

Security Section

The security section develops and maintains systems to provide a safe, secure workplace for everyone at the mission and safe, secure homes for U.S. staff and their family members. This section provides access controls such as guards, security for visiting dignitaries, and security information to U.S. businesses situated in the country. The security section also liaises with local schools attended by U.S. mission children. A Marine security guard detachment plays an important role in protecting many U.S. missions.



CHAPTER 2

SPOUSES, SAME-SEX COUPLES AND THE LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY, AND MEMBERS OF HOUSEHOLD



MARRIAGE

When a Foreign Service employee marries, the following documents must be submitted within 30 days of the marriage:

1. Residence and dependency report (OF-126 or AID 490-2). The appropriate agency human resources (HR) official will advise the employee of the opportunity to enroll or change

enrollment in the health benefit and life insurance programs. Employees from other agencies should check with their HR for the appropriate form.

2. SF-86 Questionnaire for Sensitive Positions (or other personnel security questionnaire used by participating federal agencies).
3. A certified copy of the divorce decree or other evidence of the termination of any former marriage of either the employee or the spouse.



Within 90 days of the marriage, a medical examination must be completed for the spouse and any newly acquired dependents.

Employees who intend to marry a foreign national must inform their employing agency at least 90 days prior to the expected date of the marriage. The reporting procedures are listed in [12 FAM 275](#). Employees must submit through their HR officer at post with the forms listed below.

1. Memorandum of intent
2. Counseling memorandum
3. OF-174 (the FSN employment application used by Diplomatic Security) or the SF-86 (Questionnaire for Sensitive Positions)
4. Biographical sketch on intended and family

Foreign Service or Civil Service employees who marry foreign nationals without providing the required advance notification are liable for consideration of disciplinary action.

The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) maintains a web page on [Adding a Family Member to Your Orders](#). The webpage outlines the steps needed in the case of marriage.

See also [3 FAM 4190](#), “Marriage Requirements of an Employee to a Foreign National or to a U.S. Citizen” and [12 FAM 275](#), “Reporting Cohabitation with and/or Intent to Marry a Foreign National”.

Expeditious Naturalization

The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) acts as liaison with the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in naturalization cases for foreign-born spouses of U.S. Department of State Foreign Service employees. Spouses wishing to become naturalized U.S. citizens may be eligible for expeditious naturalization under provision 319(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). The foreign-born spouse must be a lawful permanent resident of the United States and going to or already residing with the Foreign Service employee at post. To qualify, the Foreign Service employee's overseas assignment must exceed one year and have a minimum of 12 months left at post by the time USCIS receives the N400 application for naturalization. The average processing time for naturalization cases is three to five months. For more information, visit [GCLO's Naturalization of Foreign-Born Spouses](#) web page.

Spouses for non-State agencies should contact their respective human resource offices for possible assistance with 319(b) naturalization.

SPOUSAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All official members of a Foreign Service family enjoy privileges, such as payment for official travel and housing while overseas. As with any official situation, however, certain rules and regulations apply.

In 1972, the Department of State issued a “Policy on Wives of Foreign Service Employees.” The policy now applies to all spouses, regardless of sex, who are eligible family members (EFMs). Key points include the following:

- EFMs are private individuals, not U.S. government employees, so they cannot be required to perform official duties.
- The U.S. government cannot insist that family members carry out representational responsibilities (hold or attend social events on behalf of the government).
- Family member participation in charitable activities, clubs, and social gatherings is strictly voluntary.
- No EFM has authority over members of a mission community based on the employees' respective rank or position.
- Family members cannot be evaluated as part of employees' official performance reports.

- Family members are required to behave in a manner “which will not reflect discredit on the United States.”

In other words, family members are not required to participate in embassy/consulate activities overseas, although many family members find such participation to be both enjoyable and worthwhile.

Family members do have to follow certain ethical guidelines.

In brief, family members overseas SHOULD NOT do the following:

- Accept items of monetary value (gifts, favors, entertainment) 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; stocks, bonds, or shares of companies headquartered in the country, etc.).
- Participate in partisan political activities of the host country.

The [U.S. Office of Government Ethics](#) provides more guidance on this matter.

Other policies and regulations apply to family members, including host country regulations related to employment outside the U.S. embassy (see Chapter 11 – Family Member Employment). Consult post’s management or human resources office for further guidance on working on the local economy.

SAME-SEX COUPLES AND THE LGBTQI+ FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMUNITY

Two Supreme Court rulings in 2013 and 2015 ended the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and legalized same-sex marriage throughout the United States. As a result, same-sex couples are free to marry in the United States and eligible to receive the same federal benefits previously only offered to opposite-sex couples. Same-sex couples who wish to receive federal benefits must marry. Exceptions may be requested through the office of the Director General of the Foreign Service.

Employees serving overseas without the legal ability to marry overseas may request up to 10 days of administrative leave for travel to the United States or a third country where they may legally marry (see [3 FAM 3464.7](#), Limited Marriage Leave). This leave is not restricted to same-sex couples.

The following resources are available for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQI+) personnel:

- **Office of Personnel Management (OPM):** OPM offers “[Frequently Asked Questions](#)” regarding benefits for LGBTQI+ Federal Employees and Annuitants.
- **The Overseas Briefing Center:** OBC maintains resources for LGBTQI+ employees and their family members. Members of the foreign affairs community can email FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov for more information.
- **Bureau of Global Talent Management’s Office of Career Development and Assignments (GTM/CDA):** LGBTQI+ employees bidding on positions overseas should work with their Career Development Officers (CDOs) to learn about host country policies and practices related to the accreditation of same-sex spouses.
- **glifaa- LGBT+ in Foreign Affairs Agencies** is a Department of State and USAID employee affinity group, advancing diversity and workplace equity in U.S. foreign affairs agencies and human rights for LGBT+ people around the world. glifaa and its 120 Post Representatives have on the ground knowledge of the LGBT+ environment at post and can provide additional guidance (email board@glifaa.org).
- **Country Specific LGBTQI+ Traveler Information:** Consular Affairs maintains Country Specific Travel Information. To learn about LGBTQI+ considerations in a specific country, navigate to that country, and click “Local Laws & Special Circumstances.”
- **Resources for LGBTQI+ Adoptions**

MEMBERS OF HOUSEHOLD

A member of household (MOH) is an individual who resides with a Foreign Service employee at post, but is not on the employee’s official travel orders. This individual falls outside of the Department of State’s current legal and statutory definition of an eligible family member.

Employees are required to notify and get approval from chief of mission that a member of household will reside with them during their tour of duty at post. MOHs may include elderly family members, other relatives of the employee, domestic partners, and adult dependents over the age of 21 who do not qualify to be on the employee’s orders. There is no limit on the number of people an employee may declare as members of household. Visit the Global Community Liaison Office’s [Member of Household](#) webpage for more information on MOHs including eligibility, overseas work permits, education, visas, travel expenses, access to embassy services, and more.

Foreign Service children become adults at age 18 in the United States. It is important, as the parent of a child in the Foreign Service, to know at what age some of the regulations change. Keep in touch with your career development officer (CDO) regarding the status of your child on your orders. A family member who turns 21 is no longer eligible for allowances (except for educational travel up to the 23rd

birthday, plus additional years allowed for any military service, per [DSSR 280](#)) or coverage under the health unit, for medical or emergency evacuations.

Accommodations

Any member of household who has been declared to the chief of mission may receive limited support and assistance from post. Without conferring any special status, [3 FAM 4180](#) provides guidance to chiefs of mission on how to best facilitate member of household integration into the post community. Where appropriate and practicable and subject to local law, post may:

- Assist MOHs with obtaining residency permits and travel visas in accordance with local laws.
- Include all U.S. citizen MOHs in the mission warden system.
- Encourage employees to complete emergency locator cards for their MOHs.
- Allow MOHs access to CLO and GCLO-sponsored activities and programming (except those events precluded by current regulation or policy).
- Include MOHs in post telephone and address listings at the employee's request.
- Permit MOHs to apply and compete for local-hire positions within the mission. (See "Limitations" below.)
- Allow MOHs to participate in all events officially sanctioned by post.
- Grant MOHs access to the Department of State's intranet (see [5 FAM 780](#)).

In addition, MOHs must follow the security guidelines as outlined in [12 FAM 442](#). Of important note is the following, according to the FAM:

"When an employee declares a person as an MOH to the Chief of Mission (COM), the employee must provide such biographic data to the Regional Security Office (RSO) on the MOH as may be necessary to conduct appropriate investigative activities. In the case of U.S. citizens, this will be data sufficient for conducting a national agency check, and if the MOH is an expatriate, appropriate records must be checked with the host government. If the MOH is a non-U.S. citizen, a background investigation equal to that given to Foreign Service national (FSN) staff will be conducted."

Limitations

MOHs are to be considered an integral part of the U.S. mission community. There are, however, limitations on what the government can provide MOHs. Limits apply to the following:

- The U.S. government will not pay for official travel for MOHs, including travel to post, home leave, rest and recuperation (R&R), transfers, or vacations.

- The post health unit is restricted from providing medical care to MOHs. MOHs will need to access health care on the local economy.
- Only children listed on the employee's official travel orders qualify for an education allowance.
- MOHs may not work within the mission under a Family Member Appointment (FMA).
- MOHs do not have diplomatic status and therefore do not fall under bilateral work agreements or de facto work arrangements. MOHs are subject to host country employment regulations and must secure a valid work permit to work at post.
- In the event of an official evacuation from post, U.S. citizen MOHs are eligible for evacuation services provided through post's American Citizen Services and must reimburse the U.S. government for transportation costs. MOHs are not entitled to evacuation Subsistence Expense Allowance (SEA) benefits.



CHAPTER 3

CHILDREN IN THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMUNITY



Families in the foreign affairs community face unique opportunities and challenges when moving around the world with children. Over 10,000 children are a part of U.S. mission communities overseas. Paying attention to their needs for emotional support, personal and educational growth, and health and happiness is paramount to their sense of identity and a feeling of belonging in your family, mission life, and the world at large.



ADVANCE PREPARATION

As a foreign affairs community, we move a lot! The average family is changing posts every two to three years. Children react to change in different ways, whether moving to post, while at post, and leaving again. For parents, helping children make connections with friends, finding activities that spur growth (both emotional and physical), and identifying appropriate schooling opportunities are always of paramount concern.

Each move creates another chapter in the family story. Most importantly, each move creates a new story for your child. Even within the same family, each child will develop different and exciting stories around a change in country, a change in friends, a change in school, and a change in themselves. And each child will respond differently to the various stages in the moving process. Be prepared for the full spectrum of emotions, reactions, and behaviors.

Where to Start

Considering the best interests of your children when bidding and planning for future assignments takes time, research, and patience. Include children in the bidding process (age-appropriate considerations). Open communication with your children about post options encourages their engagement in changes on the horizon. Have them help do the preliminary research on different posts, listing pros and cons. While children cannot always influence the outcome, they can provide input into which posts have qualities they like. Older children can do more in depth research into schools and activities, as well as cultural sites and travel opportunities. Younger children may enjoy looking at pictures or post videos or trying the food from a specific country. Much of this information is available at the Transition Center's Overseas Briefing Center, both in-center and online.

Introduce both younger and older children to others their age who have moved or will be moving overseas. The [Foreign Service Youth Foundation \(FSYF\)](#) sponsors activities for school-age children. [The Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide \(AAFSW\)](#) offers playgroups in the Washington, DC area. In addition, Facebook pages tailored to the foreign affairs community provide a variety of special-interest information and offer parents connection with others before heading to post or when transitioning back to the United States.

Children's Education Options

When researching posts, schooling options are often one of the first things that families consider. Some posts only offer one school that meets U.S. standards while others may have several options. Accessing all the available resources can help narrow down your bid choices. If your child has special educational needs, be sure to find out if there is a school or program at post that can accommodate your child's needs before formalizing a bid. The Department of State has several offices that work together to support families. Getting all the pieces to fit during the bidding process is the challenge and what you discover might change your bidding preferences with your child's educational needs in mind.

- **Overseas Briefing Center: Post Info to Go's** collection of post-specific resources includes materials on schooling and child care options, community liaison office welcome materials, and more. Contact the OBC for your post research. Email FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.
- **The Office of Overseas Schools** promotes quality educational opportunities at the elementary and secondary level for the children of U.S. government employees working at an embassy or consulate abroad. They also compile a list of schools that offer support to children with special needs in our communities overseas. Making an appointment with a regional education officer (REO) is a great way to start. REOs can assist with identifying schools that may be a good match for your child and, if needed, those that provide learning support.

1. [List of REOs](#)
2. [List of Schools Worldwide](#)

- **The Office of Child and Family Programs** handles case review for educational clearance recommendations to MED Clearances for school-age children of U.S. government personnel assigned overseas. They provide intensive case management of the Special Needs Educational Allowance (SNEA) program, involving eligibility determinations, annual renewals and professional verification of allowable expenses for U.S. government dependents from 0-21 years old. Email medcfp@state.gov.
- **The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO)'s** Education and Youth team can assist with exploring schooling and curriculum options, homeschooling and boarding school resources, and general guidance. Email: GCLOAskEducation@state.gov.
- **The Office of Allowances** administers all allowances, including educational allowances. This office implements the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR) provisions, with guidance from MED subject matter experts, the Office of the Legal Adviser, and other offices. Email: AllowancesO@state.gov.

ONCE YOU HAVE YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Continue Your Research and Get Your Child Involved

Learn as much about your new country as possible, using books, videos, websites, and other resources. Ask the community liaison office (CLO) coordinator to put you in contact with others at post with children of similar ages so your child can begin connecting to new friends. If possible, obtain photos of your new house and school. Help alleviate any fears by providing your child with visuals of your new environment.

The Overseas Briefing Center provides KidVids, videos made by young foreign service videographers between the ages of 10 and 18. Videos illustrate life at post from a kid's perspective and cover housing, schools, activities, shopping, and more. Find them on the OBC websites. Kids who watch these videos can see better envision what life at post might be like, helping to calm fears and set realistic expectations.

Arrange for some training to support transition to your new location. In a study of what Foreign Service youth liked least about overseas life, 35% mentioned moving, 28% leaving behind friends, and 28% language barriers. How do you make moving less stressful? Encourage curiosity and discovery! Arrange for age-appropriate language training, whether via videos, books, phone apps, computers, tutors, or formal classes. Register them for in family classes at the Transition Center so they learn what to expect of embassy and overseas life. See Chapter 9 - Transition Center Resources.

In our community, we know that assignments can change at the last minute due to the needs of the service. Wait until the employee has actually have been paneled into a new position before making definite statements about your destination. For children, reality sets in when a move timetable is put in place. Share with your child what that timetable looks like for the family. Are you moving directly to post with no stops after leaving your present home? Are you visiting family and friends along the way? What plans involve your child's preferences?

Moving is a process and does not happen in one day or even one week. Moving involves preparation, packing and shipments, airplane travel, and arrival at a new post where it takes several more weeks until shipments arrive. Talk with your child about every aspect of the move, the projected timing given where you are assigned, and the different shipments that may be involved.

The Transition Center also offers a downloadable resource. [The Amazing Adventures of \[Me\]: A Children's Guided Journal to an International Move](#). For elementary school-aged children, this resource helps facilitate discussion between children and parents as they process and prepare for an international relocation. Journal activities encourage curiosity and discovery and games prompt discussion and exploration. The journal, based on resilience literature, leads children through the phases of an international move and grows their sense of belonging in the process. In addition, the journal offers quotes from real kids who live overseas! Parents will also find a Parent's Companion Guide which provides information and context to help facilitate discussion and understand the emotional process and journey of your child.

No matter what their age, encourage conversation about how your child is feeling. Listen carefully to them. It is normal to be sad about leaving friends, excited about going to a new place, worried about a new school, anxious during move day, and more. Try to maintain the daily routine; this can help

children feel more secure. You may want to start new rituals or traditions that can be continued wherever you are.

During the rush of pre-departure preparations, take time to help your children say goodbye to the people and places they love most. Suggestions from families include collecting contact information from friends, creating a family online webpage so friends can follow new adventures, and having a goodbye party for each child and his or her friends. Creative ideas for maintaining connection abound in today's interconnected world.

How to say goodbye is a great conversation to have! Saying goodbye, in itself, makes your child focus on “who” they consider as their good friends. Pay attention to how your child is feeling about not seeing their best friend every day. Talk with your child as they take time to consider which people in their life they will miss. Find ways to give closure by saying goodbye to friends, neighbors, teachers, babysitters, and extended family. Emphasize to your child that it does not necessarily mean these important people are gone forever. It is important for your child to understand that although you are moving, their immediate family will remain the same. Family goodbyes are a bit different because you most likely will see family again.

PACK OUT TIPS

Involving your children in the pack out is helpful to them in providing a sense of control, the ability to make some decisions on their own, and letting them generate ideas about how to decorate their new rooms or what items they can show and share with new friends.

Visual aids such as checklists or charts of things to be done can be helpful; draw pictures and use stickers for the youngest children.

Allow your child to select items for their suitcase. For the unaccompanied air baggage (UAB), allow your child to include one small box of their favorite items (toys, books, favorite pillow, etc.). The rest comes as household effects (HHE). Use the [Children's Guided Journal](#) to help your child understand the differences in shipping speeds and involve them in small choices about the shipments.

You may also identify some items that your child can donate or give away to charity. Knowing that belongings are going to a good cause encourages the gift of giving, kindness, and social responsibility. Make this event collaborative within your family.

Pack outs and the actual moving day are periods of extreme disruption. Explain the moving process to your child. As a parent, consider what happens to your child during moving day. Do they watch the packers or stay at a friend's or relative's house? If they are home, who keeps an eye on them? If you feel it is important for your child to be part of the pack out day, explore letting them stay home from

school (with the school's permission and understanding of the emotional importance of being home for the big move day!).

Here are some suggested items for inclusion in your air freight (unaccompanied air baggage or UAB) or carry-on bags:

- Children's books, especially large story collections, which give lots of mileage
- Tablet, MP3/4 player, laptop computer, and/or e-book reader
- Audio books, very comforting in a new environment
- A few videos or DVDs (while old technology, many families still rely on DVDs overseas, with DVD player – you can check with post to see if streaming U.S. channels is possible)
- Building toys (LEGO®-type bricks), they are small, light, and enjoyable for a range of ages
- Extra clothes and shoes for the start of the school year
- Board games, travel sizes are best
- School supplies
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils, sketchbooks, coloring books, sticker books
- Stuffed animals for comfort and familiarity in a new bedroom
- Lightweight sports equipment, other small outdoor toys
- Decorations for your child's bedroom that make the new house feel like home

If your household effects are delayed—and it is wise to assume that this may happen—find out if you can mail additional packages to yourself. Since storage space at post's mail room is typically limited, check with someone at post and arrange for boxes arriving early to be picked up.

TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN

Take your children's needs into account when scheduling travel. Some families prefer to arrive shortly before school starts so children will have the chance to make friends and adjust to their new time zone and routine. If arriving during a holiday period, try to arrange for your children to meet others their age. Single parents may want to make prior arrangements for time off upon arrival to locate child care options, help children adjust, or schedule travel for a time when a trusted friend or family member can come along and help out for a week or two.

Make sure that you know the regulations concerning rest stops, upgrades, and other travel details so that you can choose the best option for your family. Some families prefer to travel directly to post, feeling that they are all too exhausted to enjoy a vacation. Other families plan travel breaks to enjoy time for family togetherness and relaxation after the rush of getting everything ready. Allow plenty of time between flights in case of delays. If you expect a long wait at an airport, research the facilities in

advance. Make note of observation decks, play areas, hotels that allow you to use the facilities (many now offer “day passes”), or other kid-friendly features. If you anticipate a difficult trip, you may want to plan for an overnight stop, even if you “cost-construct” the travel amount (pay for a portion yourself).

Advance planning can make long journeys easier. Below are tips from seasoned travelers:

1. Explain your travel plans in advance at each child’s level, including length of flights, stops, what you will do, people you will see, and so on. It may help to write plans on a calendar so they can visualize the trip. Agree upon and review an easy-to-remember contingency plan in case your family gets separated at any point. If you have a pet, explain to your child the pet travel plan (when the pet will arrive).
2. Expect challenges. Your children may not sleep well, they may be fidgety, they may be nervous and curious at the same time and exhibit different behavior. Being attentive to their needs can help make for a smoother flight and travel experience.
3. Get as much help from the airline as possible. If you have a stroller or infant carrier, ask to gate check it so you can use it right up until boarding the plane. Request help if you need to change planes, particularly if you are traveling alone with children. The airline may be able to transport your family in a motorized airport vehicle.
4. Some families make a point of requesting bulkhead seats. These seats offer advantages such as more leg room and a place for smaller children to take a break from sitting. There is no one in front of these seats to be annoyed by talking or kicking. There are, however, downsides to bulkhead seats that may negate the advantages: inaccessible carry-on bags during take-off and landing; arm rests that cannot be raised; the fact that other passengers may cut through the space; and the policies of some airlines that require the floor to be clear at all times. Weigh the advantages against the disadvantages and determine what will work best for your family.
5. Pack at least one change of clothes for each person (including adults) in accessible carry-on luggage. Increase this to two or more outfits for longer trips. Consider putting your children in “disposable clothes,” old t-shirts and leggings that you can throw away at the end—or in the middle—of the trip. Pack sweaters or sweatshirts for cold planes and air-conditioned airports.
6. Order children’s meals from the airline when you confirm your flights but bring enough food for mealtimes anyway. Meals may not arrive when your child is hungry, and the food offerings might not be to your child’s liking.
7. Bring cups with lids or sports bottles for each person (including adults). Immediately transfer any airline beverages into these containers to avoid spills. Bring plenty of water, especially if you are traveling to or through countries without potable water. Keep in mind that airport security rules may dictate that your containers must be empty at the check points, and then can be filled afterwards.

8. Let your children choose some items for the carry-on bags, then finish packing them yourself. Adapt the following suggested items to the most recent security constraints, your child's interests, and your tolerance for cleaning up:

- Snacks, drinks (something for your children to eat, drink, or chew during takeoff and landing to help relieve ear pressure)
- Wipes
- Thick paper towels or whatever you prefer to clean up spills and messes
- Resealable plastic bags (for wet or dirty clothes, trash, wet towels used to clean up spills, etc.)

Toys or activities that have worked for other families include:

- Hand puppets
- Books
- Travel-sized magnetic drawing boards
- Tablet or laptop computer with games or movies (remember the charger!)
- Other electronic handheld games, with extra batteries
- E-book readers and headphones
- Paper, coloring books, or sticker books, crayons, markers, colored pencils, or small packs of other favorite art materials
- Travel-sized board games

ARRIVAL AT POST

During the first few days, be considerate of your child's "settling in" experience. If invited to "no kids" social events, feel free to decline such invitations until you can identify a reliable caregiver to watch your children. Ideally, you have already explained your circumstances to your sponsors or new colleagues before arriving, and they have thoughtfully scheduled events accordingly.

Explore your surroundings with your children. As soon as you can, find something new and fun to do as a family. It will help turn your minds away from what you left behind and toward the new adventures ahead. Also schedule in some quiet family time together to do the same sorts of activities you have done in the past. Keep up the family rituals. Something as simple as reading a chapter each night from a long book that you started in the United States can give a sense of continuity and sameness during the upheaval of moving.

AGE-RELATED ISSUES

Infants and Preschoolers

This age group is the easiest to move in terms of their adjustment to a new country. Young children take their cues from their parents. If you are comfortable with the move, they usually will be too. Young children may regress for a time during a move. Do not be surprised or upset if toddlers behave badly, wet the bed, want bottles, cling to your legs, or become weepy and cranky. Routines and familiar objects and food will help ease the transition to the new, unfamiliar environment. Give them extra loving care and attention and take care of yourself. Moving is stressful so take a deep breath and give yourself and your family time to adjust.

Elementary School Children

From this age on up, schools play an important part in choosing assignments. Children are a wonderful bridge to the people your family meets at a new post. School communities are often an important part of a U.S. mission community. Recognize that kids will more readily explore this new community without fear and be eager to introduce you, as parents, to their newfound friends. Embracing these new friendships gives work/life balance to your family setting. Getting together with other families teaches children how to interact with people of all ages and to create new bonds where extended family is absent.

Children in this age group may have difficulty leaving a familiar house or packing up their things. They are beginning to develop lasting friendships which make separations more difficult. Find ways to help them stay in touch with the friends they are leaving while developing new friendships at your new post.

Since there will be many things they do not know how to do in a new country, focus on acquiring abilities that make them comfortable in their new country such as what coins look like and counting in a new currency. If school is a challenge initially, work with the school to identify a tutor, get books that support their learning, use the school library, and meet with your child's teacher on a regular basis. For more information on education options, see Chapter 12 - Education for Foreign Service Children.

Pre-teens

Pre-teens are in the process of developing a cultural identity, which will become a big part of who they are. If your family lives primarily overseas during these years, consider frequent trips so pre-teens can reconnect with their "home" culture. Keeping in touch with peers may also help.

Sports teams and sports clubs, youth groups, school clubs, involvement in the school play, the robotics team, musical groups, music lessons, dance and theater, and many more help to keep pre-teens active and engaged in the community.

Finding a peer group is also of great importance. Help connect with other parents to create fun activities for your children. Host or attend family game nights! The resilience lessons of these gatherings - family connection, communication, good sportsmanship, celebration, and forgiveness - create positive memories, teach children problem-solving, and encourage family communication.

Older Teens

Many will agree that the older a child gets, the harder it is to transition from post to post or post to the United States. The routine of their schooling, as well as preparation for college may be disrupted. Families have found success when planning assignments whereby the last two years of high school are not interrupted by a move. Involving your teenager in transition planning and school choice can avoid high levels of frustration.

If your teen will complete high school overseas, be sure to check on potential colleges well in advance. Plan to visit colleges and universities on summer or spring breaks, attend virtual tours and explore websites. If you are transitioning to the United States during high school, make sure that all credits earned overseas will transfer and all requirements will be met for graduation.

Getting a driver's license, having a part-time job, and participating in specialized school activities, including sports teams, are all "normal" teenage activities in the United States. These are not always possible overseas. When bidding, identify schools with programs that match your child's interests. Research "on the ground" opportunities to expand your child's knowledge of the world. Regardless of whether the post is large or small, help your child discover a group of potential friends and activities. Mobility is important for this age group, so try to find places where your teen can get around safely alone, whether walking, bicycling, or using public transportation (if post's security posture allows).

YOUR "HOME" CULTURE

Our foreign affairs community is made up of employees and family members who hail from countries all over the world. Not every U.S. diplomat passport carrier was born in the United States. Regardless of where one was born, we all have connections with family in a "home" country with its own unique culture, be that the United States or another country of birth. Make every effort for your children to experience life in the "home" culture. Plan to make trips back to the "home" country and keep in touch with relatives and friends. Make a point of celebrating U.S. holidays in traditional ways or holidays from another country either represented in your family or from a past assignment. Children

who grow up overseas do not have a lifetime of experience in the United States or any other country. They only have the experience you provide them with.

LEAVING POST

When your assignment nears its conclusion, make time to follow the same leaving and preparation procedures as before. If assigned to Washington, DC or another U.S. city, your children may face difficulties in returning to the United States. We often forget that after years away, the United States is another foreign country to them. They are not returning home in the same way that you are. Prepare them as thoroughly as you would for any other post.

Also see Chapter 24 - Leaving Your Post.

OUTCOMES FOR OUR CHILDREN

Children can benefit tremendously from their overseas experiences. They learn other languages, experience other cultures first-hand, enjoy travel opportunities, meet people from diverse backgrounds, and embrace an international lifestyle that ultimately makes them Third Culture Kids (TCKs). Research shows that TCKs tend to become resourceful, open-minded, and flexible. They are adaptable and usually communicate well with adults. They often have a greater understanding and tolerance of differences, as well as a more developed social conscience. They have an extended network of friends and stay in touch via email, social media, and other methods. They enjoy close family ties. They benefit from outstanding educational opportunities. They may gain strong feelings of self-confidence from their abilities to adapt to new situations. Their international experience and expertise may provide a competitive advantage in an increasingly global economy.

It's amazing what children pick up as they move around the world that later impacts who they become as adults. Children are naturally keen observers of all that surrounds them. As a result, children who grow up with the influences of foreign lands display heightened cultural understanding. Adventure abounds when children combine curiosity about the world with the experience of an internationally-mobile childhood. And when celebrated and embraced by family, children can thrive. Parents who set a positive example for dealing with the ups and downs of the foreign affairs lifestyle help their children develop a resilient outlook – one that allows them to benefit from the challenges and unique experiences that come from living abroad.



CHAPTER 4

ELDERCARE



GENERAL INFORMATION

Deciding how to best meet the needs of elderly loved ones can be one of the most difficult aspects of the foreign affairs lifestyle. The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) [Eldercare](#) webpage offers useful information for anyone concerned with eldercare issues. Even if you are not currently facing eldercare issues, it is wise to begin to learn about the topic before a crisis strikes.

Family members no longer need to shoulder most of the burden of eldercare. An increasing number of local services provide meals, transportation, and other services, allowing older adults to stay in their

homes, even without family to care for them. A variety of retirement communities offer living situations ranging from independent living to skilled nursing care.

Nevertheless, the elderly relative may not always be able to make decisions about these services. Family members may need to coordinate care, help make transitions (including sorting and disposing of possessions), provide extra assistance and transportation, supervise home care services, offer companionship, and monitor medications.

Begin the discussion about eldercare before it becomes a crisis, e.g. during relaxed times together. Find out the aging person's preferences and discuss available options. Knowing this information will help if the time comes when an elderly relative becomes unable to perform everyday tasks and function independently.

FEDERAL LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE PROGRAM

The U.S. government now offers the [Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program \(FLTCIP\)](#) to help defray costs that employees may incur when caring for an elderly relative or other eligible family members. The program encompasses several attractive features. For example, a family member may get reimbursement for care for an insured aging parent whose incapacity triggers the insurance benefit. In addition, an employee with the insurance can use the Care Coordination service to research support services/providers for a parent even if the parent is not insured. Moreover, FLTCIP can cover costs of services provided in a variety of settings, including the person's home, an assisted living facility, or a nursing home. It also pays for services/facilities overseas.

Many people think that Medicare will cover a long stay in a nursing home. It may not, but long-term care insurance can help pay for this kind of custodial care, as well as for home health care aides and other services that are not strictly medical.

Individuals eligible to apply for the Federal Long-Term Care Insurance Program include employees, annuitants, spouses of employees and annuitants, adult children (at least 18 years old), parents, parents-in-law, and stepparents of employees. This program can help increase your care options and protect your estate should you ever need extended health care services.

Note that under FLTCIP, the cost of the premium is paid entirely by the employee and there is no government subsidy as is the case with the Federal Health Benefits program. FLTCIP offers an opportunity to all federal employees to buy an insurance product at group costs. This program is medically underwritten, which means that you will have to answer questions about your health on your application. Certain medical conditions, or combinations, or combinations of conditions, will prevent some individuals from being approved.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE ELDERCARE PROGRAM

The Department of State Eldercare Program provides support services and programs for employees caring for elderly relatives. For personnel working abroad, the Department seeks additional ways within budget constraints to defray some of the increased eldercare costs that are due to the employees' serving overseas.

Employees in the DC metro area are encouraged to attend Eldercare Support Group meetings coordinated by the Bureau of Medical Services Office of Employee Assistance Program (ECS/EAP).

Domestic or overseas employees can access eldercare information and services through WorkLife4You, a free resource and referral service for Department of State employees and their family members. Employees of other agencies should check with their human resources office for the availability of similar programs.

WorkLife4You (WL4Y)

WorkLife4You (WL4Y), a comprehensive and confidential resource and referral service that assists employees who are searching for ways to balance the demands of their professional and personal lives. Through WL4Y, Department of State employees have access to a range of resources to take care of their aging parents and older loved ones. Employees can arrange care options and living arrangements, caregiver issues and concerns, meal delivery and in-home services, transportation services, hospice services, Medicare, Medicaid, and social security, respite care, and funeral planning.

Services provided by WL4Y include the Professional Care Management Program (PCM), an employer-paid benefit that offers in-person assessments for caregivers and their loved ones. WL4Y also offers Geriatric Care Management. This service will arrange for highly qualified geriatric care managers (GCMs) to conduct in-person evaluations and services for employee's caregivers and their loved ones. GCM Program includes a variety of in-home "Flexible Care Hours." An inventory of these services and available assessments is available on their website.

Please contact the Overseas Briefing Center at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov for additional information, log in information for the WL4YOU website, and to learn more about these services.

"Five Wishes"

As part of its Eldercare Program, the Department of State makes available Five Wishes, an easy-to-use legal document that helps a family plan for serious illness. One copy per direct-hire Foreign and Civil Service employee is available upon request. To receive the customized and free version of Five Wishes, please contact the OBC to request the access key.

Five Wishes can be used in all 50 states. If a user's state has any unique requirements, Five Wishes Online automatically includes these documents at no additional charge. Employers and benefits providers can share Five Wishes with employees and members instantly - saving time and distribution costs. Five Wishes is a supplement to a complete final will and testament. For a professional legal advice or referral service, please refer to WorkLife4You.

ELDERCARE EMERGENCY VISITATION TRAVEL

Eldercare Emergency Visitation Travel (EVT) allows eligible overseas employees and spouses to visit parents in declining health. Unlike other categories of EVT that permit travel at government expense when a parent is dying or to attend a funeral (see Chapter 7 - Medical Information), Eldercare EVT is considered a “life benefit.” It is used to help a parent whose health has changed significantly and who needs assistance in making new care or living arrangements.

Definition of “Parent”

Eldercare EVT allows an employee two trips over a career to visit his or her parents and an eligible spouse two trips to visit his or her parents. Under [3 FAM 3740](#), “parent” is defined as a mother or a father, but also includes biological, step, and adoptive parents, or individuals who have stood in the place of a parent. Typically, the traveler designates two “birth” parents for EVT purposes but may instead designate stepparents or other individuals who stood in place of parents. Please note that under no circumstances may an individual be deemed to have more than two parents, i.e., once an employee or spouse has made the designation of two parents for EVT purposes, he or she cannot designate different individuals as “parents” for a subsequent EVT.

Designated Traveler

For Eldercare EVT only, an employee may designate a spouse to travel in his or her place. In this situation, an employee who designates the spouse to travel in his or her place would be using one of the employee’s Eldercare EVTs or vice versa. An employee or eligible spouse may use the two visits to assist the same parent. However, a couple may not pool their four total eldercare visits to assist the parents of only one member of the married couple.

Family and Medical Leave Act

The 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) includes provisions for employees to take leave without pay for a number of purposes described in [3 FAM 3530 Unpaid Leave - Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993](#). Caring for a family member with a serious medical condition is one of the reasons for invoking the FMLA. For expert guidance on using FMLA, contact the leave specialists in the Office

of Employee Relations, Work/Life Division (see Chapter 31 – Resources and References) or a bureau HR specialist.

FAMILY MEMBERS AT POST

Establishing Dependency

You may decide to bring your elderly relative to live with you overseas. An employee who wishes to establish an elderly relative as an eligible family member, which means he or she is included on official travel orders, must first declare the relative as a dependent. To establish the family member as a dependent, the following is required:

1. Fill out form OF-126 (available from your human resources officer or Department of State e-Forms).
2. Write a statement regarding the circumstances. The intention must be that your elderly relative will reside with you full time, travel with you, and become a member of your household.
3. The Office of Career Development and Assignments (GTM/CDA/ASD) will need a written statement that demonstrates the elder is at least 51% financially dependent upon you. This must be quantified in dollar amounts. You must provide your relative's annual income from all sources (e.g., pension, stocks/ real estate, other relatives) and an itemized list of your expenses (monthly or annually) in support of your relative.
4. Send the form and the statements to the employee's Personnel Technician at GTM/CDA.

There are advantages to establishing family members as dependents. Relatives that are considered dependents are added to the employee's official travel orders, travel on diplomatic passports, and are entitled to diplomatic immunity, and are placed on travel orders. However, they are not covered by the Foreign Service medical program and may only use the post medical facilities at the discretion of the ambassador and post medical officer.

Relatives who are not considered dependents may come to post as tourists, but they are not taken into consideration when housing is assigned, do not have diplomatic passports or immunity, and travel at their own expense. (See Chapter 2 - Spouses, Same-Sex Couples and the LBGTQI+ Community, and Members of Household.)

It is essential to investigate medical evacuation insurance and travel health insurance before having an older relative travel to post. Medicare does not cover expenses outside of the United States, except in limited instances in Mexico and Canada. If proper care for an unexpected medical condition is not available, a medical evacuation can be extremely expensive.

For a list of insurance companies providing a variety of coverage, see the Bureau of Consular Affairs' [Insurance Providers for Overseas Coverage](#) website or contact the Overseas Briefing Center at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov. Inclusion on these lists does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of State.



SECTION 1



CHAPTER 5

WHAT MY PARENTS, EXTENDED FAMILY, AND FRIENDS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS LIFESTYLE



How do we describe the foreign affairs lifestyle to our extended networks, especially its unique characteristics—frequent moves, living in other cultures, away for extended periods of time—that many have trouble grasping? While your immediate family (spouse/partner/children) may be accompanying you to post, your parents, other relatives, and friends will no doubt barrage you with questions about where you are going and why, what your life at post will be like, and when they will see and hear from you again.

The major concerns will most likely be security, distance, and communication. No one knows your family and friends better than you do. If you are new to the Foreign Service, it is important to provide a basic understanding of your new career and lifestyle, to set expectations, and to provide a contingency plan for your loved ones at home. Open the conversation! The Transition Center's [Country Information and Bidding Resources](#) webpage is a good starting point as a comprehensive source of information. Consider sharing the Transition Center's [So You're an American? A Guide to Answering Difficult Questions Abroad](#) online resource with your family and friends so they will become aware of the many informal and unofficial questions Americans may receive while overseas. The resource is designed for all U.S. citizens living and working abroad to build skills and confidence in responding to difficult questions about culture and nationality.

MY ASSIGNMENT

The bidding and assignments process can be complicated for first time officers and, more understandably, a total mystery to those outside the foreign affairs community.

- Explain the bidding and assignment process to your parents and extended family.
- Family and friends might be interested in how you prioritized your bid list and why. For instance, did one post appeal more based on location, the job, housing accommodations, health concerns, family preferences, children's schooling, or job possibilities for your spouse/partner?
- Discuss the length of your assignment, living overseas and the fact that in this lifestyle, you will most likely be moving every two to three years.
- Explain the length of your next assignment and when you expect to be moving again.
- Explain what you know about your new position and how you will spend your days.
- Often parents want to know if and when they might be able to visit. Honest answers are best.

MY HOUSING

Housing varies from post to post in both location and style. In some cities, apartment living is the norm. In other cities, single-family housing is more common. And in many locations, families with children may be placed in housing closer to the U.S. or international school. Parents, in particular, are interested in your accommodations and/or living situation. And parents often ask common questions about safety and security.

- Once you settle in to your new home, take time with your family to describe your housing situation. It's comforting for family to imagine you in your new residence.
- Send some pictures to your immediate family members. However, common sense dictates not posting home addresses and embassy/consulate housing photos on social media sites. Please

check with your regional security officer (RSO) upon arrival at post as to whether you can take and share photos of your new home.

- Mention any security features, for instance, gated community, guard at gate, high walls and razor wire (common in many countries), cul-de-sac, apartment doorman.
- If you have a pet—where do you walk the dog? Is the cat settled in?

COMMUNICATION / RELATIONSHIPS

It's very important to agree on expectations regarding communication with your parents, other relatives, and friends. Think about how you wish to stay in touch with your friends and family back home. Everyone "back home" (wherever you call home in the world) will miss you.

- Be sure that everyone understands the time differences and your schedule. Set up a communication strategy that works for you.
- Decide if you will communicate via phone the same time each week, if you'll arrange video chats when available, texts, or rely on social media, email or snail mail.
- If you have children, how will they keep in touch with friends? (Download the Transition Center's [Children's Guided Journal for an International Move](#) with the Parent Companion for some tips!)
- If you are leaving older children in the United States, check with the OBC for the Checklist for FS Families with College-Aged Children.
- Make sure your family knows how to send mail to you, using either the pouch or DPO address (not a street address). Check the mail options and regulations for your post! Let them know how long mail will take to get to you. If there is a DPO at your post you will receive your mail in as few as three days; however, if you only have Pouch it may take as long as six weeks for mail to arrive.
- Teach your family and friends how to label packages/letters they are sending you. Remember the customs slip!
- Discuss with family members about whether your emails to them can be shared with an extended network. Often we put information in our communications with family that we might not want shared/forwarded to others. Some, when overseas, send a monthly update to friends and family!

CHILDREN / TEENS

The foreign affairs lifestyle doesn't just involve you and your work; it also involves your children. Your extended family will miss out on your children's birthdays, holidays together, and other extended family-oriented activities.

- Encourage family to send birthday cards and holiday gifts to your children so there is a connection to home. Be sure to account for mail delivery times.
- Have your children stay in touch with their grandparents through letters, phone calls, and/or video chats. Have children draw pictures and send them home and/or keep a journal when you travel someplace special and share those with family. Some families maintain a family blog where friends and family can keep up to date on your travels and family activities.
- Talk about the school environment and what your children are doing/involved in. Sports teams, music lessons, musical groups, and extracurricular clubs are an integral part of embassy/consulate life.
- If you have friends/extended family who send their children to visit you, talk about what plans you may have in store for them during the visit and safety and security BEFORE they arrive. If teens (cousins), lay down ground rules for the visit with the local environment in mind.
- If traveling with visiting family in the region, see if your post of assignment requires an authorized letter for a visiting minor to enter the country, leave the country, and travel with you throughout the country.

VISITS FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Having your parents, extended family, and friends visit you at post can be a great and exciting way to introduce them to the foreign affairs lifestyle, not to mention the joy of exploration and tourism.

- Alert family and friends to apply for (or check expiration dates on) passports and visas in a timely manner and have them research any accompanying fees (no surprises!).
- Visit the Bureau of Consular Affairs' travel.state.gov webpage for travel advisories, enrolling in STEP (Smart Traveler Enrollment Program), to find health insurance, evacuation insurance, warnings about driving and road safety, and customs and import restrictions. This extensive site provides more than just general traveler information – it's an invaluable resource. For additional information on travel health insurance, visit the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers' [Travel Health Insurance](https://www.travelhealthinsurance.org) webpage. For travelers required immunizations, go to the [Destinations](https://www.cdc.gov/destinations) webpage by the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention, and for travelers health safety and education visit the [Traveler Advice](https://www.traveleradvice.org) webpage by the same agency.
- The Overseas Briefing Center provides a list for Supplemental Medical Insurance, Traveler Assistance Programs, and Evacuation Programs for US Citizens Abroad. For a copy, email FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov or find the handout on the OBC websites.
- Suggest to family and friends what they should wear and bring (sunglasses, hats, good walking shoes, umbrella, etc.).
- A supply of any necessary prescription medicines and other medications should be brought since availability overseas may be limited.

R&R, HOME LEAVE, AND VACATIONS

When planning to visit home, it is always best to prepare ahead of time. You may be relying on the kindness of family and friends to house you (and your family) for the duration of a stay in the United States. Or, you may be renting a house and having family and friends visit you there.

- You may not have a great deal of control over when you are able to take leave, but it's always nice to let extended family know your plans. Give plenty of notice and confirm your arrival plans for a return home.
- Check your driver's license to make sure it is not expired (for rental of a car or using a family/friend's car).
- Many people outside of your family will want to see you! Plan accordingly.
- Try to plan with birthday, reunions, and other celebrations in mind.
- Explore whether R&R, leave, and vacations can be spent in a foreign country. (Note: Home Leave must be spent in the United States.)
- While at home, schedule appointments to take care of medical and dental visits, your rental property check in, financial paperwork at the bank, and other details that need attention. Family might be able to assist in scheduling some of these visits for you.

EMERGENCIES

Each post has security measures for emergency situations ranging from fires to natural disasters to political instability. Upon arrival at post, the regional security officer (RSO) briefs employees and their family members on emergency preparedness, precautions, and procedures. Parents and extended family will not be contacted if an emergency occurs at post unless, of course, there is a need to notify extended family listed as an emergency contact by the employee. The Department of State Operations Center is open 24 hours a day and will be able to answer any questions your loved ones might have or figure out how to contact you overseas if a family member in the United States is looking for you.

The [Overseas Crisis Readiness](#) is an online resource created by the Transition Center and Leadership and Management School to help U.S. government families and members of household prepare for a crisis overseas. It covers preparations to be done prior to departure for post, and upon arrival at post.

- For Department of State employees: Register your emergency contact with the Employee Services Center and with human resources at post.
- Register your pets with the Pet Tracker database through myServices. Sometimes it is necessary to send a pet home to a family member in times of crisis. Ask which family members or friends

might be willing to receive and care for your pet in an emergency.

- Make sure your extended family knows how to reach you overseas in the case of an emergency. Provide both cell phones and an embassy switchboard number.
- Provide your extended family with the contact information for the Department of State Operations Center (202-647-1512) for emergency notification. The OBC maintains information regarding Emergency Notification Procedures, which includes procedures for non-State agencies.



CHAPTER 6

RESILIENCE FOR THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMUNITY



RESILIENCE

Resilience is an essential part of a successful life in the foreign affairs community. The ability to adapt, overcome crises and hardships, find creative solutions to problems, and develop new skill sets that benefit foreign affairs professionals, families, teams, communities, missions, and the Department of State. This chapter addresses the many questions you may have about what resilience is and how you can develop various types of resilience to help you, your family and even your colleagues lead a more meaningful and productive life as you maneuver the changes, challenges, and transitions associated with the foreign affairs life.

What is Resilience?

Resilience is the capacity to adapt successfully in the presence of risk and adversity, and the ability to bounce back and move forward from setbacks, high stress, crisis, and trauma. Humans are naturally resilient and have the inborn ability to adapt to harsh and difficult environments and situations. But resilience can also be learned and strengthened by intentional practice and habits. Your resilience will be challenged over the course of your foreign affairs career. You will experience a variety of stressful situations, failures, challenges, and crises. You may experience ordered or authorized departures from posts, curtailment for personal reasons, hardship assignments, and difficult work environments. Even home leave, vacations, or holidays can expose a person to stress and challenges. When personal resilience is prioritized and promoted, it is possible to support individuals, teams, families, and communities recover from stress, lead meaningful lives, and find growth after severe stress, crises, trauma, or setbacks.

How Does Fostering Resilience Influence My Life in the Foreign Affairs?

When foreign affairs community members actively foster their personal resilience, and within their families and communities, they are more prepared for the unknown, have stronger relationships, demonstrate higher levels of innovation, and find more ways to successfully collaborate. New employees and seasoned professionals, you are more likely to achieve both personal and professional goals when you practice resilience strategies and habits. Risk is seen as an opportunity for growth, instead of something to be avoided. When we take care of ourselves in healthy and productive ways we are better able to model, mentor, and foster resilience to our teams, our families and our communities.

Can I Increase My Resilience?

Fortunately, we can improve our resilience with intention, mindfulness, and practice. Resilience is both a trait and a state. People are naturally resilient to the challenges of life, albeit in varying degrees. Resilience is also a state – it will ebb and flow based on an individual's resilience traits, environment, past experiences, and relationships. Decades of research show that resilience can be learned and strengthened over time. It is something we can choose to foster and grow or abuse and lose. Learning and adopting proven habits that encourage our resilience can lead to new levels of our physical, psychological, and social well-being.

However, resilience is not a cure-all. It can't make moving easy, worry free or without hassle. It can't stop hurricanes or earthquakes. It cannot serve as a remedy for all issues affecting poor performance, compensate for ineffective leadership and management, or solve all family conflicts. However, it can

help us positively cope and even grow from the adversity of the numerous and inevitable stressors of an internationally mobile lifestyle.

PERSONAL RESILIENCE

Improving and maintaining your personal resilience will prove invaluable as you travel the world and navigate the Department of State culture. Many people depend on you so finding time to focus on your wellbeing, your social support network, and something larger than yourselves will better enable you to cope with the added stressors of the foreign affairs life.



Five Aspects of Personal Resilience

Drawing from leading resilience research from the fields of organizational development, psychology, neurology, and disaster relief, our resilience model prioritizes five key factors for personal resilience. Intentionally enhancing these aspects of your life will bolster your capacity to handle whatever challenges come your way.

1. **Self-care.** Daily physical activity, healthy eating, sufficient sleep and continued learning, referred to as brain training, are essential for both short-term and long-term resilience. As you work to improve your resilience, think about your routine and consider what you can do to maintain or improve your health in each of the four components.
2. **Active Problem-Solving.** Your level of resilience directly correlates to your ability to maintain a sense of control, even over the smallest thing. Establish goals for yourself and work toward these goals with intention. The control you have over crossing off tasks on your “to do” list can be very empowering and builds resilience.
3. **Positive Outlook.** Consciously focus on what is going well in your life and, as necessary, positively reframe the parts that aren’t going so well. Positive reframing might require you to zoom your perspective in or out on what is bothering you. But finding the “silver lining” will bolster your personal resilience.
4. **Meaning and Purpose.** Find ways to routinely insert or identify purpose into your life. For some meaning and purpose comes from religion or family, while others engage in service projects. Identifying the “something larger” in your life adds much needed perspective during difficult times.
5. **Social Support.** Social interactions and meaningful relationships are essential to your well-being and personal resilience. Remember that the depth of individual relationships outweighs the number of relationships one has. However, recent research shows that even small social interactions can have a significant impact on feelings of connection and well-being. Seek to build new friendships and actively maintain those you already have.

As you look develop personal strategies to strengthen resilience, consider the check list below. While these suggestions may seem like common knowledge, they are not often commonly practiced, especially during periods of high stress, crisis, adversity, or uncertainty. Ask yourself the following three basic questions on a regular basis:

- What am I doing on a regular basis to build my resilience?
- Which of the five factors am I neglecting?
- What small habit can I focus on to build my personal resilience?
- Walk/Jog/Run

Take Care of Yourself

- Get seven to nine hours of sleep consistently.
- Get 60 minutes of physical exercise or activity each day.
- Limit caffeine, especially late in the day or during a crisis.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- Consume healthy fruits, vegetables, and lean protein with each meal.
- Strive to learn something new every day.
- Surround yourself with people who stimulate your personal growth.

Active Problem-Solving

- Develop a logical way to work through problems.
- Write down personal goals and post them close to your desk.
- Write “To Do” lists; consider writing a “Not to Do” list as well.
- View change as an opportunity.
- Anticipate change and give yourself adequate time to process change(every time).
- View fear as an opportunity to build courage, self-esteem, and a sense of mastery.
- Learn and practice the resilience and life skills when experiencing challenging times.
- Practice cognitive flexibility by focusing on the following traits: humor, acceptance, reappraisal, and learning from failure.

Maintain a Positive Outlook

- Record three positives at the end of each day.
- Visualize yourself being successful and happy.
- Don’t deny your problems, ignore them, or let them linger and weigh on your mind.
- Set time aside for yourself each day and take vacation or personal days from work.
- Limit negative and self-defeating thoughts.
- Focus on the part of your life that is going well.
- Diversify your activities so if one thing goes wrong, you still are successful in other spheres of your life.
- Look back to how you successfully handled previous challenges and setbacks.

Meaning and Purpose

- Practice quiet reflection, mindfulness, and meditation.
- Organize/participate in a philanthropic event.
- Become a mentor for someone else.
- Journal.

- Prayer and connect with a faith-based community who share your beliefs.
- Ask yourself fundamental questions about career and priorities, how you spend your time, and how your life could feel better, richer or more meaningful.
- Evaluate your reasons for choosing this lifestyle and find a way to resolve any feelings of doubt, resentment, and guilt.
- Discuss your ethical questions with someone you respect and admire.
- Practice your moral values by upholding them in challenging everyday situations.
- Understand that difficult circumstances can lead to personal growth.
- Use your story of overcoming adversity to encourage others.

Social Support

- Seek out resilient mentors and role models and observe them in a variety of settings.
- Practice desired behaviors through visualization and by enacting them in your own life.
- Obtain feedback when you practice the desired behaviors.
- Join an employee affinity group (EAG) to network and gain mentors.
- Attend and host entry level officer (ELO) or first & second tour (FAST) professional development events.
- Prioritize friends/family and stay in touch with them, especially when assigned overseas.
- Reach out to those you are close to when you need support.
- Join a local club/team (Hash House Harriers, Cross-Fit, yoga, book clubs).
- Host a dinner party/sports party.
- Organize a non-work-related interest group.
- Commit to supporting the community liaison officers (CLOs) by volunteering for events.

Can I Measure How Resilient I Am?

There are many different tools and tests available online. Consider using this brief personal inventory on a regular basis – for yourself, your team, family, and peers:

Personal Resilience Inventory

Resilience Statement	Choose Your Answer
1. I take care of myself. I get enough sleep, exercise, and eat well.	Yes/No
2. When I am stressed, I have things I do to help reduce my stress.	Yes/No
3. I have time for things I enjoy (i.e., being outdoors, with friends).	Yes/No
4. When I am faced with a big problem, I usually find a solution.	Yes/No
5. I adapt pretty well to change.	Yes/No
6. I feel a sense of purpose in my work or personal life.	Yes/No
7. I feel like I am growing. I am learning new things.	Yes/No
8. My life feels busy and active, in a good way.	Yes/No
9. When I need help from a friend/relative/co-worker, I ask for it.	Yes/No
10. My view of the world is pretty positive.	Yes/No

DAILY RESILIENCE COUNTDOWN



FAMILIAL RESILIENCE

Resilience is also important for foreign affairs families. Each must intentionally foster their familial resilience as a proactive measure in countering the seemingly never-ending challenges to an internationally mobile lifestyle. Familial resilience is the ability of a family unit to bounce back and adapt together. A wide variety of Transition Center courses help students better understand the opportunities and challenges of the Foreign Service lifestyle and strive to raise issues and provide tools families can use to maintain their resilience.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

A group of highly resilient individuals will not necessarily form a resilient community, which is the capacity of an organizational system to respond to change and disruption in a flexible, effective, and innovative manner. Just like personal and familial resilience, building community resilience is possible with intention and commitment.

The Seven Cs of Community Resilience

Community resilience is the capacity of a group of people to respond to change and disruption in a flexible and innovative manner. In the face of adversity, resilient communities support members while minimizing the emotional toll from the challenges and adversities they face. A collection of people with high levels of personal resilience does not automatically result in a resilient community. Community leaders and members alike need to regularly foster and follow the Seven Cs of Community Resilience in order to ensure they are ready for the unexpected:

Culture. The community has shared values, identity, history, and purpose that bind them together. Teams share stories that help describe their history and identity. Members can answer the question “who are we together?”

Competence. Community members have the capacity and skills they need to meet demands, particularly during times of crisis and high stress. They have the knowledge and abilities they need to be successful. Members share their competence with each other.

Connection. Community members know each other and have formed strong relationships. Members are treated as individuals, not as positions or titles.

Commitment. Community members are dedicated to each other and to a shared mission. They demonstrate respect and loyalty to others and add value (e.g., time, money, effort) to support others. They keep their promises and protect others from harm even when it is hard to do so.

Communication. All members feel well-informed about what is going on in the community. Members willingly share information and encourage questioning, critical thinking, and dialogue.

Coordination. Information and efforts are synchronized across the community and its goals are well-aligned. Members work through conflict to ensure they are working in sync with each other.

Consideration. Community members support their colleagues’ personal needs. They treat each other with respect, and express gratitude and appreciation to each other.



CHAPTER 7

MEDICAL INFORMATION



DEPARTMENT OF STATE MEDICAL PROGRAM

The Department of State Bureau of Medical Services (MED) covers a wide arrange of medical programs and services to promote and safeguard the health and well-being of America's diplomatic community.

Eligibility for the Department of State's medical program is not automatic. Each employee and family member must complete a physical examination, receive the recommended immunizations, and be granted a medical clearance before going overseas. Any family member who travels to post without

the required medical clearance may be denied benefits, including medical evacuation coverage, hospitalization coverage, and access to the health unit at post.

PREPARING FOR A NEW POST: MEDICAL INFORMATION

Medical Clearance

Pre-Employment or Pre-Assignment Medical Clearance

The Office of Medical Clearances is responsible for ensuring the U.S. government personnel receive adequate medical evaluation and clearance prior to their assignments abroad. The purpose of a medical clearance is to identify specific health needs and medical conditions that may require specialty management, follow up or monitoring. Additionally, the scope and frequency of the required follow-up must be determined. This reduces the need for medical travel due to lack of local health resources and limits the number of curtailments for pre-existing medical conditions.

Foreign Service Officers and Limited Non-Career Appointees from any of the five Foreign Service agencies (as outlined in the [Foreign Service Act of 1980](#)) must be able to serve at any post in the world for their first tour based on their pre-employment medical exam. Employees of other government agencies, contractors, fellows and eligible family members (EFMs) do not need to meet this worldwide availability requirement on their first overseas assignment.

The following information explains the pre-employment/pre-assignment process.

Required Physical Exam Forms

Foreign Service Officer Candidates and EFMs of One of the Five Foreign Affairs Agencies

- DS-1843 Medical History and Examination for Foreign Service or Individuals Age 12 or Older
- DS-1622 Medical History and Examination for Foreign Service for Children Age 11 and Younger

Limited Non-Career Appointees, Contractors, Civil Service, Locally Employed Staff, Personnel from Non-Foreign Service Government Agencies, and EFMs

- DS-6561: Pre-assignment for Overseas Duty for Non-Foreign Service Personnel

Other Medical Information

Medical reports do not need to be submitted with your initial medical clearance forms. Please be aware that Medical Clearances may require reports from providers, medical facilities or schools for anyone with significant past medical, mental health, or special educational needs.

ESCAPE Posts: Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, or Peshawar

Individuals assigned to any of the Employee Self-Certification and Ability to Perform in Emergencies (ESCAPE) posts, including TDY travel of 30 or more consecutive days, must meet more rigid standards and undergo further medical vetting than addressed in this document. Please read and follow the instructions on the Bureau of Medical Services' [Popular Topics](#) website.

Where to Perform a Medical Clearance Exam

- The medical clearance exam may be completed for you and your family members by a licensed medical provider of your choice.

If done overseas, insure that the all sections, labs and reports are in English. The individual, parent or guardian should complete the first two pages of each form. Page two must be signed and dated. The examiner/provider should complete the physical exam and lab portion of the exam. In addition to the hand written lab section, MED requires copies of the lab and radiology reports and the EKG tracing, if indicated.

- The clearance exam may also be done at the [Department of State Exam Clinic](#) in Washington DC for those over six years of age.

A first-time medical clearance is valid for five years or until the end of your first tour. Subsequent medical clearances are valid for the length of the tour or upon eligibility for home leave, whichever is shorter, unless there is a significant change in the individual's medical condition. A new clearance is based on a physical examination ([DS 1843](#) for over 12 years old and [DS 1622](#) for under 12 years old). Afterwards a medical clearance update form ([DS 3057](#)) may be submitted. Every employee and eligible family member must have a valid medical clearance before each overseas assignment and before returning to post following home leave. Since the physical examination is a point of reference for benefits, it is also required for the employee and family members when:

- An employee separates from the Foreign Service.
- An eligible child turns 21.
- An employee dies-for all family members as soon as possible after the death.

When a family expands overseas (through birth, adoption, or marriage), the results of a physical examination of the new family member must be submitted to the Bureau of Medical Services within 90 days. In addition, a Residence and Dependency Report (Form JF 20) must be filed. Without these, the new family member will not be covered by the Department's medical program.

Please ensure you have medical clearances for yourself and your family members prior to travel. Email MED Clearances at MEDClearances@state.gov. A full explanation of the medical clearance process can be found on [MED's internet website](#).

Payment

Medical Clearance related medical expenses not covered by your medical insurance may be reimbursed by receiving a DS-3069 payment authorization form from your human resources and submitting your invoices and "Explanation of Benefits" to Medical Claims at MEDClaims@state.gov.

Contractors and DOD Civilians should contact their sponsor's human resources.

Tips for Submitting Your Medical Clearance Application

1. Failure to have all family members' medical clearance in order may delay your travel orders.
2. Ideally type the form.
3. Insure the patient's name and date of birth is at the top of each page of the exam form.
4. Provide a personal, legible email address good for the next 90 days.
5. EFMs, age 18 and over, must provide their own email address for privacy reasons
6. Send your completed forms and medical reports: via email in a PDF format to MEDMR@state.gov (preferred) or fax to (202) 647-0292 (less preferred).
7. After a Medical Clearance is issued, any required follow-up care for any medical condition is the patient's responsibility. Patients can arrange appointments on personal travel, during R&R, home leave or other government funded travel when services are not available at the post of assignment.

Immunizations

Required and recommended immunizations for overseas travel can be obtained at the health units listed below. Be sure to allow time for spacing the immunizations, as a complete initial immunization series may require about six to eight weeks.

When necessary, because of geographic considerations, adults residing more than 50 miles outside of Washington, DC away may obtain immunizations from private providers. If authorized, the Department of State will reimburse the full cost of recommended immunizations performed by private providers for adults and children. Note: These payments are made only for immunizations recommended for overseas service, such as yellow fever, and NOT for routine immunizations such as polio and MMR.

Children should be current on routine immunizations from their private health care providers.

Country-specific recommendations on immunization and prophylaxis may be obtained through contacting the travel clinics listed below or by emailing WashDCTravelClinic@state.gov. Additionally, it is preferred that patients call or email to make an appointment. It is very important to make sure you bring your past immunization records with you to your appointment and for any Foreign Service officers with a Class 1 clearance that are worldwide available, you are advised to receive all travel immunizations offered.

Travel, Health and Immunization Clinics

Columbia Plaza (SA-1)

2401 E Street NW

Room L201

Washington, DC 20037

Phone: (202) 663-3974

Fax: (202) 663-1717

Clinic Hours: Mon., Tue., Wed., Fri., 8:15am -5:00pm and Thu. 10:00am - 5:00pm

No immunizations after 4:00pm.

Harry S. Truman (Main State) Building

2201 C St. NW

Room B846

Washington, DC 20037

Phone: (202) 647-2546

Fax (202) 736-7987

Clinic Hours: Mon., Tue., Wed., Fri., 8:15am - 5:00pm and Thu. 10:00am -5:00pm

No immunizations after 4:00pm.

(Basement level behind the credit union. For non-DOS employees: enter the Harry S. Truman Building via “C” Street entrance, a current government picture ID is required)

George P. Shultz Center (NFATC) (FSI) (SA-42)

4000 Arlington Blvd

Building E, Room E-1104

Arlington, VA 22204

Phone (703) 302-7450

Fax (703) 302-7430

Clinic Hours: Mon., Tue., Wed., Fri., 8:15am - 5:00pm and Thu. 10:30am - 5:00pm

No immunizations after 4:00pm.

Note: Medical advice and counseling services specific to your new post are available at each of these

clinics. If you have one, please remember to bring the World Health Organization International Immunization Card (the yellow card) with you.

General Cautions and Considerations Regarding Immunizations

Regulations: Immunizations are regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration with recommendations for their use issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The recommendations of the Bureau of Medical Services for a particular post are considered best for the needs of each person. Immunizations for employees and family members are based on recommendations by Regional Medical Officers and other sources. Check with the health unit at your post shortly after arrival. Always keep your “yellow shot card” current and with your passport. Also, when obtaining your immunizations, consider not only your destination post, but also the countries through which you may be traveling.

Timing: Certain vaccines require strict adherence to a timing schedule. Some series are completed in three to four weeks (rabies pre-exposure vaccine), while others require six months to complete (hepatitis B vaccine). Consult with the Immunization Clinic early to assure you have enough time to complete the necessary vaccinations before traveling overseas.

Pregnancy: Immunizations, like most other medications, are generally avoided in pregnant women. However, the relative risks of getting the disease and its effect on the pregnancy must also be weighed. These considerations must be carefully discussed and weighed before initiating immunization therapy. In general, inactivated vaccines, such as hepatitis A vaccine, are safe in pregnancy. Certain live bacterial or viral vaccines, such as measles, mumps, or rubella vaccine, should be avoided, and others, such as yellow fever, should only be given if indicated. Some vaccines such as influenza vaccine are specifically recommended for pregnant women because the risk of serious disease from influenza is high. Breast feeding is generally not a contraindication to immunizations. The Tdap vaccine is recommended between 27-36 weeks of gestation with private MD consent.



Allergies to Vaccines: Vaccine components can cause allergic reactions in some recipients. Persons who have had a significant reaction to a vaccine should tell the medical professional administering their immunizations. The most common animal protein allergen is egg protein in vaccines produced in chicken eggs (influenza and yellow fever vaccines). People who can eat eggs or egg products safely can take these vaccines.

If you are in doubt about the immunizations you need or have other questions about their administration, please check with professional staff in the health units at post or one of the Travel and Immunization clinics in the Washington, DC area.

Prescription Medications

The Department of State does not provide or pay for medications for long-term chronic medical conditions such as hypertension, elevated cholesterol, diabetes, and thyroid. Arrange for mail-order delivery of your medications. Depending on the plan that you choose, your health insurance plan may provide for a mail-order pharmacy benefit.

Be sure to take a three to four-month supply of your prescription medications with you. Mail delivery may be subject to delays. Check with your medical provider to make sure your prescription is also up to date.

If you or members of your family are undergoing desensitization injections, discuss resupply with your private provider. Depending on a variety of specific factors, this program may need to be modified based on the potential allergens at your new post.

Injectable drugs, eyeglasses, or other medically prescribed devices may be sent to you via the Department of State diplomatic pouch. Packages should be labeled clearly with your pouch address and the following wording: MEDICATION (or MEDICAL EQUIPMENT) - Urgently Needed by Air Pouch.

Medical Records

Take copies of important medical information with you overseas. For example, in addition to prescriptions, include insurance policies and claim forms, immunization records, and eyeglass and contact lens prescriptions. Carry these with you in your carry-on. Do not place them in your luggage, air freight, or household effects.

The Medical Records section of MED serves the Foreign Service by collecting, analyzing, and managing data vital for health care needs and making it accessible to health care providers and employees. The embassy/consulate health unit will maintain electronic copies of your medical records.

As some individuals may not have a copy of their health information, Medical Record Services is qualified to handle all legitimate requests for copies of health information. Written requests may be submitted via fax at (202) 647-0292 or mailed to the Bureau of Medical Services, Department of State, 2401 E St NW, Washington, DC 20522, Attn: Medical Records. Employees of the Department of State may also request their personal copy as well as copies of their underage children via email at MEDMR@state.gov. Please allow 30 business days after submission for requests to be processed.

Dental Care

It often is difficult to obtain quality dental care overseas. All family members should have a preventive dental checkup and cleaning before departure, and yearly during rest and recuperation (R&R) travel or while on home leave.

Medical Travel Kit

Small carry-along first-aid kits often come in handy as you travel. Suggested contents might include:

- Ace bandage
- Acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Adhesive tape
- Allergy tablets
- Antacids
- Antibacterial ointment - useful for minor skin infections and burns
- Antifungal ointment
- Aspirin
- Band aids
- Eye dropper
- First aid manual
- Foot powder
- Insect repellent (e.g., DEET-containing) lotion, and a spray containing pyrethrum
- Laxatives
- Malaria prophylactic medication, if prescribed
- Motion sickness medication
- Non-prescription cold and cough medication
- Scissors and tweezers
- Sunscreen
- Thermometer

MEDICAL ISSUES OVERSEAS

Plan to visit the embassy health unit shortly after arrival to introduce yourself and tell health unit personnel about your medical history. A health unit check-in is usually a part of the New Arrivals Check-in procedure. They will offer advice and explain local medical services, including how to obtain medical care after regular working hours, the location of local hospitals (if recommended for use) and provide you with the duty medical provider emergency contact cell phone.

All posts should publish a Health and Medical Information booklet, updated annually. These are available through the MED intranet website. Take a look as soon as you have a firm assignment, so that you can adequately prepare for life at post. Many posts offer an annual CPR training, food and safety training, and other helpful courses. Topics to explore for a new assignment might include:

- “Potable” safe drinking water
- Foods to avoid or special preparations needed
- Local restaurant precautions
- Recommended training or pre-employment screening for domestic help
- Laundry procedures
- Health recommendations related to climate (measures to deal with extreme heat or cold, if needed)
- Information on dangerous animals or insects
- Precautions related to swimming pools and beach water safety
- Malaria
- HIV
- Tuberculosis
- Common complaints and remedies
- Other post-specific information

Read and review your post’s handbook so that you can enjoy a safe and healthy assignment overseas.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (ECS)

Office of Employee Consultation Services

The Office of Employee Consultation Services (ECS) encompasses the Employee Assistance Program, Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program and Deployment Stress Management Program. ECS is a free, confidential counseling and referral service for employees and family members of the Department of State, USAID, and other agencies through the Bureau of Medical Services. ECS has a staff of licensed clinical social workers and psychologists with domestic and international experience who provide

crisis interventions, problem assessment, grief counseling, referral to community resources, information and follow-up services, consultation to supervisors, workshops on selected topics, and support groups.

Employees and family members consult with ECS about a variety of issues and concerns. Some examples include job stress, marital/relationship issues, parent-child problems, single parent/blended family concerns, school adjustment, elderly parent concerns, separation, loss and grief, acute and chronic medical illness, substance use, depression, anxiety, and other emotional problems, financial concerns, life transitions, and pre-post departure and reentry issues.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The EAP is an internal, voluntary, confidential, program that helps employees (including management) work through various life challenges that may adversely affect job performance, health, and personal well-being, in an effort to optimize the Department's success.

Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program (ADAP)

ADAP is primarily a prevention education and substance abuse/addiction identification program. ADAP staff evaluates relevant information to determine if a substance abuse problem exists. If it does, treatment recommendations are made. ADAP does not provide any formal inpatient or outpatient treatment. Family members or co-workers who are dealing with the substance use problems of others can also receive services.

Deployment Stress Management Program (DSMP)

The DSMP administers programs that promote positive psychological health thru prevention, early identification, and counseling for mental health issues before, during, and after an assignment to priority staffing and high stress, high threat posts.

In general, nothing a client says to ECS staff within the above programs will be disclosed to anyone without written, informed consent. There are some exceptions, such as when there is risk of self-harm or harm to others, child abuse, or a threat to national security. ECS records are kept fully segregated from MED's electronic and paper records systems in order to protect confidentiality.

To contact ECS or schedule an appointment, please email MEDECS@state.gov or contact our 24/7 line at +1 (202) 634-4874.

MEDICAL TRAVEL ("MEDEVACS")

Authorized medical travel, often referred to as a medical evacuation or medevac, occurs when adequate medical facilities do not exist at post to treat an individual's medical problem and medical care cannot be postponed until an individual's next scheduled travel. Medical travel is either to a regional center or Washington DC. The decision for medical travel is based on the recommendation of the regional medical officer or Medical Provider. If medical travel to a regional center is authorized, the patient may choose to travel to the United States for treatment on a cost constructive basis.

During medical travel a medical attendant may be approved if medically required. In very specific and limited instances a non-medical attendant, including family members, may be authorized. Children may be authorized to accompany a parent if there is no ability for self-care at post. Authorized attendants travel in the same class as the patient. Employees evacuated for medical treatment are placed on either sick, annual leave, or leave without pay status until returning to post.

An individual's medical clearance is suspended during a medical evacuation. The individual must have their medical clearance reinstated before returning to post. A medical clearance decision will be made by MED Medical Clearances based on any new medical requirements the individual may have. Per diem continues for the patient until the final clearance decision has been made, except for days when the individual is hospitalized, goes on home leave, or leaves the location of their medical care for any reason.

The patient on a medical evacuation should hand carry medical travel orders, a completed Authorization for Medical Services (Form DS3067) if hospitalized, a letter of medical introduction from the post to the accepting provider, and all pertinent available medical records. An individual may request a travel advance when needed. The patient should be sure to have his or her Social Security number and that of the employee (if the patient is a family member).

Medical travel for dental treatment that cannot be postponed until scheduled travel and that, if delayed, can reasonably be expected to result in a need for emergency care may be authorized. The patient receives one day's per diem for required and up to three days for emergency dental care and is responsible for payment of all treatment expenses.

(See also [16 FAM 310](#) or Medical Evacuations on the MED Foreign Programs SharePoint site.)

MEDICAL EMERGENCY VISITATION TRAVEL

Emergency Visitation Travel (EVT) can be authorized when a parent, child, or sibling has died; when a parent or child is in a life threatening, critical condition; or when a parent's health has significantly changed and the parent needs assistance. EVT may be authorized for a member of the Foreign Service when "stationed" abroad or for an eligible dependent "located abroad." A Foreign Service member or eligible dependent is limited to one round trip for each serious illness or injury of an immediate family member who is in an imminent death state. Separate travel for death/interment, however, can be authorized. There is no medical EVT for the illness of siblings.

Although the health unit may be able to answer general medical questions, it is the responsibility of the post's human resources office to contact Foreign Programs (MED/FP) for authorization when a parent or child has a life threatening medical condition. In the event of the death of a parent, sibling, or child, authorization for EVT is authorized by post and not MED.

A repayment acknowledgement may be signed if the traveler wishes to begin travel prior to receipt of the authorization (the employee needs to be fully aware that if the criterion of imminent death is not met, the employee is responsible for reimbursement of the travel).

It is helpful to ask a family member in the United States to give a release of medical information to the attending physician/nurse/clinic/ hospital and alert the attending physician/nurse/clinic/hospital that a medical professional from the State Department Medical Division may be contacting them.

MED will require the following contact information in order to authorize the EVT:

1. Name and Social Security number of employee
2. Name of post
3. Name of traveler
4. Name of ill relative and approximate age or date of birth
5. Relationship to traveler
6. Name, phone number, and location of hospital
7. Name and phone number of attending physician
8. Name and phone number of an alternate contact person in the United States
9. Confirmation that a release of medical information has been requested from the treating facility and the treating health care provider

If you need additional assistance, call during working hours, from 8:15am to 5:00pm: (202) 663-1662, MED/Foreign Programs. After working hours, weekends, and holidays: (202) 647-1512, Operations

Center.

Other types of Emergency Visitation Travel are as follows:

Death EVT

This type of EVT is requested for the death or interment of an immediate family member (parent, child, or sibling). This type of EVT is post funded and does not require MED authorization; Employee Relations in Washington (GTM/HR) only needs notification that the travel has occurred. (See [3 FAM 3746.2](#).)

Incapacitated Parent EVT

This is travel for a parent that has a life-changing event and requires family participation to assist in placement and/or arrangements for long-term care. The family member is authorized travel back to the parent's residence—one trip per parent per career. Please check with the post human resources office or Employee Relations (GTM/ER) in Washington on limitations and exceptions. This kind of EVT is funded centrally and is authorized under GTM/ER ([3 FAM 3746.3](#)).

Eldercare EVT

This type of EVT is requested for a parent or the employee's spouse or domestic partner that becomes temporarily or permanently incapacitated but is expected to survive. Travel is necessary to assess the need for new living arrangements or other forms of care. Please check with the post human resources office or Employee Relations (GTM/ER) in Washington on limitations and exceptions. This kind of EVT is funded centrally and is authorized under GTM/ER ([3 FAM 3746.3](#)).

See Chapter 04 – Eldercare.

Unusual Personal Hardship EVT

This type of EVT is requested for an employee or employee spouse or domestic partner requiring emergency family visitation in certain exceptional circumstances other than those covered by the other EVT categories. All unusual personal hardship travel must be approved by GTM/ER; this is post-funded travel ([3 FAM 3746.4](#)).

New Child EVT

This benefit is available to Foreign Service (FS) employees and their eligible family members (EFMs) overseas. It facilitates travel to care for a birth parent who is giving birth away from post. EFM children and other EFMs incapable of self-support as defined in [14 FAM 511.3](#), and who are listed on

the employee's post assignment travel orders, may travel on a birth parent's OB medevac orders whether they travel with the birth parent or later, for example with the non-birth parent. See [3 FAM 3746.6](#).

Unaccompanied Post EVT

This type of EVT is requested when an employee on official duty at an unaccompanied post is seriously wounded or becomes critically ill, is subsequently medevaced to another medical facility, and a family member's and/or agent's presence is determined to be medically required during the emergency period. This type of EVT is authorized by the Office of Casualty Assistance and is funded by the regional bureau ([3 FAM 3746.5](#)).

INFORMATION AND RECORDS

MED CHANNEL is a special channel for telegraphic communication of medical information. Cables received via MED CHANNEL are medically confidential and are distributed to medical personnel only. An employee or family member who wants to initiate communication from a post where there are no Department of State medical personnel may telephone the RMO, RMO/P, or the Office of Medical Services in Washington if confidentiality is important.

Anyone for whom there are medical records in the Department of State may obtain a copy of his or her records in full or in part or may have the information forwarded to a third party. An individual's full medical file will include any records from Mental Health Services (even though these records are stored separately from other medical records).

However, it will not include records from the Employee Consultation Service (ECS). These must be requested separately. In special instances material may be withheld with deletions noted and described. A decision to withhold information is made by the Office of Medical Services and is subject to appeal.

Requests for records should be sent to the Bureau of Medical Services, or the information and privacy coordinator. To initiate a request, submit a letter stating full name, place and date of birth, and employee's name if request is from family member. The request is valid only if signed by the person whose records are sought, unless the records pertain to a child less than 18 years of age, in which case a parent may sign. Also, the designated legal guardian (who presents proof of the guardianship) may request records for an adult who has been deemed incompetent to manage his or her own affairs. Processing takes a minimum of two months.

Every family should keep complete and well documented medical records (including English translations if necessary). Documentation may be needed to file claims with the Department's

medical program or the employee's health insurance plan. Personal medical records are also important for the light they shed on medical conditions that develop later on. For these reasons, they should be retained for as long as possible.

It is particularly important that employees and family members keep documentation pertaining to treatment at overseas posts. Pursuant to the Department's records disposition schedules, medical records that originated in overseas embassies may be destroyed six years after the employee has left the post.

Records of medical expenses may be required for income tax purposes. Medical and dental expenses (including insurance premium payments, prescription drugs, and transportation) in excess of 7.5 percent of adjusted gross income are deductible from federal income tax. See [IRS publication 502, Medical and Dental Expenses](#).

HEALTH INSURANCE

Medical Insurance

Make sure you have adequate medical insurance for you and your family. The Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) provides you and your family with protection against the cost of illness or accident at reduced costs; you and the government share the cost. Each year an open season is held for FEHB program enrollees to change health plans and/or the type of enrollment they have. Open season runs from Monday of the second full workweek in November through the Monday of the second full workweek in December. Moving overseas also allows you to change your plan. For informational purposes, the Overseas Briefing Center maintains a list of supplemental insurance providers. Email FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov for information.

Also, see Chapter 30 - Insurance.

Medical Claims

The Department of State acts as secondary payer (provided that the personal health insurance acts as a primary payer and the individual has met their annual insurance deductible) for treatment of an illness, injury, or medical condition incurred while abroad that requires hospitalization or similar care. If the hospitalization occurs in a local hospital overseas and the individual is admitted to the hospital for over 24 hours, the Department of State will pay the bill but the employee is expected to submit a claim to his/her insurance carrier and reimburse the Department for the amount recouped. The Department of State does not pay for illness, injury, or medical condition incurred while the employee or family is in the United States for any reason (assignment, home leave, personal travel, or

education). If an individual is not covered by insurance, he or she must reimburse the U.S. government for the entire amount of all medical expenses. For questions, email MEDClaims@state.gov.

If you wish to speak with a representative, please call (202) 663-1886. If you are submitting a medical claim, please read the checklist below to ensure you have submitted the proper documents.

In order for your claim to be processed, you will need to provide the following information:

1. A copy of the authorization (DS-3069 or 616) you used to obtain medical services under the coverage of the Department of State Medical Program.
2. All itemized bills.
3. Explanation of Benefits form.
4. Proof of payment to cover your requested reimbursement (if applicable).

Please email your information to MEDClaims@state.gov.

Where there is an embassy health unit, or where Department medical personnel serve the post, certain limited in-house services are available at no cost.

If a medical problem arises for which adequate resources (including those of the host country) do not exist and the medical condition requires immediate attention as determined by the medical practitioner at post, the Department of State will pay for travel from the post to the nearest adequate care for either hospitalization or out-patient care.

Certain family members living overseas with the employee may not be eligible for benefits under the Department's medical program. Coverage for an eligible child ceases on his or her 21st birthday, unless the child is physically or mentally incapable of self-support. The child of a legally separated or divorced employee is eligible only if the employee has legal custody and the child receives a medical clearance before going overseas. An employee's (or spouse's) parents, whether residing at post or visiting, are not eligible for benefits. A child whose adoption has not been legalized is also ineligible, as are members of household. (See Chapter 2 - Spouses, Same-Sex Couples and the LBGTQI+ Community, and Members of Household).

Medicare nor Medicaid DO NOT provide coverage for people overseas. If the employee's personal health insurance policy does not cover such family members, other health insurance should be acquired. Short-term policies that provide coverage similar to that of the Department of State's program, including emergency medical evacuation, are available. For informational purposes, the

Overseas Briefing Center maintains a list of supplemental insurance providers. Email FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov for information.



CHAPTER 8

PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES



INTRODUCTION

Foreign Service employees and family members serving abroad need to understand the scope and limitations of the privileges and immunities that flow from their diplomatic or consular status and the duties associated with their status.

Privileges and immunities are provided by host states in international agreements. Two multilateral treaties, the [Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 \(VCDR\)](#) and the [Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963 \(VCCR\)](#), are the bases for privileges and immunities of personnel accredited to embassies and consulates, respectively. Additional privileges and immunities may be

contained provided in bilateral agreements, such as consular agreements or friendship, commerce, and navigation treaties. These bilateral agreements may contain provisions that pertain to the immunities of diplomatic and consular personnel and to the embassy and consular premises. Frequently, international organizations have treaties or arrangements with host states that provide for privileges and immunities for their own staff, members of missions to that organization, or experts or other representatives on a mission for that organization (e.g., peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance). Finally, some agencies, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or Peace Corps, may have specific arrangements with a host state that provide privileges and immunities.

The discussion below can provide only a general framework. When seeking information about a specific situation, guidance should come from the Office of Diplomatic Law and Litigation in the [Office of the Legal Adviser \(L/DL\)](#). L/DL is the resource for legal advice on these matters.

The discussion below addresses the situation of U.S. government employees of foreign affairs agencies and employees of other U.S. agencies who are posted abroad and notified to a receiving state as diplomatic agents or members of the administrative and technical staff for embassy personnel, or as consular officers or members of the consular staff for those assigned to consulates outside the capital. It also applies to some family members who are notified as part of the employee's household.

The discussion below concerns individuals who are not nationals of, or permanently resident in the receiving state. Individuals, including family members, who are nationals of or permanently resident in the receiving state generally do not enjoy any privileges and immunities. Accordingly, the Department of State's policy is not to assign employees who are dual nationals to the country of their other nationality.

This discussion of privileges and immunities does not address the situation of U.S. personnel assigned to U.S. missions to international organizations. Note also that USAID employees often receive their privileges and immunities pursuant to the bilateral assistance agreements between the United States and the particular country to which the employee is assigned. USAID employees can determine their status at a particular post by talking with the USAID regional legal advisor or the executive officer.

BACKGROUND

Centuries ago, sovereign states discovered that it was not possible to maintain useful diplomatic relations with other nations if their respective diplomatic envoys feared being thrown into jail for carrying unfavorable opinions to the host government or for other real or imagined offenses to the host state. When early diplomats began to reside in host states, states realized that diplomats needed security in their persons, homes, and official papers in order to accomplish the work that both the sending and receiving states agreed that they should accomplish. Over time, a body of customary international law developed to provide a broad range of privileges and immunities for diplomats, eventually including some degree of similar protection for members of their staffs and families. The VCDR reflects customary international law, as it developed over the centuries, regarding diplomats and diplomatic premises. The vast majority of countries are parties to this treaty.

Consular representatives were traditionally considered quite apart from diplomats. Historically, consular functions consisted of helping to resolve problems involving citizens from the consul's home country and issuing travel documents. These were held to be matters not warranting special privileges and immunities. Over time, however, consular functions became more sophisticated. States came to realize that at least a limited degree of protection was necessary for their consuls. Many nations, including the United States, entered into bilateral agreements with their principal allies and trading partners to provide for certain consular privileges and immunities.

The VCCR incorporates rules that were developed by customary practice and found in bilateral consular agreements and has obtained broad adherence. However, these consular privileges and immunities are generally markedly less than those afforded diplomats.

Nonetheless, some states have, on a bilateral basis, concluded agreements with the United States that provide additional privileges and immunities for consular personnel. It is thus critical, when reviewing privileges and immunities for consular personnel, to determine whether there is an applicable bilateral agreement.

Privileges and immunities for a U.S. government employee may vary considerably from one post to another because privileges and immunities are based on the status accorded a particular individual when they are formally accepted in a specific capacity at a specific post by the receiving state. Status is not determined, in this context, by any professional designation or rank that the sending state may assign.

Possession of a diplomatic passport alone affords its holder no privileges or immunities of any kind. The advantages that the diplomatic passport does afford are only courtesies that are without significance under international law and should not be relied upon.

Similarly, a person accredited to a particular country is entitled to the privileges and immunities that correspond to their specific status only in that particular country (and, to a limited extent, when in transit to or from that country to the sending state); not in third countries when on personal leave or even on official temporary duty (TDY). The receiving state accepts the posting of an individual and has the power to end privileges and immunities at any time by declaring that individual *persona non grata*, giving the individual a reasonable time to depart before privileges and immunities cease. The receiving state has no obligation to explain why the individual has been declared *persona non grata*.

DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY (EMBASSY ASSIGNMENTS)

While all official U.S. employees assigned to embassies abroad, who are not nationals of or permanently resident in the receiving State, share certain protection (e.g., criminal immunity, personal inviolability, testimonial immunity, and inviolability of property), there is a functional distinction between diplomatic agents (engaged primarily in diplomatic exchange between the two states) and members of the administrative and technical staff (engaged primarily in the support of the former category). Both categories of personnel enjoy complete immunity from the criminal jurisdiction of the receiving state. However, diplomatic agents enjoy more extensive immunity from the civil and administrative jurisdiction of the receiving state than do members of the administrative and technical staff. Accredited service staff, if any, only enjoy immunity for acts performed in the course of their official duties. Those on TDY who have not been notified to the host state likely have no privileges or immunities; nor do U.S. citizens locally hired (e.g., Rockefeller appointments or personal service contractors). Eligible family members (EFMs) who are not nationals of or permanently reside in the receiving state derive their privileges and immunities because of their connection to the accredited employee.

It is the duty of all accredited personnel to respect the laws and regulations of the receiving state. U.S. government employees are all expected to pay their just debts and other obligations and may not rely on their privileges and immunities to avoid them.

Criminal Immunity and Related Immunities

Complete immunity from criminal jurisdiction means that a person may not be prosecuted. Full personal inviolability means a person may not be detained or arrested or subject to a body search. Testimonial immunity precludes compelling a person to give evidence as a witness. These immunities can only be waived by the U.S. government. Any waiver must be express, and generally written. Diplomatic immunity cannot be waived by the individual or the post.

To avoid a common complication, individuals who drive vehicles in the host state are advised to carry local liability insurance and may wish, in light of several cases where U.S. government employees are being sued in the United States, to carry the same liability insurance limits overseas as they do at home.

Immunity from criminal jurisdiction and personal inviolability do not preclude receiving state authorities from interrupting certain dangerous criminal actions that present an immediate threat to public safety (e.g., stopping a diplomat who is driving dangerously). However, Foreign Service employees serving abroad need not perform duties under the threat of being treated as a common criminal by the law enforcement and judicial authorities of the receiving state.

Civil and Administrative Immunity

Civil and administrative actions are those in which a person or business (or a government) files a complaint (often seeking monetary damages) against another person before the civil or administrative authorities of the receiving state. Diplomatic agents enjoy comprehensive immunity in this respect, with three exceptions:

- Actions connected with real property in the receiving state.
- Actions where the diplomat is an executor or beneficiary of an estate in the receiving state.
- Actions relating to professional or commercial endeavors engaged in by the diplomat outside the scope of official functions.

In general, members of the administrative and technical staff of embassies are only afforded civil and administrative immunity with respect to actions related to the performance of their official embassy functions. (Special bilateral agreements with some countries grant more extensive immunities, which are sometimes identical to those of diplomatic agents, to members of the administrative and technical staff. Check with your post management officer for the status of a specific country.)

For example, a member of the administrative and technical staff would probably be personally immune from a suit for breach of contract in connection with a contract that the employee negotiated

with a local vendor for services to be provided to the embassy (although the U.S. government might be a defendant). On the other hand, a member of the administrative and technical staff would ordinarily have no immunity from a private lawsuit for failure to pay personal debts or for compensation for damage to the property of a local citizen alleged to have occurred while the individual was off duty.

Family Members of Embassy Staff

The preceding paragraphs refer to the immunities of the employee. The fundamental notion of privileges and immunities is to protect the interests of the sending state in having its employees be able to perform their official functions. Sovereign states discovered some time ago, however, that the employee could not be effectively protected without extending certain protections to the members of the employee's immediate family who reside with him or her. Today, family members forming part of the household of most diplomatic personnel who have been notified to the receiving state are also accorded extensive immunities. However, cohabiting partners of Foreign Service personnel or other members of household are not accorded any of the privileges described below. Further, adult children are not typically afforded immunities unless special circumstances (e.g., substantial disabilities) warrant.

Spouses and other household family members generally enjoy the same immunities as the sponsoring accredited diplomat, except that under the VCDR, family members who are nationals of the host country (when the sponsor/employee is a diplomatic agent) or nationals or permanent residents (when the sponsor/employee is a member of the administrative and technical staff) do not have privileges and immunities in the receiving state. For example, a spouse of French nationality would not have privileges and immunities in France but, when posted to any other country, would receive precisely the same privileges and immunities as a spouse of U.S. nationality.

The criminal and related immunities of family members of diplomatic personnel are the same as those which the sponsoring employee enjoys, including complete criminal immunity for the families of both diplomatic agents and members of the administrative and technical staff who have been notified to the receiving state.

The civil and administrative immunities of families also correspond to those accorded both categories of sponsors. However, members of the administrative and technical staff (the sponsors/employees) enjoy civil and administrative immunity only for their official embassy functions. Family members of administrative and technical staff employees have no official embassy functions and, thus, enjoy no civil or administrative immunity (except in specific countries where a bilateral agreement might provide otherwise).

Family Member Employment

Under the VCDR, a receiving state may permit local employment by diplomatic family members.

The [Global Community Liaison Office](#) in the Department of State coordinates the negotiation of bilateral work agreements with other states to increase the opportunities for family members of official U.S. government employees to obtain employment in the state to which their sponsor has been assigned. As of 2015, 124 bilateral work agreements and 36 de facto work arrangements have been concluded, and negotiations with additional countries continue.

These agreements acknowledge the limitations on civil and administrative (but not criminal) immunity for family members who enjoy diplomatic immunity and take up employment in the receiving state, but only to the extent that such civil or administrative actions are related to the employment. In other words, there is no civil or administrative immunity for acts by the employed family member that is connected to his or her employment. For instance, immunity would probably not exist in the case of a suit against a family member by the employer based on allegations of fiscal improprieties. Likewise, a family member who took a position as an attorney, for example, would be subject to the administrative jurisdiction of the receiving state, including licensing requirements.

CONSULAR IMMUNITY

Consular immunity today proceeds from the same conceptual basis as diplomatic immunity. However, for the historical reasons explained above, the privileges and immunities enjoyed by members of the consular staff are dramatically more limited in scope than those afforded diplomatic staff, particularly with respect to immunities in the receiving state. (Note that persons assigned to consular sections of U.S. embassies are members of the diplomatic mission and accordingly are granted diplomatic privileges and immunities.)

Under the VCCR, consular officers and other employees at consulates have (and retain after completion of their tour) criminal, civil, and administrative immunity only with respect to acts performed in the exercise of consular functions. The determination of whether something qualifies as an “act performed in the exercise of consular functions” is generally determined by the courts of the receiving state. In the face of criminal charges or a civil action concerning official acts, the post should immediately contact L/DL.

With limited exception for serious crimes and subject to an arrest warrant, consular officers cannot be arrested or detained pending trial. Other members of the consular staff, however, have no such protection under the VCCR.

Moreover, under the VCCR, family members of consular officers or consular employees at consulates have no immunity from the jurisdiction of the host state because family members do not perform consular functions and therefore enjoy no personal inviolability.

Given the limited immunities provided under the VCCR, the United States has special bilateral consular conventions with a few countries that grant substantially enhanced privileges and immunities. The terms of these special consular agreements differ; some provide more extensive immunity only to the employee, not to family members. Consular personnel should always confirm their status at a specific post.

WAIVERS OF IMMUNITY

The right to waive immunities for any of its diplomatic or consular staff members, or family members resides in the government of the sending state and in our case only with the Department of State. The individual who ultimately benefits from the immunity has no power to waive immunity, even in cases where he or she believes that it would be in his or her interest to do so. Rather, the sending state may waive immunity when it judges that to do so is in the national interest. An individual whose immunity is waived has no basis under international law to protest this determination.

The Department of State requests waivers of immunity from criminal jurisdiction in almost all cases involving foreign personnel accredited to the United States to ensure that the proper course of justice proceeds. On this basis, the U.S. government may seriously consider waiving the criminal immunity of its employees, especially in cases where it believes the employee would receive a fair trial and the interests of the United States would not be harmed.

The only instance in which the action of an individual might directly cause the partial loss of immunity is when an employee entitled to civil and administrative immunity initiates a civil suit in the local courts. In that case, the VCDR bars the individual from asserting immunity from counterclaims with respect to the same subject matter. (Note: Individuals with applicable immunity should not initiate such proceedings without post first requesting a limited waiver of immunity from the Department.)

Even in a case in which all would believe it to be in the interest of the U.S. government for a certain immunity to be waived (e.g., an embassy employee is the sole, disinterested witness to a crime and, as a “good citizen,” wishes to testify as a witness at the trial), authorization for a limited waiver of immunity must be sought from the Department of State by the embassy or consulate. If granted, it must be expressly communicated to the foreign ministry of the receiving state before the employee takes any action. (A limited waiver might, for example, be devised to permit a diplomat to testify

regarding an automobile accident that he or she witnessed, but leave completely protected the diplomat's immunity from the jurisdiction of the receiving state in all other respects.)

LIMITS ON IMMUNITY

Persons enjoying diplomatic or consular privileges and immunities are, at least in a figurative sense, "above the law" of the receiving state. All states that enter into diplomatic relations with other states accept this encroachment on their sovereignty as a necessary cost of being a member of the world community. However, the immunity concept would never have endured if its application left the receiving state helpless to react to the commission of serious crimes in its territory or without recourse when foreign diplomats abuse the civil law rights of its citizens. In order to understand that some control must be retained, one need only recall the sense of outrage expressed by U.S. citizens whenever diplomatic immunity thwarts prosecution of a serious crime by a diplomat assigned to the United States. For this reason, the principle developed that all persons enjoying privileges and immunities also have a duty to respect the laws and regulations of the receiving state. This principle is expressly stated in both the VCDR and the VCCR.

In addition, the receiving state has the right to declare any accredited person to be *persona non grata* (PNG) at any time and without stating a reason. When declared PNG, a person has a certain period of time to depart the country before being divested of all privileges and immunities. Failing such departure, the person faces any pending legal actions (civil or criminal) with only the defenses available to an ordinary citizen. In extreme cases, the receiving state will designate a very short time within which departure must take place or even formally expel the person.

The PNG procedure is sometimes employed for purely political purposes. It is also used by the host state to require the departure of diplomatic personnel who have committed serious crimes or who have shown themselves to be generally disrespectful of local law. Family members may not be declared PNG since their privileges and immunities are derivative, stemming from their status as family members. However, if the departure of a family member is desired, it is common practice to declare the sponsor PNG, thereby divesting the entire family of protected status. The PNG procedure is harsh and abrupt, but receiving states do not hesitate to use it in addressing unacceptable behavior.

Furthermore, immunity from the criminal jurisdiction of the receiving state is not a pardon of criminal behavior; it simply creates a bar to the exercise of jurisdiction over the individual for the behavior by the receiving state for the period during which the individual has diplomatic status. Diplomatic immunity continues after the termination of diplomatic status only in respect to acts relating to the exercise of diplomatic functions by the employee. A person with diplomatic privileges and immunities who commits a crime may, after the completion of that tour, have to be concerned

with extradition attempts by the country where the crime was committed or with the existence of an outstanding warrant for arrest that effectively bars return to the country in question.

The assertion of diplomatic immunity by U.S. diplomats, consular officials, and family members abroad, even in routine cases, does not occur without visibility in the embassy and the Department of State. To illustrate, a teenage diplomatic dependent is apprehended in an act of vandalism, identifies him or herself as a person who enjoys diplomatic immunity, and is thus released. Within a short time, the local authorities will bring the incident to the attention of the host country foreign ministry that will in turn send a note to (or, in extreme cases, call in) the U.S. ambassador to remind them in pointed terms of the duty of all diplomatic personnel to respect the law of the host state and to ask that all necessary steps be taken to prevent such occurrences in the future. Sometimes the host country will ask for a waiver of immunity. The ambassador may feel obliged to apologize personally to the victims of such activity. Involvement of the embassy's front office will almost certainly prove embarrassing to the employee and the family involved.

The Department of State, as a matter of policy, directs that personnel at posts abroad pay their traffic fines promptly, regardless of whatever privileges and immunities they enjoy. The Department of State instructs its personnel abroad to drive safely and comply with local traffic laws, and considers attempts to "hide behind immunity" inappropriate.

Department of State regulations prohibit diplomatic or consular personnel from taking advantage of their privileges and immunities for improper objectives or to evade the settlement of just obligations. Violations of this prohibition would almost certainly have a negative effect on the individual's career.

The best approach when you are serving at a post abroad is to study the local customs and commercial practices carefully and pursue the same "good citizen" style of life followed at home. If you nonetheless run afoul of the law of the host country, privileges and immunities provide some degree of protection, as explained above.



CHAPTER 9

FSI TRANSITION CENTER



TRANSITION CENTER RESOURCES

The Foreign Service Institute's Transition Center serves U.S. government employees and family members of all foreign affairs agencies assigned to diplomatic posts abroad. The Transition Center mission is to prepare the Department of State community for competence and success in U.S. foreign affairs through transition training, resources, and information. Our vision is a resilient foreign affairs community that successfully manages repeated career transitions and stands ready to execute U.S. foreign policy goals across a full career span.

Values Statement

We are people focused.

We are innovators.

We empower.

We care.

Goals

- Establish realistic expectations for life at post for all community members by providing relevant training, resources, and support.
- Increase the resilience of individuals and communities for a more engaged, productive, and durable foreign affairs workforce.
- Provide post specific and logistics information with specialized support and curated materials accessible to the entire foreign affairs community.
- Increase employee engagement and retention by offering training and counseling for career transitions and retirement.
- Enable leading-edge programs by equipping divisions with necessary staff, resources, and data analytics.

The Transition Center consists of four components: the Overseas Briefing Center (OBC), Training (TC/T), Career Transition Center (CTC), and the Center of Excellence in Foreign Affairs Resilience (CEFAR).

OVERSEAS BRIEFING CENTER

Are you in the process of bidding on an overseas assignment or returning from overseas to the United States? The Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) offers a family-friendly place to research potential posts and find out more about the foreign affairs lifestyle. OBC staff collect, curate, and create resources from a wide variety of Department offices, including the [Global Community Liaison Office](#), the Office of Allowances, the Bureau of Medical Services, the Office of Overseas Schools, and offices at missions abroad including the community liaison office, the general services office, and the global talent management office. Bidding research materials are available in-Center and on the OBC's Post Info to Go websites (intranet, internet, and pass-worded dedicated internet network).

The Overseas Briefing Center responds to the needs of the foreign affairs community, serving all federal agencies that send personnel to a U.S. mission abroad. OBC staff members have many years of

overseas embassy/consulate experience and a strong commitment to outstanding customer service. Stop by, call, or email with any questions related to serving at a U.S. mission overseas or a domestic assignment.

OBC is located on the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) campus at the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC) in Arlington, VA. OBC staff are available via email during regular office hours, 8:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday – Friday. Foreign affairs personnel wishing to schedule an on-campus or Zoom consultation to discuss bidding and assignments or the logistics of an international move may email the OBC at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov. Tel.: (703) 302-7277 and (703) 302-7276.

Also see Chapter 10 - Bidding and Post Research. The following is an overview of information found in the OBC and on their websites.

Expert Assistance

Consultations with OBC staff are available on a walk-in basis, by appointment, or through phone, video conferencing, and email. OBC has subject matter experts available during office hours to answer your questions regarding post research, planning and preparing for your overseas or domestic assignment, and the foreign affairs lifestyle.

Post Info to Go (PITG)

Post Info to Go (PITG) is an online collection of documents and information stored in a database on the OBC intranet and on the password-protected website Post Info to Go - External. Post-specific information on a full spectrum of key topics includes:

- Spouse employment
- Housing
- Schooling and childcare options
- Consumables and/or hard-to-find items
- Medical facilities
- Vehicles
- Pet shipping, including quarantine and import restrictions
- Post welcome materials
- Customs and shipping details
- Visa requirements
- Accessibility and disability concerns
- Personal insights from those living at post
- Post videos, including the popular KidVid program

The Post Info to Go websites also include tools that allow bidders to view specific allowances and other criteria that play a role in the bidding process.

The Post Info to Go database is available on the Department of State intranet. For eligible family members (EFMs) and employees from the inter-agency foreign affairs community (without Department of State intranet access), Post Info to Go is available on a password-protected website. This platform is known as Post Info to Go – External. For access, email PostInfoToGoExternal@state.gov and provide name, post, agency, employee sponsor name, and the employee sponsor's government email address. All requests are subject to verification.

Electronic copies of Post info to Go documents are also available by request. Email FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov with your name and agency affiliation.

Personal Post Insights (PPIs)

Personal Post Insights (PPIs) are surveys about life at post filled out by people currently living at or recently returned from post. Submissions are anonymous, the opinions honest, and the text is unedited by OBC (with the caveat that all names are deleted). The purpose of PPIs is to help colleagues with the realities of life at post. PPIs also cover 34 domestic posts.

Post Bidding Considerations

The Post Bidding Considerations matrix database, which is integrated with Post Info to Go, is an easy-to-use reference. An OBC staff member updates this portfolio of information every 2 weeks. The Post Bidding Considerations matrix allows bidders to view specific allowances and other criteria that play a role in bidding decisions, including:

- Cost of Living Allowance (COLA)
- Post Differential
- Danger Pay
- Equity (State Department first and second tours only)
- EFM Accompaniment Restrictions
- Consumables Allowance
- Service Needs Differential
- Historically Difficult to Staff
- Tour of Duty Length
- Number of R&Rs
- R&R Point
- Post Locality Type
- Education Allowance

Bidders can also mark up to 10 posts as “favorites” and compare the criteria of three posts at a time, side by side.

Post Videos and KidVids

The Overseas Briefing Center has over 150 post videos, made by employees and family members living overseas. The KidVid collection adds to the post videos, covering life at posts around the world from a kid’s perspective. Post videos can be viewed on the Post Info to Go websites.

Pet Shipping and Import/Export Requirements

Traveling to an overseas post or returning to the United States with a pet? The Overseas Briefing Center’s pet shipping resources provide helpful information regarding airline restrictions and layovers between flights, country-specific import and quarantine restrictions, a pet shipping checklist, information on United States Department of Agriculture/Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA/APHIS) requirements, the Department’s Pet Tracker, vet care at post, and other considerations. Check Post Info to Go websites for an entire area devoted to pets.

Ready Set Travel App

Preparing for an international move and keeping track of all the details takes considerable time. Organize your tasks with the Transition Center’s Ready Set Travel app. The app generates a personalized to do list and adds items directly to cell phone calendars for employees who are heading overseas. You can enter your expected date of departure and the app will generate a checklist organized in increments of time - months, weeks and days before leaving for the next assignment. You can also customize the list and check off tasks as completed. In addition to organizing pre-departure planning, the app provides links to online resources and resilience tips to encourage and support individuals during their transition. Employees and family members may download Ready Set Travel through the APP store ([iPhone](#) and [Android](#).)

Cultural Guides and Cross-Cultural Reference Books

OBC subscribes to CultureGrams, an internet-based ProQuest product, which offers country-specific culture information in a world report edition, a kid’s edition, and U.S. states edition. Content is also accessible in audio format. Employees and family members can email the Overseas Briefing Center at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov for the username and password. The Overseas Briefing Center holdings also include books on topics relevant to transitioning overseas and adjusting to life at a new post. A series of cultural books are available in the center. These resources may be checked out for a three-day period.

Publications

The Transition Center and the Overseas Briefing Center maintain publications such as the [Foreign Service Assignment Notebook](#) (FSAN), a [Guided Children's Journal](#) (for understanding the moving experience), and [Protocol for the Modern Diplomat](#). Publications are available on Transition Center websites.

OBC Handouts

The OBC has an evolving collection of over 100 handouts, resource sheets, and checklists on topics such as planning your pack out, traveling with pets, personal documents such as wills, financial planning, insurance, and more. All handouts can be obtained in the center and online. Employees and family members may also contact OBC staff at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov to request handouts on a wide variety of topics.

Domestic Assignments

For those returning to the United States, OBC maintains information on 34 domestic locations. Information is available on the OBC websites. Personal Post Insights are also available for domestic assignments.

Washington, DC Metro Area Resources

The OBC maintains information aimed at helping employees and family members transition back to the United States and to help with adjusting to the United States for the very first time. In particular, OBC offers short-term housing and hotel information, childcare resources, a welcome to Washington resource guide, and information on returning to the United States with pets. These resources are available in the center, on the OBC websites, and under the [Domestic Assignments](#) information on the Transition Center internet website.

TRAINING DIVISION

The Transition Center's Training Division offers employees and their families training and preparation for a safe and fulfilling foreign affairs community experience, with specific attention paid to the various transitions common within the community. Comprehensive life skills training begins with presentations and courses targeting those new to foreign affairs life. Most courses are open to anyone in the foreign affairs community; however, some courses are designed specifically for spouses/partners, while others focus on children's concerns. In addition to [foreign affairs life skills training](#), the Training Division also facilitates a series of [personal security awareness courses](#) to prepare all community members for living and working overseas. Whether new to the international

lifestyle or a seasoned globetrotter, the Transition Center's Training Division offers courses and webinars that meet the needs of employees and family members. For course descriptions and schedules, visit the [Transition Center](#) internet website.

Foreign Affairs Life Skills (FALS) courses build your skills and confidence to thrive in the foreign affairs community. They are designed to give you the most up-to-date information on key topics affecting Foreign Service life, help you manage frequent changes and build personal resilience. Whether you are fine-tuning your cross-cultural communication skills, learning about overseas school options for your children, or exploring family member employment possibilities, taking FALS classes will prepare you to hit the ground running at your new post.

FALS courses not only give you what you need to thrive in the foreign affairs lifestyle, they also create opportunities to meet other people going through similar transitions. The people you meet in class understand what you are going through in a way other family and friends may not and they often become friends you stay connected to throughout your career in the Foreign Service.

Foreign Affairs Life Skills

[Preparing for Foreign Service Life](#) courses and webinars prepare employees and family members for the many nuanced realities of the Foreign Service life, covering topics such as communicating across cultures, protocol, traveling with pets, personal resilience, moving logistics, and regulations and allowances.

[Employment for Family Members](#) courses and webinars explore options for family member employment overseas, preparing for an international job search, working in international development, and building a portable career.

[Personal and Financial Planning](#) courses and webinars address the challenging aspects as a foreign affairs community member in managing your rental property from overseas, managing personal finances, relevant legal considerations, and filing taxes.

[Foreign Affairs Families and Children](#) courses address the challenges of raising children abroad, including encouraging resilience, raising bilingual children, and special needs education.

[Summer Youth Program](#) is a two-day program that introduces young family members in grades 2 - 12 to the world of diplomacy. The program explores the realities of living overseas as an American, safety and security threats children might face in an overseas environment, and tools needed to protect themselves.

[Going Overseas Logistics](#) involves both psychological and practical preparation for adults and children. Six courses introduce all ages to the impact and logistics of an impending international move.

Webinars - Many Life Skills courses are offered as webinars, at no cost to the student. For a complete listing, visit the [Transition Center's Courses and Webinars by Date](#) website.

Security Overseas Seminars

[Security Overseas Seminar \(SOS\)](#) - This two-day security seminar is designed to prepare U.S. government personnel and their families to identify safety and security risks overseas. Subject matter experts offer information and guidance on a range of security and safety topics, including: personal security, cybersecurity, environmental hazards, fire safety, counterintelligence, weapons of mass destruction, evacuation planning, and crisis management. SOS is required for U.S. government employees working under chief of mission and highly recommended for family members over the age of 18.

[Basic Personal Defense](#) - This interactive two and a half-hour course introduces participants to basic personal defense skills needed for overseas living. Security experts will discuss how to recognize and deter possible physical threats and, how to defend oneself if the threat escalates to a physical confrontation. Participants will practice sound defense tactics demonstrated by qualified instructors.

Youth Basic Personal Defense - This course is designed to introduce teenagers to personal defense skills needed for overseas living. Security experts will discuss how to recognize physical threats and how to defend oneself if the threat escalates to a physical confrontation. Participants will practice sound defense tactics demonstrated by the instructors.

[Courses for Selected Groups](#) - The security awareness portfolio also includes classes for personnel from the private sector, IO/NGO, and the community of study abroad administrators.

Free Online Internet Resources

- [Overseas Crisis Readiness](#)
- [So You're an American? A Guide to Answering Difficult Question Abroad](#)

CAREER TRANSITION CENTER

The [Career Transition Center](#) (CTC) provides training, counseling, and other assistance to U.S. citizen employees of the Department of State and other federal foreign affairs agencies who are leaving U.S. government service. Classes are listed below. Employees may enroll in RV 101, RV 103, RV 104, or RV 105 more than one time during their career. Spouses/partners may attend RV 101, RV 103, RV 104, and RV 105 on a space-available basis.

Three Flagship Programs

- [Retirement Planning Seminar](#) (RV 101) - four-day seminar that includes the one-day workshops RV 103 and RV 104
- [Job Search Program](#) (RV 102)
- [Mid-Career Retirement Planning Seminar](#) (RV 105) - two day

One-Day Workshops

- [Financial Management and Estate Planning](#) (RV 103)
- [Annuities, Benefits, and Social Security](#) (RV 104)

The CTC also provides:

- Employees may enroll in RV 101, 103, 104, or 105 more than one time during their career.
- Spouses or partners may attend RV 101, 103, 104, 105 on a space-available basis.
- Posting of job leads for employers; job seekers may subscribe to the posting service.
- Three job fairs per year, in conjunction with the Job Search Program (RV 102). Private sector and non-profit employers as well as federal agencies participate in the fairs.
- Volunteer Fair in the Job Search Program with approximately 20 volunteer organizations.

More information about the Career Transition Center, including course dates and registration information can be found on the [CTC's](#) website.

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS RESILIENCE

The Center of Excellence in Foreign Affairs Resilience (CEFAR) provides resilience training, education, and support for U.S. government foreign affairs agencies. Resilience is the ability to adapt and manage change effectively, be creative in the midst of change, and foster individual, family, community, and workplace team resilience in healthy productive ways.

CEFAR aspires to create a foreign affairs culture where resilience is modeled by senior leaders, mid-level managers, and all members of the workforce, regardless of hiring mechanism. Diplomacy in the 21st century demands effective, creative, and innovative foreign policy solutions. The United States needs an engaged, flexible, and durable work force to safeguard our national interests. Resilience, the ability to adapt in the face of adversity, is the key. Within the next ten years, a supportive inspired and nimble workforce will formulate and implement more creative and effective diplomatic solutions.

Through resilience training, members of the foreign affairs community can learn more about building personal, team, and community resilience, resilience leadership, pre-deployment preparation for high stress assignments, and encouraging resilience in their children.

Also see Chapter 06 – Resilience for the Foreign Affairs Community.

Six courses are available through CEFAR, including:

- Encouraging Resilience in your Foreign Affairs Child (MQ500)
- Building Your Resilience in the Foreign Service (MQ502)
- Resilience Leadership (MQ503)
- Resilience Preparation for High Stress Assignments (MQ940)
- High Stress Assignment Outbrief (MQ950)

For course dates and registration, visit the [CEFAR's website](#).

SECTION 2

BIDDING CONSIDERATIONS





SECTION 2



CHAPTER 10

BIDDING AND POST RESEARCH



The bidding and post research process is a critical part of the foreign affairs lifestyle. Overseas postings with the Department of State (DOS) typically range from two to three years (with shorter tours in high threat posts and occasional longer tours if extensions are granted). Typically, the first two tours for new DOS employees are “directed assignments” for a length of two years each. The length of a tour with other agencies can vary and be significantly longer in some cases.

Researching various aspects of a post helps to determine whether the assignment will be a good fit for you and your family. Being well-informed about the realities of life in any given country allows you to

make educated decisions about your bidding strategy and ultimately increases the probability of a positive experience for you as you consider an onward assignment.

The Transition Center (TC) at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) offers a comprehensive set of resources aimed at helping employees and their family members achieve these goals. The Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) has a wealth of post-specific information and resources to help employees and their family members make informed bidding choices. Equally important, the Training Division offers classes and webinars that provide knowledge about the foreign affairs lifestyle, regulations and allowances, a child's experience, spouse and family employment, and other factors of importance.

For more information about TC resources and offerings, and access to these resources, see Chapter 09 – Transition Center Resources.

THE OVERSEAS BRIEFING CENTER

Bidding Resources in the Overseas Briefing Center

The variety of informational tools available through the OBC can assist you in answering questions about specific embassies and consulates, logistics for household effects and personal vehicles, housing at post, local technology, pet shipping, community groups and educational resources, relocation allowances, and adaptation guides and advice. The OBC also offers checklists and apps to help organize an upcoming move. Access to OBC staff and resources is available to all foreign affairs employees and their family members assigned to or returning from a U.S. mission overseas.

Post Info to Go

The OBC's Post Info to Go databases provide post-specific documents compiled from some 270 posts worldwide. Members of the management team at overseas missions, including the community liaison office (CLO) coordinators, work closely with the OBC to submit and update their post documents throughout the year.

Post Info to Go documents cover a variety of topics pertaining to life at post to help bidders make informed decisions. Core Post Info to Go documents include:

- Welcome to Post assignment cables
- Pet surveys, including information about quarantine and import restrictions
- Welcome information from U.S. mission community liaison office
- Suggested consumables lists, if appropriate, or suggested items to bring to post
- Schooling and childcare information
- Housing handbooks and photos of housing interiors

- Technology surveys
- Disability and accessibility survey Commissary and recreation survey
- Cultural information
- Welcome notes from global employment advisors (GEAs)

Additional resources include air quality, local and community activities, travel opportunities, kid's programs, and additional adaptation resources. The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) provides the Family Member Employment Report (FAMER) and the Overseas Childcare Report for each post. The OBC adds the official Post Report and other documents provided by Washington offices.

Also available from Post Info to Go are Personal Post Insights, post videos and KidVids, the Post Bidding Considerations matrix, a comprehensive pet shipping database, and links to such important tools as the Bureau of Medical Services Air Quality Hub. See Chapter 09 – Transition Center Resources for a complete listing.

CONDUCTING POST RESEARCH WITHOUT DEPARTMENT OF STATE INTRANET ACCESS

The OBC offers Post Info to Go – External, a passworded website providing OBC bidding and assignments research materials for eligible family members and the inter-agency foreign affairs community (without Department of State intranet access). Request access by emailing PostInfoToGoExternal@state.gov and provide name, post, agency, employee sponsor name, and the employee sponsor's government email address. All requests will be verified with the employee sponsor and agency.

Request Information by Email

OBC staff responds to requests to email Post Info to Go documents, Personal Post Insights, or any other OBC resource to interagency personnel or family members who are unable to access these materials online. Contact the OBC at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov to request materials or call OBC at (703) 302-7277.

Visit and Connect with the OBC Staff

OBC is located on the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) campus at the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC) in Arlington, VA. OBC staff are available via email during regular office hours, 8:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday – Friday. Foreign affairs personnel wishing to schedule an on-campus or Zoom consultation to discuss bidding and assignments or the logistics of an

international move may email the OBC at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov. Tel.: (703) 302-7277 and (703) 302-7276.

RESEARCHING SPECIALIZED TOPICS

Beyond post-specific information, the OBC has a wealth of material on specialized topics that may influence your bidding or you may wish to study after being assigned to a post.

Pets: Shipping and Import/Export Requirements

The OBC has compiled extensive resources on traveling with pets. The OBC has an entire section on the Post Info to Go websites devoted to this topic, and has put together country information on import restrictions and quarantines. Two OBC handouts are essential for pet owners: *Worldwide Pet Import and Quarantine Restrictions Chart* and the *Shipping Pets Checklist: For Dogs and Cats*. Find them online or ask the OBC for copies by emailing FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.

Spouse Employment: Resources and Support Services

The OBC provides handouts and resources for those interested in family member employment at overseas posts. The Global Community Liaison Office, as the primary point of contact for employment questions relating to eligible family members and members of household, provides the Overseas Briefing Center with the Family Member Employment Report (FAMER). The FAMER provides a snapshot of the employment situation inside and outside the mission for job seekers preparing for an overseas assignment at a particular post. The report also describes the working environment on the local economy and identifies whether a bilateral work agreement or de facto work arrangement exists. GCLO also manages the Global Employment Initiative (GEI), with some 20 global employment advisors (GEAs) who help family members explore employment and professional development options while posted overseas. GEAs provide on-site and virtual employment coaching sessions, training workshops, and career development services at no cost to eligible family members and members of household. GEAs are important connectors for family members who are exploring the local employment landscape. Information on the GEI program can be found on the GCLO's [Global Employment Initiative](#) website.

The OBC provides selected family member employment handouts. For more detailed information on family member employment, see Chapter 11 – Family Member Appointment.

Researching Overseas Schools

The OBC has information on schools around the world, including school fact sheets from the Office of Overseas Schools (OOS). The Post Info to Go websites also contain post-specific schooling information.

To begin your research, find out whether the specific posts you are considering have schools supported by the Department of State's Office of Overseas Schools. These schools are called “assisted schools.” The Department of State assists over 190 overseas schools through direct and indirect support programs designed to promote an American-style program. Fact sheets are available on the Office of Overseas Schools' [Schools Worldwide](#) website.

You may wish to investigate alternative or additional educational options. At some posts, there may be more than one school option for children, in addition to the “assisted school” choice. While these other schools may not have official endorsement from the Department of State, their curriculum or services may better meet your child’s needs or parent preferences and may still merit consideration. A parent may use the designated post education allowance for any school of their choice. Check post-specific education information at the Overseas Briefing Center, and take a look at the Office of Overseas Schools website for the [complete listing of assisted and non-assisted schools](#). These are more extensive, multi-page reports produced by the Office of Overseas Schools.

The Office of Overseas Schools is staffed with a director and six regional education officers (REOs), each assigned oversight of a geographic region. REOs are well-informed about schools attended by U. S. citizen school-age dependent children. Visit their site for a listing of REOs who may be of assistance when determining if a school is able to meet your child’s educational needs, including for children needing more specialized educational support.

Be sure to research special needs education resources, if needed. Facilities and school programs vary greatly from post to post. To determine if specific posts offer adequate opportunities for your special needs child, consult with the Bureau of Medical Services Child & Family Program at MEDCFP@state.gov. They coordinate post approval and medical/educational clearance recommendations for children with special needs, in coordination with the Medical Clearance Division in Washington, D.C. and overseas medical providers.

The Bureau of Medical Services’ Medical Clearance Preview tool (available on the DOS intranet) can be used for informational purposes only and provide medical capabilities information related to special needs services at post. You may also contact the overseas health unit staff at the posts you are considering for their guidance.

For more information on schools, see Chapter 12 – Education for Foreign Service Children.

LGBTQI+ Considerations

Legal conditions surrounding same-sex relationships vary throughout the world. For this reason, LGBTQI+ bidders will want to conduct additional research. It is important to thoroughly investigate LGBTQI+ experiences at individual posts, as well as the accreditation process for any same-sex spouses intending to accompany the employee. Bidders with questions about issues affecting LGBTQI+ families overseas should contact their career development officer (CDO) in the Bureau of Global Talent Management/Career Development and Assignments.

The Overseas Briefing Center maintains a handout outlining Department of State and interagency resources for the LGBTQI+ community.

For more information on same-sex spouses or partners, please see Chapter 2 - Spouses, Same-Sex Couples and the LGBTQI+ Community, and Members of Household.

Medical Information: Country Information and Contact Offices

Health-related issues in each country are often a major concern. Factors that could affect your health include climate, altitude, locally prevalent infectious diseases, sanitation, security issues, pollution, and more. Travel health and immunization clinics, managed by the Bureau of Medical Services, provide health information and recommended immunizations that are specific to U.S. diplomatic missions overseas. Please schedule an appointment with one of the Department of State's clinics, located at HST, SA-1, and FSI (SA-42) as soon as you are aware of your destination.

The Bureau of Medical Services provides The Air Quality Hub, with a dedicated Air Quality and Bidding tool. Available to staff and families for bidding on and preparing for overseas assignments, the interactive tool shows air quality patterns in post cities and resources at post or in the city to reduce air pollution exposures and health risks. The Air Quality Hub is available on the Department of State intranet and via OBC's Post Info to Go – External website.

The Bureau of Medical Services also offers online access to post health unit handbooks and recommended immunizations on the Internet through [Travax](#). To access Travax, email FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov to receive the username and password.

Tandem Couples

Tandem couples are defined as two individual Foreign Service officers who are married to each other. As such, their bidding challenge is often to find two positions at the same post that align with their job aspirations and family circumstances. The Career Development and Assignments (CDA) office within the Department of State Bureau of Global Talent Management has a tandem coordinator.

There is also a helpful blog called “The Foreign Service Mid-Level Toolkit” (available on the DOS intranet) which contains tandem bidding information.

Allowances and Post Data

Many families research factors such as the allowances afforded to them when considering a post. These post allowances and factors may include cost of living allowance (COLA), post hardship differential, danger pay, family member restrictions (for instance only adult family members over the age of 21 can go to post), the size of the mission community at post, consumables shipments, the length of tour, the number of rest and recuperation (R&R) opportunities and R&R points, and whether the post has an “away from post” educational allowance higher than the “at post” allowance (to allow for the boarding school option).

This data is available through the Post Info to Go websites. OBC’s Post Bidding Considerations Tool allows you to compare three posts side by side, looking at all these factors on one screen. This tool also allows you to sort the data.

RESEARCHING BEYOND THE OBC

The Overseas Briefing Center provides much of the information that may be of interest to bidders and strives to ensure its timeliness, relevancy, and accuracy. Once you have reviewed the relevant documents and post videos, you can also consider taking advantage of a variety outside resources.

Post Community

After narrowing down choices, bidders often contact the community of people currently at post. The community liaison office (CLO) coordinator is responsible for providing the Overseas Briefing Center with some of the information made available through Post Info to Go. The CLO, in their role to handle welcoming and orientation to post, is in an ideal position to answer any specific questions you may have regarding schooling and childcare, spouse employment, availability of goods, housing, and general lifestyle consideration for the length of your projected tour. The management and general services (MGT/GSO) offices can also be helpful resources for post-specific logistics questions, and the incumbent in your upcoming position may be willing to share some insight about the job responsibilities and other particulars about life at post.

Before arrival, the community liaison office may assign a post sponsor to you and your family. This person can also provide insights and a wealth of knowledge for your transition to post.

Government Libraries and Document Collections

There are many government libraries and document collections that have supplemental and complementary resources related to those found in the Overseas Briefing Center. The OBC can provide assistance in identifying and accessing additional resources for your particular questions or situation.

Diplopedia Post Reports

Post Reports are “guides to U.S. diplomatic posts and the cities and countries that host them. They include local conditions about the host country and in many ways are a "catch all" summary of life at post. They are useful not only to those recently assigned to, bidding on or about to complete a temporary duty (TDY) at a post, but are also helpful to anyone wishing to learn more about a country and, in particular, U.S. presence in that country.

Post Reports may be accessed through the Post Info to Go websites or emailed to you by request at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.

The Department of State’s Ralph J. Bunche Library

The Department of State’s Ralph J. Bunche Library has put together databases and resources that might be useful in researching country information. Note: To access the material on some databases, it may be necessary to have access to the Department of State intranet or a library account. Sample databases include:

- [CIRI Human Rights Data Project](#) - Contains standards-based quantitative information on government respect for 15 internationally recognized human rights for 202 countries, annually from 1981-2011.
- [Countries and Their Cultures](#) - A book that presents the cultural similarities within a country that set it apart from others by examining over 200 countries to document the myriad ways in which culture defines and separates the nations of the world as much as geographical borders do.
- [Country Watch](#) - An information provider for corporations, government agencies, universities, schools, libraries and individuals needing up-to-date news and information on each of the recognized countries of the world.
- [Economist Intelligence Unit](#) - Country, risk, and industry analysis from The Economist.
- [Europa World Plus](#) - Online version of the Europa World Year Book and the nine-volume Europa Regional Surveys of the World series. First published in 1926, the year book covers political and economic information in more than 250 countries and territories.

- [International Crisis Group](#) - An independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to preventing and resolving deadly conflict.
- [Rulers \(of the World\)](#) - Lists of heads of state and heads of government (and, in certain cases, de facto leaders not occupying either of those formal positions) of all countries and territories, going back to about 1700.
- [Statesman's Yearbook](#) - Information on all 194 countries in the world plus states and dependencies, covering key historical events, population, politics, economics, trade and infrastructure.
- [World Atlas](#) - Search thousands of maps, flags, articles, and statistics in the interactive World Atlas from the Encyclopedia Britannica. Choose from political, physical, and other maps as you drill down from continents to countries, states, and cities.
- [World Constitutions Illustrated](#) - Comprehensive, searchable listings of country constitutions worldwide.
- [World Religion Database](#) - Contains detailed statistics on religious affiliation for every country of the world and provides source material, including censuses and surveys, as well as best estimates for every religion to offer a picture of international religious demography.

The Stephen Low Information Center at the Foreign Service Institute

The FSI Information Center's collection comprises diverse subject-matter areas with emphasis in the fields of international relations, area studies, political science, cross-cultural communications, employment and transition, training design and development, foreign language studies and second language acquisition.

Staff at the Information Center are always happy to help bidders find resources of interest. The Information Center is available on the Department of State intranet. Contact the Information Center at InformationCenter@state.gov or by calling (703) 302-7119.

The following Internet-accessible resources have been suggested by staff at the FSI Information Center as potentially helpful to bidders:

- [CIA World Factbook](#) - Information on the history, people, government, economy, energy, geography, communications, transportation, military, and transnational issues for 267 world entities.
- [CountryReports.org](#) - Over 35,000 pages of online content on the cultures and countries of the world.

- [Department of State Office of the Historian](#) - Browse official documents from the published Foreign Relations of the United States series. The Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series presents the official documentary historical record of major U.S. foreign policy decisions and significant diplomatic activity.
- [Hathi Trust Open Access Digital Library](#) - A partnership of academic & research institutions, offering a collection of millions of titles digitized from libraries around the world.
- [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#) - Offers economic and financial information on countries worldwide, as well as statistical datasets and scholarly publications.
- [OverDrive](#) - It's easy and it's mobile! Access ebooks, audiobooks, and video from your PC or mobile device.
- [PressReader](#) - An all-you-can-read digital newsstand with access to thousands of international newspapers and magazines in over 60 languages. For access to PressReader contact informationcenter@state.gov.
- [Travel.state.gov](#) - The official site of the Bureau of Consular Affairs. Information for U.S. citizens traveling and living abroad.
- [UNData](#) - United Nations data on crime, education, energy, the environment, finance, food and agriculture, gender, health, HIV/AIDS, human development, information technology, population, refugees, tourism, trade, and more.
- [World Bank](#) - Offers economic information for countries worldwide as well as statistical datasets and scholarly publications.

Government Resources

- [Air Quality](#) - Find data on air quality in specific locations
- [Foreign Affairs Offices and Organizations](#)
- [Health Information for Foreign Countries](#) - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention travel health information
- [Inspector General Reports](#) - Inspection reports summarizing the main tasks and challenges (not available for all countries)
- [International U.S. Commercial Service Offices](#)
- [Library of Congress Country Studies](#) - Description and analysis of the historical setting and the social, economic, political, and national security systems and institutions of selected countries
- [Overseas Security Advisory Council](#) - Global security news and reports
- [Peace Corps](#) - Find out what it's like to be a volunteer from the people who know best – the volunteers themselves
- [Post Classification and Payment Tables](#) - Allowances and differentials by country
- [Travel Advisories and Consular Information Sheets](#) - Summaries of dangers, areas of instability, health concerns, crime, and unusual currency or entry requirements

- [United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#) - Locations and overviews for country-specific programs
- [Websites of U.S. Embassies, Consulates, and Diplomatic Missions](#)
- ZephAir - mobile app with real-time air quality data from the Department's air quality monitors at U.S. embassies and consulates around the world. Available for download in [Apple App](#) and [Google Play](#) stores.

Non-Government Resources

- [Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide](#) - This organization connects the U.S. diplomatic community at home and abroad with resources and support programs. Their site hosts useful articles about overseas life in general. AAFSW's *LiveLines* email group (livelines@groups.io) offers 24/7 answers to questions about posts for those who have passed the Foreign Service exam or are already members of the U.S. foreign affairs community.
- [International Chambers of Commerce: The World Business Organization \(ICC\)](#) - provides a forum for businesses and other organizations to examine and understand the nature and significance of the major shifts taking place in the world economy.
- [Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training \(ADST\)](#) - Provides a collection of oral history interviews of foreign affairs practitioners. They also house a [Country and Subject Reader Series](#), which provides a chronological, historical overview through a series of oral interviews regarding a particular country or policy subject.
- [Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas \(FAWCO\)](#) - international network of independent volunteer clubs and associations.
- [Foreign Service Youth Foundation \(FSYF\)](#) - supports children, teens and families affiliated with U.S. foreign affairs agencies and strives to help young people adapt to their changing environments and make the most of their Foreign Service experiences.
- [glifaa - LGBT+ in Foreign Affairs Agencies](#) - glifaa membership consists of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and straight employees of U.S. diplomatic agencies.
- [GlobalEDGDE](#) - Country data resources from the Michigan State University for global business knowledge.
- [LangMedia](#) - Language and Cultural resources (including video and audio materials) for selected countries.



CHAPTER 11

FAMILY MEMBER EMPLOYMENT



Family members seeking employment overseas find their prospects both rewarding and challenging at the same time. Depending on the assignment, family members may have the option of working inside the U.S. mission, on the local economy overseas, teleworking, or creating their own work opportunity as an entrepreneur (self-employed). Those who are Civil Service employees may be able to take their position with them to post, if the position is eligible for a Department Employee Teleworking Overseas (DETO) agreement. Whichever path a family member chooses, being flexible and open to exploring new work opportunities is recommended as it may not be possible to find employment in their chosen career path, with salaries comparable to the United States.

It is essential to explore all options, take advantage of available resources, and gain an understanding of the employment environment as you prepare for each assignment. And it is important to understand your unique position within the foreign affairs community and consider how best to maximize the opportunities available at each post for a meaningful and rewarding work experience overseas. This chapter outlines the services and resources available that support employment for the internationally-mobile family member.

THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

The [Global Community Liaison Office \(GCLO\)](#) is the primary point of contact for foreign affairs eligible family members (EFMs) and members of household (MOHs) seeking assistance with employment options. GCLO provides job search guidance for overseas opportunities and for a return to the Washington, DC area. GCLO also offers online resources and assistance through the following:

- [Family Member Employment Report \(FAMER\)](#) - published twice annually, these post-specific reports show the number of adult family members employed inside a U.S. embassy or consulate overseas, as well as those working on the local economy of their host country, teleworking, or self-employed.
- Functional and other training information for family members.
- Employment briefings through courses offered at the Foreign Service Institute and at other agencies.
- Individual employment advising.
- Information on Department of State EFM employment programs.
- Information on bilateral work agreements and *de facto* work arrangements.
- [The Global Employment Initiative \(GEI\)](#) - provides employment coaching and helps family members with resume development and interviewing skills.

The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) maintains extensive information about family member employment on their internet website. If you need further information after viewing the information online, GCLO answers employment questions via their [employment email inbox](#). Review the following web pages for more detailed information:

- [GCLO's internet page for family member employment](#)
- [Employment Inside the Mission](#)
- [Employment Outside the Mission](#)
- [Portable Career Resources](#) (telework and self-employment)
- [Strategic Volunteering](#)
- [Returning to the United States](#)

- [Global Employment Initiative](#)
- [Training Resources for Family Members](#)
- [Family Member Employment FAQs](#)

TYPES OF OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT

Overseas employment for family members includes work inside the U.S. mission and employment outside the mission, which includes working on the local economy, telework, and self-employment options. Employment options vary from post to post.

Opportunities Inside the U.S. Mission

Employment within a U.S. mission may be with the Department of State or other U.S. government agencies. U.S. government salaries, regardless of the hiring mechanism and overseas location, are taxable, including both U.S. federal and state tax where applicable. Jobs within the mission differ in the hiring mechanisms that define the terms and conditions of employment. Most positions inside the mission pay at an FS-7 or FS-6 grade, with an average salary between \$38,000-40,000 a year. Family members should understand the terms of any federal appointment or employment contract before accepting a position and seek assistance from the human resources office at post if they have any questions.

In addition to the foreign affairs agencies (the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Foreign Agricultural Service, Foreign Commercial Service and U.S. Agency for Global Media), many other federal agencies send employees overseas and may offer employment opportunities. Federal agencies at post have unique needs and may have different authorities under which they may hire personnel. As such, there are [four main hiring mechanisms](#) under which family members may be hired. The factors that determine how a family member is hired depends on the hiring agency, the applicant's family member definition (e.g. U.S. citizen, foreign national or member of household, reference [3 FAM 7121](#)), and the hiring preference granted to the family member type.

Each embassy or consulate has a Post Employment Committee (PEC) that ensures equity and transparency in the selection process for U.S. veterans and eligible family members for positions inside the mission. According to [3 FAM 8200](#), U.S. citizen family members who are deemed qualified according to the vacancy announcement will be given preference over residents or other local nationals. Candidates should understand that the hiring process at post is likely to be competitive and that host country language ability is often a requirement for certain positions.

To learn about vacancies at post, contact post's CLO coordinator and visit post's website for jobs at the embassy or consulate. Many posts now require applications to be submitted through the

Electronic Recruitment Application (ERA) which can be located on the embassy or consulate's webpage.

EFMs who work overseas in a U.S. mission should also familiarize themselves with the [Foreign Service Family Reserve Corps \(FSFRC\)](#). For individuals who meet all the eligibility criteria, FSFRC registration is open several times per year.

Opportunities With Centralized Hiring Programs

In addition to the positions advertised at post, the Department of State has three employment programs that have centrally-managed hiring in coordination with post. These programs can be an additional employment option for family members who meet the eligibility requirements and are assigned to an overseas post. They are:

- [Consular Affairs – Appointment Eligible Family Member \(CA-AEFM\) Program](#)
- [Expanded Professional Associates Program \(EPAP\)](#)
- [Professional Associates Program \(Hard-to-Fill\)](#)

For more information on these programs, visit the GCLO's [Family Member Employment within a U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) website.

Opportunities Outside the U.S. Mission

Pursuing a specific career field when contemplating international moves requires flexibility, networking, preparation, and perseverance. Family members with certifications, advanced training, or experience in a specialized field may find professional work opportunities outside the embassy or consulate. The availability of positions and compensation in a given career field will vary from country to country and generally, compensation is often below U.S. standards.

Prior to undertaking any employment outside the U.S. mission, EFMs and MOHs must notify the chief of mission through the [EFM Employment Outside the Mission Action Memo](#). Confirm the requirements with post's human resources officer (HRO) for guidance.

Working Remotely / Teleworking and Self-Employment

EFMs or MOHs who are presently working in the United States might consider approaching their employers about the possibility of teleworking while overseas. Please see GCLO's [Telework Overseas Guidance for Family Members](#) website for more information.

For family members who are currently employed with the Department of State in a Civil Service position, it may be possible to telework your position from overseas. This is known as the Department Employee Teleworking Overseas (DETO) program. There are several steps for approval. If you are currently employed with another federal agency and interested in taking your position overseas as a teleworker (while an EFM at an embassy or consulate), contact GCLO for more information and guidance.

Operating a home-based business provides another option. Keep in mind that there are tax implications involved with self-employment. It is also important to learn about the local regulations covering self-employment, work permits, and registering the business with local labor authorities. It is worth noting that if self-employment intersects with the local economy (i.e. clients or customers who are not U.S. employees/families at post), the family member will have to secure a work permit.

In addition, family members should secure chief of mission approval before engaging in any employment activity outside the mission, whether it is teaching, consulting, telework or self-employment. Since the family members activities indirectly reflect on the U.S. mission, this step ensures that the activity does not damage the interests of the United States or violate any local laws. While this approval is usually a formality, it is an essential step for any family member exploring work activities outside the mission. Visit GCLO's website for a [copy of this template](#).

RESOURCES AND ASSISTANCE

Family members should familiarize themselves with the following when considering posts on a bid list and researching employment options at any given post worldwide.

Contacts for Post-Specific Employment Information

The Global Community Liaison Office encourages family members to contact the following offices for assistance once they know their post of assignment:

- The community liaison office at post: CLO[name of post]@state.gov
- The human resources officer at post: Email listed in the post's FAMER
- The global employment advisor (GEA): See GCLO's [Global Employment Initiative](#) website for email address

These contacts can help you learn about the local employment landscape. It is advisable to provide your expected arrival date and any information on your professional background including information relevant to future employment at post. Also include a resume and ask for potential open positions and networking referrals.

Global Employment Initiative (GEI)

The Global Community Liaison Office's Global Employment Initiative (GEI) helps family members explore employment and professional development options. Currently, a network of 20 global employment advisors (GEAs) covers more than 200 posts. These employment transition professionals understand the challenges of working overseas and provide on-site and virtual employment coaching sessions, training workshops, and employment development services at no cost to eligible family members and members of household. GEAs cover a variety of topics at posts, including self-employment, via webinars and one-on-one meetings, both in person and remotely.

GEAs can support family members with:

- Advice on both inside and outside the mission employment.
- Preparation of culturally appropriate resumes.
- Tips and practice for interviews.
- Briefings on cross-cultural workplace issues.
- Self-employment, telework, and strategic volunteer options.
- Networking guidance.
- Long-term employment planning and strategy.

If you are interested in working on the local economy at post, contact GCLO at GEI@state.gov to connect with the appropriate Global Employment Advisor for your current or future post and review the information on [GCLO's Global Employment Initiative](#) website.

Family Member Employment Report (FAMER)

The [FAMER](#) provides a snapshot of the employment situation inside and outside the mission for job seekers preparing for an overseas assignment at a particular post. The report also describes the working environment on the local economy and identifies whether a bilateral work agreement or de facto work arrangement exists. If employment at post is a critical factor for you, review the FAMER during the bidding process to understand the options available at different posts. The FAMER also indicates if the post has a bilateral work agreement or defacto work arrangement, including information about securing a work permit for local economy employment. Use the FAMER information to provide you with information on where family members are employed on the local economy and to network with any potential employers listed in the contact section. FAMER documents for specific posts are available through OBC's Post Info to Go and by emailing [GCLO](#).

Bilateral Work Agreements and *De Facto* Work Arrangements

With the mutual agreement of the host government and the U.S. government, family members may find employment on the local economy. The Department of State has bilateral work agreements (BWAs) with more than 120 countries and de facto work arrangements with more than 30 others. BWAs facilitate the work permit process to find employment on the local economy, and HR at post will be available to help with the work permit process. De facto agreements are informal arrangements which usually require more effort on the part of the applicant and employer to obtain employment authorization. A complete listing of work agreements by country, with annotated exceptions, can be found on GCLO's [Bilateral Work Agreements and de facto Work Arrangements](#) website.

Privileges and Immunities

Under the regulations of the Vienna Convention for Diplomatic Relations (VCDR), family members who work on the local economy do not have civil and administrative immunity with respect to matters arising out of their local employment, but retain their criminal immunity. (See [Chapter 08 - Privileges and Immunities](#).) Questions on waiver of diplomatic privileges or immunities related to employment should be directed to the [Global Community Liaison Office](#).

Taxation and Social Security

Working on the local economy subjects family members to local labor laws and host country taxation, possibly including contributions to a social security or national insurance system. Under U.S. tax regulations, such employees may be eligible for overseas earned income exclusion or a foreign tax credit. [Resources on taxation and social security](#) may be found on GCLO's website.

The [American Foreign Service Association](#) produces an annual tax guide which may prove helpful. GCLO strongly advises anyone considering local economy employment to consult a professional tax advisor for guidance.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development Fellowships

GCLO's Professional Development Fellowship program supports spouses and partners in their efforts to develop, maintain, and refresh their professional skills while overseas. Subject to budgetary considerations and program rules, these competitive fellowships reimburse costs for enrichment activities.

Selected applicants must fund a minimum of 25% of the cost of the proposed activities while the Fellowship stipend will cover the costs from \$1,000 to \$2,500. Activities include, but are not limited to: classroom and distance learning courses, professional development activities, obtaining or renewal of professional certifications and licenses, development of new career skills, and participation in professional conferences. The program is announced annually on GCLO's website and via cable. Eligibility requirements are outlined in the program announcement. Visit GCLO's [Professional Development Fellowship Program](#) website for more information.

Overseas Seasonal Hire Program for Eligible High School and College Students

The Overseas Seasonal Hire Program (OSHP) provides job opportunities for eligible* high school and college students of U.S. government employees assigned to an overseas post under chief of mission authority. OSHP employees perform clerical and administrative support duties during the transfer season and other times during the year as determined by post. If your post has an OSHP, job opportunities for eligible* students may be available, depending upon post's budget.

*Eligibility generally applies to unmarried eligible family member (defined in [3 FAM 7120](#)) children who are at least 16 years of age, registered as full-time or part-time students, on the travel orders of a sponsoring employee (defined in [3 FAM 7120](#)), and/or undertaking travel for which a U.S. government employee is authorized to receive an education travel allowance as set forth in [DSSR 280](#) if that child were to undertake study at a school away from post. Please see your human resources office at post for more details about eligibility.

Strategic Volunteering

Volunteering can be an excellent way to explore a career field, gain experience or learn new skills. Short-term volunteer experiences can fit into those transition times when you are settling into a new location. Target and document your volunteer experience so that it can support your long-term career plan.

REENTRY INTO THE U.S. JOB MARKET

The Global Community Liaison Office offers several services and resources to support family members returning from overseas and looking for employment in the United States.

The Network

[The Network](#) listserv connects those looking for a job in the Washington, DC area with current job listings both in the federal government and in private companies. Subscription includes email listings of available positions and announcements for employment-related training and events for family

members in the DC area. If you are moving to the Washington, DC, area, get an early start and subscribe from overseas. Send an email to GCLONetwork@state.gov to subscribe.

NonCompetitive Eligibility (NCE)

If planning to work for the federal government, familiarize yourself with the noncompetitive eligibility (NCE), a special hiring authority through which appointment eligible family members (AEFMs) can be appointed to federal positions without competing with the general public. [Read more](#) about noncompetitive eligibility for eligible family members.

Global Employment Initiative (GEI)

Family members can schedule an individual consultation with a [global employment advisor](#) responsible for the Washington, DC area. If returning to the DC area contact GEIUSA@state.gov; if out of the DC Area contact GEIWHANorth@state.gov.

Career Development Resource Center (CDRC)

For federal employment, the Career Development Resource Center (CDRC) is a free resource for Department of State Foreign Service family members and Department of State employees.

CDRC covers such topics as job search strategies, resumes and federal application preparation, networking, evaluation of interests, skills, values, and preferred work situations, and career planning. CDRC offers a library with books, newspapers, and multimedia materials, as well as computers with Internet access, federal application information, and online training. EFM's from other federal agencies should check with their HR departments for similar support.

FSI TRAINING AND DISTANCE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Family members are eligible for training to supplement your job skills and enhance your resume. The following is an overview of training options offered by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) at no cost to Department of State family members. Many webinar options are also free to EFM's and MOH's posted overseas to an embassy or consulate with other federal agencies.

Distance Learning

FSI provides distance learning via two catalogs: Skillsoft General Library and FSI custom-produced training. Course descriptions and enrollment are available via the intranet.

Department of State employees and EFM's must register via the intranet, but once enrolled, they will then be able to access the courses via the internet. EFM's without intranet access should coordinate

with their employee sponsor to submit course requests on their behalf through their career development officer (CDO). Non-Department of State EFMs should check with their respective sponsoring employee's office to learn what programs are provided by their agency.

The Skillsoft General Library (formerly known as FasTrac) is a government-wide distance learning program comprised of thousands of courses in business, information technology, leadership and management, among others. Funded through FSI, the program is available on the internet via FSILearn, allowing access at anytime, anywhere – from home, work or wherever is convenient. A single password provides access to the entire course library on an annual basis and is renewable, provided the user completes a minimum of one course per year. No approvals are required. Once you have registered, you can access courses from any internet connection using your log-on information. If you have questions, email fsiregistrar@state.gov.

FSI custom-produced training offers a number of distance learning courses in the following topic areas: Management, Economic and Commercial Affairs, English Language, Grammar, Consular, Public Diplomacy, Security, Language, Orientation, and Transitions. Some courses require access to the Department of State's intranet and not every course is open to EFMs. Students enroll by searching the FSI catalog on the intranet and using the "Apply Now" link found in each course's description.

Language Training and Distance Language Learning

Classroom training for language courses is available to EFMs on a space available basis. Courses are open to EFMs after all Department of State employees have been accommodated. To view course offerings, go to [this link](#) and search for the "Classroom" delivery method.

The Distance Language Learning (DLL) program provides online language training in situations where traditional classroom-based training options are not available or preferable. The DLL program offers over 80 mentor-guided online courses in 21 languages covering a range of skill levels. To be eligible for enrollment in this program, EFMs/MOHs must have a current or confirmed onward assignment to a country where their target language is the local language. To view course offerings, visit [this link](#) and search for the "DL-Mentored" delivery method. EFMs/MOHs should register via their sponsor's CDO (training officer). Please contact OnlineLanguage@state.gov for more information.

The Post Language Program (PLP) supports part-time foreign language training for State Department and other participating agencies at embassies and consulates overseas. Training targets language acquisition, maintenance, and enhancement and may be anything from survival/functional lessons to job-specific training. Check with your post of assignment on the availability of a Post Language Program.

Functional Training

Classroom training for functional courses listed below is available to EFMs on a limited, space available basis. Courses are open to EFMs after all Department of State employees have been accommodated.

Completion of any of the functional training classes does not guarantee EFMs positions at post but may increase their competitiveness for certain positions. Specific course eligibility requirements are listed below:

- **General Services Operations:** There may be pre-enrollment requirements.
- **Financial Management Overseas:** Financial experience and education will be reviewed by the FMO course manager.

Other functional training, including courses in human resource management and information technology, may be available to EFMs on a space-available basis. EFMs must have all paperwork complete and meet all prerequisites before they are eligible to be enrolled in functional training. Please contact [GCLO](#) for further information regarding functional training.

Transition Center Employment Courses

The Training Division at FSI's Transition Center offers several employment courses and free webinars on various aspects of family member employment. Visit the Transition Center's [Life Skills Training](#) webpage for more information.



CHAPTER 12

EDUCATION FOR FOREIGN SERVICE CHILDREN



EDUCATION ALLOWANCES

When assigned to a post overseas, researching education options for your children is advisable. Parents have school choice, meaning the choice of any school that best suits your child's educational needs and family preference. Employees are offered different types of allowances to support:

- School “at post”
- School “away from post” (boarding school)
- Homeschooling
- Special needs education support

Supplementary instruction allowances are also available. See [DSSR 276.9](#).

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 costs before making any important decisions. This allowance is intended to provide an education similar to what the child would receive in the United States if attending public school. Allowances are not provided for preschool and college: parents are expected to pay the costs of preschool or college. Educational allowances are explained in the Department of State Standardized Regulations, [DSSR 270](#). Dollar amounts for education allowances by post are [available online](#). An Educational Travel allowance, [DSSR 280](#), is also available which pays for college-age students to visit their families overseas.

EDUCATION AT POST

Many children in our foreign affairs community accompany their parents overseas and attend schools at post. Options at a given post may vary between homeschooling, an American curriculum school or international-style school, to a school that offers an educational program in another language. Other options may also exist.

With the exception of the few Department of Defense schools, the schools most children attend abroad are usually independent schools, controlled by a local school board. Though they may be called “The American School of [city or country name],” they are not owned or operated by the U.S. government or the Department of State.

Typically, overseas schools take on at least some of the flavor of the host country. In some countries, the international school may have many local students. In other places, students at the international school may come from dozens of countries. Among the schools that are assisted by the Department of State, the children of U.S. government employees may make up only 10 percent of the total school population. Your children will most likely learn a great deal about the host country culture, the local language, and about many other countries, as represented by their fellow students.

Each family chooses which schools to use. Sometimes there is clearly one school that is right for your children. Other times, however, there may be several choices to consider.

The Office of Overseas Schools (A/OPR/OS) publishes a one-page fact sheet for each of the 193 schools it assists, which can be accessed on their [Schools Worldwide](#) webpage. Through these fact sheets, you can also find a school’s website and email address. They also maintain a small library containing yearbooks, newsletters, school profiles, and curricula.

The Office of Overseas Schools has a staff of regional education officers (REOs). REOs are experienced educators who oversee a geographic region and are well informed about schools attended by U.S. government children. Many parents contact an REO for specific information about schools in their assigned country. Their [contact information is available online](#). When they visit your post, be sure to participate in meetings they arrange for parents so you can share knowledge about the local school situation with them.

The Office of Overseas Schools provides financial, professional, and technical support to the schools the Department assists. This support can be in the form of grants, curriculum advice, board training, regional conferences, administration and faculty training, and other services as requested by these schools.

In addition, the Office of Overseas Schools recommends to embassies and the Office of Allowances which schools should be deemed adequate. Adequate is defined as: “an elementary or secondary school not requiring mandatory denominational religious instruction and providing an educational curriculum and services reasonably comparable to those normally provided without charge in public schools in the United States. The major criterion of ‘adequacy’ is whether a child of normal ability, upon completion of a grade, or its equivalent, can enter the next higher grade in a public school in the United States.” The REOs determine which school at post is the closest to a U.S.-style education, and that school is known as the “base school” on which the at post education allowance will be based.

The Overseas Briefing Center’s online Post Info to Go database contains documents and information on each post, including education reports, school brochures, KidVids (videos of a post from a youth perspective), and Personal Post Insights (anonymous comments on schooling options at post). For more information on researching your post, see Chapter 10 - Bidding and Post Research.



The Education and Youth Team at the Global Community Office are advocates for Foreign Service families on educational issues and the emotional well-being of Foreign Service children. This office provides resources, encourages support networks, and can help you sort out your educational options. It has information on 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 can likely put you in touch with other parents who have children of a similar age. You can contact the CLO at CLO [name of post]@State.gov.

Children are natural learners. Many families choose to supply their overseas homes with board games, challenging puzzles, books (whether hardcopy/paperback or on a device), musical instruments, outdoor sports equipment, computer equipment (age appropriate), and other items that promote a child's interest in discovery and curiosity. Check with your school of choice regarding after-school activities and what a parent needs to bring to post for their children in order to participate (i.e., musical instrument, baseball bat and glove, dance leotard, yoga mat, soccer cleats, etc.).

EDUCATION AWAY FROM POST: BOARDING SCHOOL

For some families, boarding school may be a good option. There will be an “away from post” allowance when the school at post is not adequate (as based on the above definition). This amount varies from post to post since it is based on an average of boarding school costs and 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 “at post” schooling. Parents may use the “at post” allowance toward the cost of boarding school, but will have to pay out of pocket for the remaining cost, i.e., tuition and other expenses. For more information on boarding schools and making these choices, contact [GCLO's Education and Youth Team](#).

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, if the child is located in another country. 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 another trusted adult to arrange for hospital admission, give permission for medical treatment, or otherwise act for the parent in matters involving health or school-related questions.

Some boarding schools may also require you to leave permission with them to act *in loco parentis* in the case of an emergency. Another source of assistance in emergency situations could include the school's dean of students. Parents should be sure to provide and routinely update emergency contact numbers with the school.

Finances

A clear discussion of financial expectations can increase 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.

When choosing the most appropriate method of providing emergency funds, you 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 other periods when the school closes.

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 in case of accident (e.g., 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. An important question to ask a prospective boarding school is what forms of support it offers students. Parents should ensure they know the contact information for those providing support resources at the school.

The Overseas Briefing Center offers a handout entitled “Checklist for FS Families with College-Aged Children” which outlines communication, security, financial, and other considerations. Tips in this handout also apply to students at boarding school. [Email the OBC](#) for a copy.

HOMESCHOOLING

A select number of Foreign Service families choose to homeschool their children due to personal preferences or when a post has limited educational options. A wealth of online learning options makes this possible in the overseas environment. The Global Community Office provides information and support for the Foreign Service homeschooling community. Read their [Homeschooling FAQs](#).

Families who choose to homeschool should be aware that they need to abide by local education laws and will have limited outside support while instituting their education plans. Before choosing the homeschool option, families living abroad should check the legality of homeschooling in their host country. More information is available on the [Global Community Office website](#).

Homeschooling Allowances

The Department of State offers the Home Study/Private Instruction Allowance ([DSSR 277.3](#)) to employees whose choose to homeschool their children while posted overseas. The Office of Allowances offers an [FAQ on this reimbursable allowance](#). Employees from agencies other than the U.S. Department of State should check with their financial office for similar allowances. Families who plan to homeschool should alert the financial management officer at post of their educational plan, preferably before arrival at post.

According to the Office of Allowances, “Post must obtain one of the following from the employee/parent prior to any disbursement: (a) receipts for enrollment of the child in a recognized home study course (such as the Calvert School for grades K-8 or the University of Nebraska for grades 9-12); or (b) guidelines and verification that the employee/parent is participating in and complying with the home schooling requirements of a selected location. This location can be the employee/parent's state of residence, another relevant state, territory, possession or country. Any fees to indirect or third party providers is the responsibility of the parent.”

SPECIAL NEEDS

If you have a child with special needs, additional research will be required both during the bidding process 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, your child may benefit from special education allowances.

Further resources are available on the Office of Overseas Schools' [Resources](#) webpage, including the publication “[Overseas Schools Offering Support to Children with Special Needs](#).” This document is a listing of schools offering programs for special education and gifted and talented. Additional resources are also available on GCLO's [Special Needs and the Foreign Service Child](#) webpage. Both sites are essential reading for Foreign Service families with children in need of special needs educational support.

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 admit children with anything more than mild learning difficulties. Even when the U.S. mission is represented on the school board, schools do not have to accept students they feel they cannot serve (provide the adequate special needs educational curriculum and support). It is critical for parents to research post options and to allow enough time for the relevant Department of State offices (Office of Child and Family Programs, Office of Allowances, Office of Overseas Schools, Global Community Office, and the Office of Career Development and Assignments) 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 Office of Child and Family Programs (CFP) must agree that the child meets the special needs definition. CFP staffers help parents arrange evaluations, which may include psychological, educational, speech/language, occupational therapy, and psychiatric assessments.

If a child is due for a medical clearance examination, the evaluations can be authorized by CFP 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. Since U.S. public schools provide evaluation of children with special educational needs, testing cannot be authorized if the family is posted to the United States, unless the testing is part of

the pre-clearance process. Overseas, the mission health unit, community liaison office coordinator, or management 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 the full range of testing required. Going to one location for all evaluations can make the process easier.

Medical Clearance Process

Evaluation reports become part of the child’s medical records and are used in determining medical clearance. The Bureau 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 Bureau of Medical Services.

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

Special Needs Education Allowances (SNEA)

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 needs education allowance (SNEA) 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 check in annually with the Office of Child and Family Programs for review and concurrence on the IEP.

The special needs education allowance can be used to fund services specified in the child’s IEP or equivalent. Allowable expenses include (but are not limited to): school tuition, transportation, periodic diagnostic testing, rental of specialized equipment, and individual tutoring. Regulations on SNEA benefits can be found in the [DSSR 276.8](#). Also read the Foreign Affairs Manual ([3 FAM 3280](#)) for recent amendments which increase the transparency of the SNEA process and streamline the methodology for calculating the rate of allowance.

During the Bidding Process

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

As mentioned above, the Office of Overseas Schools provides a list of schools that offer support for children with special needs. It includes self-reported information on overseas special needs programs (including programs for highly gifted children). Parents should also contact the regional education officer responsible for a post's geographical region.

Families with special needs children should contact the Office of Child and Family Programs (CFP) about services available at potential posts. CFP maintains the Post Capability Database, which gives additional information about resources available at post. This information can change rapidly and parents should check directly with post and school in order to verify available resources and ask additional questions.

Remember that if your child has been evaluated as having a special need, they will only be cleared to go to post if you have confirmed that a school at post can meet their 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 developmental needs can be met at the next post **before** the assignment is finalized. 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) Facebook groups, social media sites, and listservs specific to the foreign affairs community may also be helpful if you are looking for anecdotal information from parents with children in overseas schools. These communities may provide support as you identify opportunities for your child at a potential post.

Before Moving to Post

Request a copy of your child's master and special education files from the current school. The National Center for Learning Disabilities recommends that families keep a collection of documents including:

- Copies of the child's individual education plans (IEP) describing the goals, objectives, and services for the child each year.
- Assessment reports describing any disabilities.
- Copies of all relevant medical statements.
- Dated parental notes concerning the child (comments from professionals not recorded elsewhere, parents' goals and objectives, key staff and contact numbers at previous educational institutions, and other information).

Get specific recommendations from people currently working with your child. If you explain that you are moving to another country where services may not be available, these professionals will often be

happy to cooperate, providing specific, detailed therapeutic programs, plans, and recommendations. Ask if there are therapeutic activities you can learn to do with your child.

Find out if there are items you will not be able to obtain at post (therapy equipment, learning aids, etc.) and look for alternatives. Many items can be ordered online.

At Post

Once at post, you will want to meet with school personnel to discuss the educational or therapeutic strategies that will be implemented to help your child. They will need to see the most recent assessment of your child's needs and abilities and will be interested to know more about your child's developmental history and progress, so prior records are also important. As the parent, you will continue to play an important role in the school/home partnership. Be sure to keep the Office of Child and Family Programs updated on your child's development.

Take advantage of all that your new post offers. Local salaries may be low enough to allow you to hire private tutors or therapists you might not be able to afford in the United States. You may be able to train someone to work one-on-one with your child if you have gathered the right information and prepared in advance.

Look for activities (i.e., dance classes and sports programs) to keep your child engaged. Ask if there are any local support groups. If not, find other interested parents and professionals and start one; this will help your family and make a lasting contribution to your host country.

Educating a child with special educational needs overseas is a challenge. With the help of professionals, parents or guardians must determine the best course of action for both child and family. In some cases, the best choice may be to return to or stay in the United States. With sufficient planning and preparation, however, a child with special needs can thrive in the overseas environment.

Gifted and Talented

Under the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR), U.S. government Foreign Service families overseas with gifted children who are not sufficiently challenged in the overseas school environment and where the overseas school does not offer a gifted program may avail themselves of a supplemental educational allowance for education in academic areas (mathematics, science, languages, and social studies). Check with the Office of Allowances for the most up-to-date regulations and the Office of Overseas Schools regarding testing and suggestions for course materials. Information is available on the Internet in the [DSSR 276.9 \(e\)](#) and in the [Office of Allowances FAQ section](#).

SECTION 3

SECTION 3

PREPARING FOR YOUR POST





CHAPTER 13

PREPARATION FOR GOING OVERSEAS



With what seems like a thousand pieces of information to track during an international move, how does one stay organized? Checklists! The Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) offers both printed checklists and the READY SET TRAVEL app (available at no cost in the App Store for Android and iPhone).

Below is a list of items for your personalized checklist. Pick and choose those to best keep you organized and prepared for each step of the planning process, for when the movers arrive, and when you (and your family) eventually arrive at the airport to head to your new post. For more information

on any of the items below, please contact the Overseas Briefing Center at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.

POST RESEARCH AND PRELIMINARY PREPARATIONS

Post Research

Areas to consider when bidding - see Chapter 10 - Bidding and Post Research for more information on bidding.

Use Post Info to Go

- The Overseas Briefing Center's Post Info to Go, covering over 270 posts worldwide and 34 domestic locations, contains over 6,000 documents, some 2,000 Personal Post Insights, post videos, and more to give you the information you need about living in your assigned country. The OBC suggests that you revisit this post-specific information once you learn of your onward assignment.

Check Other Web Resources

- Visit the post's websites. These can be found in Post Info to Go and in the Technology Survey for each post.
- Research cultural information using CultureGrams, provided by the OBC.

Research and Confirm Schools at Post

- Find out whether post has schools assisted by the Office of Overseas Schools.
- Investigate other educational options beyond "assisted" schools.
- Visit the Office of Overseas Schools website.
- Make an appointment with the regional education officer (REO) covering your post of assignment. Visit the Office of Overseas Schools website for contact information.
- Does the school offer IB or AP for high school? After-school activities? Sports programs? Music programs?
- If your child has a learning challenge or special needs, work with the Bureau of Medical Services/Child and Family Program office to identify appropriate schooling options, evaluation, and qualification for the special needs education allowance (SNEA).

- For children under the age of kindergarten, review the Global Community Office's Overseas Child Care Report for your post, available in Post Info to Go.
- Register children for school of choice and let the CLO at post know of your choice.
- Obtain copies and hand-carry school records to post. Make sure your child's current school has forwarded (either electronically or by mail) school records directly to the school of your choice.

Arrange for Post Health/Medical Needs

- Consider health-related issues in each country.
- Review the health handbook for your assigned post.
- Determine how to fill prescriptions / update your eyeglasses prescription.
- Alert the embassy/consulate health unit if you are bringing a child to post who will require vaccinations.
- Schedule immunizations and exams.
- Get copy of U.S. vaccination schedule to follow while overseas.
- Check your insurance and change if needed.
- Make medical appointments: schedule medical clearance exam if needed, eye, dentist, specialists, etc.
- Request copies of records to hand-carry to post.
- Make sure you have a copy (hardcopy or electronic) of your final medical clearance.

Investigate Family Member Employment

- Review opportunities for inside the Mission and local economy employment.
- Check the post's Family Member Employment Report (FAMER).
- Prepare or update your resume and collect employment paperwork.
- Review the bilateral work agreement / de facto work arrangement information for securing a work permit (if needed).
- Contact the CLO and the HRO at post to let them know of interest in working, volunteering, or professional development opportunities.
- Ask post about position vacancies and timing.

- Consider making some business cards (no address listed).
- Ask post about the Overseas Seasonal Hire Program (OSHP) if you have teens / college students who want to work during the summer months or winter breaks.
- Contact the Global Community Office (FLO) for general guidance.

Check Pet Entry Requirements and Arrange for the Shipping of Pets

- Use OBC's Pet Import Restrictions database and resource handouts to research restrictions and living conditions for pets.
- Reference OBC's Pet Survey for your post.
- Use OBC's Shipping of Pets Checklist for a step by step process to follow.
- Contact post to confirm entry requirements.
- Arrange required shots and certificates.
- Purchase supplies.
- Plan travel/shipping route.

Enroll in Training

- Enroll in Transition Center Foreign Service Life Skills classes.
- Enroll in Transition Center Resilience training.
- Enroll in the Security Overseas Seminar (SOS).
- Enroll in Transition Center Retirement Planning courses.
- Consider Distance Language Learning options.

Change of Address

- Set up mail forwarding and establish a permanent email address.
- Submit post office form 30 days before move.
- Send change-of-address forms.
- Make sure friends and relatives have new contact information.
- Update contact info with Employee Services Center.
- Check absentee voting procedures.

Organize Household Effects

- Contact your assigned transportation counselor.
- Register for the Travel and Transportation PCS Portal (for all agencies).
- Develop inventory list (with photo or video).
- Obtain certified appraisals for high-value items.

- Arrange cleaning and repair.
- Plan for donations of unwanted items.

Confirm Banking Arrangements

- Set up at least one joint checking account (if you have a spouse).
- Arrange direct deposits.
- Arrange automatic deductions (if needed).
- Sign up for overdraft protection.
- Get a credit card that works in international ATMs for emergency cash.
- Learn bank credit card policies and fees for international transactions.
- Review your credit rating. Establish sufficient credit to cover emergencies.

Prepare Important Papers & Records

- Draw up Powers of Attorney (limited POA preferred).
- Update will/letter of instruction/beneficiaries.
- Create a medical directive (ask the OBC about “Five Wishes”).
- Scan important papers, including tax returns.
- Photocopy scrapbooks/photos.
- Consider a safe deposit box (leave a copy of the key with a trusted family member, lawyer, or friend) for important papers and valuable jewelry.

Review Insurance Coverage

- Update life insurance before being assigned.
- Confirm what your health insurance plan covers overseas.
- Check whether your life insurance covers death in terrorist or “perils of war” incidents.
- Obtain an insurance policy for full-replacement value of household goods.
- Obtain vehicle insurance to include “in-transit.”

Consider Real Estate Options

- Decide whether to rent or sell your current home.
- Interview real estate agents and property managers.
- Clean, paint, repair.
- If renting, search for tenants using Foreign Service listservs or through a realtor/property manager.
- If renting, change your house insurance policy to “rental.”

- If renting, arrange for automatic deposit of your renter's "rent check" each month or determine how rent will be paid and deposited into your account.
- Be sure your lease includes the "Foreign Service Clause."

Schedule Pack Out

- Contact your transportation counselor.
- Learn which moving company will handle your pack out.
- Set a time for a pre-pack survey.
- Arrange for a babysitter (if needed) for the day of the move.
- Arrange for friends and family to help (if needed).
- Separate air freight and HHE shipments, and storage.
- Check with Transportation before leaving town and make sure they have contact information.

Apply for Visas and Passports

- Gather forms.
- Take needed photos.
- Deliver paperwork to proper office.
- Allow enough time for processing.

Go Shopping/Consumables/Cell Phones

- Prepare for a consumables shipment (if assigned to a consumables post).
- Purchase 220V electric appliances, if needed.
- Consider items you may need at your new post (beach towels, kids games, bicycles, seasonal clothing, etc.).
- Ask post about cell phone requirements and the cost of purchase. Take "unlocked" cell phones to post, if possible, for easy transfer of plans.

Plan for Shipment of Automobile

- Check restrictions with management office/GSO (OBC also maintains a listing of worldwide vehicle restrictions).
- Check with lien holder if car can be brought overseas (you will need the car's title).
- Select appropriate auto and in-transit insurance.
- Renew driver's license and/or obtain international permit.
- Place title of vehicle in the employee's name or provide proof of a marriage license if car is in the spouse's name.

- Purchase spare parts and ship them with your household effects (HHE).
- Schedule car delivery to shipper.
- Take photos of your vehicle and document any scratches or dents.

Write Letter to Post

- For employees, use OBC's template for writing a letter of introduction about yourself to the chief of mission (with cc to the DCM and OMS) to arrive no earlier than six weeks before you do.

Arrange Travel Finances

- Travel allowance
- Explore the "advance of pay" allowance, if needed.
- Plan for initial expenses at post.
- Obtain foreign currency, if needed for travel and arrival at post.

Confirm Travel Arrangements

- Request and pick up (or receive electronically) airline tickets.
- Notify post of flight, arrival date and time, number of people and suitcases (and if traveling with a pet).
- Double check pet shipping plans.
- Arrange for transportation to airport.

TAKE WITH YOU TO THE AIRPORT

- Plane tickets
- Passports
- Suitcases and carry-on luggage
- Immunization records (needed at new embassy/consulate health unit and for children enrollment in new school)
- Prescription medicines (and prescriptions)
- Credit or debit card (or other method for cash)
- A checkbook, for cashing checks at the embassy/consulate
- 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 eyeglasses (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.
- If you shipped a car, an extra set of the car keys.
- Take U.S. cell phone and charger (and 220V charger if available and necessary).

Try the READY SET TRAVEL app! The app generates a personalized to do list and can integrate directly with a user's cell phone calendar. Users can enter their expected date of departure and the app creates a checklist organized in increments of time - months, weeks, and days before leaving for the next assignment. After the app generates tasks, the user can check them off as completed. In addition to organizing predeparture planning, the app provides links to online resources and resilience tips to encourage and support individuals during their transition. Download the app by visiting the [iPhone](#) or [Android](#) app stores.

If you prefer a Word version of the checklist with "months, weeks and days before leaving for the next assignment" listings, contact the OBC at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.



CHAPTER 14

TRAVELING WITH PETS



GENERAL INFORMATION

Of all the logistical tasks that must be addressed prior to moving abroad, shipping a pet is sometimes the most challenging, time consuming, and expensive. During the bidding process, it is crucial to determine if the post you are considering will allow your breed of pet into the country.

The Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) offers a pet chart that can be used for the initial bidding research. It lists import restrictions and quarantines for each country. It also indicates if the post discourages bringing a pet due to housing availability or other issues. The handout, *Worldwide Pet Import and Quarantine Restrictions Chart* is available by emailing FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.

Pet owners should determine what the country's pet entry requirements are, the timeline that must be followed, and the contract airline's pet shipping policy for the routing to your post. For some countries, the preparation period may require at least 180 days prior to departure. For others, it may be less than a month.

Current post-specific pet entry requirements are listed in each post's Pet Survey located in OBC's Post Info to Go collection. These surveys also include other detailed post-specific pet-shipping information. The post's TM-3 (Welcome to Post cable) also includes the entry requirements. Both documents are available on the OBC Post Info to Go websites or via an email request to FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.

OBC also publishes a comprehensive, step by step *Shipping of Pets Checklist: For Dogs and Cats* that includes current airline pet shipping policies, methods of shipping, types of microchips commonly recognized, standard types of health certificates, the endorsement process of the health certificate by the United States Department of Agriculture - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS), as well as where to find a professional pet shipper. Contact OBC at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov for the latest version of this guide.

The FSI Transition Center (FSI/TC) offers an annual Traveling with Pets (MQ855) program at no cost, featuring expert panelists who address all the critical facets of shipping pets internationally. MQ855 is open to U.S. government employees and family members being posted to a U.S. mission abroad. The Transition Center also offers a shorter webinar *Ask the Pet Expert* several times per year with helpful tips for pet shipping and a review of timely airline policies. Once assigned, notify the post early on that you will be bringing a pet and contact the post directly to confirm entry and quarantine requirements. If the post provides information that is vague or contradictory, it is important to clarify it as soon as possible. Some country government websites provide forms printed in English and the host language for your veterinarian to complete. OBC's pet surveys often provide links to these forms as does the USDA-APHIS' [Take Your Pet from the United States to a Foreign Country](#) webpage.

Be aware of [new critical CDC requirements for pets returning to the U.S.](#) implemented as of July 14, 2021. Read CDC requirements before taking your pet overseas. All pets leaving the United States should have a ISO 15-digit compliant microchip. For any changes to these requirements, check OBC's *Shipping of Pets Checklist* handout or email the DOS Transportation Policy office at TransportationQuery@state.gov.

REGISTER YOUR PET ON THE PET TRACKER

Pet owners should register their pet using the Pet Tracker through myServices. Through this online tracker, you can submit essential data such as your pet's name, breed, crate size, veterinary/vaccination history, travel and caretaker information, as well as a photo of your pet. This information will travel with you from post to post. It is up to you to provide periodic updates. The tracker provides real-time data to ensure your pet remains safe and accounted for in emergency situations and assists the pet owner in keeping all vital information in one location electronically.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

If you take your pet overseas, make the necessary arrangements directly with the airlines well in advance. The cost of shipping a pet to post (including from post to post and back to the United States) is the responsibility of the pet owner. See Chapter 27 – Allowances Connected with Post Assignments for allowances related to reimbursement for pet shipping.

Check each airline's current pet transportation regulations. They vary considerably and can change at any time or fluctuate during a crisis such as a pandemic. Shipping a pet in summer months and the coldest winter months is often more difficult due to temperature restrictions. These circumstances often necessitate using a commercial pet shipper.

Most airlines will permit one or two animals per flight in the coach and business/first-class sections. The pet must be small enough to fit in a container that slides under your seat. However, there are some countries that require even very small pets to enter as cargo. Check for exact crate size requirements and availability of acceptable containers for your chosen airline. Make reservations early. Most government travel offices will not handle pet reservations. The pet owner is responsible for booking their pet transport.

Methods of Shipping a Pet

There are three ways to ship your pet via the airlines:

1. **In-Cabin.** Depending on the size of your pet, your pet might be able to travel on the plane with you in-cabin. The in-cabin rate is always the least expensive. However, it is not allowed on some airlines or by some destination countries and is always only for the smallest animals.
2. **Excess/Accompanied Baggage.** You can book your pet as excess/accompanied baggage on the same flight as you, which means that your pet will be checked in with your suitcases at the ticket counter. Most airlines, but not all, charge a reasonable rate for this service. In this case, the pet will be placed in the cargo hold during the flight and collected at the baggage claim area at the

point of destination. If your flight involves more than one leg, it is preferable to use the same airline carrier for both legs because airlines no longer “interline” pets between carriers. If the U.S. contract carrier does not offer the option, the travel agent can usually book the passenger ticket through the contract carrier but for a flight on its pet-friendlier codeshare partner’s plane. If even this isn’t possible, a pet owner also has an option of using a DS-4022 Form, *Justification Certificate for Using a Noncontract or Indirect Air Carrier*, to request use of another U.S. carrier flight on a cost-construct basis.

3. **Cargo.** You can ship your pet as cargo. Some airlines only offer this option (unless the pet is small enough to travel in-cabin). Some countries require all pets to enter as cargo, regardless of the size of your pet. In this case, your pet will need to be brought to the cargo terminal of the airport at least four hours prior to the flight. Once you arrive at post, you will collect your pet at the cargo terminal of the destination post. If this is your only option, check to see if you can personally book the pet or if you are required to use a licensed commercial shipper to book the pet which requires an additional fee charged by the shipper. If needed, pet owners may check the [International Pet and Travel Association \(IPATA\)](#)’s website for registered and licensed professional pet shippers. With cargo, the pet can be booked on the same flight as you are traveling or on any other flight.

As a general rule, animals 100 pounds or larger (with their crate weight) will be charged as cargo. A few carriers allow a heavier weight limit for accompanied baggage. It is important to check with the airline if your pet is close to 100 pounds and to determine if its policy varies from this general rule.

Shipping Crates

Shipping containers must be made of sturdy wood or reinforced plastic. Acceptable crates often are sold by airlines as a service to their passengers. Extremely large animals may require specifically-constructed shipping crates and may have to be shipped in a cargo plane (not passenger plane) because some cargo openings on passenger jets cannot accept unusually large crates. Soft-sided carriers suitable for use as “under the seat” baggage are not acceptable as shipping containers in the hold. Your hard-sided crate should have a solid leak proof bottom lined with absorbent non-plastic material. At least 20 to 30% of the crate’s upper surfaces should be ventilated. A batten or other protrusion on the container will prevent it from being placed flat against another surface, which would limit its air flow. It should be large enough to permit the animal to stand and turn around. Too much space should be avoided as rough weather can create a battering effect on the animal. Contact OBC for information on labeling your pet’s travel carrier.

A water dish should be fastened to the crate to allow the animal to drink without the crate being opened. It should be conveniently located so that an attendant can provide water at stopovers

without being bitten. A leash and cloth bag of food should be attached to the crate along with care and feeding instructions.

Attention given to pets at stopovers varies and is sometimes nonexistent. Some flight staff will feed and water animals; others will only open the baggage compartment door for ventilation.

The crates are placed and secured in the hold of the plane in a pressurized compartment where temperatures are similar to that of the passenger compartments. The compartments are airtight. The reason to book early is that the number of pets shipped on a single flight is limited. If possible, the crate is put near a door so that the animal can get some fresh air whenever a stopover is made. Airline pet handlers leave space around each crate and secure the pet container with a net to prevent bouncing. Try to check these details before boarding your flight.

HEALTH CERTIFICATION

Certification requirements vary from country to country.

It is advisable to use a federally accredited veterinarian to examine your pet, even if the foreign country where you are going does not require it. The USDA-APHIS' [Find an Accredited Veterinarian](#) webpage provides a tool to locate a vet in your area. Your current veterinarian may already be on this list.

Although some countries do not require the health certificate to be endorsed by the USDA-APHIS, it is becoming more common. The veterinarian can upload the completed certificate to the United States Department of Agriculture - Veterinary Export Health Certification System's (APHIS/VEHC) site for an electronic endorsement. Some countries will accept a totally electronically endorsed form.

Other countries will require an additional step for APHIS to print the form, sign it in ink, affix the seal, and mail it back to the veterinarian. This is done using a prepaid FedEx mailing label. The turnaround time is normally only a couple of days. The APHIS site will indicate which endorsement process a country accepts. (See [VEHC's Country List](#)).

USDA-certified veterinarians will use either the USDA-APHIS Form 7001 or if the country has its own specific health form, the veterinarian will use that country's template available on the APHIS site. Check the USDA/APHIS' [Take Your Pet from the United States to a Foreign Country](#) .

Carefully check the post-specific pet survey in OBC's Post Info to Go. Email OBC at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov or visit USDA/APHIS' [Take Your Pet from the United States to a Foreign Country](#) webpage to determine what the post indicates the exact requirements are before making an appointment with a vet. It is also useful to reconfirm the requirements with the post.

Also check with your chosen airline. Even if the country does not require a specific health certification, almost all airlines require one for your pet to board the plane. There is a minimum endorsement fee by the USDA per certificate for cats and dogs (a higher amount for the United Kingdom and South Africa). More than one dog or cat may be on the same certificate. For other animals or specific questions, please call USDA at (844) 820-2234 Monday-Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm ET, email CustomerServiceCallCenter@aphis.usda.gov or visit USDA/APHIS' [Pet Travel](#) webpage.

Authentication of Certificate

A few countries may require an authentication of certificate. If your country of assignment requires one, go first to the following office:

U.S. Department of State Office of Authentication

Physical Address

Office of Authentication
U.S. Department of State
600 19th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Mailing Address

Office of Authentication
U.S. Department of State
CA/PPT/S/TO/AUT
44132 Mercure CIR PO Box 1206
Sterling, VA 20166-1206

Full details on this service, fees and directions on how to submit form DS-4194 are on the [Travel.State.gov](https://travel.state.gov)'s [Office of Authentication](#) website, or contact:

Tel.: (202) 485-8000
8:00 am to 3:00 pm, Monday-Friday
Closed Federal Holidays

Timetable for Obtaining Examination and Certifications

The timetable for obtaining examination statements and certifications can be very tight. Plan ahead carefully to be sure all paperwork is complete before travel. For more information, review suggestions in the *Shipping of Pets Checklist*.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON SHIPPING AN ANIMAL

- Let your pet become accustomed to the crate before shipment by having practice sessions that increase in time of confinement.
- Include a familiar toy or something with your scent in the crate.
- Put identification tags that include an emergency phone number around your pet's neck, using a plastic, breakaway collar.
- Feed your pet a light meal about six hours before shipping. No water within two hours, unless the weather is very hot. Check with your veterinarian for requirements for your pet.
- **Do not tranquilize your pet.**
- Special information placed on the crate should include: flight route, shipping destination, when last fed and watered, the pet's description with a photo of the pet, and a telephone contact number. You might want to list this information in other languages, depending on the countries transited. Include the main telephone number and address of the embassy/consulate you are heading to.
- Check with the agent who meets the flight about your pet's progress when you are changing planes. Have your airway bill number readily available when doing this.
- Allow plenty of time between connecting flights to allow time for your animal to transfer to your onward flight if traveling with you.
- If there is a delay, the airline will kennel the pets when kennels are available. State on your airway bill that your pet is to be taken to the animal port if there is a delay or stopover, if you desire this service. There are daily and half-day rates for the service. These rates usually vary depending on the type and size of the animal.
- Arrange to have your pet picked up immediately upon arrival. Airline facilities for pets may be limited or nonexistent.
- Carry a photograph of your pet for emergency identification purposes.
- If your pet is traveling on your same plane, alert the embassy/consulate that you are traveling with a pet and provide whoever is meeting you at the airport with the size of the crate, along with the number of people traveling with you and the number of suitcases. More than one vehicle may be needed for arrival pickup.
- If your pet is arriving at post via cargo and not on the same plane as you, check with the embassy/consulate as to whether they will assist with picking up your pet. Many embassies and consulates do not offer assistance if your pet arrives separately. If this is the case, get directions to the cargo terminal and arrange for pickup.

ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES

Remember to save your shipment receipts for allowable costs related to reimbursement under the Foreign Transfer Allowance. See Chapter 27 - Allowances Connected with Post Assignments.

The Foreign Transfer Allowance (FTA) and the Home Service Transfer Allowance (HSTA), (Department of State Standardized Regulations - DSSR sections [241](#), [242](#), [251](#), and [252](#)) provide for certain allowable pet shipment costs to be reimbursed.

Tax Deductions for Moving Expenses

The DSSR considers costs beyond the limits prescribed personal expenses. For **tax years 2018 through 2025**, the deduction of certain moving expenses (such as pet shipping) is suspended for nonmilitary taxpayers. In order to deduct certain moving expenses, you must be an active member of the military and moving due to a permanent change of duty station.

Check with a tax advisor or with the IRS for more information on the tax treatment of these expenses. Forms, publications, and other information are available on the IRS' website. Of particular interest is the IRS' [Moving Expenses to and from the United States](#) webpage.



CHAPTER 15

ELECTRICITY, COMMUNICATIONS, TV, AND INTERNET



SUMMARY

The foreign affairs community relies on access to information services during relocation for needs such as travel coordination, shipping logistics, entertainment, and staying in touch with personal and professional contacts. Households also need to consider the variety of electrical and communications standards throughout the world and plan accordingly to adapt or modify their appliances and personal computers to local conditions.

This chapter will:

- Discuss technical services and standards found throughout the world to assist you in planning for your next relocation.
- Provide suggestions for creating a personalized technology checklist.

Tips for creating a customized post technology profile include:

- Read the technology survey from OBC for your country of assignment (available on the Post Info to Go websites or by emailing FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov).
- Review post-specific recommendations in welcome information received from post.
- Identify the electrical plug type that is commonly used in your country of assignment.
- Create an inventory of your personal electrical appliances and their voltage ranges.
- List the types of personal appliances you will need to replace with local equivalents.

IMPORTANT! Examples of commercial products or services presented in this chapter are for informational and demonstrative purposes only. Mentions of specific commercial products, services or companies are not recommendations or endorsements. You are encouraged to review all applicable products and services for their suitability for the needs of your household.

ELECTRICITY

Electricity standards can vary from country to country and even within a common region, such as the European Union. Voltage and plug configurations are often the most common differences from the standards found in the United States. The quality of electrical infrastructure is often an important factor to consider when thinking about how you should plan to adapt your household for local conditions.

If you know your next assignment, begin your research by looking at post-specific resources on Post Info to Go websites or by emailing FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov. These resources include documents such as the Welcome Cable (TM3), Housing Handbook, OBC technology survey, and the Community Liaison Office (CLO) Welcome Packet materials. These documents typically provide a description of the type and quality of electrical infrastructure found in the city of your post of assignment.

Voltage and Frequency

Electricity in the United States, Canada, and in locations throughout the Western Hemisphere operates at 110V, 60 cycles-per-second (Hz) alternating current (AC). The designation “110V” actually includes voltages up to 125V. Much of the rest of the world operates on 220V electricity at 50 Hz. The “220V” electricity includes voltages up to 250V.

Some dual-voltage appliances are built to operate in either of these systems. Increasingly, dual-voltage equipment includes:

- Televisions (LCD)
- Personal computers and devices (laptops, desktops, tablets, smart phones)
- DVD players (if you use one)
- Entertainment systems (XBox, PS4, AppleTV, Roku, etc.)

You can check to see if an appliance is dual-voltage by looking for the label found on the back or bottom of the equipment. A dual-voltage appliance will usually have a line that reads something similar to: 100-240V, 50-60 Hz. Some appliances switch automatically, while others require you to move a selector switch to change to different voltage settings. Always unplug the appliance before changing the selector switch!

Plug Types and Adapters

The variety of plug types for AC electrical outlets is likely familiar to anyone who has travelled outside of the United States. It is helpful to have plug adapters that are country-specific. There are also multi-type adapters that can be convenient to include as part of carry-on luggage. The [International Electrotechnical Commission \(IEC\)](#) has a [country-specific reference guide for world plug types](#).

Plug adapters can be purchased from vendors in the United States prior to proceeding to an overseas assignment or bought on the local market after you arrive. If you are assigned to a country where the quality and availability of equipment is in question, look to buy plug adapters through electronics stores or online retailers.

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter Sockets

In some posts it is common to find GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) electrical outlets. This type of outlet can prevent electrical shock in wet locations such as bathrooms, kitchens and outdoor areas. These outlets have buttons for “test and reset.” Check with your post’s GSO or management officer to learn more about whether GFCI outlets are an option for your overseas residence.

Transformers

A transformer can convert a local voltage to a device-compatible voltage so personal appliances can be used around the world. There are two types of transformers: step-up and step-down. The most commonly used step-up transformer allows a lower voltage (e.g., 110V/50Hz) appliance to be plugged into a higher voltage (e.g., 220V/60Hz) outlet. If many of your household appliances that are from the United States, a 110V/50Hz standard will be the most common voltage for your equipment.

Use a transformer when:

- A device is rated for 110V/50Hz and you are in a country where the local electricity is 220V/60Hz (step-up transformer).
- A device was purchased in a country where 220V/60Hz is used and you are using it in a location where 110V/50Hz is the standard (step-down transformer).
- For devices that use more than 50 watts a heavy duty converter is recommended. For devices that use less than 50 watts, a transformer converter can be used.

NOTE: If you plan on using a device for an extended period of time, it is better to use a heavy duty converter rather than a smaller or travel-type, transformer.

Not all transformers have surge protection or voltage regulator controls. If you are connecting equipment to a transformer and are concerned about potential damage from electrical surges, consider using a transformer that has fuse protection and voltage regulator.

The transformer must be large enough to handle the wattage of your appliances. To find the wattage of an appliance, look for the small box printed on the back or bottom of the device. There will be a number followed by “W” or “A”. For example, “1500 W” means the appliance draws 1500 watts of electric current and will need a transformer of 1500 watts or more. The letter “A” indicates amperes. To find the wattage of appliances marked with amperes, multiply amperes by voltage ($A \times V$). For example, a device marked “120V~ 50/60Hz 1.8A” has a total of 120×1.8 or 216 watts.

See Safety Precautions section below.

Can Appliances from the United States Be Used Overseas?

If your appliances are not dual-voltage, you have several options:

1. Use the appliances you currently use and use transformers. Find out if post will supply your residence with transformers or if you will need to buy them. Most posts will supply a limited number of transformers as part of your household inventory. Transformers will convert 220 -

400 volt electricity to 110 volts but they do not change the cycle frequency from 60 to 50 hertz. This is not an issue for some appliances. Others, such as electric clocks, devices that rely on internal clocks to operate, devices with automatic shutoff features (e.g., coffee makers), hairdryers, and microwave ovens may not function properly on the wrong frequency. Such appliances may need to be replaced with local versions. People departing post may be happy to pass on their locally bought appliances. Check the post newsletter or contact the CLO coordinator for more information.

2. Sell or put into storage your appliances and purchase new ones at the proper voltage of your new country. Ask post whether to buy appliances before arriving. If you need multiple appliances, having local versions can reduce the need to use multiple transformers/converters. On the other hand, purchasing the local versions may increase your personal moving costs.
3. Purchase dual-voltage appliances. Check with post or review post documents in OBC's Post Info to Go databases (or email FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov) before making any purchases.

Surge Protectors and Uninterruptible Power Supply Units

Surge protection is important to prevent damage to electrical and computer equipment when unexpected power surges or brown outs (drop in voltage in an electrical power supply system) occur. Sudden jumps or drops in power levels can happen as a result of electrical storms and poor quality infrastructure in a building or geographic region. Equipment with computer processors and digital storage can be severely damaged and may result in permanent loss of information and files.

An uninterruptible power supply (UPS) further protects computer equipment by providing a steady flow of electricity during surges and brown outs. An uninterruptible power supply (UPS) is a device that allows a computer to keep running for at least a short time when the primary power source is lost. This gives the user time to log off and not lose open files and emails. The UPS will beep when it senses a change in power supply. UPS devices also provide protection from power surges.

TIP: Use an UPS and surge protector for any sensitive or expensive equipment to reduce the possibility of damage or data loss.

Safety Precautions

Electricity operating at 220V is significantly more powerful than the 110V standard found in the United States. Common safety guidelines still apply:

- Do not touch appliances with wet hands.
- Do not use standard appliances in damp or wet conditions.
- Unplug an appliance before disassembling or attempting to make a repair.

- Ensure that appliances are properly grounded.
- Consider placing transformers and surge protectors on a ceramic tile rather than directly on carpeting, wood floors, or other flammable surfaces.
- Protect small children from the ability of touching outlets or sticking things into outlets. Explore using baby-safe options and search for current articles on how to baby proof everything electrical.

Households with children are encouraged to take special care to explain to your children the difference in voltages so that they do not plug equipment into the wrong voltage and cause appliance/electronic device damage, or worse, personal injury or fire.

Take specific precautions with transformers:

- Do not attach an appliance requiring more wattage than the rating of your transformer. When attaching more than one appliance, the total wattage must not exceed the rating of the transformer. For instance, with a 1600-watt transformer do not use a toaster drawing 100 watts at the same time as a waffle iron drawing 1100 watts. The total of such a combination would burn out your transformer.
- Do not purchase any type of transformer with exposed wiring. Buy from a reliable dealer and only those units that conform to established safety standards.
- Do not handle or move a transformer when it is plugged into a socket. Disconnect it first.
- A 1600-watt (or larger) transformer should never be used in an ungrounded socket or with an ungrounded plug. Check with the management office or general services office (GSO) at post if you have questions about the status of outlets in your residence and whether they are grounded or can be modified to make them grounded.
- Finally, do not place your transformers on carpets or near curtains or other combustible surfaces. They should always be kept dry and well ventilated. Transformers do produce heat, but if they are very hot to the touch something is wrong. An electrician should be able to determine if the problem is with the transformer or the appliance.

TELEVISION

Suggested Specifications

Given the variety of standards globally, consider a television that will offer a maximum of flexibility for the foreign affairs lifestyle, such as having a 120V/230V, 50/60Hz universal power capability. This functionality is increasingly common in many consumer electronics today. Also, an LED-based screen is likely to be more resilient and use less energy than a plasma-based display. Depending on the region

of the world, it may also be helpful to have a multi-system option to accommodate NTSC and PAL. However, the issue of encoding is less of a factor than in the past with the growing use of digital networks.

What About a “Smart TV”?

Smart TVs include internet-enabled features that offer a simpler means to connect to online streaming and content delivery services. If you anticipate that your international assignments will be in regions with high-quality internet services, a “smart TV” can be a good option. However, the more sophisticated televisions may experience complications or be unable to use selected features depending on the level and quality of internet service in other regions where internet access is metered or of lower quality compared to the United States. Do your research before you buy.

Local TV Networks

Information about television service providing access to local networks, international news and entertainment channels can be found in the Overseas Briefing Center’s Post Info to Go country profiles and post-specific documents. The technology survey is a good starting point since it provides a report on communications and entertainment services on a post-by-post basis.

DVDS

Maintaining a collection of DVDs can be a reliable way to ensure that your favorite TV shows and movies can be watched regardless of an internet connection, or while en route to your next post. Many laptops and desktop computer systems no longer have a built-in DVD player as a standard option. Purchasing an external DVD drive is also an option.

Depending on where your DVDs were purchased, it is likely they are coded for a specific geographic region. The film industry has divided the world into seven "regions," and DVDs are typically encoded for playback in only one region. For example, DVDs sold in the United States are coded for Region 1 while videos sold in Europe are coded for Region 2. When purchasing DVDs, keep the issue of regions in mind to avoid buying non-playable DVDs for your collection.

Region Code	Geographic Area
0	Unofficially used for a disc that will play in any region
1	United States, Canada, U.S. territories
2	Western Europe, much of Central Europe, the Middle East, Egypt, Greenland, Japan, Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland
3	Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea
4	Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands, Central America, Mexico, South America, and the Caribbean
5	Eastern Europe, Kazakhstan, Indian subcontinent, Africa, (except for the south), North Korea, and Mongolia
6	China
7	Reserved for future use / Unassigned
8	International venues such as aircraft, cruise ships, and other special venues
9	All. Discs with this regional setting can be played in any location on any player DVD players

If you are planning to use a DVD player that was purchased in a country that is different from your country of assignment, it may be possible to activate a “region free” mode so that DVDs from any country can be viewed. Procedures for switching into a “region free” mode vary among DVD players and can often be found by conducting an internet search for how-to sites.

IMPORTANT! Making programming changes to a DVD player is not a guaranteed solution and may result in a non-working device.

Purchasing pirated copies of DVDs contributes to intellectual property theft and could additionally also inadvertently support other criminal activities. The FBI’s website provides additional information about intellectual property theft.

U.S.-Based Entertainment Services

An option for entertainment programming is the use of subscription-based video services like iTunes, Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hulu.

An account with one or more of these services may provide a means to continue viewing TV shows and movies while at an overseas post. However, these U.S.-based services may restrict access to their sites from non-U.S. internet protocol (IP) addresses. While a virtual private network (VPN) service may provide access to an online entertainment subscription, it is advisable to review the terms of service details as usage of a VPN may violate those terms. The OBC technology survey for your post of assignment will include information about the use of VPNs.

TELEPHONES AND VIDEO CALLING

Landlines

Telephone lines in government-leased or government-owned housing are usually managed by the general services office (GSO) or another designated group within the management section of an overseas mission. Maintenance and installation of telephone lines is also handled by an embassy or consulate and therefore personnel assigned to government-managed housing should coordinate with the mission if repairs or upgrades are needed.

Landlines are common in housing at post for regular communications needs and, in some cases, for residential security. Billing for use of the landlines may be managed by the GSO or another group within the management section.

NOTE: U.S. government personnel and their family members are responsible for payment of calling charges associated with their period of occupancy in government-managed housing.

TIP! Keep a record of your move-in/move-out dates for government-managed housing at post so that you can compare call activity with your occupancy dates. While most posts will require a landline in your leased or government-owned assigned residence, it is not a standard worldwide.

With a Living Quarters Allowance

If your housing is being paid for using a living quarters allowance (LQA), costs associated with installation and maintenance of a land line may not be included as part of rent. LQA may be used to pay for rent, utilities, taxes, and related fees (see [DSSR 131.2](#) for a complete listing.)

Mobile Services

In an overseas location that is far from the continental United States, it can be cost prohibitive to use a U.S.-based mobile telephone service package. In such cases, use of local mobile telephone services is the alternative. If your household is assigned to a post in North America, it may be possible to continue using a U.S.-based mobile telephone plan but roaming fees may apply.

What Is Available at Post?

Finding mobile phone options can include a review of materials prepared by the community liaison office (CLO) and a broader internet search. The technology survey, available as part of the Overseas Briefing Center's Post Info to Go database, is also a useful starting point as the types of mobile phone services are outlined on a post-specific basis.

Prepaid or Subscription (Postpaid) Services

Review information from the Post Info to Go database and welcome materials from the community liaison office (CLO) for recommendations of which type of mobile phone service is suggested for use.

In some countries it may be simpler to use a "pay as you go" (prepaid) option rather than setting up a subscription (postpaid) with a local mobile service provider. One potential benefit of a prepaid service is that it reduces the chances of unpaid charges or fees when you depart from post, either on home leave or during a permanent change of station (PCS).

Some foreign cell phone companies provide a U.S. cell number in addition to your local number as part of the plan. If this is the case, a person in the United States can call your U.S. number and it will ring on your cell phone in the foreign country. Ask post if an option like this is available through a local provider.

VoIP

Voice over Internet Protocol (IP) is a digital telephone service that uses the internet to complete telephone calls. Multiple services offer free and low-cost telephone calling options for domestic and international destinations.

Equipment required for VoIP can range from a smartphone device to tablets, laptops, and desktop computers. All services require users to set up an account and typically have a dedicated application or program that is used to make and receive calls. Such a service enables users to connect a "box" to a high-speed internet modem and then an existing telephone handset can be used when connected to the "box."

Subscription plans can be monthly or yearly and include options such as:

- Retaining an existing U.S.-based telephone number.
- Creation of a new, dedicated telephone number in the United States and, in some cases, non-U.S. locations.
- Instant messaging.

International Voice Gateway (IVG) Lines

International Voice Gateway provides a U.S. dial tone (from Maryland area code 301) to users at posts overseas. Using IVG, it is possible to reach people at Department of State annexes supported by the domestic voice network, place toll-free calls, and use calling cards from overseas. Posts have policies on the use of the post IVG line. IVG lines may be available from an embassy or consulate office, but not from your assigned residence.

Personnel and family members assigned to an overseas post can learn about the availability of IVG at their post by reviewing the post's OBC's technology survey, part of the Post Info to Go database.

Information about IVG availability is often included in the 'welcome to post' materials that are prepared by the community liaison office or management office at post. Copies of these materials are also available through the OBC's Post Info to Go database.

International Callback Services

Many different companies offer this option. You dial an access number, let it ring once, then hang up. The company calls you back, providing you with a connection to a phone line in the United States. Some put your right through to the number you wish to ring; others require you to dial the number. By using the company's line, you do not pay the normal outgoing international rate. This procedure may also work well from a mobile phone, particularly in a country where you do not pay to receive incoming calls.

An internet search can help you check which companies provide high-quality services in your country. Be sure to read the fine print to fully understand all billing conditions and procedures. Make sure that using a callback service that does not violate local laws. While the U.S. Federal Communications Commission has determined that callback services do not violate domestic or international laws, some countries have declared them illegal.

Calling Cards

Many companies provide international phone cards, which exist in prepaid or pay-as-you go accounts. These cards provide an option for short-term use or as a means to place calls in the event of an emergency (e.g., if you are without a mobile phone and away from your residence). Using these cards typically involves dialing an access number, possibly a personal identification or card number, and then the number you would like to reach. Investigate the billing structure carefully. Some cards charge a high minimum fee per call or incur weekly service fees once the card is activated. In some cases, calls made to mobile phones incur higher costs than calls to landlines. Ask at post for a good service, conduct an internet search, or purchase one before leaving the United States. You will also find these available for purchase at airports.

Messaging applications

Sending text messages and chats from a personal computer or mobile device can be an easy and less expensive means to stay connected with family and friends while traveling or once you have arrived at your overseas post. The wide variety of messaging applications makes it impractical to list them all but several examples are presented below.

When selecting a messaging/chat application you should consider the types of information you plan on sharing with the chat application and then think about factors such as:

- Are chats encrypted in transit?
- Are chats encrypted so the service provider can't read them?
- Will past communications be secure if your application "keys" are stolen?
- Can you verify the identity of others using the application?
- Does the application automatically change any of your privacy settings on your mobile device?

IMPORTANT! If you are planning to use any messaging app on a government-issued device, be sure to verify that it is approved for use before installing it.

For more information about messaging applications, please see Chapter 31 - Resources and References.

INTERNET ACCESS

Local Services

Connecting to the internet once you have arrived at an overseas post can typically be accomplished through both short-term and long-term service options. Some posts will arrange for internet services to set up in your assigned residence before arrival, others will not. If you are moving into temporary quarters upon arrival, ask about setting up internet in your permanently assigned residence before move-in.

Short-Term Options

Arriving at post often includes the almost immediate need to reestablish communications for both personal and professional contacts. If you are residing in temporary quarters or are in the process of setting up home internet service, it may be possible to use a prepaid cellular modem for internet access.

Cellular modems can be either stand-alone devices or USB-connected units. The modem works in a similar fashion to prepaid mobile phone accounts and credits can be purchased and applied to provide for data services. Depending on the local market, it may be that cellular modems can provide internet access conveniently but at a higher per-megabyte cost than landline internet services.

Using cellular modems for basic email rather than multimedia communications can be a cost-effective way to stay in touch. These modems are also a helpful option if your mobile phone does not offer a tethering capability to share a cellular connection.

Long-Term Service

Internet service for your assigned residence while overseas is increasingly a “must have” rather than an optional communications tool. With the growing use of online accounts and web-based services connected to relocation, a reliable home internet connection should be set up as soon as it is practical. The management office or other designated section in your mission may offer assistance depending on the complexity of working with local internet service providers.

TIP: Once you have confirmed your arrival date, consider coordinating with your sponsor at post to begin planning for the setup of a home internet service. This is especially important for adult family members who telework.

You or a member of your household should be prepared to be available to oversee the installation and setup of a home internet service. Be sure to note all system settings to allow you, or members of your household, to access a modem or router after the initial installation is complete.

What About Using My Own Router?

Personally-owned internet routers can be used in conjunction with digital modems to provide additional customization and security options for a home network.

If using your own router, consider options for surge protection and follow suggested guidelines from the FCC and FTC for enhancing the security of a home network.

Managing Your Home Network

Using wireless access points (i.e., routers) can be a convenient way to improve the availability of internet service in your residence overseas. While your wireless network is active, it is important to secure the connection to reduce the possibility of other people to potentially access devices connected to the network. Check with the information management section at the embassy or consulate for home-network security recommendations. Each country will have its own protocols for internet security.

Cloud-Based Apps and Storage

Relocating to a new post, either domestically or overseas, can now be somewhat easier with the option to store important files and records in cloud-based storage services on the internet. However, some of the most widely used services such as Dropbox, Google Drive, and Microsoft OneDrive can be made more secure with a few adjustments in how you store and upload your files.

The convenience of cloud-based (internet) storage services is often highlighted by the capability to sync files with multiple computers, share documents with other users, and reduce the risk of data loss by storing information outside of your home computer. Many of the cloud storage services offer limited amounts of secure storage capability and, in some cases, maintain the ability to provide access to your files through their encryption key management.

To reduce the chances of your files being disclosed in an unencrypted format, you can create protected (encrypted) versions before uploading them to an internet-based storage system.

Depending on the types of files you are storing online, it might not be necessary to take the extra step of pre-upload encryption. Consider protecting the following types of documents:

- Copies of passports
- Copies of birth records
- Copies of marriage certificates
- Tax records
- Business documents
- Estate planning documents
- Powers of Attorney (POAs) and wills
- Copies of children's school records
- SF-50 and related human resources records (including advanced degrees and other certificates)
- Job application forms and resumes

If you are interested in using an online storage (cloud storage) service and prefer not to go through an additional encryption process before uploading information, a zero-knowledge storage service might offer a solution that fits your needs.

The basic idea of a zero-knowledge service is that the company storing your information does not have any encryption keys to permit them or that any other entity has access to your stored files. In some cases, these vendors also separately store portions of your online data in different geographic locations. When you use these types of storage services, your data gets encrypted locally (i.e., on your home computer) before it is uploaded to the cloud storage space.

What Is the Best Option for Protecting Critical Information?

If any of your personal files are of high importance or would be difficult to replace if lost, it might be a better choice to not use cloud-based storage and keep the information off of the internet altogether. External hard drives with large storage capacities, e.g., 2-4 terabytes or larger, can be readily purchased from online retailers and are increasingly portable. Files can be encrypted and then transferred to the external drive prior to departing for your next post and then the devices can be hand-carried during your transfer.

STORING YOUR INFORMATION - USB FLASH DRIVES, DVDS/CDS, EXTERNAL HARD DRIVES, NAS

USB Flash Drives

Files can be stored and transferred easily using removable flash storage “stick drives” that use the USB connection port on a personal computer. The storage devices can range in size from 4GB to 512GB (and larger). The convenience of these drives and their small size make them useful for storing information while traveling or when relocating to a new country. However, without encryption, the information on a flash drive can be easily copied if the device is lost or stolen.

Consider using a flash drive that offers security features to reduce the risk of data loss. Secure flash drives are available from multiple vendors and the U.S. government regularly issues IronKey® storage devices for official use.

IMPORTANT! Personal data storage devices such as USB flash drives should not be used on U.S. government computer networks or equipment. If you have questions about how to transfer files from a personal device while using a U.S. government computer (e.g., workstations in a community liaison office at post), ask a member of the management team or an IT service desk at post for assistance.

DVDs and CDs

Another option for storing important files and maintaining backups of documents and photos is to “burn” the files onto DVDs or CDs. The portability of these items makes them convenient for transferring to a new post or having additional copies of key documents (e.g., tax files, employment records, payroll receipts, etc.). While many computers continue to include DVD/CD drives as part of their standard configuration, some manufacturers have removed them from laptops. For laptop users it is often possible to purchase an external DVD/CD drive for an additional cost.

Security of files on DVD/CD can be improved by encrypting the information before it is copied onto the DVD/CD. Depending on the operating system of your home computer, there may be multiple options available to apply encryption to individual and groups of files.

Network-Attached Storage (NAS)

A network-attached storage device is a tool that can help a foreign affairs community household manage their digital information (photos, messages, documents, movies, etc.). Because it is portable and secure, this device offers a useful solution for households that relocate overseas and may face a variety of cybersecurity and internet service concerns.

A NAS server, similar to an external hard drive, connects to your router (or switch) using a network cable and allows the storage space to be available to every computer on the network. A NAS acts as a backup destination and also works as a streaming server, file sharing server, and even a personal cloud server.

Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)

A virtual private network (VPN) connection can provide a secure means to communicate information on the internet and also provide options for connecting from different Internet Protocol (IP) addresses. VPN services have been used by people residing overseas to connect to entertainment services for viewing television series and movies from their home country. However, users should be careful to review if the use of a VPN violates any terms of service from the entertainment companies.

Using a VPN does not require special equipment or specific router types, although customized internet routers are available from some vendors. Setting up a VPN involves creating an account with a VPN service provider and then following the provider's instructions to adjust your internet router's settings to use specific internet connections.

Consider your privacy preferences when choosing a VPN service provider and review not only their general scope of services but also the terms and conditions pertaining to the logs that might be created and kept. If privacy is a primary concern for your VPN use, be sure to carefully read (and reread) the logging and privacy policies.

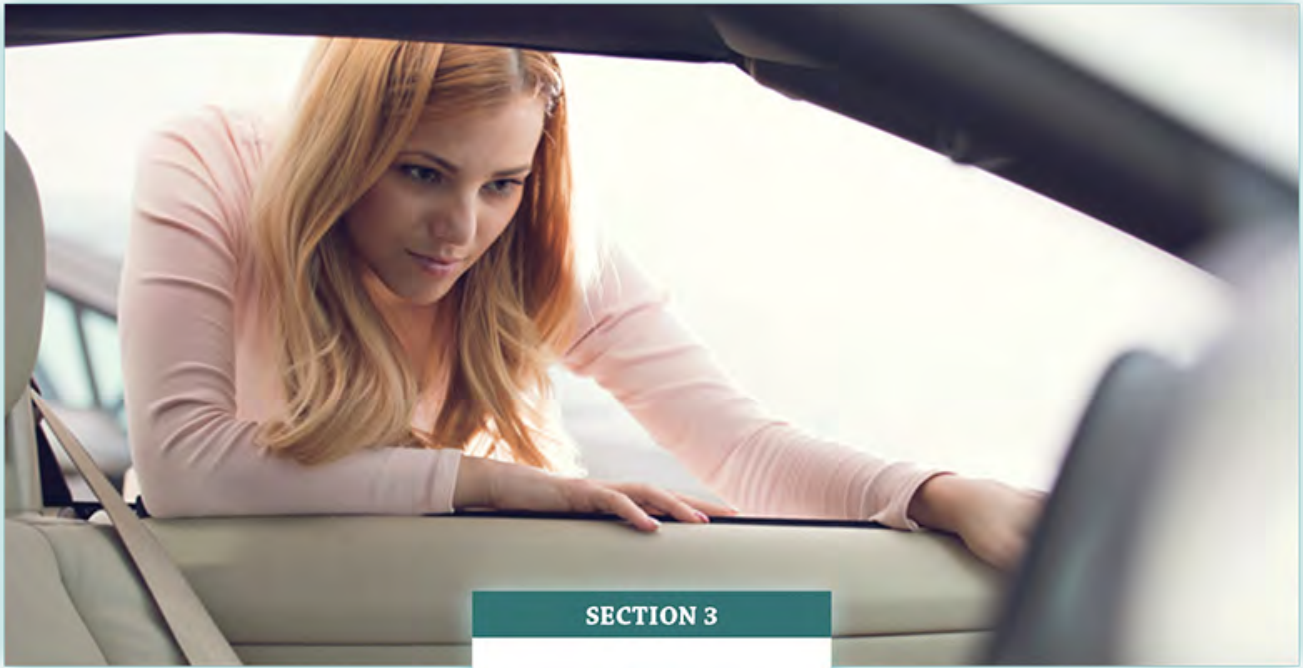
There are multiple resources on the internet that can provide reviews and commentary about the level of privacy and security offered by VPNs. As with any service, be sure to review all applicable options for your requirements and thoroughly research the service's terms and conditions.

It is possible to find free (i.e., no fee) VPN services with an internet search. Using free VPN services may result in issues connected to reliability and security and it is generally recommended to carefully consider such services before relying upon them for long-term and sensitive information transfer. A close review of any free VPN service provider's privacy and logging policies should help clarify what information is collected and kept in exchange for the free service.

There are numerous companies that charge for a VPN services and they can be identified using an internet search. Depending on the country where you will be living, some VPNs may provide better services than others. Conducting online research and soliciting advice from others who are already living in the region can be a reliable way to identify VPN options.

Cybersecurity Awareness

In addition to protecting information that you upload to online accounts and storage services, specific steps should also be considered to protect your identity information while traveling and residing at your assigned post. For more information on cybersecurity awareness, check out the Department of Homeland Security's [Stop. Think. Connect](#) toolkit.



SECTION 3



CHAPTER 16

AUTOMOBILES



ADVANCE CONSIDERATIONS

As foreign affairs professionals travel the world, vehicle import restrictions and preferences for navigating a country's roads and landscape often require the purchase of a different type of car. The buying and selling of vehicles for each new post can become a major expense. You may be able to keep the car you already own, but chances are you might have to make a change in your privately owned vehicle (POV). The following information should help you through the decision-making process.

Department of State Limitations

The Department of State pays for the shipments of one POV per employee. The size of the vehicle may not be more than 800 cubic feet, with any excess being paid by the employee. Additional vehicles may be shipped at owner expense, provided your assigned country's import restrictions allow. For members of the interagency community, check with your logistics office to see if there are any limitations on vehicle shipping for your assigned position and office.

Country-Specific Import Restrictions

Many countries place restrictions on the types of vehicles that can be imported. Certain colors or models may be prohibited, age of the vehicle may be restricted (i.e., no more than five years old), and tinted windows may be illegal. The Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) maintains a listing of worldwide vehicle restrictions. In addition, the TM3 welcome cable and shipping and customs cable from post generally includes this information. Copies of these documents are available through the OBC's Post Info to Go program (accessible only by the foreign affairs community), by emailing FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov, or by visiting the OBC in person.

Contact the general services office (GSO) at post before making any decisions about buying or selling a car. Start by asking GSO if your current car is acceptable. If your current car is unacceptable for import to your newly assigned post, then the Department will provide storage for the duration of your tour. The OBC has contact information for each post if needed.

Local Conditions

Consider the conditions at your future post. If temperatures are very high, air conditioning may be recommended. An alarm system may be helpful if theft is common. If roads are narrow, you may prefer a small vehicle. Check to make sure your vehicle will fit into the garage, carport or even driveway at your newly assigned house or apartment complex and verify the number of vehicles you are allowed to park in any assigned spaces.

Check on the availability of spare parts, either locally or through a supplier in the United States. Also identify repair services for your particular vehicle make and model. (Remember that warranty and part numbers may be different overseas, even for the same model of car).

Find out if a car is even necessary. Some posts offer great public transportation and housing near the embassy or consulate.

OBC's Personal Post Insights offer recommendations on the type of vehicle to bring to post. You may also want to check with the community liaison office for suggested vehicle makes and models. Ask if there are any makes/models to avoid.

New Cars vs. Used Cars

Some posts require new models or cars in near-perfect condition. New cars may be more reliable than older cars and require less maintenance. In addition, new car loans may carry a lower interest rate than used car loans.

Having said that, new cars are expensive and much of the value is lost in the first few years. Also, new car warranties may not be valid overseas, negating peace of mind as a factor. In some countries, new cars may stand out and present a target for theft or other crime. And if you plan to sell the vehicle at the end of your tour, you will want to make sure you can sell at a reasonable price to avoid a financial loss. (See Selling a Car below.)

Driving conditions are often challenging overseas. Encountering potholes, poorly maintained roadways, and the possibility of fender-benders might be determining factors in deciding to purchase a used car vs. possible damage to a newly bought vehicle.

Four-Wheel Drive

Post information may indicate that four-wheel drive vehicles are necessary. Double-check this information before making an expensive purchase. Ask about the condition of roads in the city, the neighborhood where you will be living, and the commute to work, school (if you have children), and shopping areas. Ask when, where, and how often a four-wheel drive vehicle is needed. Find out if vehicles are available for rent at post for occasional trips to places with poor roads.

Note that expensive sports utility vehicles are popular targets for carjacking and theft and are not permitted at some posts for that reason.

Research the price of gas. Larger vehicles (especially V8 engines) might be less gas efficient than a mid-size or smaller vehicle.

Right-Hand Drive

Again, opinions vary as to whether to buy a different car if traveling to a country with right-hand drive. Some countries do not allow cars with U.S. configurations. In others, it is your choice. It is probably cheaper to keep the car that you already own, and many families have reported no problems with driving "on the wrong side of the road" (other than horrified stares from bystanders). Be mindful

that visibility is not as good, turning may become confusing, roundabouts hard to navigate, and insurance premiums may be more expensive. It is easy to slip back into driving on the right side of the road (U.S.-style) by mistake which can cause an accident. With this in mind, you may find that buying a car that conforms to local standards proves practical if you are posted to other right-hand drive posts or if you can resell the vehicle at a minimum loss.

One Car, Two Cars

Not more than one vehicle may be transported to a post of assignment (see [14 FAM 615.3](#), [14 FAM 615.4](#), and [14 FAM 615.5](#) for exceptions). You may choose to ship a second vehicle at your own expense or purchase one at post. The need for a second car depends on your family circumstances, local transportation options, embassy commuting information, and personal preferences. Again, check with post for local conditions.

BUYING A CAR

Foreign Service families who need to purchase a vehicle have more options than their U.S. counterparts. These include:

Diplomatic Auto Sales

The OBC provides a list of companies that sell to diplomats overseas. Prices may be discounted, but makes and models may be limited. Contact the OBC at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov for more information.

Foreign Car Manufacturers

Some foreign car manufacturers offer discounts to diplomats overseas. You may be able to pick up a car at the factory and drive it to post at the U.S. government expense on a cost-constructive basis (meaning that you may be reimbursed up to the cost of shipping a car from the United States.) If the car is made locally, it should be easy to find parts and repair facilities.

Purchasing a Used Vehicle upon Arrival

People leaving post may want to sell their vehicles to incoming personnel and family members. The post newsletter or CLO Facebook page is a good place to check the post “buy and sell” marketplace. You may even want to place an ad letting departing employees know that you are in the market for a used vehicle.

A big advantage to buying a vehicle either before arriving at post or upon arrival is the certainty of having “wheels” when you land on the ground or in your first week. Ask as many questions as possible up front. Ask someone to examine the car, and ask if the owner has maintenance records for the vehicle. You may also ask a local mechanic to inspect the car before purchase. Make sure that any exemptions the car has received from local laws will pass to a new owner.

Dealers at Post

Ask post about whether purchasing a car on the local economy is an option. If so, request information on local dealerships, costs, tax rebates, registration, and other considerations.

If you purchase a car no more than 30 days before leaving, you may not have to register the car in the United States, resulting in substantial savings. New cars may need to be registered in the United States for the warranty to be valid so be sure to check all the facts.

Car Buying Services in the United States

Services such as the State Department Federal Credit Union (SDFCU) priority assist car buying service can provide other purchasing options. For instance, the SDFCU located a car in Texas for an officer to purchase and drive to his new post in Mexico.

Ask lots of questions about car loans. In some cases, lenders require the car loan to be paid off before leaving the United States, resulting in unexpected last-minute paperwork difficulties and costs. If you plan to take a car that is still being financed out of the country, you will need a letter from the lending institution granting you permission to do so. In addition, the shipping company will require a copy of the title. Investigate a new bank loan if needed. The SDFCU is one financial institution that will allow even newly-financed vehicles to leave the country and they will provide you with the title of the vehicle.

SELLING A CAR

Be sure to always keep the title of your vehicle with you in your moving paperwork. Don't let it get packed with your household effects.

It is risky to sell your car overseas to a local resident or local dealership. A wiser option is to limit selling the car either to someone at the embassy/consulate or to another diplomat from another country. There are many rules in place about selling a car at post, including limitations on the profit that may be made. Check with the management office in advance of selling your vehicle to make sure you follow post regulations and complete the proper paperwork for the sale.

SHIPPING A CAR

Arranging the Shipment

Start the process by working with your transportation counselor to determine how to arrange the shipment. The counselor will work with you to gather any required documents and will also make the arrangements for a drive-away firm to pick up the car at your residence. Employees can use the DOS Personal Change of Station (PCS) Portal to submit their POV shipment request. Ask your transportation counselor for instructions.

Required Documents

Employees **MUST** have all these documents to set up a POV shipment:

1. **Completed form JF-49**, available at logistics management on Intranet. Please ensure block 13A is complete; contact your car dealership or mechanic to inquiry where to locate this information. You must return all pages and ensure a signature on **“EMPLOYEE CERTIFICATION”** page 3 of this form. **Enter the vehicle’s physical pick up address in block 4** and enter your preferred pick up date in block 15.
2. **Clear scanned copy of both front and back of the vehicle title as follows:**
 - If you already own the vehicle and title is under your name, provide a copy of that title.
 - If there is a lien on your vehicle and you do not have a copy of the paper title, your lien holder **MUST** request a copy of actual paper title from DMV/MVA. The Office of Travel and Transportation does not accept the vehicle transcript from VinTek or any form of e-title in lieu of a paper title.
 - If you recently purchased a used vehicle (e.g., Carmax, dealership, etc.), ask for a copy of the current paper title signed over in your name on the back. You do not have to wait to receive a new title under your name for export.
 - If your vehicle is being purchased brand new, a “certificate of origin” provided by the dealership will work for export in lieu of the title. The certificate of origin should be signed over in your name on the back.
3. **Copy of the letter from the lien holder (if applicable) allowing export of vehicle.** Provide a letter (copy) from the lien holder allowing export of your vehicle if there is a lien on the vehicle, you are financing it, or if the title shows the name of a financial institution.
4. **Copy of the Travel Authorization**
5. **Copy of the bio photo page of diplomatic passport (clear scan/copy)**

6. **Copy of the bill of sale.** Applies to recently purchased (new or used) vehicles only. If you paid in full, the bill of sale/buyer's order must show as such or provide documentation to show it was paid in full, i.e. reflect a zero balance due or be stamped "paid in full".
7. **Copy of the marriage certificate.** If your vehicle title is not in the name of the employee (for instance it is in the name of the employee's spouse), proof of a marriage certificate will be required to register the vehicle in your country of assignment. It is recommended that the vehicle be in the employee's name, regardless if the EFM is listed on travel authorization.
8. **Limited Power of Attorney.** Complete the Power of Attorney, enclosed at the end of this chapter. Leave first two lines blank (comp rep & forwarder name) and complete the remaining portion. The document does not have to be notarized.

DO NOT SEND PHOTOS/PICTURES OF YOUR DOCUMENTS!

Preparing the Vehicle

Contact your post regarding recommended vehicle preparation. The motor, brakes, windshield wipers, lights, horn and exhaust system should be in good operating condition. Check to see that the battery is fully charged, and that the cooling system contains sufficient antifreeze to prevent freezing in transit. Other shipping requirements and tips include:

- The car must be shipped with one spare tire and the jack assembly (these are mandatory).
- Consult your shipper about the required gas level in your gas tank.
- Do not put anything in the trunk or rear area of the car that is not standard equipment. Extra spare parts or tires should be shipped with household effects. Hubcaps, floor mats, ashtrays, tools, or anything else that could potentially be stolen should be removed and shipped with your household goods.
- Remove any paperwork in your glove compartment.
- Take pictures of your vehicle. Document any existing scratches or dents. Compare these photos with the condition of the car upon arrival at post. If there are new dents and scratches or other damage, consult the shipping and customs office for proper procedure for repairs and paint touch-up.
- A complete set of keys accompanies the vehicle (provided to the shipper). Pack your other keys in your carry-on so it is assessable upon arrival at post.

Shipping Times

Shipping times for cars will vary upon several factors including weather, the number of ships available, and conditions at post, but it is wise to plan for at least one month or more. Discuss arrival

times with your transportation counselor who will be familiar with shipping times for a given area.

Should employees wish to know the current status of their POV shipments, they may contact Transportation Operations at (800) 424-2947.

Picking up the Vehicle

When picking up a car at post, remember that the fluids may have been drained during the shipping process. Locate a service station near the pickup point in advance and plan to immediately fill the gas tank and top up the oil and other fluids as needed.

DRIVING AT POST

Driving in a foreign country should be considered a privilege. Rules of the road in any country are conditioned by culture and may be quite different from U.S. driving behavior. Information about traffic regulations, local laws, and customs can be obtained from the management office or the CLO at post. Although diplomatic immunity can offer certain protections, diplomats and their family members are expected to obey local traffic laws. Diplomatic immunity can be waived by the chief of mission (with permission of the Department of State) if it is in the U.S. interest to do so.

You will need a valid U.S. driver's license in order to acquire one in the host country. Some posts require an international driver's license. The host country driver's license will be valid only for the period that the U.S. license is valid. If you have a U.S. driver's license, you can obtain an international driver's permit, valid for one year, from the American Automobile Association (AAA). Teenagers may find that, though they have a valid U.S. license, host country age requirements may prevent them from obtaining a driver's license overseas.

Repairs

Check with your new post regarding availability of replacement parts and supplies. Parts such as air filters, oil filters, fuel filters, spark plugs, belts, fuses, and windshield wipers can be easily packed in your household effects if they are difficult to locate or expensive at post. (Metric sizes may make it difficult to find an exact fit.) If you are short on space, the right hoses and belts can often be "created" locally. If you are not sure what to take, contact a reliable mechanic or dealership and explain that you need to take supplies for all the maintenance that your vehicle will need over the next two or three years. They may be willing to help you make a list and even put together a package for you.

It also may be useful to talk to a U.S. dealership or your current mechanic about the possibility of sending parts to you as needed. Other strategies include enlisting the help of family members, picking up parts when visiting the United States, or using a parts dealer or online service.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

There are two automobile insurance categories under which your car can be covered: 1) comprehensive insurance, which covers loss or physical damage done to your car, and 2) collision insurance, which covers damage or harm which you might cause while driving your car. The comprehensive insurance can most likely be obtained from your U.S. insurer. The collision insurance must be obtained at the post where you are assigned.

Most posts require that an automobile primary (also called third-party) liability policy be issued in the host country. Your post will have extensive experience with this type of coverage and can help provide you with resources, options, and cost estimates. Coverage and premiums vary widely.

If the locally purchased primary liability policy provides inadequate limits of coverage, additional coverage called “excess liability coverage” is available through U.S. brokers. Adequate coverage is highly recommended.

Marine insurance, which covers the loss or damage of an automobile while it is being transported by sea, is a matter of personal choice; however, remember that the Military and Civilian Personnel Claims Act does not fully cover privately owned vehicles. Shipping records show that catastrophic loss or damage to vehicles shipped overseas is extremely rare and that minor damage—cracked windshields, missing accessories, frayed tires—may not exceed the deductible and may, in fact, be less than the cost of insurance. Nevertheless, the Department strongly recommends purchase of personal marine insurance. (See also Chapter 30 - Insurance.)

**LIMITED POWER OF ATTORNEY
FOR
EXPORT/IMPORT OF PERSONAL EFFECTS**

Date: _____

Applies to:

POV: ☐ **Initial Here:** _____

I hereby name and appoint (Company Rep) _____
(Please Print)

Of (name of Forwarder) _____ be my lawful attorney-in-fact to act on my behalf to conduct all transactions necessary with the U.S. Customs Service in the proper exportation or importation of the below stated **vehicle** which is described as

Year	Make	Model	Color	Body
Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)		Title Number	Engine Number	

and do all things necessary to ensure compliance with all requirements pursuant to section 192 of Customs Regulations.

_____ Signature of Owner	_____ Owner's Name (please print)
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_____ Signature of Co-Owner	_____ Co-Owner's Name (please print)
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_____ Home Address of Owner	_____ City/State/Country	_____ Zip code
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CHAPTER 17

CONTINGENCY PLANNING



EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Foreign Service families have always lived with the possibility of evacuation. The number and variety of reasons for evacuations has increased during recent years. The Department of State takes responsibility for the following:

1. Informing you of the emergency evacuation plan for your post
2. Transporting you to a safe haven

3. Paying for shipping your air freight or giving you an allowance in lieu of shipping the air freight (usually this is for cases where the employee does not have time to arrange for air freight shipment prior to leaving post)
4. Paying you an evacuation allowance during the length of your evacuation, up to 180 days, and a daily transportation allowance
5. Returning you to post or transferring you to a new assignment

The Global Community Liaison Office (M/GTM/GCLO) is the main point of contact for evacuees. GCLO's Crisis Management and Support Team has primary responsibility in GCLO for evacuee assistance and support. GCLO does the following:

- Responds to questions about evacuation allowance payments
- Helps organize town hall meetings
- Answers questions about the evacuation process
- Provides guidance and referrals to help solve problems related to evacuations
- Explains Separate Maintenance Allowance

With the active assistance of CLO coordinators from the evacuated posts, GCLO maintains communication with the evacuees, the posts, and the affected bureaus through newsletters, emails, conference calls, and town hall meetings. The affected bureau may form a working group to deal with personnel and administrative issues during an evacuation.

For a thorough guide to help you prepare for an evacuation, see the GCLO publication, "[You've been evacuated. Now what?](#)". Information for evacuees is available on GCLO's [Crisis Management - Post Evacuations](#) webpage.

DIVORCE

When employees or family members consider a separation or divorce overseas, they may discover that access to marital and legal counseling presents a major problem. Referrals may be found within the overseas community by consulting the regional medical officer (RMO), the health unit, CLO coordinator, and the RMO/psychiatrist (RMO/P).

Trained professional help may be available in country or at a neighboring post. Professional help and confidential counseling by clinical social workers are also available from the Employee Consultation Service (ECS), by appointment in person, by telephone, or digital video teleconferencing in some locations. ECS also sponsors a monthly divorce and separation support group. Email

MEDECS@state.gov or call (703) 812-2257 for further details. Also visit the GCLO's [Divorce and Separation](#) webpage for more information.

When finalizing a divorce, employees should be mindful of changes in paperwork within the Department or their agency regarding designations of beneficiaries, travel orders, and any other online databases. See more information below.

Considerations

Legal counsel can be difficult to locate overseas and foreign national lawyers are not generally familiar with U.S. domestic law. Divorce information is available in GCLO's [Divorce and the Foreign Service](#) webpage for more information.

All direct-hire Department of State employees and eligible family members can access WorkLife4You. The [WorkLife4You](#) website contains information related to divorce (including state laws and procedures) and a variety of other topics. For logon information, contact the Overseas Briefing Center at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.

Leaving Post

If departure travel together is not possible and one spouse will be returning to the United States without the other, issues that should be addressed are:

1. **Method of Departure:** The spouse may return on "Advance Departure of Family member(s) from Post" orders. (See [14 FAM 532.3-14](#) and [14 FAM 536.1-2](#).)
2. **Shipment of Household Effects:** These orders can also authorize the shipment of household effects from the post ([14 FAM 618.1](#)). The chief of mission or the principal officer must request such orders from the employee's agency or the regional bureau at the Department of State. The employee must sign a repayment agreement against their eventual transfer or, alternatively, the employee may send the family members home at personal expense and claim reimbursement later when the employee is transferred under routine reassignment procedures.
3. **Reason for Departure:** It is advisable for the couple to draft a document that clearly indicates that the separation is mutually agreed upon so that neither party will be liable for desertion of the other at a later date.
4. **Goods in Storage:** A spouse is not automatically entitled access to goods in storage. It is recommended that couples sign a Joint Property Statement when placing goods into storage. (A sample of such a statement appears at the end of this chapter.) When signed by both parties and notarized, this statement will allow either spouse to access goods held in storage. The statement

does not, however, make the Department of State liable for costs pertaining to the access, transportation, or separation of such items before the regularly authorized time of removal.

5. **Receiving Goods from Post:** A spouse must have written authority from the employee in order to sign for the delivery of goods shipped from post if the employee cannot be present. A sample form “Authorization to Receive Goods Shipped from Post” is included at the end of this section.

Children and Separation

Eligibility for all allowances is based on whether or not the child normally resides with the employee.

Children (including stepchildren) can receive one paid visit per year to visit their parent when the employee is assigned abroad. [3 FAM 3750](#), Travel of Children of Separated Families provides one round trip every 12 months for each child below the age of 21 to visit the other parent with whom the child does not normally reside.

The travel is paid from the post to the nearest point of entry in the United States or vice versa. Further details about this benefit are outlined in [3 FAM 3750](#). When the children are on Involuntary Separate Maintenance Allowance (ISMA), the child may travel to an alternate location to meet up with the parent as they are not allowed to visit a post with an “unaccompanied” status. There are no provisions in the regulations for payment for an adult to accompany the children.

Garnishment of Wages

If a court order states that an employee or retiree is obligated to pay alimony and child support and the employee/retiree fails to do so, the Department can garnish the wages to remove the arrears. Writs of garnishment must be obtained from the court and sent to the appropriate legal office in the employee’s agency for processing. Contact the Crisis Management team in GCLO for more information.

Medical and Health Concerns

Former Spouse Health Benefits

Once the divorce is final, a former spouse is no longer an eligible family member and loses coverage under the employee’s Federal Employee Health Benefit (FEHB) plan, subject to a 31-day extension of coverage. To avoid a gap in health insurance coverage, the former spouse may continue FEHB coverage under the temporary continuation of coverage (TCC) provision for up to 36 months. The TCC option requires the former spouse to pay both the employee’s and the federal government’s portion of the FEHB premiums, plus a two percent administrative charge.

The former spouse may also have the option to enroll in the FEHB under the spousal equity provision, provided the following requirements are met:

1. The former spouse does not remarry before age 55, and
2. The former spouse was enrolled in the employee's FEHB plan as a family member at any time during the 18 months preceding the date of divorce or annulment, and
3. The former spouse receives or has future entitlement to receive an annuity or survivor annuity payable under the Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System (FSRDS) or the Foreign Service Pension System (FSPS).

Generally, a former spouse must enroll within 60 days after the dissolution of marriage. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website outlines FEHB coverage for former spouses. Visit the [OPM](#) site, read the chapter in the FEHB Handbook relating to former spouses, and check the FAQs, also available on the OPM site. Contact the Human Resources Service Center at HRSC@state.gov for information on how to enroll in former spouse FEHB benefits.

Other Family Member Entitlements

Children may remain on the employee's health plan regardless of which parent has custody. Family members returning from post are entitled to a physical examination with the Department of State medical offices. For further information regarding health concerns, contact the Bureau of Medical Services. Employees and family members with the Department of State, USAID, the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS), and Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) contemplating separation or divorce can contact MED's Employee Consultation Service (ECS) for confidential, free counseling related to divorce and other family concerns. Contact ECS at MEDECS@state.gov.

Entitlements for Former Spouses

Former spouses have a default entitlement to a pro rata marital share of the annuity, survivor annuity and health benefits coverage if the following conditions have been met:

1. Former spouse must have been married to annuitant for at least 10 years of the employee's creditable service (civilian or military), with five of these years occurring while the employee was in the Foreign Service; and
2. Have been divorced from employee after February 15, 1981, and
3. Have not remarried prior to age 55 or expressly waived spousal benefits under the Foreign Service Act of 1980.

A qualified court order or a valid spousal agreement will take precedence over the above-noted provisions. For additional guidance, contact HRSC@state.gov.

DEATH

Preparing oneself for surviving a spouse is not easy. This section clarifies some of the major actions, obligations, and requirements that affect the survivor. Since this section does not cover every possible circumstance or describe the scope and limitations of every benefit, the Foreign Affairs Manual ([3 FAM 2550](#), Deaths in Service) should be consulted for more details. For information about death benefits in cases of death in the performance of duty or due to a terrorist incident, please consult [3 FAM 3650](#).

For the purposes of this section, it is assumed that there is a surviving family member at post. In the case of an employee who dies in travel status or while assigned to the United States, or whose family members are not at post, some aspects of this discussion might not apply. Particular circumstances may also influence the benefits available.

How to Prepare

Once a year, the employee and their next of kin should review any previous decisions and plans in the light of changes in the family's circumstances. They should examine the financial resources that would be available to the survivors and bring information on assets and liabilities up to date. They should review wills and letters of instruction and discuss the family's needs and how these needs would be met. They should answer questions such as how income could be supplemented, if necessary; where the family would live; and what kind of insurance they would need. A frank discussion of each family member's wishes concerning medical care in the event of medical incompetence or the artificial maintenance of life is vital. For more information regarding designations of beneficiaries, please see "Designation of Beneficiaries" below.

If circumstances have changed, the employee should review their electronic official personnel file (eOPF) and update their designation of beneficiary forms for unpaid compensation and unused annual leave (SF-1152), FEGLI life insurance (SF-2823), and Foreign Service Pension System (DS-5002) or Civil Service (SF-3102 or SF-2808) return of retirement benefits. The revised forms should be sent to the HR Service Center at HRSC@state.gov for processing. If the employee wishes to update their designation of beneficiary form for Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), they should mail the revised form TSP-3 directly to the TSP address indicated on the form. The TSP-3 form is housed and maintained at the TSP. After sending in beneficiary forms to be updated, it is important employees later visit eOPF to ensure new form are scanned and included in eOPF. This kind of preparation will assist survivors confronted with new realities and the need to make many immediate decisions.

The Office of Casualty Assistance (GTM/OCA) is the Department of State's first and primary contact in the event of the death of a Department of State employee, dependent, or eligible family member. OCA serves as the liaison between surviving family members, post, and the various benefits offices. OCA will explain to beneficiaries the various benefits and the necessary claim forms. This office plays an enhanced role when death is due to an act of international terrorism. OCA can help identify the needs of families, research answers to questions families may have, and refer families to other offices and services within the Department, at another agency, or in the community that may be of assistance. OCA can also advocate for families. Contact the Office of Casualty Assistance at oca@state.gov.

Overseas Procedures

Post will immediately notify the OCA, which will contact survivors either at post or in the United States. Consular and management personnel at post brief the survivor on the local situation regarding disposition of remains: regulations and restrictions, practitioners, and the availability of suitable containers. Note: Local laws and practices vary greatly and may be in conflict with the wishes of the family.

Consular personnel also prepare (and provide the survivor with at least 12 copies of) Form DS-2060, Report of Death of an American Citizen Abroad. This form is often used in connection with estate proceedings and is required as a basis for many of the government allowances and benefits described below. Form DS-2060 is not a substitute for telegraphic notification of the death from the post, nor is it the same as a certificate of death (a document issued by local authorities that verifies a person's death). The certificate of death, if issued in another language, should be translated into English. Consular personnel can usually prepare an official translation. If death resulted from an accident, the locally-issued certificate of death along with police reports and newspaper articles may be important for claiming insurance benefits. The survivor should review these documents carefully for accuracy.

The family of the deceased can expect the following from their home agency:

- Expenses in connection with remains: reasonable cost of preparing remains including the cost of embalming or cremating; casket or container suitable for shipment to the place of interment; necessary clothing
- Expenses incurred in complying with local and U.S. laws
- Transportation of remains from place of death to any place in the United States designated by next of kin
- Travel expenses for family members from the post to the place of interment

- Return of family to post to complete the school year and/or for packing out upon request and authorization by post
- Shipment of household effects to separation address as designated by next-of-kin any time within 12 months of the date of death
- Storage at U.S. government expense for up to 90 days of household effects at point of origin or destination, and of permanent storage from the last day the employee was in pay status. (Waivers can be requested in both instances on a case-by-case basis for extenuating circumstances but may not exceed 180 days.)
- Travel of family from post to selected location in the United States. This travel is the “final trip” from post and must take place within one year from the date of death of the employee.

The 12-month limit for expenses may be extended for an additional six months by an authorizing officer (orders must be amended). Expenses for travel, transportation of effects, and shipment of remains to the separation residence designated by the next of kin are paid for by the home agency. Although the designated separation residence must be in the United States, a foreign location may be used for any or all of the above on a cost-constructive basis.

Note: It may not always be possible for the survivor to be present at post to supervise packing of household effects.

Regulations and Allowances

While the survivor is at post, administrative personnel can provide information on the various regulations that affect them.

All allowances stop when the employee dies. However, Living Quarters Allowance (LQA) ([DSSR 130](#)) may, if authorized by the deceased employee’s agency, be extended for up to 60 days beyond the date of death. (If the employee was assigned to government-provided housing and therefore was not receiving LQA, surviving family members may remain in this housing at the post’s discretion.) Also, claims for the Education Allowance ([DSSR 270](#)) that were already processed at time of death do not, for practical purposes, have to be refunded.

When the survivor arrives in the United States, the Office of Casualty Assistance will remain their first and primary point of contact and will advise and assist on all aspects of survivor benefits and entitlements. OCA can provide guidance on the Home Service Transfer Allowance, workers’ compensation, and other benefits and entitlements. OCA can also provide information on resources and grief counseling (OCA@state.gov). The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO@state.gov) can advise and answer inquiries about spouse employment, continuing education, and education of

children. The Employee Consultation Service (MEDECS@state.gov) can provide grief counseling and make referrals.

Designations of Beneficiaries

Before describing the various benefits to which a survivor may be entitled, a word needs to be said about designation of beneficiary forms, which can be located in the employee's Official Personnel File (eOPF). An employee may designate beneficiaries for unpaid salary and unused annual leave, any lump sum payments due under the retirement system, Federal Employees Group Life Insurance benefits and the Thrift Savings Plan by filing appropriate designation of beneficiary forms for each of these payments. The forms allow the employee to designate by name and relationship the person or persons to whom the particular payment will be made, and in what share.

If no beneficiary has been designated, payment will be made according to the legal order of precedence, spelled out precisely on each form, beginning with entire amount to the surviving spouse, to child or children in equal shares, to parents in equal shares, or the entire amount to the surviving parent, or to a duly appointed legal representative of the estate of the deceased employee. It is not necessary to designate a beneficiary unless the employee wishes to name a person or persons not included in the order of precedence or to name them in a different order or for a different share. However, a signed designation of beneficiary form streamlines the payment process and makes it easier for the survivor. Another point to keep in mind is that when a minor child becomes a beneficiary (either named or through the order of precedence), special court action becomes necessary that can greatly slow the payment process. Instead, the employee may want to consider designating the person who will be the child's guardian or the executor of the estate (by name) in order to avoid this difficulty, or create a trust for the children and designate it as the beneficiary. It is advisable to consult an estate attorney to determine the best option.

Designations on the forms described below are not affected by a will. The employee may change or cancel a designation at any time by filing a new form (which completely cancels any designation filed previously).

Four different forms are involved. Filing one does not have any bearing on the others and different beneficiaries may be designated on each. An employee's family situation may change due to marriage, divorce, death, birth or any number of other circumstances. Such changes may warrant a cancellation of prior designation, or new designations. Remember that changes in designation do not occur automatically, but must be made by the employee.

Unpaid Compensation and Designation of Beneficiary

Unpaid compensation due a deceased employee may include unpaid salary through the date of death, all amounts due in reimbursement of travel expenses, payment for all annual leave to which the employee was entitled as of the date of death, and unpaid allowances due the employee. The form for designating the beneficiary of any such unpaid compensation is Standard Form 1152, Designation of Beneficiary (Unpaid Compensation of Deceased Civilian Employee).

The form must be forwarded to the human resources officer at post for signature and inclusion in the employee's official personnel folder, or can be emailed to the HR Service Center at HRSC@state.gov. The form for filing a claim for this unpaid compensation is Standard Form 1153, Claim of Designated Beneficiary and/or Surviving Spouse for Unpaid Compensation of Deceased Civilian Employee. This form should be submitted to the Office of Casualty Assistance with supporting documentation, as requested.

Survivor Benefits under the Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System (FSRDS)

In the event an employee member of the Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System (FSRDS) dies during active service, a surviving spouse is entitled (unless otherwise provided a spousal agreement) to a regular survivor annuity provided that the employee had at least five years of service credit under FSRDS excluding any credit for military service, and either the surviving spouse was married to the employee for at least nine months immediately preceding the death or is the parent of a child born of the marriage. In order to qualify, the spouse must elect to receive the Foreign Service survivor annuity in lieu of any other survivor annuity under the Foreign Service, Civil Service, or other retirement system for government employees. The maximum amount of survivor annuity under FSRDS is 55% of the employee's full annuity. This amount may be divided between a current spouse and any qualifying former spouses. (A qualifying former spouse is one who has a default entitlement to a survivor benefit or was awarded a survivor benefit through a court order or notarized spousal agreement. See the [Entitlements for Former Spouses](#) section above.)

Survivor benefits are not actually paid until a qualified survivor submits a claim (DS-5022, Application for Death Benefits) to GTM/OCA for processing and it has been approved by the Department. However, payments are retroactive to the day following the employee's death.

Survivor Benefits under the Foreign Service Pension System (FSPS)

In the event of a death-in-service of an employee who was hired after January 1, 1984, or who transferred to FSPS and who had at least 18 months creditable civilian service, benefits are payable to

the eligible survivors. If the employee had more than 18 months of civilian service but less than 10 years of total service, the eligible spouse will receive a Basic Employee Death Benefit (BEDB) that may be taken in either a lump sum or over a 36-month period. The BEDB is equal to:

1. A lump-sum payment of \$34,542.01 (as of February 1, 2021); plus
2. 50% of the employee's final salary or high three average salary, whichever is higher.

In addition to the above BEDB payment, if the employee completed 10 years of creditable federal service, the surviving spouse may be entitled to a survivor annuity. The maximum amount of survivor annuity under FSPS is 50% of the employee's full annuity.

To be eligible for a child survivor annuity, a child must either be under age 18 or under age 22 and an unmarried full-time student, or disabled and incapable of self-support regardless of age.

The following child rates apply from December 1, 2020 through November 30, 2021. When the child has a living parent who was married to the deceased employee or retiree, the benefit payable to that child is the lesser of:

1. \$552 per month per child; or
2. \$1,656 per month divided by the number of eligible children (if over 3).

When the child has no living parent who was married to the deceased employee or retiree, the benefit payable to that child is the lesser of:

1. \$663 per month per child; or
2. \$1,989 per month divided by the number of eligible children (if over 3).

Under FSPS, the amount of the total children's annuity is reduced by the amount of Social Security children's benefits that are paid.

Refund of Retirement Contributions (3 FAM 6000)

If there is no survivor annuity and/or child benefit payable, then a lump-sum payment, consisting of a refund of retirement contributions that were deducted from the salary of an employee, is payable following the death of an employee or former employee of the Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System (FSRDS) or the Foreign Service Pension System (FSPS). This benefit is payable to the beneficiaries as specified on the most recent designation made on Form DS-5002, Designation of Beneficiary by the employee or by law.

Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Benefits (FEGLI)

The surviving spouse of a deceased employee who was enrolled in the FEGLI program may be a beneficiary as a result of having been so designated by the employee on Standard Form 2823, FEGLI Designation of Beneficiary, or as a result of the order of precedence if no designation of beneficiary was made. The Office of Casualty Assistance in Washington, DC is responsible for advising the beneficiary immediately and for assisting the beneficiary in filing a claim for benefits (Form FE-6, FEGLI Claim for Death Benefits). Payment should be made within 60 days of FEGLI's receipt of the completed claim package.

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

Employees enrolled in FSRDS or FSPS may have a Thrift Savings Plan account. All employees enrolled in FSPS have an account since the employing agency contributes 1% of salary on behalf of every employee regardless of whether the employee participates. Designation of beneficiary for TSP is made by completing form TSP-3 and submitting it to the TSP office. The surviving spouse or other next of kin must apply for payment using form TSP-17. TSP will then contact the designated beneficiary directly.

Medical Examination for Surviving Dependents

When an employee dies in service, eligible dependents who have ever accompanied the employee are eligible for a medical examination ([16 FAM 219 b.](#)). The examination should take place within 90 days of the employee's death (although an exception can be made by the medical director). Dependents over the age of 12 may be examined at the Department of State's Examination Clinic or by a family physician with reimbursement from the employee's agency; dependents under age 12 are normally examined by a family physician or pediatrician with expenses reimbursed by the employee's agency.

Federal Employees Health Benefits Coverage (FEHB)

A survivor is entitled to continue the FEHB if they will be entitled to a survivor's benefit (either a survivor annuity and the Basic Employee Death Benefit) upon the employee's or annuitant's death. If the survivor annuity is not enough to cover the FEHB premium, the surviving spouse would be billed for the difference.

Eligible survivors may receive benefits through Social Security and Veterans Administration programs as well.

Compensation for work-related death substantial financial benefits administered by the Department of Labor, Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) are available to survivors of a civilian

employee of the U.S. government whose death results from personal injuries (including disease) sustained in the performance of duty under the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 8101-8150. The death must have been proximately caused, i.e., due to or aggravated by employment. These benefits are not available when death was caused by the willful misconduct of the employee, where the employee's intention was to bring about their own or someone else's death, or when intoxication was the proximate cause of injury or death.

Survivors may be entitled to benefits pursuant to the Federal Employees Compensation Act if the employee's death was the result of a service-connected injury or illness. These benefits, described below, can be significantly greater than those the survivor would receive under the Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System or the Foreign Service Pension System (survivors entitled to benefits under both a retirement plan and workers' compensation must choose one).

While the survivor has three years to complete a claim for these benefits, establishing the conditions under which such a claim can be made must be taken soon after the death, and should be taken if the post or the survivors have any reason to believe that the death may have been work related. Form CA-6, Official Superior's Report of Employee's Death, must be completed by the employee's official supervisor or other authorized official of the employing agency and submitted, along with a position description, detailed supervisor and/or witness statements, certified copy of the death certificate, to the Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs. Questions about workers' compensation should be referred to the employee's agency's workers' compensation coordinator (see the contact list below).

A survivor who is entitled to both an annuity from the Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System/ Foreign Service Pension System and Workers' Compensation benefits must choose which of these he or she will receive. The OWCP claims process can be lengthy; until the claim is approved, an eligible survivor receives FSRDS/FSPS annuity payments.

Once OWCP advises FSRDS/FSPS that the claim is approved, the annuity ceases. OWCP reimburses the FSRDS/FSPS fund for annuity payments made, and the survivor receives the difference. In the event that all the eligible survivors of a deceased employee of FSRDS/FSPS elect to receive the OWCP benefits rather than the FSRDS/FSPS annuity, a lump-sum payment refunding retirement contributions may be payable. If the survivor is eligible for workers' compensation benefits but chooses not to receive them, he or she may still be eligible for the death gratuity (see below).

Compensation is claimed on Form CA-5, Claim for Compensation by Widow, Widower, and/or Children and submitted with relevant medical documentation tying the death to the work-related incident, the death certificate, marriage certificate, and birth certificate or adoption documents for each child. (The claimant should file immediately but has three years to file the claim. However, Form

CA-6, Official Superior's Report of Employee's Death, must have been submitted to OWCP first.) If there are no children, an employee's surviving spouse will receive compensation at the rate of 50% of the employee's salary paid in 13 equal payments. If there are children, the spouse will receive 45% of the employee's salary and an additional 15% for each child up to a total of 75% of the salary in 13 equal payments per year. If there is no surviving widow or widower, compensation for the first child is 40% of the employee's monthly salary, with 15% paid for each additional child up to the maximum of 75%, money to be divided equally between the children. All workers' compensation payments are exempt from federal tax. Payment continues for life or until remarriage if before age 55.

Compensation for a child ceases when the child marries or reaches age 18 (or age 23 if unmarried and a full-time student who has not completed four years education beyond high school) unless the child is incapable of self-support due to physical or mental disability. In certain cases, compensation may be paid for dependent parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren.

If the Department of Labor determines that death occurred in the performance of duty, burial expenses up to \$800 may be paid by OWCP, with any payment made by the Veteran's Administration deducted.

Whether or not any funeral or burial expenses are paid, the personal representative of a deceased federal employee may also be entitled to \$200 for reimbursement of the costs of termination of the decedent's status as an employee of the U.S. government. Original itemized funeral and burial bills must be submitted along with Form CA-5.

The employing agency of the deceased may also pay a discretionary death gratuity equal to \$10,000 less any other death gratuity paid on behalf of the deceased except that paid pursuant to the Foreign Service Act. This payment is to assist with funeral expenses. For those employees serving in a combat zone, there may also be a lump sum Combat Zone death payment (CS and FS).

Once the Department of Labor has approved the claim for compensation, a death gratuity is payable to the survivor in accordance with the Foreign Service Act section 413 ([3 FAM 3650](#)). The death gratuity equals one year's salary at the Senior Executive Service level 2 at the time of death paid to the widow or widower or, if none, to the dependent parent(s) in equal shares. This is a one-time benefit that is payable even if the survivor waives workers' compensation and elects to receive an annuity under FSRDS or FSPS.

Survivors of Department of State employees should work through the Office of Employee Relations to submit claims to Department of Labor's Office of Workers Compensation Programs. Survivors of AID employees should work through the Office of Labor Management Relations; APHIS through the

Human Resources Division; and Foreign Agricultural Service and Foreign Commercial Service through the Office of Foreign Service Personnel.

Death from Terrorist Action

Public Law 98-259 (and amendments to the law in the Tax Reform Act of 1984) added section 692c to the Internal Revenue Code. This section exempts from federal income taxes certain military and civilian employees of the United States who die as a result of injuries sustained overseas in a terrorist or military action. The exemption applies to the taxable year in which the death occurs and to the prior taxable year beginning, i.e. the last year ending before the year in which the wounds or injuries were received.

There are also additional benefits that may be available to survivors of employees killed in the line of duty or due to injuries sustained as a result of a terrorist incident (see [3 FAM 3650](#)).

A December, 1984 Letter of Understanding between the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the Internal Revenue Service established the specific procedures for processing tax returns of individuals covered by the law. All returns and claims for refunds must be accompanied by IRS Form 1310, Statement of Person Claiming Refund Due a Deceased Taxpayer, and certification from the Department of State (in the form of a letter signed by the director general of the Foreign Service or a director's delegate) that the death was a result of a terrorist or military action outside the United States. The Internal Revenue Service has designated representatives in their district offices who will answer tax questions and assist in preparing original and amended returns for individuals covered by the law.

Personal Papers and Documentation

A survivor immediately faces needs to locate personal papers and provide information. It's important to start gathering important papers (listed below) and keep in one location known to a trusted contact at home and keep a copy with you, so it can be later used by your family to get personal affairs in order. Additionally, discuss with your family what to do in case of an emergency and inform family members of the emergency notification numbers and your supervisor's phone numbers at your office by which they can reach you should family experience an emergency. The following list offers an idea of the range of documents and information needed after a death:

- Letter of last instruction (if one was prepared)
- Certificate of death (at least 15 certified copies)
- OF-180 if death occurred abroad
- Birth certificate of deceased

- Birth/adoption certificates of survivors (including children)
- Marriage certificates and divorce decrees, if husband or wife were previously married
- Change of name decree for anyone in family who has one
- Military discharge certificate if deceased has military service
- Wills
- Insurance policies: life, accident and health, disability
- Name, address, and telephone number of lawyer, insurance agent, stockbroker, employer, real estate agent, accountant
- Business contracts
- Bank books, notes receivable, notes payable, stocks, bonds, securities
- Pension plans
- Real estate deeds, closing statements for house, receipts for property taxes
- Income tax returns and receipts for previous six years, W-2 forms, and other records of earnings
- Social Security numbers
- Automobile registration
- Information on debts, charge accounts, loans, etc.
- Naturalization papers

The list changes periodically. Please check the Bureau of Global Talent Management's (GTM) Workers' Compensation page on SharePoint for updates.

A funeral director may ask for name and home address of the deceased; how long in state; date and place of birth; citizenship; date and place of marriage and marriage license; deed to cemetery lot; occupation and title; Social Security number; employer's name, address, telephone and father's and mother's names, places of birth, and places of burial.

A life insurance agent or company representative may ask for policy numbers and amounts; full name and address of deceased; occupation and date last worked; date and place of birth and sources of birth information; date, place, and cause of death; claimant's name, age, address, and Social Security number. Additionally, the claimant may be asked for details of health history and/or the nature of the injuries of the deceased, as well as identities of attending physicians and the person who had possession of the life insurance policy.

If a serious incident occurs immediately notify the Department of State Operations Center (phone: (202) 647-1512; email: SES-O@state.gov; your regional bureau executive office; and OCA (email: oca@state.gov).

SAMPLE

JOINT PROPERTY STATEMENT

We declare that the property being stored at government expense is the joint property of

and

and either party may have access to these effects.

1. Date:

Signature:

2. Date:

Signature:

Name of storage company:

Address:

Date entered into storage:

Invoice No.:

SAMPLE

AUTHORIZATION TO RECEIVE GOODS SHIPPED FROM POST

I declare that the property being shipped from (name of post):

to (destination):

under travel authorization #:

may be delivered to: (name):

Employee Signature:

Date:



CHAPTER 18

PACKING TO GO



Packing and unpacking are a constant reminder of the internationally-mobile lifestyle. To smooth the way for successful relocation, preparation and planning, with checklists, often make the process much easier.

The Office of Logistics Management (A/LM), Travel Management Division, assists with travel management and household relocation services that support the Department of State and other U.S. Government agency personnel. Their Permanent Change of Station Portal, known as the PCS Portal, is designed as a one-stop shop and provides a single end-to-end portal for the needs of the traveler. It includes seven modules (itinerary, travel, shipping, check-in, check-out, allowances and voucher and

claim). The PCS Portal can be accessed through myServices on OpenNet and AIDNet using single sign-on, or the internet with a username and password through the [myServices](#) website.

For assistance, schedule a session with a transportation counselor at (202) 663-0891/0892. The counselors are located in suite 5100 of SA-3 at 2121 Virginia Avenue, Washington, DC 20037. General questions can be addressed to the Transportation Management Division and a transportation counselor will be assigned to assist with your pack out. Email TransportionQuery@state.gov or call (202) 472-8480/8481. Toll Free: (800) 424-2947.

Those planning a move should also check the A/LM website on the Department's OpenNet for comprehensive information on how to move your household effects (HHE), unaccompanied air baggage (UAB), privately owned vehicle (POV), consumables (CNS) and layette (LAY) shipments. The site answers many common transportation questions and includes PCS Portal guides and a shipping page job aid. Employees should also review the It's Your Move guide (for entitlements, packing and moving) and use the PCS Portal (to request a shipment or check your shipment status). If you are unable to access this information, contact the email and telephone numbers listed above.

HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS

Types of Shipments

You will be packing two kinds of shipments:

1. Your household effects (HHE), which will be handled by a moving and storage company and sent overseas or put into storage.
2. Your unaccompanied air baggage (UAB), also referred to as "air freight," which will also be packed by a packing company but will go by air.

The Department of State regulations define baggage as "official and personal property needed for use en route or immediately upon arrival at destination." It includes accompanying air baggage (the suitcases you take to the airport) and UAB. The household effects shipment includes everything you need for your tour of duty that has not been included in your accompanying air baggage or UAB. Your vehicle will be shipped separately. HHE are belongings that will be sent in a lift van by sea freight, surface, or occasionally by air.

Foreign Service posts vary. A few so-called "unfurnished" posts require you to bring your own furniture and large appliances. Most posts are "furnished" and supply both furniture and large appliances. They allow you to ship housewares, linens, and those items that will make you feel at home. Post reports indicate what type of housing the U.S. government provides and which household

items might be available on the local market. Some posts not only allow for the shipping of HHE, but also additional consumables such as food, paper products, toiletries, and other items not available at post. For country-specific information on household effects and consumables, check with the Overseas Briefing Center or contact the post community liaison office (CLO) coordinator or management office/general services office (GSO).

Weight Allowance for Shipment of Household Effects

The full weight allowance for shipment of household effects is 18,000 pounds net weight. The full shipment applies when post offers unfurnished quarters. If post provides furnished quarters, a limited shipment of 7,200 pounds net weight is authorized. Ambassadors may send a limited shipment of 12,000 pounds of HHE, of which 1,000 may be sent by air, in addition to the standard UAB allowance.

The weight of cartons, crates, and other packing materials is charged against the weight allowance; the weight of lift vans is not. Storage at government expense is authorized for household effects that are not shipped (within the overall weight allowance). The total shipment weight plus the weight of effects stored may not exceed the 18,000 pound HHE allowance.

The shipment authorization remains valid for one year from the date of the employee's arrival at post, so it is possible to request a supplemental shipment. The chief of the Transportation Division is authorized to deny use of U.S. government services and facilities when requests are made for more than two supplemental shipments or multiple requests are made for pickups of HHE from locations other than the employee's residence.

An overweight shipment will not be shipped until the employee has paid the excess freight charges (which may be deductible as moving expenses from income tax). Schedule a few days between packing out and departure to deal with any unanticipated needs and make arrangements if your shipment is overweight.

A separate gross weight allowance is authorized for UAB.

Unaccompanied Air Baggage (UAB)

Family	Gross Weight (includes all packing material)
For the first traveller	250 pounds
For the second traveller	200 pounds
For the third traveller	150 pounds
For the fourth and any subsequent traveller	100 pounds

Any unused UAB weight allowance may be applied to increase the surface shipment or storage of household effects. UAB should be packed and weighed before the surface shipment so that adjustments can be made easily. The weight of all packing materials, crates, and banding is charged against the UAB allowance as gross weight. Often the final wrapping takes place after the cartons have been taken from your home, so check with make sure you take this extra weight into consideration.

Ways to Ship Household Effects

In moving HHE from the United States to Foreign Service posts, the Department uses the following methods:

1. The conventional pack-and-crate
2. International Through Government Bill of Lading (ITGBL)

Under the conventional pack-and-crate method, a company that is under contract to the Department packs your effects at your house, picks them up, and prepares them for export shipment. When packing is completed, your HHE is brought to the packer's warehouse and from there to the nearest port. There the shipment is loaded on the first available U.S. flagship scheduled to call at the overseas port used by your new post for its inbound shipments. The post arranges for customs clearance, delivery, and unpacking. This method is used for many posts.

The Department also ships employee household effects via the ITGBL method to some posts. Under this mechanism, an international freight forwarder handles shipments to given posts from origin to destination through agreements it has with packing, port handling, and steamship companies. With the ITGBL method, the employee will work with one ITGBL contractor to handle air freight and HHE,

and another to pack and remove storage. The international forwarder arranges to have the shipment trucked to port, booked and loaded aboard ship, cleared through customs at destination, and delivered and unpacked at your new home.

Shipping Documents

A Government Bill of Lading (GBL) is a contract between the government and a transportation company for the performance of certain transportation services. It is a receipt for effects turned over to the company at origin and a receipt for their delivery. It is used for rail, highway, air, and occasionally for sea shipments. It also serves as the following:

- Shipping order
- Carrier's waybill
- Notice of loss or damage

Packer's Authorizations are approvals by the Department for a packing and storage company to perform the duties listed below:

- Pack household goods at your residence.
- Pick up your household effects and prepare them for shipment.
- Place goods you will not need in storage.
- Withdraw goods from storage and deliver them to your house.
- Give you limited access to your stored goods so that you can remove certain items.

The Transportation Division issues packer's authorizations after a packing company has been selected and the Department has assigned you a packer. Packer's authorizations will not be issued until you have selected dates and confirmed the dates of your move.

Please remember that you may make all your packing, storing, and shipping arrangements without having your travel orders in hand. However, actual packing of items cannot start unless you have received your official travel orders.

Personal Inventory

Begin the packing process by making a personal inventory of all your possessions. There are a number of tools you can use to do this.

Video Recording

One of the simplest ways to complete an inventory is to use a mobile phone with a camera or a video camera. Go through each room of your house and record the contents. Remember to open closets, cupboards, and drawers and record those items as well. Speak into the device as you pan the room and describe everything, giving brand names, the approximate age or purchase date, and other details.

Once you have finished, make a list of any serial numbers you need, collect warranties, sales receipts, appraisals, and other paperwork, and make a copy of both the recording and the accompanying papers to store in a safe deposit box or with a friend or relative.

Camera

Go through your house taking photographs that clearly show all your possessions. This will require many shots of each room, showing the contents of all closets, cupboards, drawers, bookshelves, etc.

Save the photos with notes regarding brand, approximate age or purchase date, and any special considerations on cloud storage or copy the photo files and notes onto external storage devices. If you have dinnerware sets with brand markings or collections with a label, photograph the marking and label.

Collect receipts, warranties, appraisals, etc., and make at least two packages, one to carry with you and one to store in a safe location.

Apps and Online Tools

You can find household inventory programs online, often for free. Some popular financial software programs include an inventory option. There are also many free or low-cost phone and table applications. A simple Excel spreadsheet can also be used, noting item, value, age, quantity, and room. The Overseas Briefing Center provides a listing of inventory apps and online tools. Request a copy at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov. Once you have completed your inventory, back up your work on an external hard drive or save to the cloud, put your paperwork together, and store as above.

Paper and Pencil

If you prefer to create a hard copy rather than a digital copy, begin by writing your name and the date on a cover page. Go through your house, room by room, and write down everything you see. Group and record items by category unless they have special features or exceptional value. Attach receipts, appraisals, and other relevant documentation, and copy the whole package.

Regardless of which inventory method you use, keep pictures of household effects, especially valuables, and make sure you have all receipts, appraisals, or estimates of the value of items in case of

loss or damage. Fax or mail a complete inventory to the Transportation Claims Office indicating which items on the list are of high value (\$1,000 or more), or hand in a limited list of the high-value items only. Doing this establishes the ownership and value of these items in case you ever need to file a claim. You may want to attach this to the DS-1620 (Claim for Private Personal Property Against the U.S. government) so you will be sure to provide the personal information requested, such as agency, grade, Social Security number, and other details. Please note that the packing company never sees your list of high-value items; it goes only to Claims. Once your inventory is complete, you can plan how you will separate items:

1. Packed in your suitcase
2. Sent by air freight (UAB)
3. Sent by surface (HHE)
4. Put in storage

Transportation counselors will answer your questions and help you make the necessary arrangements. Travelers should contact the Department's Transportation Management Division once a post assignment is made and approximate moving dates are determined. At that time, the employee will inform their transportation counselor of the moving and storage requirements, the approximate amount of the effects to be shipped and stored (your inventory should help with this), and the preferred pack out dates.

Provide at least two available dates to allow the counselor flexibility in scheduling your move. The counselor will then select a packing company, assign the packer to handle the move, and complete the schedule. The packer will contact the employee to reconfirm the pack out dates. If, at a later date, the employee needs to change the pack out dates, the employee must contact the transportation counselor as early as possible to reschedule. The best dates for you and your family should be established early, before the packing company is assigned. Cancellation may result in delay if the movers are already booked.

If you live outside the Washington, DC, area, Transportation Management will furnish you with specific information on the packing procedure to be followed.

Pre-pack Survey

The next task is to make an appointment with the representative of the packing and storage company to schedule a walk-through. This allows the representative to estimate your shipment's weight. The estimate is generally within +/-10% of the actual weight. With a signed pre-pack estimate, you can determine if you need to eliminate items to stay within your shipment and storage allowance, or if

you can include additional items because you are “underweight” (meaning you still have unused weight).

It is your responsibility to schedule the pre-pack survey with the assigned company. Be certain the estimator sees all items stored in your garage, shed, or attic, as well as a list of items you intend to purchase. The pre-pack estimate is not binding, and all charges will be based on actual weights, not on the estimated weight. At the time of the survey, discuss any items that might need special handling.

To protect yourself against an overweight shipment, advise the packing company that it may not ship or store any weight in excess of your allowances without your written consent.

Controlled Storage

Controlled storage may be authorized for items of high value in a facility where temperature, humidity and security are controlled. Controlled storage is designed for rugs, tapestries, paintings, silverware, heirlooms, furs, clothes, documents or other nonfurniture items that need special storage. To qualify, an item (or collection of items) must be worth at least \$2,100. Authorization for controlled storage must be included in the official travel orders. See [14 FAM 623.1](#).

To place items in controlled storage, submit your request to your GTM assignments technician, along with a memorandum containing a list of items to be stored. The memorandum must be accompanied by a certified appraisal that can be prepared only by an appraiser who is certified by the American Society of Appraisers or a comparable group. Items (or sets of items) to be stored must be worth at least \$2,100.

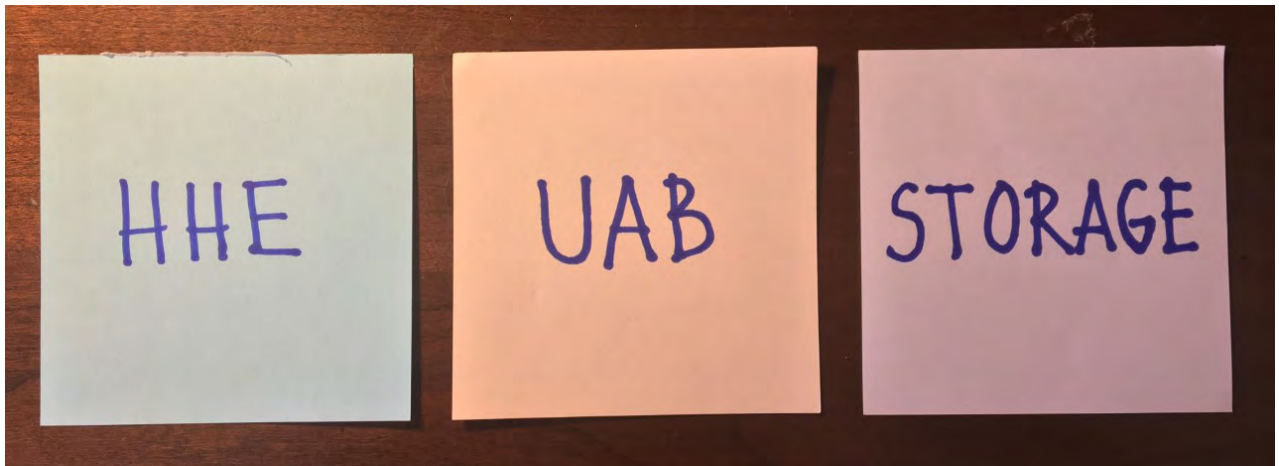
Note: Firearms must be placed in controlled storage (not regular storage) regardless of cost.

Before the Packers Arrive

Prior to moving day, consider doing the following:

- Sort out items for shipping and storage. Do not ship anything you could not bear to lose, should you have to leave post in an evacuation. Also consider that household effects are sometimes subjected to climatic extremes and rough handling.
- Dismantle outdoor play equipment and stereo and television sets. Repack in original cartons, if you saved them.
- Remove pictures and mirrors from walls and group together. Put a hammer, nails, and hangers in your UAB so they will be readily available when you start to hang pictures at your new post.
- Consider having your area rugs cleaned before placing them in long term storage or shipping them overseas. And make sure they are completely dry before the movers wrap them.

- Separate, tag with different colored stickers, or otherwise identify surface shipment (HHE), air freight shipment (UAB), and storage items. Indicate the destination of drawer contents on the outside of the drawer.



- To the extent possible, divide items to be packed into “fragile” and “heavy” groups. Packers usually start with fragile items and need to have a space to pack, such as the dining room table. Fragile items can be collected on the table and, as they are packed, new items can be brought until all art objects, china, crystal, and so forth have been wrapped. (Each lampshade should be packed in its own carton).
- Place kitchen utensils on the counters or on the kitchen table.

Some people prefer to pack unbreakable items such as clothing, linens, and personal papers themselves to get them out of the way before the packers arrive.

Please note that many moving companies will not accept any carton which is “PBO” - packed by owner. In some cases, the moving company will permit the employee to pack cartons, but request they remain open (unsealed) for inspection. When the packers arrive, they will inspect the unsealed cartons and then seal them up, thus taking responsibility for the cartons themselves. If the moving company agrees to limited self-packing, they will also provide you with cartons, tape, and labels in advance.

It is advisable to personally pack small, high-value items such as cameras, watches, and jewelry and include them in your accompanying baggage (luggage).

Packers are supposed to bring a scale for weighing air freight as it is packed. In case they fail to bring a scale, try to have a bathroom scale handy. Allow an extra 10-12 pounds per box for wrapping and banding, which will be done later. Because of the impossibility of keeping mobile scales calibrated, their weights can only be considered an estimate. The employee should arrange to telephone the packer or transportation counselor the day after pack out to check the final weight. On the day of

packing, ask whether waterproof cartons will be used. The lift vans themselves should also be waterproofed.

When the Packers Arrive

For best results, it is essential for you to plan on being present during the entire pack out. The person who has organized the pack out is always best able to answer the packers' questions. When the packers arrive, take them around your entire dwelling to indicate what needs to be packed. Marking all items with color-coded labels (e.g., green for HHE, red for storage, or blue for air freight, etc.) and grouping items according to destination helps to reduce packing mistakes. Once everything else has gone, don't forget to remove these labels from storage items, as they may damage your furniture over time.

It is preferable to pack air freight first; that way you can add or subtract items according to weight. This is impossible if everything else is already packed. Next, pack surface freight (HHE) and finally the storage items. Schedules permitting, it may be possible to pack the various categories on separate days.

In order to better supervise the packing, try to enlist the help of friends or family. If several packers come at once, it is very difficult for one person to supervise all of the work.

The packers will place a number on each item or carton and list it on their inventory sheets; for example: #1 linens, #2 china, and #3 kitchen supplies. You may also wish to use your own marking system to number each carton as it is filled and sealed. In a notebook or on a tablet, record a brief description of the contents, which makes it easier to locate specific items upon arrival at post. If any cartons are lost, it is then possible to determine what is missing.



Be certain that every container or loose item has the packer's inventory tag or tape on it and that each item is listed legibly on all inventory copies. (The packer's inventory will not be as detailed as the ones you make). The contents of cases, such as a violin case, should be listed separately on the inventory. As an extra precaution, write your name and destination on the outside of each carton with a permanent heavy black magic marker.

The packers should specially crate mirrors, paintings, and similar items that are easily damaged or broken. Made-to-measure wooden crates have to be agreed upon at the time of the pre-pack survey.

They are constructed in the warehouse and brought to the packout. Their weight counts against the total weight allowance. Dishes and glassware should be packed vertically in so-called “china barrels” with horizontal layers of cardboard between layers of china and glassware to minimize breakage risks.

Notations on the condition of your furniture—marks, scratches, worn places—will be entered on the inventory. You should make sure that a proper description of the condition of your goods is entered. Note any exceptions you may have to the condition descriptions on the inventory next to the item number.

Usually lift vans (huge crates of wood used for sea shipment) are loaded at your doorstep. Watch how they are packed. Make certain that those cartons designated for storage are separated from those to be shipped. Specially mark cartons containing things you may wish to locate easily. Be sure items are protected from each other with the heaviest ones at the bottom. Generally, packers do a meticulous job, but should you have to give instructions, remember that everything should be packed so solidly that nothing can move inside the box. Make sure that the destination address of each lift van is correctly stenciled on the outside. If several lift vans are required, a notation such as “1 of 4; 2 of 4; 3 of 4; and 4 of 4” appears beside the stenciled address to show how many lift vans are traveling together. Do not hesitate to telephone the transportation inspector ((202) 663-0961 or (202) 663-0891/0892) if questions or problems arise during pack out in the United States.

On occasion, moving companies prefer to take your cartons and crates to their warehouse for packing into lift vans. Under no circumstances should this happen unless it has been previously cleared with a transportation counselor before the company leaves your home. Taking loose cartons and items to the warehouse for packing increases the chances for loss, damage, and confusion.

If the movers have to take any furniture apart, either ask them to tape screws and the like in small plastic bags or ask them to give you the screws to have readily available when you start to unpack. Taping the bag of screws to the bottom of the piece is also helpful.

When the packers have finished, you will sign their inventories for goods in shipment and in storage. These are the only receipts you have for your goods. Take part in seeing that they are accurate. The inventory includes notation of the condition of separate pieces, but contents of cartons are not listed in detail. Especially for items of high value, be sure the description is adequate and the value noted. Hand-carry copies of the inventories with you to post, and leave copies in a safe accessible place in the United States. You will need the inventory when your shipment is delivered, when you receive your stored effects, and if you need to make a claim. You must refer to the inventory of stored goods when you request an additional shipment to post of items from storage. If you should need to retrieve items from storage before access or delivery at government expense is authorized, the inventory can save

you time and money. Any personal inventory cannot serve as a substitute for the inventories you receive from the packers.

Storage in the United States

The storage company will number each box destined for their warehouse in the United States. It is important for you to know exactly what each carton contains since you might want to request some of the cartons for a later shipment. The request for cartons must be made by number. Individual items will not be retrieved from boxes.

It is also essential that this information be recorded if, for some reason, you may wish to go into storage for items at your own expense. All arrangements for gaining access to goods in storage must be made in cooperation with the Transportation Management Division and the warehouse. The storage company cannot grant access without authorization by the Department. In order to gain access to goods in storage, it is important for couples to draft a joint property statement, in a similar format to the one appearing [at the end of this chapter](#). The statement needs to be signed by both parties. An emailed or faxed permission sent to Transportation Management to grant access may be used in lieu of the formal property statement.

Government-paid access to stored goods is allowed for new employees preparing for a first tour or during a transfer between overseas posts. Free access is also granted to employees awarded a Separate Maintenance Allowance. At all other times (including evacuation, home leave with return to post, and vacation travel), access is at the employee's expense (\$150 for document preparation and a minimum charge of \$88 for one hour of labor). Retrieval and shipment of goods from storage in divorce situations are especially complex. For more information involving divorce, contact the management office at post or the Global Community Liaison Office at GCLO@state.gov | (202) 647-1076.

Any employee, whether retiring from a domestic assignment or from overseas, has one year from the last day in pay status to arrange delivery of goods and services from storage or shipment from post. In some cases, if application is made before the 12-month period is expired, the employee may request a six-month extension from GTM which makes for a final maximum of 18 months in which to send goods (and also during which to travel to the separation address).

In the event of an employee's death overseas, goods will continue to be stored at government expense for up to three months. After that, the family must accept the goods or assume storage expenses. HHE is shipped to any point in the United States, as designated by the next of kin within one year of the employee's death.

Unpacking at Your Destination

When your HHE is unloaded, check off the corresponding item number listed on your inventory. Any missing or damaged items should be noted on the mover's inventory prior to signing it. You are entitled to have the movers unpack all your effects. However, you may wish to handle some of the unpacking yourself. Knowing where to place items in a new residence overseas often takes time. Or there might be boxes that you do not want to unpack and place in a closet, garage or basement instead. Even if you plan to unpack yourself, the moving company will ask you to sign off on the entire inventory of boxes.

Be sure to note in writing at the bottom of the inventory sheet that "the condition at the time of delivery is unknown."

Consider saving any original boxes for electronic equipment and other fragile items to use during your next move.

SUGGESTED DOS AND DON'TS

DOs

- Read It's Your Move available from Travel Management.
- Be flexible with your departure time. Allow for possible failure with packers to meet your deadline. Do not plan on going directly to the airport from your final pack out.
- Contact Transportation Management as soon as you know your preferred moving date so that a transportation counselor can select a packing company and schedule your move. Consider packing air freight, surface shipment, and storage on separate days, if that wish can be accommodated.
- Order any new furniture and small appliances far enough in advance to be delivered to your home for pickup with your HHE.
- Ask the packer for a complete and descriptive inventory showing the correct number of items stored and shipped.
- Require that agreements between you and the packing company are in writing. Confirm all transactions with Transportation Management.
- Advise Transportation Management of your travel plans and a mobile number and address where you can be reached prior to or en route to your destination. You are responsible for staying in touch with Transportation.

- Check with Transportation Management regarding controlled storage for valuable or irreplaceable items (with a certified appraisal value of at least \$2,100) such as furs, tapestries, art, and rugs. Try to contact the certified appraiser at least three months in advance.
- Make certain you have adequate private insurance on your shipment and stored items for damage, loss, and replacement value. “Full replacement value” insurance is strongly recommended. Also consider evacuation insurance (based on your destination). You cannot insure anything after it has left your possession. The Overseas Briefing Center provides a resource list of insurance companies. Email FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov. When you receive your household items at your post, note on the inventory or delivery receipt all exceptions to loss or damage. If you do not have time to open all cartons, sign the receipt by adding the proviso: “subject to further inspection.”
- Promptly file a written claim with the moving company for any losses or damaged items. Under ordinary circumstances, if it turns you down—which it often does—you then apply to your own private insurance. If you do not have insurance, you can then file a claim against the U.S. government (see Chapter 30 - Insurance) through the Claims Act.

DON'Ts

- Do not put valuable items, such as silverware, heirlooms, furs, jewelry, and important documents and papers in storage with the rest of your effects. Employees should make copies of important documents to leave with family or friends.
- Controlled storage may be authorized for clothing, rugs, tapestries, paintings, other works of art, silver and other non-furniture items of high value. Furniture is not authorized for controlled storage. High-value items include non-furniture items which 1) have value exceeding \$2,100; 2) are part of a set whose combined pieces exceed a value of \$2,100; 3) are one-of-a-kind articles that are irreplaceable and have a substantial, albeit hard-to-determine monetary or insurable value; and 4) have special storage requirements. Notwithstanding the \$2,100 limit, controlled storage may be authorized for usable (in working condition) firearms. For more information on the availability of controlled storage, talk with Transportation Management.
- Do not leave money or other valuables unprotected during the packing process.
- Do not offer alcoholic drinks to packing company employees. Having non-alcoholic refreshments available is a kind gesture.

SUGGESTED ITEMS FOR HOUSEHOLD SHIPMENT

Items you need to include in your shipments vary from post to post and the size/makeup of your family. The most important step in successfully packing just the right things is research. Contact the Overseas Briefing Center for access to Post Info to Go materials and the CLO coordinator to find out as much as you can about your future home.

Ask more than one person at post about what to bring. The CLO or housing office at post should be able to tell you more about your housing assignment, the size of the beds and whether vacuum cleaners and microwaves are provided. For anonymous views on what to bring, read the Personal Post Insights provided by the Overseas Briefing Center. Responses will vary and the range of answers should help in determining what to bring.

The following are some general points to consider, based on the experiences of foreign affairs community members.

- **Furniture:** Request a list of standard furnishings in post housing. Check whether items such as computer desks, entertainment centers, child-sized furniture (cribs upon arrival), or sufficient bookshelves are provided. If you bring larger furniture items to post, removing U.S. government-provided furniture to make room for your items may not be possible due to limited warehouse space.
- **Mattresses:** Mattresses in government housing vary in quality and comfort. Some people recommend shipping a memory foam pad or even a complete mattress and box spring set. Confirm the sizes of bedrooms in the house so your mattress/box spring set and any other beds you chose to bring will fit and make sure that post can store items you prefer not to use.
- **Decorations:** Bring anything that makes a new place home. However, remember that you will probably pick up all kinds of wonderful new items. If you are not flexible about colors and décor, bring sofa covers or textiles to place over embassy furniture. You can also order these online once you arrive at post.
- **Priceless Items:** Do not bring anything that you absolutely cannot bear to lose. Having said that, remember that things can get lost or damaged in storage too. Read Chapter 30 - Insurance.
- **Books:** Many of us do not want to part with our book collections. Books are heavy and will add considerable weight to your HHE shipments. You may wish to invest in a tablet or e-reader and start reading e-book rather than shipping a large number of books. Find out if there is a good English-language library or book exchange at post. Make sure that special books are packed carefully.

- **Shopping:** If your post can receive packages via DPO or pouch, you will be able to shop online, making it less essential to pack everything you need in your initial shipments. However, some companies will not ship to DPO addresses. Also, if you will be in the Southern Hemisphere, remember that U.S. companies may have difficulty filling out-of-season orders such as bathing suits in December or sweaters in July. When visiting the United States during vacations, plan to shop for needed items. If you have visitors coming to post, ask them to bring those few extra items you might need.
- **Climate Control:** Determine what kind of heating and cooling exists in your assigned residence, when it is turned on, and how it functions if the power supply is erratic. You may appreciate an extra space heater or fan.
- **Electrical Items:** Verify with post whether the voltage is 110v or 220v. This will determine the type of small electrical appliances to bring (i.e. hair dryer, toaster, mixer, microwave). Check the Overseas Briefing Center's Post Info to Go "Technology Survey" for your post which includes information on televisions, mobile phones, or other items. Ask post about transformers. How many are supplied with each house and if you should plan on bringing your own? Use of transformers often makes purchasing new equipment/small appliances unnecessary. (Also see Chapter 15 - Electricity, Communications, TV, and Internet.)
- **Clothing:** Make sure that actual temperatures at post match your expectations (for instance, Mexico City can be very cold, but some people do not bring warm clothing because they imagine that they will not need it). Plan on clothing for changes in local climate, including trips to other countries where the season may be different. Check whether local shops supply shoes and clothing in your size. Consider what clothing your children might need over the course of a year. Consider local fashions for women's and men's clothing. Find out as much as you can in advance or wait to see and buy later or online. Some people suggest packing winter clothing, even if you are going to a tropical post, since you may end up traveling during the winter.
- **Computers/Tablets/Mobile Devices:** Hand-carry a laptop or tablet if you need email access and computing ability immediately upon arrival at post. Find out if electronic items are cheaper or more expensive at post before purchasing anything new. Bring printer supplies (paper and ink cartridges) and anything else you may need. It is always recommended that any cell phone you bring for use with a local chip be "unlocked."
- **Cosmetics:** Ship those items you use on a daily basis. Certain items may not be available locally (cotton balls, unscented soap, or hypoallergenic products, for example).
- **Gifts and Seasonal Decor:** When overseas, small U.S.-style hostess gifts are generally appreciated, for example a small book with pictures of Washington, DC. Special gifts may be expensive or hard to find at post. You may want a supply of presents for children's birthday parties and special occasions. You may also wish to include holiday items that continue family

traditions. A nice touch is to hand-carry a gift for your post sponsor or other people at post who helped with your transition planning.

- **Food Items:** If anyone in your family has special dietary needs or preferences, plan ahead. Items such as unbleached flour, canned soups without MSG, gluten free pasta, olive oil, peanut butter, or specialty products may not be available. You might use part of your shipment weight on certain foods, even if you are not going to a consumables post.
- **Hobbies:** If you quilt, sew, or love craft projects, you may want to stock up on fabrics, notions, or patterns.
- **Vacuum cleaners:** Some posts offer these, some do not. Check to see if vacuum cleaners are provided as part of your furniture. In some cases, if the post vacuum breaks, the general services office (GSO) will not fix or replace it. Do you need a vacuum? A “stick” vacuum is lightweight and easy to pack, if acceptable for your needs. Furniture allocations usually include rugs for the living room, dining room, and each bedroom.
- **Pet Supplies:** Check on the availability and cost of pet supplies, especially if you have a “picky” pet. Items to consider include cat litter, preferred brands of food, and medication. It is always a good idea to include a starter amount of pet food in your air shipment (UAB), as well as a small amount in your luggage.
- **Miscellaneous:** Think about what you will need to set up a home, in addition to the furniture provided by the post. Suggested items include: wastebaskets, shower curtains and hooks, bathroom hooks or organizers, extra lamps, or occasional tables. Also bring clothes hangers, bed sheets (determine size in advance), towels, pillows, tablecloths, all kitchen items, children’s toys, and items for outdoor entertaining.
- **Cleaning Products:** If you think you might hire household help, you may want to stick with local products, since your staff will know how to use them. If you have a particular type of detergent you prefer, consider bringing a beginner supply in your HHE. Check with your shipper for allowable cleaning items.

Other suggested items (adapt according to your preferences and what is available at post):

- Automobile parts and supplies
- Bicycles
- Camping and picnic gear (cooler, grill—especially if you like a certain kind of grill)
- Children’s toys, books, and items for decorating their rooms
- Candles (birthday cake and decorative)
- Card table and chairs (may be available from the embassy if only needed occasionally)
- China/dishes/glassware/silverware
- Holiday decorations (perhaps an artificial tree if live trees are not available locally)

- Flashlights, batteries (if allowable in shipment), rechargeable lamps
- Flower vases and flower-arranging supplies
- Freezer bags and storage bags
- Household tools: nails, screws, picture-hanging supplies, extension cords, any electrical supplies, toolkit with hammer, screwdrivers, pliers, etc.
- Paper products. You may want decorative paper napkins or paper plates, gift wrap, cards, transparent tape, envelopes if you need a certain size, post-it notes, or other office supplies.
- Photo albums. You should scan and save all photos on an external hard drive - especially irreplaceable pictures, such as family photos, and leave the originals in a safe place.
- Sports equipment and supplies (tennis rackets and balls, golf clubs and balls, basketball, soccer ball, swimming and beach supplies, snorkeling gear, and hiking equipment)

BAGGAGE

Your personal items travel with you as accompanied baggage in the hold of the plane or as carry-on luggage. Since current security protocols limit what you may pack in carry-on luggage, check with the airline for the latest guidance. Also verify limitations on the size of carry-on luggage, and acceptable weights for each piece of luggage.

Accompanied Air Baggage

Weight Allowance (14 FAM 568)

The amount of baggage allowed to passengers without charge varies by airline according to class of service, ownership (U.S./foreign), and departure location. Pets are not included in your baggage allowance. Confirm baggage allowances with your airline.

A traveler leaving the United States on an American flag carrier (AFC) is usually entitled to take two pieces of luggage each weighing 50 pounds for a maximum of 100 pounds. If the traveler flies all the way to their destination on the AFC, there are no additional charges. If the traveler changes to a foreign flag carrier (FFC) en route, and the luggage is “interlined” (i.e., not weighed before being put on the FFC) and there is likewise no additional charge. However, if the luggage is weighed before being placed on the FFC, then the traveler may have to pay overweight charges since the economy class weight allowance on most FFCs is 44 pounds. Thus, if the traveler’s luggage weighs 100 pounds, the luggage will be deemed overweight by 56 pounds. In this last instance, the traveler may be reimbursed for the overweight. **Note:** The Department of State will not reimburse the traveler for individual bags which weigh more than 50 pounds or for bags which are oversized.

If your travel begins on a foreign flag carrier overseas, consult with post's travel center to determine allowable weight allowances.

Content of Accompanied Air Baggage (Your Personal Luggage)

The items in your suitcases will be your only possessions until your HHE shipment arrives. This may be for several weeks.

- Pack everything snugly. Cushion breakable items with soft items. Leave no empty spaces and use items such as underwear and socks for cushioning. Consider using “deflators” which compact garments to take much less space.
- Include medical items (see Chapter 7 - Medical Information).
- Check with the airline to determine acceptable carry-on and checked suitcase size and weight. The maximum size for luggage is determined in “linear inches,” which means length, width, and girth added together. This number may vary depending on which airline you use.
- Weigh your suitcases to estimate whether they will fall within the airline's weight requirement. Stop when you are just short of the maximum weight limit and consider whether you need to allow for purchases en route.
- Pack your accompanying air baggage so that you do not have to open every bag at every stop. If possible, pack in such a way that one bag will suffice for the whole family during stopovers. It's always a good idea to pack a change of clothing for each member of the family and toothbrushes/toothpaste in case you have an unexpected layover.
- Remember that every member of your family may carry items as cabin luggage. Be sure that everything needed for the flight is in the flight bag. You should also carry your important papers and records with you in a briefcase or even a small suitcase.
- Given security protocols, check with the airlines for prohibited items in carry-on luggage. Your flight bag is weighed with your luggage and always passes through security inspection prior to takeoff.
- If you use old luggage, be sure that it will stand the trip. Weak fastenings are sure to break. Consider buying new light-weight, durable luggage pieces.
- Tag each piece on the outside and tape a paper with your name and destination inside. It is helpful to mark luggage for easy identification with some distinctive color or symbol, such as a large square of plastic tape or colorful heavy yarn tied at the handle beside the luggage tags. Use luggage tags to indicate your flight itinerary and to provide telephone contact numbers in the case of loss or delay.
- Travelers are often not permitted to lock their luggage or they can only lock luggage after it has been inspected. Thus, you might want to have luggage locks and keys available in case there is an opportunity to lock luggage. It is also possible to purchase locks that are acceptable to the

Transportation Security Administration and that only they can open with a special key. Finally, it is possible to purchase plastic security seals which can be easily broken, which clearly indicate that the luggage has been opened.

Suggested Items for Accompanied Air Baggage

Through a mission sponsor program, your assigned sponsor may be purchasing basic food supplies for your arrival at post. You may request specific items such as coffee, butter, eggs, bread, cheese, and milk. Be sure to reimburse for purchases made on your behalf!

Verify the contents and availability of post welcome kits. A welcome kit provides loaner items for the kitchen (pots and pans, toaster, utensils and dishware, cooking implements), for sleeping (sheets, blankets and pillows), for general household items (iron and ironing board), and a small television. When will you need to return the welcome kit? Most posts require that the welcome kit be returned when your air freight (UAB) arrives. If this is the case, make sure that you send basic household items in your UAB.

Suggested items to pack:

- Clothes: make sure you have one or two outfits for dressy functions, work clothes, comfortable clothes for relaxing or sports activities, maybe even a few items for the next season if it is possible that you may need them (your UAB may be delayed)
- Pet food (if animal needs particular brand)
- Small toolbox for doing minor repairs if you are a fix-it type
- Basic home office or school supplies such as tape, mini stapler, pens, pencils, notebook, scissors, mini pencil sharpener
- Playing cards or other small games
- Stamps
- Stationery
- Adapter plugs, if needed right away
- Any essential kitchen items not provided in welcome kit
- Clothes hangers (if not provided in the welcome kit)
- Needles, thread, a few buttons, snaps, hooks and eyes, safety pins
- Laundry bags
- Rain gear, umbrella (if needed)
- Anything else that will make you feel more comfortable and at home in an empty, unfamiliar place

- Lightweight projects including books, language learning aids, or other things that will give you a feeling of accomplishment while waiting for your shipments to arrive

Unaccompanied Air Freight

The purpose of sending a portion of your household effects by air freight (also known as air cargo or unaccompanied air baggage/UAB) is to enable you to set up light housekeeping until your larger shipment arrives. Again, verify details regarding welcome kits to find out what's included and how long you can keep it.

Also check with post for a realistic estimate on how long air freight should take to arrive. Usual arrival times are within three to four weeks of pack out. Since your household effects may not arrive for two or more months, take stock of your family needs and interests and pack the air freight accordingly. Find out if you will spend time in temporary quarters before moving to your assigned residence. You may not want to unpack your air freight in a temporary residence, just to pack it up again.

Packing Your Air Freight

Have the movers pack your air freight before packing your household effects. China and glassware sent by air may break easily. Consider purchasing attractive plastic dishes and glasses that can be used for picnics later. Ship small appliances in their original cartons, if possible.

Do not pack anything in your air freight that can be damaged due to extreme cold temperatures. Be aware of liquids that may burst open. Unpressurized and unheated compartments at high altitudes can cause things to freeze or the contents of bottles and tubes to be sucked outward by low air pressure. Screw type plastic bottles packed inside leak-proof plastic bags are best for transporting liquids.

Do not pack flammable or explosive items, such as lighter fluid, matches, aerosol cans, nail polish, or polish remover in air freight.

Unaccompanied Air Freight Allowance Chart

Family	Gross Weight (includes all packing material)
For the first person	250 pounds
For the second person	200 pounds
For the third person	150 pounds
Each additional person	100 pounds

Suggested Items for Air Freight

(See Chapter 3 - Children in the Foreign Service for additional suggestions on packing for children.)

- Basic kitchen items: kitchen utensils including knives, plates and silverware, serving utensils, glasses, mugs, cookware, spices and condiments, cookbook, tea kettle
- Sponges, soap, cleaning rags, dishcloths
- Small electronic appliances, including coffee maker, toaster, mixer, hair dryer
- Pillows, sheets, blankets, bedspreads
- Towels, bathmats
- Shower curtains and liners (if needed) with hooks
- Tablecloth, napkins (either paper or cloth)
- Clothing for all members of the family
- Work clothing
- Shoes, outerwear, umbrella
- Clothes hangers
- Cosmetics and toiletries, including a supply of soap
- Books, games
- Children's toys
- Computer equipment
- Office supplies
- Items for hobbies, including small musical instruments
- Seasonal decorations
- Gifts

- Pet supplies, including a beginner supply of pet food, pet bed, and leash
- Extra set of eyeglasses and other non-urgent medical items
- Food items (if allowed)
- Anything that you need in the first few weeks that will not fit in your luggage

CONSUMABLES ALLOWANCE

Some overseas posts provide the employee an additional weight allowance for consumables. This allowance is meant to offset difficulties caused by the unavailability of certain foodstuffs, paper products, and other personal or household maintenance items.

Consumables are items that are consumed or used up; they do not wear out. There are two categories of consumables:

1. **Edible Consumables.** Nonperishable foodstuffs, edible either as are (such as packaged cookies, canned tuna) or edible as part of prepared items (such as flour or oil used to make cake). Edible consumables directly satisfy the need for nourishment. Perishable or frozen foods may not be included in a consumables shipment. Pet food may also be shipped as part of edible consumables.
2. **Nonedible Consumables.** Nonedible consumables are used for personal "maintenance"—e.g. deodorant, toothpaste, and personal hygiene products and for maintenance of the household such as paper products, laundry and cleaning supplies.

Articles such as tires may not be shipped as consumables (they belong in HHE). Up to 2,500 pounds of consumables may be shipped for a two-year tour of duty, although this amount does not have to be shipped all at once. It is often best to order consumables in several installments, thereby managing cost, availability, and the shelf-life of purchased items. If the tour is extended by a year, another 1,250 pounds may be added.

The Overseas Briefing Center provides a handout on shipping consumables, including stores where consumables may be purchased. Some stores allow your shipper to pick up the items directly from them. You also have the option of compiling your consumables in a location of your choice (your own home for instance) and arranging for the shipper to pack in that location. For more information on the packing of a consumables shipment, contact Transportation Management at TransportationQuery@state.gov.

Check with post and the Overseas Briefing Center for suggested items to purchase. A list of suggested consumables items for each post where the allowance applies is available through Post Info to Go and can be requested from OBC at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.

Some suggestions when planning consumables purchases:

- Get specific information from more than one person, if possible, about what is available and affordable at your particular post. To aid you, you may want to review your post's Personal Post Insights as well as the list of suggested consumables items on Post Info to Go. You can request either of these from the OBC at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.
- Before planning purchases, keep track of the items your household uses in a week or a month. Use this to determine amounts.
- Check expiration dates. It is possible to lay in a two-year supply of some things (such as shampoo), but impossible for other things (such as crackers). Make sure that food items and cleaning or hygiene products are packed in separate boxes (not together).
- Find out the rules on follow-up consumables orders. For a two-year posting, items can be ordered during the first year. For a three-year posting, items can be ordered through the second year with an amendment to the travel order which is valid for only one year. Keep track of the shipment weight so you can use your remaining pounds if you need them. Keep track of what you originally paid for goods. If you need to sell them at the end of a tour, you may not charge more for any item than you paid for it. You may sell them to people at post or to other diplomats but never on the local economy.

The Office of Allowances website offers [information on consumables](#) and a [listing of consumables posts](#).

TRACKING SHIPMENTS

You can track your shipments through the PCS Portal, provided by the Transportation Management Division. The PCS Portal can be accessed through myServices on OpenNet and AIDNet using single sign-on, or the internet with a username and password through [myServices](#). For more information on tracking your shipments, email TransportationQuery@state.gov or call (202) 472-8480 / 8481 | Toll Free (800) 424-2947.

FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION

If you plan to ship firearms, first review post policies and the post's TM3 (available through Post Info to Go or by emailing FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov) to determine any restrictions or limitations. Anyone who plans to bring firearms to post must first consult with the regional security officer and have the permission of the chief of mission. Arrange to have firearms registered with U.S. Customs before they are shipped from the United States ([Customs Form 4457](#)) as proof that you took the

firearms from the United States to another location. This will simplify reentry. **Note:** The U.S. government will not ship ammunition under any circumstance.

ITEMS NOT COVERED IN U.S. GOVERNMENT ALLOWANCES

Boats (including kayaks), outboard motors, aircraft, construction materials, animals, and plants are not officially considered personal or household effects and may not be shipped or stored at U.S. government expense. If you want to ship any of these items at your own expense, contact the embassy/consulate to which you are assigned to see if the items may be imported.

INSURANCE CLAIMS

Throughout the moving process, your belongings are subjected to multiple handlings, stresses, and strains. Damage or loss can occur despite care taken in both packing and shipping. Therefore, purchasing adequate private insurance is an absolute necessity. It is strongly recommended that **private insurance covers both loss and damage** for household effects (shipped and stored). You cannot insure anything after it has left your possession. It is also important that you obtain commercial insurance to cover both marine and land transits of your vehicle.

The Military Personnel and Civilian Employees' Claims Act of 1964 (see [14 FAM 640](#)) does not provide for full insurance. Rather, it functions only as a minimal safety net in those instances where an employee has no private insurance or where private insurance is disallowed. See Chapter 30 - Insurance for more information.

The Claims Act authorizes payment for personal property only. It does not provide a remedy for consequential damages or other types of expenses such as loss of use, interest, carrying charges, cost of lodging or food while awaiting arrival of shipment, attorney fees, telephone calls, cost of transporting claimant or family members (car rentals), inconvenience and time spent in preparation of claim or cost of insurance premiums. A list of high-value items (more than \$1,000) should be filed with the Claims Office in the Department of State. Thus, value and ownership will already have been established if there is need to file a claim against the U.S. government (see [Personal Inventory](#) above).

When filing an insurance claim for goods damaged during shipment, employees should bear in mind three deadline dates:

- **75 days** from the date of delivery to submit a letter of intent or a form DS-1620E "Notice of Loss or Damage" itemizing damages or missing items
- **Two years** from the date of delivery to file a written claim with the Claims Office or post
- **Six months** from the date of settlement or denial of a claim to file for a reconsideration

For additional information, employees should contact the Claims Office at ClaimsQuery@state.gov.

NOTE TO NEW EMPLOYEES

As you prepare to come to Washington, you will probably not know your overseas destination. You can facilitate your subsequent move abroad if you carefully follow the packing suggestions in this section, taking special care to:

- Prepare a complete inventory of your household and personal goods.
- Plan what you might take abroad if authorized a limited shipment of effects (the shipment you get if traveling to a furnished post) and see that these items are packed separately from those that you plan to keep in storage during your first tour overseas.

As the packers fill out their inventory sheets, be certain that you can identify cartons and items by the number placed on each piece. It might be useful to keep a small notebook and enter the packer's number with a brief notation of carton contents or description of individual items. When you receive your assignment, you can easily notify the storage company or the Department warehouse regarding the effects you wish shipped abroad.

SAMPLE

JOINT PROPERTY STATEMENT

We declare that the property being stored at government expense is the joint property of

and

and either party may have access to these effects.

1. Date

Signature

2. Date

Signature

Name of storage company:

Address:

Date entered into storage:

Invoice No.:



CHAPTER 19

UNACCOMPANIED ASSIGNMENTS



Today's foreign affairs employees face a high probability of serving at an unaccompanied post at some point during their careers. Unaccompanied posts are those that do not allow family members on the employee's official travel orders. Some posts may allow adult spouses to accompany the employee if they have secured an EFM position working inside the mission. Unaccompanied assignments may also occur when a family chooses a separated tour to accommodate educational or medical needs, employment concerns, or the care of elderly relatives.

In accepting an unaccompanied tour, all employees should familiarize themselves with the length of tour, the number of rest and recuperation (R&R) travel in a given year, the weight allowances for the

shipping of personal belongings (and consumables if provided), and the amenities provided by post. For singles, planning for when you travel to meet friends and family during R&R points is helpful, whether leaving behind significant others, parents, siblings, nieces and nephews, or children. For couples and families, advance preparation can help cope with separations more successfully.

With your individual family circumstances in mind, the below suggestions provide a proven "road map" from the offices that support employees and families, and individuals and family members who have experienced an unaccompanied tour.

CHOOSING A HOME LOCATION

Families of employees traveling to an unaccompanied assignment after a Washington, DC posting may find it easiest to stay in DC, remaining in the area where they have lived for the past two to six years. Other families may enter a separated period following—or even during—an overseas posting. In some instances, families may have the option of remaining at post during the employee's temporary assignment elsewhere. Foreign-born spouses, in particular, may choose to reside in a third country to enjoy extended family support. More often, separated families travel to a U.S. location of their choice for the duration of the assignment.

Factors to consider when choosing the location might include the following:

- Existence of a support network of family and friends
- Employment opportunities
- Cost of housing
- Quality of schools
- Allowances that will apply
- Visitation-related factors, such as number and length of R&R travel and time, ease, and cost of travel from the assignment location
- Shipping and duty expenses
- Availability of transportation
- Ability to be in frequent communication with the post and Washington, DC-based offices (high-speed internet and phone service options)
- Recreational opportunities
- Personal preferences (weather, mountains, beach, rural or city, etc.)

Access to embassy services may not be available if choosing a foreign location.

PREPARING FOR SEPARATION

Getting ready for an unaccompanied assignment involves preparation on many different fronts: organizing paperwork, getting finances in order, arranging for allowances, communicating with family members, and considering the psychological aspects of the impending separation.

Organizing Paperwork and Finances

Consider the following actions before the employee leaves for post:

- Make or update wills. Each of you should have a copy; give the original to the person named as executor or leave it with your attorney. Do not put it in a safe deposit box.
- Place important papers such as the following in your safe deposit box: original deed to property/house, title to car(s), insurance policies, certificates of marriage, divorce, birth, citizenship naturalization, adoption papers, etc.
- Draw up a calendar of events listing annual inspections and renewal dates (e.g., auto safety and registration, furnace and other household infrastructure), memberships and subscriptions, medical checkups, and pet vaccinations.
- Review life insurance coverage. Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) and American Foreign Service Protective Association (AFSPA) life insurance plans offer coverage for deaths in terrorist or “perils of war” incidents, whereas many other plans do not. Consider whether you might wish to participate in AFSPA’s [Immediate Benefit Plan](#) coverage which provides payment to the designation beneficiary. A coverage payment amount is deducted directly from pay per pay period.
- Review designation of beneficiary forms found in eOPF on unpaid salary and unused annual leave (SF-1152), refund of retirement contributions, FEGLI benefits (FE-6), Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) insurance policies (TSP-3), and investments. Send revised designation of beneficiary forms to the HR Service Center at HRSC@state.gov for processing. The TSP-3 Designation of Beneficiary form is not stored in the employee’s eOPF but with TSP. It should be mailed directly to TSP to the address on the form.
- Discuss with your family what to do in case of an emergency. Execute a durable power of attorney for medical decisions and a living will. The Department of State provides one free copy of “Five Wishes” for each employee for this purpose (see Chapter 31 – Resources and References).
- Write and have notarized a letter from the absent parent authorizing the other parent to travel internationally with the children, if anticipated.

- Create a power of attorney for transportation or medical treatment of children, if they are being left with a guardian.
- Make a list of emergency notification numbers for contacting the employee.
- Set up a current power of attorney so that the spouse can transact business on the employee's behalf. Have several originals and copies made. Check with your financial institution (bank, credit union) to ensure they will accept the power of attorney. For instance, the State Department Federal Credit Union (SDFCU) has proprietary forms.
- Establish at least one joint checking account. Make sure that each person can access funds if anything should happen to the other. Discuss the easiest way to make deposits and fund transfers. Make sure both spouses know how to access the account and check the balance electronically.
- Establish credit that will be adequate for emergencies. Obtain credit cards for both employee and spouse. It is essential for the spouse to establish credit in their own name.
- Get an automatic teller machine (ATM) card for your bank account that can be used throughout the United States and internationally. Ensure that appropriate security controls are on the account.
- Create a family email address that you can share with family, friends and school; this will make it easier for everyone to stay connected and know what is going on. Think about using and establishing accounts for social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram. Be mindful of family and post security, don't publish full birthdates, addresses, and don't put names or locations on photos.
- Review income tax requirements if one spouse has not been involved in preparations.
- The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) supports the unaccompanied tours portfolio. Fill out the GCLO contact information form for families on unaccompanied tours. This allows GCLO to provide updated information and services during the separation. Email GCLO at GCLOAskUT@state.gov to request a form.

Arranging for Allowances

Review the provisions of Separate Maintenance Allowances (SMA). Detailed information can be found in Chapter 27 - Allowances Connected with Post Assignments.

SMA is categorized into three categories: involuntary, voluntary and transitional. All require that the applicant complete the SF-1190 (Foreign Allowance Application, Grant and Report) and submit it, prior to arrival at post, with the required documentation for approval to the employee's designated regional or functional bureau's SMA coordinator. Commencement of SMA occurs when the employee begins work at the post; SMA is paid directly to the employee every pay period, not the spouse.

An agency may authorize involuntary SMA (ISMA) when adverse, dangerous, or notably unhealthy conditions warrant the exclusion of family members from the area, or when the agency determines a need to exclude family members from accompanying an employee to post. If the employee initiates a request for ISMA based on medical reasons, supporting data must include a statement from the attending physician and a ruling by the ranking medical officer attached to the agency or by such other person or group as the head of agency may designate.

In other cases, individuals may elect voluntary SMA. While this decision is a private one, the employee is required to state on the SF-1190 application the reason for the separation and provide supporting data as cited in [DSSR 264.2](#). SMA typically is granted for career, health, education, or family considerations of the spouse, children, or other family member. SMA may be requested on behalf of one or all of the employee's family members up to the age of 18.

When voluntary SMA is elected, all other benefits normally received by eligible family members at post are waived for the period of separation, including medical travel, home leave travel, educational travel, travel of children of separated families, and R&R travel. The employee will subsequently be treated as a single employee at post and receive housing and other allowances commensurate with their unaccompanied status if all family members are on SMA.

Transitional SMA may be authorized when a post converts to an unaccompanied status following the termination of an evacuation when family members are not allowed to return to post. It is intended to assist family members with the extraordinary expenses of temporary commercial housing and is paid for a maximum of 90 days. Family members will be paid involuntary SMA following the termination of transitional SMA. The Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR) were amended in July 2007 to add two new types of Transitional Separate Maintenance Allowance (TSMA), both designed to assist employees on unaccompanied tours with the costs incurred by their families for temporary commercial quarters at an Involuntary Separate Maintenance Allowance (ISMA) location. [DSSR 262.3d](#) allows up to 60 days of TSMA when the family relocates to an ISMA point and temporarily occupies commercial quarters while the employee proceeds to an unaccompanied post. [DSSR 262.3e](#) allows up to 10 days TSMA to assist with the costs of temporary commercial quarters as the family prepares to depart the ISMA point to rejoin an employee transferring from an unaccompanied to an accompanied post.

The Employee Services Center (ESC) requests that employees and family members update their employee locator record by providing the ESC with contact information. They use this information to inform you of friends and family members who are interested in locating you as well as provide updated mail forwarding instructions. The ESC may be reached at (202) 647-3232 / 3433 (see Chapter 31 - Resources and References).

In an emergency, if other means of communications have failed when family members attempt to contact an employee overseas — such as serious illness or injury or the death of a member of their immediate family — family members can contact the Office of Casualty Assistance at (202) 736-4302 from 8:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (EST) Monday-Friday and the Operations Center (202) 647-1512 after business hours, Saturday, Sundays and holidays.

Making Personal Preparations

If you are in the Washington, DC, area, consider taking the Transition Center course [MQ 940: Resilience Preparation for High Stress Assignments](#). This course empowers employees and couples to be more psychologically prepared for an extended assignment to a high stress post. To enroll, email FSITCResilience@state.gov.

No matter where you are, review the resources available on the Global Community Liaison Office's [Unaccompanied Tours](#) website. The resources are organized into categories for before, during, and after an unaccompanied tour.

Take time to talk about the upcoming separation and how you plan to deal with it. Be honest about your fears and concerns. Share your expectations so that misunderstandings will be minimized. Decide on a plan for communicating and visiting. Discuss responsibilities: who will handle which matters while you are separated? Heighten awareness about income tax requirements, including the collection of certain receipts, invoices, and other financial considerations. Decide which chores can be contracted out or perhaps delegated to a child.

Decide which items will travel with the employee. Consider storing photos, music, and other media on the cloud where both spouses can access it remotely. Encourage children to provide a small keepsake or favorite photo to “remember me by.”

Talk about discipline and decision making regarding the children. (No second-guessing the person left in charge!) Hold a family meeting to discuss why it is important that the parent is going away and how the family will function during the separation. Take time to acknowledge that the children are making a sacrifice, too, and listen to and address their concerns.

Prepare activities in advance to help keep the family connected:

- Record favorite bedtime stories for young children.
- For an older child, consider getting two copies of a book that is of interest but a bit challenging. After the two of you read each chapter, discuss it on the phone.

- Share ownership of a fantasy sports team, arrange to play long distance chess or pursue some other joint activity.
- Purchase gifts and cards to be left for special occasions. Consider setting up a “treasure hunt” (leaving small treats or notes hidden around the house, with clues to be provided over the weeks or months to come).
- Give family members journals or scrapbooks to record their daily lives so that you will be able to catch up when you return.
- Provide a special photo of yourself: it could be ironed onto a T-shirt or pillowcase, placed in a special frame, laminated for portability or whatever will make you seem close by.
- Research communication apps and practice using whichever platform you choose before you go.

Speak clearly with children about the upcoming changes. Make sure that they do not somehow think that the separation is their fault. Be prepared for clinginess (from the younger ones), aloofness (from the teenage crowd), or any other kind of altered behavior. Explain the situation to teachers and encourage their understanding and assistance.

The spouse staying home should plan for back-up childcare, both short-term and longer term in case of emergency. Having this plan written down and known by relatives or neighbors could help in case of unforeseen circumstances. Also consider using [WorkLife4You](#), which can provide emergency backup childcare for a \$10 copay.

Make sure to take a break from all of the preparations to spend time doing fun things together. (Put this “action item” on your list multiple times and enjoy checking it off!) You will treasure the memories.

Plan ways to say goodbye. It might seem easier to live in denial, ignoring the upcoming separation and glossing over it. However, time passes more slowly for children, and the rituals of farewells can form part of the process of adapting.

Finally, recognize that the complex emotions involved may emerge in many ways. As the departure date approaches, you may find yourself picking fights, acting angrily, distancing yourself, or building emotional walls. While you may experience these, you might not want them to fill your final days. Self-awareness may help you modify your actions.

LIVING APART

When living apart consider the following:

- Develop a plan for how to handle everyday tasks and have a plan for when emergency situations happen. The Department of State's free referral service WorkLife4You can help you locate these services.
- Work on creative ways to communicate: video calls, texts, telephone, email, letters, or newspaper and magazine clippings. If your child cannot read, take crayons with you so you can send drawings. An older sibling, the other parent, or a guardian can read your letters out loud.
- Photograph or video your post, quarters, surrounding area, embassy office, and friends with the permission of the regional security officer (RSO), so that family in the U.S. can see what it's like at post.
- Plan to see and talk with each other as often as finances allow.
- Write a journal, especially at the beginning. It can help with all of the new emotions and feelings.
- Talk about ground rules for what sort of information and emotions, especially emotions, can be shared and in what manner.
- Remember that this experience is time-limited. Put on paper the reasons for accepting this separated assignment and refer to them periodically, as a reminder.

As the distant employee, create shared experiences with your family, even while far away like enclosing small local items in your letters — and, yes, send letters even if you email four times a day! Work towards maintaining an emotional connection throughout the assignment.

For those at home, create a way to mark the time apart if this seems helpful: a calendar with days that you can cross out or a jar containing the same number of marbles as you will have days apart, to be removed one per day. Show young children pictures of the absent parent and make sure that they know this is Daddy or Mommy.

Enlist support. This is no time to be a hero. Others who have already been through this experience report feeling as though admitting negative emotions would be a betrayal of the employee. Ask for help when you need it (and offer help when you can).

Treat yourselves to rewarding activities and special experiences: take a class, plan a special trip, or enjoy watching all your favorite old movies. As one family member recommends — “Stay as busy as possible.” If your self-therapy includes redecorating part of the house or if you face a move during this period, be sure to send pictures to the distant spouse and keep a few familiar objects or arrangements intact. Homecoming will be emotionally awkward anyway; try to minimize the additional sense of being in a strange physical environment.

Expect emotional and behavioral changes, both from adults and children. The stages of coping with separation may include denial, anger, bargaining, and depression. None of these are pleasant to

encounter, but normal steps in the adjustment process. Listen carefully, without becoming defensive, and don't try to tell others what they should feel.

Find reasons to give thanks. Small joys can ease larger sorrows.

MAKING VISITS

Plan visits carefully. Discuss expectations in advance: what are you imagining? If one partner is dreaming of a second honeymoon and the other just wants help mowing the lawn, conflict is inevitable.

Seriously consider meeting at a vacation spot or alternative location rather than home. Social events, chores, and everyday life can make a home visit more exhausting than relaxing. With the family routine in full swing, the visiting employee may feel like a fifth wheel, while the home-based spouse may feel frustrated and irritated that the visiting spouse does not offer more help, damaging the fragile equilibrium of life apart.

The employee should remember that seeing everything function means that the family has found ways to get by – a good thing! Although it may appear at first glance that the family “doesn't need me anymore,” understand that they have worked hard to manage without you but desire a return to normalcy, just as you do. However, you are all going to have to redefine what normalcy means.

The home-based spouse should bear in mind that the major traumas of every-day life may come across as trivial to someone who has been witnessing daily mortar attacks. Try to be understanding of each other.

Regardless of the location, schedule down time for recovery before launching into more energetic pursuits. Take charge of the calendar and protect family time together and free time for resting. It may not be possible to see everyone and do everything; you can make up for it after the tour ends. Consider planning one event to include friends, neighbors, and distant relatives, leaving more time for resting and reconnecting.

Particularly if visiting the Washington, DC area, the employee should practice “office control” and refuse to let work impinge on family time together.

Extra days can be scheduled to accommodate work requirements; R&R should be exactly that.

Consider scheduling a few days of couple time without children. This can be difficult to arrange, since the employee may arrive exhausted (making a romantic getaway impractical at the beginning of the leave) and children may understandably react badly to having both mom and dad depart at the end of

the time together. One possible solution is for the employee to stop en route for a day dedicated to sleeping, then both meeting somewhere before starting “family time.”

Help children manage their expectations. Mom or Dad is not coming back for good, just for a visit. Again, this is one more reason that an alternative location may prove advantageous. Some families have each person make a list of things he or she wants to do during the R&R and make sure everyone gets at least one wish. Consider adding a new bonding item or activity (see above).

Remember that, just as when leaving the first time, complex emotions can cause you to react in unexpected ways. If conflict threatens your time together, bear in mind that a difference of opinion gives you options: it offers the gift of a new perspective. Focus on the fact that the other person is not ultimately the problem. The problem is the enforced separation.

RETURNING HOME

As the end of the separation nears, the home-based spouse may take on a taxing schedule of trying to get everything in perfect order. The returning spouse may undergo an exhausting journey followed by a serious case of jetlag. If coming from a high-risk post where tensions are uniformly high, the employee may react to the sudden cessation of threats by collapsing like a puppet whose strings have been cut. Plan to rest for the first few days, taking time off as necessary. Allow time to get reacquainted, for the kids to go through their scrapbooks or journals, for lazy days to enjoy each other’s company. Once again, discuss expectations ahead of time to help reduce disappointments.

The Office of Medical Services has a Deployment Stress Management Program (M/MED/MHS/DSMP) to help build psychological resilience and reduce stress associated with deployment for employees and their families before, during, and after their unaccompanied tour. (1800 N. Kent Street, Rosslyn, VA 22209; telephone: (703) 875-4828; email: MEDDSMP@state.gov.)

DSMP also offers prevention, intervention, treatment, counseling, education and referral services.

Remember that the employee may seem like a stranger to very young children. Older kids of all ages may test the limits or find it difficult to control their emotions. Be patient and flexible. This is just another stage in the adaptation process.

Encourage the employee to talk about his or her time away, but don’t insist if he or she does not wish to dwell on the experiences. It may take time to process everything that happened. Brace yourself for the realization that you will never truly know what it was like over there and that colleagues who did share the experiences are going to have a kind of intimacy with your spouse unavailable to you. This does NOT replace your primary role as spouse. Scheduling time to go through journals together or setting up some other systematic way of reconnecting may enhance understanding of the experiences

the other person lived. Consider family counseling even if everything seems to be fine; this preventative maintenance can help build an even closer relationship.

If returning from a high-stress assignment, make it a high priority to attend the [Transition Center course MQ950: High Stress Assignment Outbrief Program](#). Past participants have described how much better they feel knowing that they are not the only one reacting to helicopters or slamming car doors, feeling that life at home focuses on trivial matters or having difficulty resuming everyday routines.

No matter what your assignment, don't expect to jump right back in to how things were before the separation. You have all changed, and you may wish to reallocate roles and responsibilities. Take your time, and avoid criticizing decisions made while you were away.

Find ways to thank each other. The home-based spouse does not receive glowing performance reports or meritorious honor awards. Often the only appreciation he or she receives for supporting your Foreign Service work comes from you; family and friends may even have expressed criticism or disapproval. Balance the scales with heartfelt and generous thanks, conveyed in multiple and creative ways.

SECTION 4 SECTION 4

AFTER YOU ARRIVE





CHAPTER 20

THE COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE AND POST SUPPORT



For more than 40 years, the Community Liaison Office (CLO) has served as the epicenter of post morale, providing support to U.S. government employees and family members who are assigned to U.S. embassies and consulates all over the world. Currently, there are CLOs at more than 200 missions (both large and small) overseas, including several unaccompanied posts such as Baghdad. The [CLO program](#) is administered by the Global Community Liaison Office.

The CLO coordinator at your post is one of the first contacts you should make when you receive your new assignment—well before you arrive at post. The CLO is your “eyes and ears on the ground,” and is best equipped to give you post-specific and up-to-date information that you need to know before you

pack your bags. The CLO will provide pre-arrival information, a sponsorship and orientation program, and assistance with settling in after you arrive at post. You can expect to get relevant information about life at post, school options, the employment situation for family members, housing, and more. At most posts, you are assigned a social sponsor shortly before you arrive. The social sponsor will be able to help you navigate your arrival logistics and to answer questions about your neighborhood, schools, shopping, and points of interest to help you get settled in to your new community.

Providing essential pre-arrival assistance is just one of the many ways CLOs serve their communities. CLOs are charged with building community spirit and enhancing morale. They identify the needs of their specific community and respond with effective programming, information, resources, and referrals.

CLOs serve as the community advocate for employees and family members. They advise post management on quality-of-life issues and recommend solutions and family-friendly post policies. They assist in times of crisis.

CLO coordinator duties are defined in eight areas of responsibility, described below.

1. LIAISON WITH MISSION AND COMMUNITY

As the advocate for the needs and concerns of the post community, the CLO serves as an active member of the mission's country team, as well as a non-voting member of the housing board, the post employment committee, the emergency action committee, and the employee association. The CLO also meets regularly with leadership to inform them of trends and any community morale issues. In addition, CLOs maintain contact with local organizations and resources.

2. COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

CLOs gather, maintain, and disseminate information to the community through a variety of methods, which might include regular email updates, newsletters, social media, and websites. CLOs also report regularly on local schools, child care facilities, family member employment, and other post-specific information. Those reports are available in the post-specific information found through the Overseas Briefing Center's "Post Info to Go" collection of documents. CLOs also deliver these by email directly and many are posted on missions' intranet sites.

3. EDUCATION

To assist families with school-related decisions both before and after they arrive at post, CLOs establish and maintain contact with schools used by post families. Working together with the Office of Overseas Schools, CLOs prepare summary reports on their community's international schools and

on services available for children with special educational needs. CLOs also regularly report about child care options at post. These overseas child care reports are available through OBC's Post Info to Go.

4. EMPLOYMENT

CLO is an advocate for family member employment at post, serving as a member of the post employment committee as a non-biased observer during all job interviews involving family members for positions inside the mission. In conjunction with regional global employment advisors, the CLO also assists family members who wish to work outside the mission or who want to explore portable careers. CLO's semi-annual Family Member Employment Report (FAMER) is an invaluable resource to help prospective employees understand the job situation at post. The FAMER is available through OBC's Post Info to Go.

5. GUIDANCE AND REFERRAL

Although they are not counselors, CLOs do offer confidential support to individuals and groups within the community who are undergoing stressful situations, referring them to available resources as needed. CLOs are bound by a confidentiality policy which requires that they do not share information they are told in private, unless there is a danger to the individual, to others, or to the U.S. mission. CLOs must report allegations of discriminatory or sexual harassment. In no other cases will the CLO repeat what is said by another person without permission of the individual or unless required by law.

6. CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY

CLOs inform decision-makers about the interests and concerns of the community during times of crisis, helping to manage rumor control and keep the community informed. CLOs maintain emergency contact information for family members, schools, and other local and government resources. Helping families be prepared for emergencies is another major focus. CLOs also assist those who are experiencing unaccompanied tours, whether they are the employee or the family members left behind.

7. WELCOMING, ORIENTATION, AND DEPARTURES

In addition to pre-arrival information and assigning sponsors for newcomers, the CLO offers orientation programs to help the employee and their family members adjust to life at their new post. CLO should be one of your first stops after you arrive. The CLO can help guide you to the proper

authority to get answers to questions that are sure to come up after you arrive. The CLO also provides assistance for departing families whose tours have come to an end.

8. EVENTS PLANNING

While this is only one of eight major areas of responsibility, it is probably one of the most visible. CLOs plan a wide variety of events throughout the year to enhance post morale and to encourage a sense of community. Events may focus on U.S. traditions, host country culture, or social activities. They may also be educational workshops and seminars. One thing they all have in common is that they would not happen without volunteers! Regardless of the size of the post, CLOs receive no government funding for events. All events either must be self-supporting (tickets sold to cover the cost), or funded by volunteers or employee associations within the mission. You can help by generously donating your time (and sometimes your money!) when your CLO calls on you for support. Not only will you be supporting your community, but you also will be enriching your time overseas through your involvement in community life.

THE CLO POSITION

Community liaison office coordinators (CLOs) and assistant CLOs are positions that are filled by eligible family members (EFMs) of employees serving at post, and are advertised through a vacancy announcement when a position becomes available. As part of the post's management team, the CLO is a knowledgeable who can answer questions that come up before or after you arrive at post. Though you and your family members may contact service providers at the embassy directly, CLOs are often able to guide you to the appropriate resource quickly. Get to know your CLO!



CHAPTER 21

DIPLOMATIC POUCH AND MAIL SERVICES



The Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division (A/LM/PMP/DPM) is the directorate for all mail service-related matters and maintains all pouch and mail information, which is available via numerous links on the Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division's (DPM) intranet site.

RECEIVING MAIL AT POST

Personal mail may be sent overseas through an international postal service, APO/FPO/DPO Postal Service, or by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) unclassified diplomatic pouch service. All official mail must be sent via diplomatic pouch.

International Postal Service

International mail service is available all around the world. However, this service may be more costly, possess stringent restrictions, and less reliable. It is recommended that you research its effectiveness and consider safety and security before giving out or using an international address.

DPO Mail Service

Through an organized partnership with the United States Postal Service (USPS) and other federal agencies, DOS provides mail service to various locations overseas based on State program requirements. The DOS acts on behalf of the USPS, while ensuring that overseas diplomatic post office (DPO) postal facilities meet USPS operational standards.

DPO mail service is not available at all overseas posts.

Employees assigned to a post that provides DPO service must send and receive all personal mail and packages via the U.S. Postal Service through the DPO system rather than the unclassified diplomatic pouch. If a vendor will not send items to a DPO address, then customers must find alternate means or vendor. Parcels or flats sent by FedEx, UPS, Airborne, DHL or any other private carrier cannot be addressed to a DPO address. Packages are limited to 70 pounds and 108 inches (length and girth combined). For specific instructions, check at any U.S. post office or consult the USPS [APO/FPO/DPO Restrictions](#) webpage to see restrictions that apply to a specific DPO. (All DPO mail requires a customs declaration (PS Form 2976 or Form 2976-A) and appropriate U.S. postage from the point of origin to the point of entry into the DOS postal system. Handwritten customs forms are no longer authorized and the customs form must be completed online at the USPS [Customs Forms](#) webpage.

DPO mail service is not available at all overseas posts and only a select few locations are serviced by the military postal service (APO/FPO systems) with similar rules and restrictions as the aforementioned DPO system.

The standard DPO address format is as follows:

JOHN DOE

UNIT NUMBER, BOX NUMBER

DPO AE 09080-BOX NUMBER IS + 4

NOTE: Be sure to verify each post's preferred address format. An additional line may be added below the person's name to help sort mail at large posts. Do not add job titles, embassy names, or geographic locations unless directly instructed to do so; this information will result in delays.

U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Services

The term "diplomatic pouch" includes both the official pouch (which has a Washington, DC 20521 ZIP Code) and the personal mail for pouch-only locations (which has a Dulles, VA 20189 ZIP Code), which is only used for posts without a DPO assigned.

The official pouch address should not be used for personal correspondence or packages. The U.S. Postal Service irradiates mail sent via USPS to an official pouch address (meaning, items sent from outside DOS with regular postage), causing both delays and possible damage.

In 2002, the Department of State obtained a new ZIP Code (20189) for personal mail to support personnel assigned to non-APO/FPO/DPO posts overseas, which are referred to as "pouch-only posts". Mail sent to this address will not be irradiated. For DOS locations without a DPO, U.S. citizen direct-hire members of the foreign affairs community and their family members may receive letters and packages via the personal pouch address. The following size restrictions apply: add length + circumference – if length < 36 inches, then length + circumference NTE 135 inches – if length > 36 inches + NTE 48 inches, circumference is NTE 44 inches. No parcels can exceed 48 inches in length and maximum weight.

Note: Some posts have additional size and weight restrictions in effect because of host government decisions or aircraft size limitations. Check with your information management officer or information programs officer for clarification or visit the Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division (DPM) intranet site.

The DPM (A/LM/PMP/DPM) maintains a pouch dispatch schedule for each post on its intranet site. The frequency of pouch dispatches is determined by volume of mail and other material. Larger posts receive up to three dispatches per week. A small post will receive a minimum of one dispatch per week. Pouches are sent on commercial airlines as air cargo. Passenger baggage and critical supplies have priority when space is limited. Posts with a DPO assigned receive only one pouch shipment per week.

Postage must be paid at the applicable domestic rate for the class of mail and type of service desired, subject to zone rates (for parcel post) from point of origin to Dulles, Virginia. The USPS has a [postage calculator](#) on their website.

Using express mail services does not get mail to a post any quicker because the express mail service applies only from the point of origin to Dulles, and not to post. Packages may be mailed at any post office in the United States or sent to the Department of State by UPS, FedEx, DHL, Airborne, or any other private carrier (although these also only speed the material to the Dulles starting point).

Please address this mail using the following address format example:

JOHN DOE
2010 ABIDJAN PLACE + APT # (Required for a pouch only post)
DULLES, VA 20189-2010

When using the Dulles, VA, ZIP Code, for security reasons, nothing in the address field should reference in any way a mission, an office, job title, or anything official about where you work.

Insured and registered mail services are not available for items sent through the pouch. The Department accepts no liability for loss or damage – customers ship at their own risk and there is no claims process for pouch shipments.

Prohibited Items in Pouch

All items arriving at the Unclassified Pouch Facility (SA-32) in Sterling, VA are processed through X-ray. If, after X-ray processing, the parcel is deemed to contain a possible prohibited item, it is set aside for further processing, which could take several more days. If it is concluded that there is a prohibited item, the parcel is rejected and returned to sender.

There is an extensive list of prohibited items due to International Air Transport Association's (IATA) dangerous goods regulations, host country issues and concern to avoid damage to contents of the pouch. This list can be found at [14 FAM 723.2](#) and the DPM intranet website. The following list contains some examples but is not all-inclusive: aerosols, alcoholic beverages, ammunition, items for resale or donation, corrosives (acids), currency, explosives, firearms, flammables (perfume), glass containers, illegal substances, incendiary materials, narcotics, plants, poisons, radioactive substances, and uninterruptible power supply (UPS).

Lithium batteries are permitted in the pouch as long they are installed in the component (such as laptops, cell phones, iPads, Kindles or cameras). No more than four cells or two batteries are allowed

per package. For more information regarding restricted materials consult the USPS [Shipping Prohibitions & Restrictions](#) webpage.

A maximum total of 16 ounces of liquid in either plastic or glass per parcel is permitted; liquids include anything that flows, such as syrup or peanut butter.

Vendors occasionally place an “ORM-D” label (other regulated materials - “D” classification) on the outside of the parcel. These parcels cannot be shipped in the pouch and are returned to sender. ORM-D designates package containing hazardous or restricted item for surface shipments in accordance with Department of Transportation and IATA regulations. Since shipments are placed on international passenger flights and this identifying label would then be hidden inside the pouch, DPM cannot ship these labeled parcels onboard passenger aircraft.

The USPS guidelines and acceptance policy for Dulles personal pouch mail can be found on the USPS [Mail Manual](#) webpage.

Bulk Shipments

Bulk shipments are permitted in the unclassified diplomatic pouch but transportation is funded by the customer (personal or official). Bulk shipment equals or exceeds 6 cubic feet (meets or exceeds 5 single-copy paper boxes) and is destined to the same addressee/household between pouch shipments. All automotive tires (single or multiple) are considered bulk and shipped at the customer’s cost. If the customer does not fund transportation cost, the items are returned to sender.

SENDING MAIL TO THE UNITED STATES FROM POSTS

All official mail must be sent via diplomatic pouch. There are also three ways you may send personal mail to the United States from overseas: by international postal service, APO/FPO/DPO postal service, or Department of State pouch.

International Postal Service

Investigate the reliability of the service before using this option.

APO/FPO/DPO Postal Service

If your post has these facilities, you may use them to send letters and packages to the United States. Customs declarations are required for all packages and letter-sized envelopes containing anything other than correspondence. Each letter or parcel must include your APO/FPO/DPO return address and appropriate U.S. postage. Information on special mail services may be obtained at post. Intra-

theater mail, in rare cases, (i.e., APO AE xxxx to another APO AE xxxx) may be sent from one APO to another without postage by putting the initials “MPS” in place of a stamp. However, there is NO intra-theater mail to or from DPO addresses. APO/FPO facilities will know if postage is required for intra-theater MPS mail. If you are in doubt, please ask the postal clerk to verify this service.

Mailing Items from Post to the United States

When the post has no access to APO/FPO/DPO facilities, letters, exposed film, items the size of a small paperback book may be sent by diplomatic pouch services back to the United States (two pound limit). Items needed for health and welfare purposes may be sent by air pouch to the United States for replacement or repair. U.S. postage must be affixed at the appropriate domestic rate for the type of service desired from Dulles, VA to the ultimate addressee.

In a select few locations, the Department of State’s Commissary and Recreation Office has set up procedures for posts to use the pouch to send parcels back to the United States under the Homeward Bound Mail Program. This service is operated by employee associations and is paid for by the employees who use them. Not all locations have requested approval for this program, so please check with your post. Parcels being sent to the United States will require customs declarations. For more information, contact foodandfun@state.gov.

Prepare parcels containing unwanted/unneeded merchandise to be returned to respective vendors via diplomatic pouch as follows:

1. Affix appropriate U.S. postage for transmission through the USPS from Dulles, VA to the ultimate addressee.
2. Endorse the outside of the package with a statement that it contains merchandise purchased in and received from the United States which is being returned to addressee for exchange, such as “Returned U.S. Merchandise.”

To avoid confusion and ensure proper handling by the store where the item was purchased, it is recommended that you rewrap the package, address it clearly, and enclose a letter of explanation. Even if the package originated as a UPS delivery, it must be returned as a postal parcel and be prepared accordingly.

A return address must appear on all mail in the following format example:

NAME OF INDIVIDUAL

2010 ABIDJAN PLACE APT # (Required for Pouch Only Post)

DULLES, VA 20189-2010

A/LM/PMP/DPM manages the Department of State pouch and mail system in the Department, domestic field offices, posts, and U.S. Missions to International Organizations. For additional information contact the Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division.

DETERMINING YOUR ADDRESS

To determine which posts receive and mail personal packages via the APO/FPO/DPO system as opposed to the Department of State's diplomatic pouch service, consult the post's welcome cable (TM-3) available from post and also located in information from the Overseas Briefing Center's Post Info to Go websites.

Personal and official pouch addresses, as well as DPO addresses with ZIP codes are posted and maintained on the DPM intranet site.

Employees assigned to border posts receive and mail personal packages through special U.S. addresses, rather than through the APO/FPO/DPO or the DOS diplomatic pouch and mail services. Consult the TM-3 welcome cable (available from the Overseas Briefing Center) for the entire address and a description of the mail system.

TRACKING POUCH AND COURIER SHIPMENTS

Track pouch and commercial courier shipments by contacting the post mail room or by visiting the DPM intranet site. Items can only be tracked with a registry or tracking number.



COMPARISON OF MAIL OPTIONS

Mail Service	Weight
APO	250 pounds
FPO	200 pounds
DPO	150 pounds
USPS	100 pounds

Both APOs and FPOs are military mail services.

Washington, DC Pouch OFFICIAL pouch 20521 ZIP Code

Primary use: Official letters and official packages. Supplies (paper towels, calendars, computers, etc.) should be shipped via U.S. Despatch Agency.

U.S. postage required: No, if originates at HST or DC Metro Area State annexes. Yes, if originates outside Dept. of State/embassy/ consulate, or Department offices outside the DC Metro area. Postage amount is to or from Washington, DC.

Irradiated: Yes, if mailed (i.e., sent from outside the Dept.).

Size restrictions: Check with post for larger items. If shipment is equal to or exceeds 6 cubic feet, it is considered a bulk shipment and post must fund transportation costs. Shipment should go via U.S. Despatch Agency.

Customs declaration required: No

Can I use it to send mail to the United States?: Yes (official use only)

Frequency: 1 – 3 shipments weekly

Articles prohibited: Guidelines on the DPO intranet. Note that there are new guidelines concerning lithium batteries, and certain electronics containing 1-2 batteries (including iPods, smart phones, GPS, and certain laptops) may now be sent through the pouch if the product has been properly tested, and installed in the component prior to packaging and shipping. Please review the Department Notice on the intranet for full guidance.

Address change: Not relevant, since this should never be used as your personal address.

Commercial express (i.e. UPS, DHL, FedEx, etc.) permitted: Yes, however, all UPS, DHL, and FedEx shipments are brought to SA-32 pouch facility near Dulles VA, at which point they will be delivered to you by pouch.

Other notes: No collect on delivery (COD) service available, no insured mail, no registered mail or special handling. Express mail can be used but probably will not be quicker than regular mail. Also view additional information on the USPS [Mail Manual](#) webpage.

Sample address: Charley Horse U.S. Department of State Section 2010 Abidjan Place (or PL)
Washington, DC 20521-2010. For official business only. No postage required if sent from DC Metro area DOS facilities.

Dulles, VA Pouch PERSONAL pouch 20189 ZIP Code

Primary use: Personal letters and packages for those who do not have APO/FPO/DPO.

U.S. postage required: Yes. Cost = U.S. domestic postage to or from Dulles. Ex: Letter sent from CA via this address to person at U.S. Embassy Nairobi. Cost= U.S. first-class stamp.

Irradiated: No

Size restrictions: Yes, usually limited to 70 pounds and 108 inches (length, width and girth combined). May vary by posts that have oversize piece (OSP) restrictions. For latest information, see the restrictions for each DPO using the USPS [APO/FPO/DPO Restrictions](#) webpage.

Customs declaration required: No

Can I use it to send mail to the United States?: Yes, but limited to letters, exposed film, recorded cartridges, and voice tapes (cannot exceed two pounds). Items for health and welfare purposes may be sent for replacement or repair. With certain restrictions, apparel and merchandise purchased in the United States may be returned. Some posts offer the “Homeward Bound” program and allow other parcels to be sent (cost paid for by employee).

Frequency: 1 – 3 shipments weekly

Articles prohibited: Same as USPS guidelines, plus no aerosols, alcoholic beverages, ammunition, items for resale, bulk supplies, corrosives (acids), currency, explosives, firearms, flammables, illegal substances, incendiary materials, narcotics, perfume, perishables, plants, poisons, or radioactive substances, temperature-sensitive items. 16 oz. of liquid is permitted per box. Liquids include anything that flows (syrup, peanut butter). Charity donations and home business use is prohibited (including selling items on eBay).

Address change: The USPS will forward mail TO but not FROM a 20189-ZIP Code. Send individual address change cards. Post will forward items for a while.

Commercial express (i.e. UPS, DHL, FedEx, etc.) permitted: Yes, however, all UPS, DHL, and FedEx shipments are brought to SA-32 pouch facility near Dulles, VA at which point they will be delivered to you by pouch.

Other notes: No collect on delivery (COD) service available, no insured mail, no registered mail or special handling. Express mail can be used but probably will not be quicker than regular mail. Also view additional information on the USPS [Mail Manual](#) webpage.

Sample address: Charley Horse 2010 Abidjan Place (or PL) Dulles, VA 20189-2010. Never add embassy name, official title or country.

APO/FPO (only available at certain posts)

Primary use: Personal letters and packages. Should be used in place of personal pouch if available—unless a vendor will not send to an APO address.

U.S. postage required: Yes, to and from point of entry into military system.

Irradiated: No

Size restrictions: Yes, usually limited to 70 pounds and 108 inches (length, width and girth combined). May vary by posts that have oversize piece (OSP) restrictions. For latest information, see the restrictions for each DPO using the USPS [APO/FPO/DPO Restrictions](#) webpage.

Customs declaration required: Yes

Can I use it to send mail to the United States?: Yes

Frequency: Varies by post

Articles prohibited: Varies by post. For latest information, see the restrictions using the USPS [APO/FPO/DPO Restrictions](#) webpage. Nothing related to a home business is permitted (including selling—not buying—on eBay).

Address change: The USPS will forward mail, but you cannot change your address over the internet.

Commercial express (i.e. UPS, DHL, FedEx, etc.) permitted: No, will be refused.

Other notes: Many USPS services may be available, including certified mail, registered mail, insured mail, certificate of mailing, and return receipt. Priority mail IS faster than regular mail. No collect on delivery (COD) or delivery confirmation services.

Sample address: Charley Horse Unit XXXX, Box YYYY APO AE 09080-YYYY. Verify address with post: Some require an extra line. Never add embassy name, official title or country.

DPO Diplomatic Post Office (pilot program) PERSONAL MAIL ONLY

Primary use: Personal letters and packages.

U.S. postage required: Yes, to and from point of entry into DPO system to include other APO/FPO/DPOs.

Irradiated: No

Size restrictions: Yes, usually limited to 70 pounds and 108 inches (length, width and girth combined). May vary by posts that have oversize piece (OSP) restrictions. For latest information, see the restrictions for each DPO using the USPS [APO/FPO/DPO Restrictions](#) webpage.

Customs declaration required: Yes

Can I use it to send mail to the United States?: Yes

Frequency: Varies by post

Articles prohibited: Same as official and personal pouches.

Refer to [14 FAM Exhibit 723.2 - Items Prohibited For Pouch Dispatch](#). View the USPS [APO/FPO/DPO Restrictions](#) webpage.

Address change: Same as APO (cannot be changed online).

Commercial express (i.e. UPS, DHL, FedEx, etc.) permitted: No, will be refused.

Other notes: DPOs are primarily self-service online. No money orders, special delivery, express mail or registered mail services available. Retail sales may be available through the commissary or employee association at post.

Sample address: Charley Horse Unit XXXX, Box YYY DPO AE 09701-YYYY. Verify address with post: Some require an extra line. Never add embassy name, official title or country.

PLEASE NOTE: Some posts (particularly in Mexico and Canada) use other U.S. addresses. Always verify your address with post.



CHAPTER 22

HOUSEHOLD EMPLOYEES



The idea of having domestic staff can be disconcerting for Foreign Service employees and family members. The concept can be somewhat uncomfortable for those who have never employed domestic staff before. However, there are a few different factors in play overseas that somewhat change the dynamics and perspectives:

- Depending on your assigned country, daily tasks may require great effort—even without any potential language barriers. For purchasing food and preparing meals, you may need to ask for instructions on what to buy and how to cook it, travel to the local market, bargain for unfamiliar produce, carefully wash and disinfect your purchases, wait for a power outage to end, and only

then begin to cook supper. Having someone reliable to assist you can make life easier in a challenging environment.

- Hiring someone helps the local economy by providing employment for qualified nannies, housekeepers, drivers, cooks, and gardeners. If you are assigned to a country where jobs are scarce, such positions may hold more status than you realize.
- Household employees may provide a window into the local culture or a part of society that you may not see as a Foreign Service employee or family member, enriching your experience and broadening your understanding of the country.
- Help at home can free up time for other activities, such as representational events in your residence, opportunities to travel, or be involved in meaningful volunteer work.
- For families with young children, reliable nannies offer continuity in daycare, babysitting, and accomplishing child-oriented tasks around the house.

PLAN THE POSITION

Do not feel that you have to hire your predecessor's employees or the first person recommended to you. Take time to determine your requirements first. Do you need someone full-time or part-time? Do you want someone to cook, and do you want them to cook local or U.S. foods? Will you need help on evenings or weekends? Do you need child care and if so, how many hours per week? Will the employee need to take care of your pets, receive telephone messages, shop for food, or manage other employees? Does the employee need to speak English and at what level? Do you want a live-in maid? Think about these and other factors before asking for recommendations.

Although you may have diplomatic immunity, your employees will expect you to abide by local labor practices. Find out in advance what is normal in terms of working hours, holidays, benefits, bonuses, and responsibilities. Getting a sample contract may help you avoid unpleasant or expensive surprises down the road.

Check with the human resources (HR) office at post to determine an appropriate salary. Pay will depend on the local pay scale, the size of your house and family, the employee's experience, and the scope of duties. Choosing an employee at the lower end of the salary range may mean sacrificing experience and maturity; paying more for experience may be worth it.

Be clear before you interview anyone what you intend to provide in the way of fringe benefits. What is expected? (In some countries, employers provide personal hygiene products such as soap and shampoo for live-in employees, along with room and board). Which of your items will the employee be allowed to use? Will you pay for sick days or emergency absences? Will you help the employee's family by providing school uniforms for their children or other extras? What will the limits be? These points can be included in a written contract if agreed.

At some point your employees most likely will face personal circumstances that affect you (for example, your live-in housekeeper has a baby, or her father passes away and she needs a loan for funeral costs). Will you loan money or provide salary advances? It helps to consider various possible situations in advance and think about how you might deal with them, as well as what is dictated by cultural norms.

HIRE CAREFULLY

The best way to find an honest, reliable employee is to get recommendations from previous employers or other acquaintances at your new post and review household help advertisements in the post newsletter. Even if the employee has excellent recommendations, take the time to follow the careful hiring practices.

Prior to interviewing candidates, prepare a list of questions relating to your needs. Use it at each interview to help you select the best candidate. Be consistent in seeking information from prospective candidates. Some factors to determine (either at the interview or in advance) include:

- Past employment: what, where, how long, duties, reasons for leaving.
- Education: languages spoken, ability to read and write (which may or may not be important), skills for any other job requirements.
- Specific position-related skills and training.
- Cultural factors as relevant to employment. For instance, you might ask whether there are foods the candidates will not cook, if they are uncomfortable with certain types of pets, or if they would find it difficult to work with someone from a different local ethnic background.
- Health and hygiene habits. See "[Protect Your Family](#)" and "[Train Employees](#)".
- Willingness to meet your requirements.

Clearly explain the duties that you expect and the salary plus benefits you are prepared to offer. Establish a professional tone at the interview. If speaking a foreign language, use the formal verb tense if there is one.

Pay attention to how comfortable you feel with the person. This is someone who will be in your home every day (depending on the schedule). Even if you are favorably impressed with an employee, you may wish to suggest a paid probationary period of one to three months rather than immediate employment.

When interviewing potential child care providers, remember that as the employer, you set the rules for your household practices. Consider discussing the following topics:

- The caregiver's education and training
- The caregiver's experience and references
- Your family philosophies and goals, including meals, snacks and drinks for infants and children
- Discuss any medical conditions and food allergies pertaining to your child
- Discuss your preferred treatment for common childhood ailments (and find out if there are local practices with which you are not comfortable)
- Ideas for usual activities and a typical daily schedule
- Use of television or other media
- Philosophies on naps or quiet time
- Your family discipline methods, behavior expectations, and rules
- The caregiver's willingness and experience caring for children with special needs, if relevant

It may be helpful to interview the potential employee without children present, then schedule a time for the employee to meet the children. A few hours of babysitting while parents are still in the house (for example, unpacking or working on other projects) may give a good idea of how the potential caregiver interacts with your children.

Be sure to check references, stop by unexpectedly at times when your children are under the caregivers' supervision, and listen carefully to what your children say.

Remember that the housekeeper or cook is not necessarily the best person to watch your children. Cooking, cleaning, and caring for children at the same time may not be optimal for safety reasons, and the employee could resent the change in responsibilities if unexpected.

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY

Obtain the potential employee's full name, address, and any identification number (such as the local version of a Social Security number). Ask the regional security officer to conduct a background investigation if one has not been done recently.

Ask the post medical unit which medical tests are recommended. Arrange for a complete medical examination, chest x-ray, or other recommended procedures for the potential employee. Paying for these tests is your responsibility as an employer. You may want to personally take the employee to this examination, both to make it more convenient for your employee and to make sure that he or she does not send someone else instead.

Do not just ask for references: check them. Take the time to call previous employers and ask detailed questions. Read letters of reference carefully and attempt to verify what they say with the writers, even if they have since moved to a new post.

CREATE DOCUMENTATION

You might want to put specifics in writing to avoid misunderstandings and legal problems. Write down what you expect from the employee and what the employee may expect from you. Be as specific as possible regarding duties to be accomplished on a daily and monthly basis. Go over this list, reading it aloud to the employee, and—once all parties agree—have the employee sign it as a contract addendum.

Create monthly receipts of payments and save them. Obtain the employee's signature upon each salary payment.

Establish a form to track leave or vacation taken or paid. Some countries' laws require a 13th (at times even a 14th) month salary, and this form serves as proof that the employer covered all local legal requirements. Have the employee sign this form as proof that he or she received due payment and benefits.

Set up a folder and keep (at a minimum) copies of the employee's identification documents, documentation of health checkups, residence address and contact numbers, two additional points of contact in case the employee cannot be reached, salary log, etc.

Give the post regional security officer (RSO) a list of your domestic staff so that the alarm company or roving security patrol will know who is authorized to be at your residence when you are not home.

If the country requires that the employer pay for health insurance, verify all paperwork with the human resources office at post.

Provide the human resources office with a copy of your signed contract with the employee. The HR office may even have sample contracts for employee use.

TRAIN EMPLOYEES

The importance of this step cannot be overemphasized. If you need to, spend an entire day or two completing all of the required tasks with the new employee. Do not make assumptions about what employees know, even if they have worked for other U.S. families. Go over the use of each appliance. Point out which ones require a transformer or other special treatment. You may want to put labels in the local language on the machines, clearly and simply noting controls and requirements. Indicate how laundry should be separated, which items should be washed by hand or line-dried, and how often to use products such as bleach or fabric softener. Show them how to wash special dishes, such as nonstick pans. Point out which cleaners should be used for each task. Make sure that cloths or brushes used for bathrooms and floors never come near dishes or food preparation surfaces. Go over

procedures for safe food and water handling with all employees. If your home has a water filtration system, explain when to use potable water vs. water from the city source.

Make sure that the new nanny knows your rules regarding television time, snacks, naps, safety measures, etc. Indicate if there are foods or drinks that you do not want your child to have (in some cultures it is considered fine to give children coffee, tea and sodas, for instance).

Arrange for first aid training if possible. At the very least, provide emergency contact information and go over what to do in case of choking, poisoning, falls, and any other life-threatening occurrences.

A real and unexpected problem for some families is the fact that household help may wait on children hand and foot, allowing them to do whatever they want. Avoid this by reminding both the employee and child that the employee is in charge and should be respected. Continue to assign children household chores and responsibilities, so that they will not be too shocked by a later return to “real life.” Teach your children to maintain a healthy respect for your household help.

Instruct your employees on security procedures. Make sure they know where emergency numbers are located and which device to use in case of emergency (telephone or radio). Instruct employees not to give out information about the family to incoming callers unless they are SURE that the caller is a friend or relative. Employees should know the full names of everyone in the family in case of emergency. Do not allow employees to permit entry onto your compound or in your house of anyone you have not specifically approved.

Insist that employees accompany workmen or others who want to enter the house, after verifying that they have legitimate work orders. Remind them that exterminators should not spray food preparation surfaces or cupboards containing pots and pans, dishes, or food.

Ask your household staff to report any suspicious or unusual activity that takes place near your residence. Make sure they know how to contact the roving security patrol to investigate any suspicious activity.

Be clear about your expectations regarding the use of your possessions and your home. Which food is all right to eat? Can the employee use the telephone, television, or radio?

If you do not speak the language well, or if the employee does not speak English well, you may want to enlist a friend to interpret or write out instructions in the employee’s language. You may be able to physically demonstrate many tasks, but be sure that important points have been understood.

LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER

- Respect the culture of your employees. For example, do not ask Muslims to cook or serve pork.
- Do not expect your female housekeeper to give the male gardener orders if this is not the norm.
- Do not expect people to clean up after pets if this is offensive to them.
- Do not leave expensive items or cash lying around; it best to avoid temptation but also to avoid unfair speculation when you misplace anything.
- Remember that an employee living in your house is neither a friend nor a guest. Americans may try to ease ambivalent feelings about household employees by trying to treat employees as part of the family. This may be confusing and ultimately unfair to everyone involved.
- Many families in the foreign affairs community recommend maintaining distance by using the formal verb tense, having different meal times and keeping living areas separate. In the end, it is a professional work relationship.
- Be realistic in your expectations: no one is going to raise your children the same way that you do or iron your shirts exactly the way the dry cleaner did in the United States. Express appreciation, compliment work well done, and be generous when it is appropriate. This is much more effective—and easier on your and your employee's nerves—than frequent complaints or criticisms.

DISMISSAL OF HOUSEHOLD HELP

If you need to dismiss employees, do not give them advance warning. Simply ask for the keys, give them the required severance pay, and ask them to leave. Try to avoid firing someone in a moment of anger. Take the time to find out in advance what local regulations are and the best way to handle the situation in the context of the local culture. “Saving face” may be important in some cultures; in other countries you may need a signed statement from the employee saying that he or she has been paid in full. Regardless of the reason, try to avoid firing someone before a major holiday.

If an employee is terminated for cause (stealing or inappropriate behavior), help prevent problems for future employers by documenting the behavior and sending a brief report to the regional security officer, as well as the CLO coordinator.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS MANUAL (FAM) REGULATIONS FOR PERSONAL DOMESTIC WORKER EMPLOYMENT

[3 FAM 4128](#) stipulates that all personnel under chief of mission (COM) authority (including family members and members of household) are expected to ensure that any personal domestic workers employed in their homes are treated fairly. In addition, [3 FAM 4128.2-2](#) stipulates that personnel under COM authority who locally hire personal domestic workers to work for more than 20 hours per

week are required to have a written contract. All employee contracts with a locally-hired personal domestic worker must be in accordance with local law and post policy, and must include the terms of description of duties, hours of work, wages, overtime work, and living conditions. Please take the time to review these important regulations to ensure you are compliant with post requirements.



CHAPTER 23

SAFETY AND SECURITY



BEFORE YOU GO

All direct-hire U.S. government employees who are the security responsibility of the Secretary of State on official duty abroad must complete mandatory personal security training prior to their travel (outlined in [13 FAM 301.4](#)). Adult eligible family members are highly encouraged to complete security training, though security training is not a prerequisite for employment at an overseas Mission. There are four mandatory classes:

- [Introduction to Working in an Embassy \(PN113\)](#): All U.S. government personnel who are the security responsibility of the Secretary of State on official duty overseas and who will spend **30 days or more in a 12-month period** overseas, are required to complete the distance learning course, Introduction to Working in an Embassy (PN113). This applies to personnel who are either transferring under PCS, on TDY, in a REA or DETO status.
- [Security Overseas Seminar \(SOS\) course \(MQ911\)](#): All U.S. government personnel who are the security responsibility of the Secretary of State on official duty overseas for **45 or more cumulative days in a 12-month period** - except for those exempted, as described in [13 FAM 301.4-4\(B\)](#) - are required to complete the SOS course (MQ911). This applies to personnel who are either transferring under PCS, on TDY, in a REA or DETO status. This also applies to special agents of the Diplomatic Security Service. SOS content is not included in special agent training and therefore is required. Furthermore, it serves to inform special agents of the baseline safety and security understanding of their community members.
- [Counter Threat Awareness Training \(CTAT, previously HTSOS\)](#): All U.S. government personnel who are the security responsibility of the Secretary of State on official duty overseas for **89 or less cumulative days in a 12-month period** - except for those exempted, as described in [13 FAM 301.4-3\(B\)](#) - are required to complete the CTAT course (previously HTSOS). This applies to personnel who are either transferring under PCS, on TDY, in a REA or DETO status. It also applies to employed eligible family members (EFMs) who are over the age of 18.
- [Foreign Affairs Counter Threat \(FACT\) training \(CT650\)](#): All U.S. government personnel who are the security responsibility of the Secretary of State on official duty abroad for **90 or more cumulative days in a 12-month period** - except for those exempted, as described in [13 FAM 301.4-2\(B\)](#) - are required to complete the FACT course (CT650). This applies to personnel who are either transferring under permanent change of station (PCS), on temporary duty (TDY), in a reemployed annuitant (REA), or department employee teleworking overseas (DETO) status. It also applies to employed eligible family members (EFMs) who are over the age of 18. However, it will not be a condition of employment. EFMs who receive an offer of employment with the U.S. government prior to travel should take FACT or receive a waiver.

The Department of State strongly encourages all individuals and agencies to begin enrollment for the Foreign Affairs Counter Threat (FACT) training as soon as possible and attempt to avoid traditional PCS seasons to ensure training is completed in a timely manner.

Additionally, before traveling to post, it is highly encouraged that you research any available security documents for your post, and that of countries en route, at the [Overseas Briefing Center](#) in the Foreign Service Institute and other sources before you go overseas. See the Chapter 10 - Bidding and Post Research for more information.

The Overseas Briefing Center also provides a subscription to CultureGrams, an online database with cultural information for every country in the world. Contact the Overseas Briefing Center at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov for logon information.

AT POST: REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICE

Upon arrival at post, you will be scheduled for a series of in-country briefings including one with the regional security office (RSO). If, for some reason, this does not happen within the first 48 hours, you should arrange a briefing with the post or regional security officer as soon as possible and include adult family members in this meeting. Ask whether your children can also receive a security briefing either through the CLO or the RSO. Ask about the crime levels, which areas should be avoided, and if local transportation is safe to use. Also ask about the emergency notification procedures and adding family member cell phones to RSO alerts. Your personal safety and that of your family is most important. Do not hesitate to make a request if after a few weeks at post and once you have gotten over jet lag and the shock of moving, you would like a refresher security briefing.

Regional security officers (RSOs) are special agents (SAs) of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) and are sworn federal law enforcement officers responsible for the security of Foreign Service personnel, property, and sensitive information throughout the world. A substantial portion of a DS special agent's career is spent living and working abroad. DS special agents are also responsible for the protection of the Secretary of State, certain foreign dignitaries during their visits to the U.S., and others as designated by the Secretary of State. Major activities include protective services, management of security programs for Foreign Service posts, criminal investigations, background investigations, and providing testimony in legal proceedings relating to investigations, in addition to administrative, training, and liaison functions.

When the embassy is aware of an impending emergency, the RSO assists in producing advisories or warnings that are disseminated to the mission community and registered U.S. citizens via email, fax, or telephone by American citizen services (ACS). If an emergency requires the evacuation of Americans, the RSO in conjunction with the ACS assists in disseminating information on evacuation times and locations. RSO personnel may also coordinate with host nation law enforcement and security agencies to ensure safe passage of U.S. citizens to evacuation points, and to provide and coordinate security at the points of departure.

If you anticipate that life in a particular country might be difficult for you, arrange for a confidential session to develop entry strategies prior to departure with the Employee Consultation Service with the Office of Medical Services in the Department of State, Tel: (202) 663-1815. Employees from other agencies should check with their agencies for similar services.

TIPS FOR OVERSEAS LIVING

Crime rates the world over have risen in the past decade. Being from outside the country may add to your vulnerability. You may appear wealthy or be viewed as a tourist and therefore an easier or more attractive mark. Depending upon where you are assigned, crimes at your post may include:

- Carjacking
- Robbery
- Residential burglary
- Criminal abduction
- Assault
- Pickpocketing
- Terrorism

Detailed information, strategies and resources to mitigate crimes and increase your personal safety are provided by safety professionals and subject matter experts (SMEs) in FSI's [Security Overseas Seminar \(MQ911\)](#). We strongly encourage all government employees, eligible family members (those 18 years of age or older) to participate in the seminar before going to post. Participants develop strategies to reduce the chance of being involved in a crime overseas and think through what to do if you are a victim.

Be informed. Check for any travel advisories for countries you plan to visit. [Travel Warnings and Consular Information Sheets](#) are available on the Department of State internet site. [The Overseas Security Advisory Council](#) (OSAC) also offers security information, guidelines, and incident reports.

Other tips include:

- Obtain an international driving permit. Get a wallet card identifying your blood type, known allergies, required medications, insurance company, and an emergency contact.
- Remove from your wallet all credit cards, phone cards, ATM cards, and other unnecessary items. Put a plain cover on your passport (available in stationery stores).
- Use sturdy, lockable luggage with a tag that does not expose your address to passersby. Luggage tags should have your name, phone number, and full street address of the mission. Do not label them with "U.S. Embassy," "USAID Mission," or anything similar.
- Inform a family member or friend of your specific travel plans.
- Obtain a small amount of local currency in advance of traveling if possible.
- Be aware of airline safety records when booking vacation trips while overseas.
- Do not provide the name of your employer in reservation information.
- Ask visiting family and friends, who stay at your residence, to follow appropriate security measures.

TIPS FOR PERSONAL SECURITY AWARENESS

- Follow the recommendations of the regional security office at post.
- When at home, use the alarm system at your residence and teach all household help how to activate the alarm if needed.
- Learn to use the mission-provided radio for communication in the case of an emergency. Participate in routine radio checks, conducted by your embassy/consulate Marine security guards.
- Lower your profile. Do not drive a showy car or dress in a flashy manner.
- Know the culturally-appropriate dress in your assigned country and stay within its bounds. It may be best to not wear expensive jewelry.
- Know appropriate and inappropriate cultural gestures. The wrong one could inadvertently cause an embarrassing or dangerous incident.
- Avoid street demonstrations.
- Be aware of your surroundings. On the street, walk confidently and, in some cities, avoid walking alone. Stay out of unlit areas. Walk in the middle of the sidewalk and stand back from the curb while waiting to cross the street.

SECURITY FOR CHILDREN

Set the stage before you go overseas. Sharing information with your children about what you have learned about the new post can help alleviate some of their concerns. Practice communicating and rehearsing “what if” scenarios specific to your post and family. It is often best to bring up selected subjects during routine activities: during dinner or on a weekend hike. Be careful to avoid an apologetic tone about any restrictions that living overseas may place on them.

- Security measures: make arrangements for your children to attend the Young Diplomats Program at FSI's Transition Center, which is specially tailored for children and teens. Have a family meeting afterward and discuss some of the topics of program.
- Cultural restrictions: teens need to understand any dress or behavior restrictions ahead of time. Help children accept the local customs, not resent them. Make your guidelines clear.
- Help your child learn a few key phrases in the local language.
- Teach your child never to get into a car or go into a house without your permission. Do not leave your child alone in a public place even for a moment. Always know where your child is and what your child's plans are.
- Teach your child your home address and telephone number and the telephone number of the embassy/consulate. Children should know how to use public or cell phones. Keep a list of emergency numbers by your phone and make children aware of them.

- Train children not to give personal information out over the phone, even if the caller may be a friend. “Personal information” could mean which family member is away, any travel plans, where parents work, or recreation or school routines. Explain the importance of never divulging information in front of strangers.
- Caution children to keep all doors locked at all times and to never unlock a door to a stranger without adult approval. Teach them to not accept packages from anyone they do not know. Teach children never to admit strangers into the home.
- Listen when your child tells you he does not want to be with someone; there may be an important reason. Have the child present when you interview a household employee who will be caring for him and observe his reactions. See Chapter 22 - Household Employees.
- Teach children local emergency phone numbers, the mission number, and how to use the two-way radio. Make sure younger children know their name, address, and phone number.
- Caution teenagers about "blind dates" or meeting anyone they do not know.
- Teach younger members of your family not to open mail or packages.
- Teach children how to say no to strangers.
- Teach children how to exit the house in case of emergency. Have a family communication plan and decide ahead of time on gathering points.
- As age appropriate, show children how to use the alarm system at your residence and how to activate the panic button, if needed.
- Teach your children and any household help how to use the radio provided by the embassy/consulate.

EVACUATIONS

Evacuations occur for lots of reasons, such as political instability, acts of terrorism, or natural disasters. No two evacuations are the same. Some evacuees have had weeks to prepare, while others only hours. Some employees and family members return to post after a short time, while others do not.

There are common threads that run through all emergency situations. Preparation and information are key to managing the crisis.

Determine the “who” and “where” with your family. Who should be contacted in the United States and where should you and your family go during an extended evacuation? This is particularly important for single parents and tandem couples. Some employee positions could be deemed essential and require the employee to remain at post, while other employees and family members follow authorized or ordered departure procedures. Make arrangements for who might care for your

children if an evacuation occurs and one or both parents need to remain at post and children must leave.

- Plan your safehaven location. General guidance can be found on the [Global Community Liaison Office's Post Evacuations webpage](#), as well as guidance for families with children.
- Establish a line of credit to cover emergencies. Obtain individual credit cards for employee and spouse or partner. Consider two checking accounts: an active account and another for emergencies.
- Arrange automatic payroll deposits to a stateside bank.
- Arrange for monthly automatic electronic bill payments (i.e. mortgage, car payment, etc.).

The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) serves U.S. government direct-hire employees, their family members, and members of household (MOH) in times of evacuation. Extensive resources regarding evacuation can be found on [GCLO's Post Evacuations webpage](#).

STAY BAGS & GO BAGS

When a major crisis at post occurs, employees and family members may be asked to shelter in place. Evacuation procedures may follow.

Stay Bag

Your stay bag is your shelter in place home emergency kit. Supplies should last for three to four days and be stored in an easy-to-carry container such as a backpack or duffle bag. A stay bag should include:

- Water - three-day supply per person.
- Food - three-day supply of nonperishable ready-to-eat items.
- Supplies and medication - all prescribed and over-the-counter aids.
- Sanitation - toilet paper, paper towel, soap, wipes, sanitary products.
- Clothing - shoes and rainwear.
- Pet Supplies - see [Ready.gov](#) for more information.

Go Bag

Your go bag is your evacuation emergency bag. It is your bag that is ready to grab-n-go when you get a phone call to evacuate. One of the most important things to hand carry in a go bag are your personal documents and records. Your go bag should include:

- Documents (passports, important records, account passwords)
- Photos and digital records (can be on a portable hard drive)
- Prescriptions, medications, and vaccination cards
- Phone charger
- Keys (unless otherwise instructed by GSO)
- Cash
- Clothes
- Medical kit
- Batteries for digital devices
- Toys, books, and games
- Water and snacks
- Pet supplies (if they can come) - see [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) for more information or view resources from the Overseas Briefing Center's handout.

It is also important to consider setting up Power of Attorney for parents traveling separately with children.

More details on go bags, evacuations and building resilience, and a customized personal crisis preparedness aid, can be found in the Transition Center's free online resource [Overseas Crisis Readiness](#).



CHAPTER 24

LEAVING YOUR POST



Transitioning from an overseas post to a home location or another post is a process that, just like heading to post, takes planning, time, and effort upfront. The tasks ahead will vary depending on your current post, as well as your follow-on assignment. Many posts will have checkout sheets to help you with the transition. This chapter will give you a general overview of the process so you can start planning ahead for one of the many transitions that comes with the foreign affairs lifestyle.

LOGISTICS OF LEAVING YOUR POST

Leaving post includes a range of logistical tasks and challenges. Many of these tasks will be post-specific and require you to follow proper departure and checkout procedures. Contact post management and your sponsoring office in advance about the particulars that will apply to your work position and transfer eligibility, and your personal and family situation in planning the timing of your move.

Checkout, Packout, and Transfer Process

About six months before your expected departure date, check with your post's HR or management office for the official departure checkout sheet. This will guide you in the many logistical steps required, including the signatures needed to prove you have completed the tasks. Each list and the tasks that must be completed will vary from post to post, but may include such things as:

- Scheduling departure flights through My Itinerary on the intranet
- Updating medical clearances
- Renewing passports
- Arranging for visas
- Planning shipments
- Housing walk-through with the general services office (GSO)
- Return of your badge, cell phone, and other government equipment in your possession

To customize your “to do” checklist for the upcoming move, the Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) offers the [Ready Set Travel app](#). This free mobile app is available for iOS and Android devices in the APP store.

To get organized for a packout, see the detailed information in Chapter 18 - Packing to Go. It is often helpful to start by categorizing your household into three groups:

1. Items you will want to bring with you in your airport luggage (including items that are irreplaceable or sensitive such as important documents or records and jewelry, as well as anything that you will want to have with you immediately at your new post of assignment).
2. Items that you will want to arrive a few weeks later via air freight (UAB).
3. Items that you can survive without for a few months until they arrive in your household effects shipment (HHE).

The transportation office at your current post will be the best point of contact to make all of the necessary arrangement for the logistics of the move, as well as the GSO shipping and customs office at your new post. If transiting to the United States, your shipper will be the main contact for the arrival of your air freight and household effects.

Exporting a Pet

It is important to plan far in advance, even as far ahead as 12 months before departure, if you will be bringing a pet with you to your next post. Depending on your location, there may be certain rules and regulations that must be met in order to depart the host country with an animal on top of all the regulations that must be met in order to enter the new country. Airline restrictions can be problematic; in some cases, it is far easier to get a pet into the country than it is to get one out. Here are some tips to get started:

- Check with the management office or GSO at post to develop a plan for exporting your pet.
- Check OBC's Post Info to Go information to find the pet survey for your new post and make sure that you can meet all of the entry requirements on the correct timeline.
- If returning to the United States, read guidelines in OBC's "Shipping Pets" checklist or review the information on OBC's internet website.

Selling Items from Your Personal Property

As you begin to sort through and pack all of your items for your next post, you may wish to downsize and sell (or give away) some items that you no longer want or need. [4 FAM 368](#) (Disposition of Employees' Personal Property Overseas and Conversion of Proceeds) governs the sale of personal property at posts overseas.

You will need permission from the management office at post if items are over a certain dollar amount, and there are often restrictions preventing items from being sold at a profit (especially if the item was brought in duty-free like your personal vehicle). Be sure to check with the management office in advance in order to document any sales of personal items as required by regulations and post policies.

Ideas for advertising your items for sale:

- Put an ad in the post newsletter or on the CLO Facebook or marketplace page.
- Mention your items for sale in online groups that are dedicated to foreign affairs community members.
- Post photos online and share the private links with your friends and colleagues at post.

Donations to charity, faith groups, schools, and other institutions are welcome in many overseas locations. This is a great way to lessen your shipment weight, but more importantly, donations greatly benefit local organizations in need.

Shipping a Vehicle

If you plan to ship a vehicle from your current post to your new post, you will need to make sure that your vehicle is in compliance with the import requirements of your newly assigned country. Countries often restrict vehicle importations on the basis of age, weight, size and type of vehicle, and window tinting. To find out the vehicle restrictions in place for your new country, check the post's Welcome to Post cable (TM3) available through Post Info to Go or by emailing OBC at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov. To begin the process of shipping a vehicle, contact the GSO or shipping office to make the necessary arrangements. Refer to Chapter 16 - Automobiles of this publication for detailed information.

If you are unable to ship and import your vehicle to your next post, you may want to consider selling it to an incoming employee, and purchasing a vehicle from a departing employee at your new post. Check with the management office if you choose to do this to ensure you are following any regulations on selling personal items at post.

The USG will fund the shipment of one (1) vehicle. This does not mean you are limited to one vehicle at post. You may be able to purchase a second vehicle on the local market. Check with post on the number of vehicles a diplomat can legally register with the Foreign Ministry at post. Also check post-specific guidance on motorcycles. If purchasing insurance through a U.S.-based company, make sure coverage is valid in your country of assignment and that it covers "in-transit" during the shipping process.

Documents and Important Records

As you transfer from post to post, it is important to keep consistent and well-maintained documentation and records, including medical records, school records, EFM employment records, and financial and personal documents. It is recommended to make digitized copies of these records to save on an external hard drive, and to hand carry any physical copies with you as you travel to your new post. The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) [maintains a list of all important documents](#) that should be hand-carried during a move. Start organizing these records in advance, as it may take more time than expected to obtain copies of certain documents.

Planning Ahead for Your Next Post

The logistical tasks for getting set up at your new post are just as important as completing the tasks necessary to leave your old one (and the two are often related).

Be sure to review Chapter 10 - Bidding and Post Research and Chapter 13 - Preparation for Going Overseas in this publication to guide your preparations and planning. Factors to consider include enrolling children in school or daycare (depending on age), researching family member employment options, shipping and importing a pet, determining items to bring to post, reviewing housing options, and more. To customize your “to do” checklist for the upcoming move, the Overseas Briefing Center offers the Ready Set Travel app. This free mobile app is available for [iOS](#) and [Android](#) devices in the App Store.

REGULATIONS AFFECTING TRANSFERS

Allowances for Transitions Between Posts

For detailed information on allowances, see Chapter 27 - Allowances Connected with Post Assignments.

There are financial costs related to international moves between posts and a transition home to the United States. The Department of State provides allowances to help defray certain expenses. The Foreign Transfer Allowance is provided for extraordinary but necessary and reasonable expenses not otherwise compensated for, but incurred by an employee incidental to getting established at a post overseas. The Foreign Transfer Allowance is composed of four elements: a miscellaneous expense portion, a lump-sum wardrobe expense portion, a pre-departure subsistence expense portion, and a lease-penalty expense portion. This allowance is not subject to federal tax. See Chapter 27 for full details.

Home Leave

For detailed information on home leave, see Chapter 28 - Travel and Leave Benefits.

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. Employees must complete a minimum of 12 months of continuous service abroad before home leave eligibility is established.

Foreign Service employees who are assigned abroad earn home leave at the rate of 15 days for each year of overseas service. There is no maximum limitation on the accrual of home leave. Employees are not paid for unused home leave upon separation or retirement.

Home leave can be used only in the United States, in the U.S. Commonwealths, or in the territories and possessions of the United States. Home leave should be taken in one continuous period, although, with approval in advance from the Career Development and Assignments (CDA) Office for Department of State employees and the HR office for other agencies. It may be interrupted for training, consultation or for other purposes. Any trips made outside of the United States before, after or during the home leave must be charged to annual leave, leave without pay or compensatory time off.

For detailed information on home leave, see Chapter 28 - Travel and Leave Benefits. Regulations are outlined in [3 FAM 3430](#) and [3 FAH-1 H-3430](#).

SAYING GOODBYE

Saying goodbye to the people at your post and the city that you've called home is a personal process and the best way to go about it will vary for everyone. However, it can be helpful in getting closure as you move to a new location, especially for children.

Saying Goodbye to Friends

Some people may choose to have a farewell or departure party as they prepare to leave their post. Consider combining farewell parties if leaving during a season of high turnover.

For children in elementary school, the Transition Center offers a [Children's Guided Journal to an International Move](#) with a companion parent guide. It is important to help children through the process of saying goodbye. Help them think of ways that they can say goodbye to their friends at school or in the embassy community. If your children have a nanny or have formed relationships with household staff during time at post, they may consider them to be close to family and experience trouble saying goodbye. It is important to be sensitive to these feelings and to help children with the process of moving on to a new post. During relocations, your child might feel a lack of control. For instance, a child has little say in the timing of a move. Coping with this lack of control and the associated lack of routine can be difficult. Discuss how the family might stay connected to friends and find age-appropriate ways to do that, like a family Facebook page or an annual holiday card/letter. And once you move, continue to talk to your child about ways to connect with family and friends. Having a communications plan can help to remove the sadness of not seeing someone or the "old, familiar surroundings" every day.

Establish Ways to Stay in Touch

To make the process of transitioning easier, establish ways to keep in touch with friends or colleagues after you depart from post. The method you choose may depend on whether the relationship was mostly professional or personal.

Getting Closure

As you start to prepare to transition to a next post, make a list of all the things you want to accomplish before leaving the country. Are there trips you still want to complete? Are there places you still want to see? Are there events you want to attend before departure? Are there things you did, really enjoyed, and would like to do again?

Tips:

- Start planning ahead of time, at least six months in advance, to make sure you can accomplish everything on your list without saving it all for the end of your tour when you will be busy with other logistics.
- Be sure to involve family members, if applicable, in move planning. Check dates regarding the start of school, mission orientation programs, and other factors which might impact transition timing.

Other ideas include starting a collection of souvenirs or mementos to mark your time in a particular location or to create a photo album (digital or physical) or videos from your tour. Such collections serve to commemorate your foreign affairs experience for years to come.

You may also wish to start a list of things that you are looking forward to doing at your new post to generate some excitement instead of focusing only on the things you will miss at your current post. Reach out for new contacts and connect your children, if applicable, with some potential new friends through the mission's sponsorship program.

RETURNING TO THE UNITED STATES

The Overseas Briefing Center has information on 34 domestic posts as part of its Post Info to Go database. The information is available online through the Department of State's intranet, Go Browser, and Post Info to Go-External websites. The OBC provides re-entry assistance for those returning to the United States.

Information on domestic posts is compiled by OBC staff and includes resources for:

- Housing
- Schools
- Medical care
- Domestic personal post insights (PPIs)
- Family member employment
- Cost of living comparisons
- Crime rates
- Safety information and more.

Welcome to Washington Resources

The OBC has extensive information on returning back to the D.C. metro area on its [Domestic Assignments](#) webpage. Resources include short-term housing providers, childcare and schools options, returning to the United States with pets, and more.

Short-Term Housing

The Overseas Briefing Center maintains information on short-term housing providers for those returning to the Washington, D.C. area. The resource also includes background information on the Department of State's lodging program. This information is available on OBC's [Short-Term Housing](#) webpage. A [detailed listing](#) can also be requested in handout form by emailing the OBC at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.

There are two basic options for Department of State employees assigned to Washington, DC. They are:

- Employees on TDY status for language training and other training requirements have the option of participating in the DOS Direct-bill Lodging Program. Vendors participating in this program send lodging bills directly to the Department of State and they do not use the sliding per diem scale. This is especially helpful if your temporary duty (TDY) is lengthy, increasing the likelihood that you will incur out-of-pocket expenses. You must book with the DOS PCS Lodging Program from the beginning of your TDY to take advantage of this program. Contact the lodging program directly at hrpcslooding@state.gov if you need further details. Program information is also available on [HR/EX PCS Lodging Program's Facebook page](#).
- Employees also have the option of finding their own housing accommodations. If you chose not to participate in the DOS PCS Lodging Program and find your own housing instead, the sliding per diem scale will apply. Some companies are familiar with the sliding scale per diem and can

write a lease that will take this into consideration. You may also want to consider including what is known as the Foreign Service clause in any lease you sign, which may allow you to terminate a lease early due to unexpected changes in your travel orders. The OBC provides a handout on the Foreign Service clause with sample lease wording, based on information from the American Foreign Service Association. Contact OBC for a copy at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.

Childcare and Schools

The Overseas Briefing Center maintains a list of childcare options near the Foreign Service Institute, including the childcare center at FSI. To request this list, email OBC at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov. This list is also available on OBC's Post Info to Go websites.

[WorkLife4You \(WL4Y\)](#) is a free 24-hour/ 7 days per week counseling, education and referral service that can help Department of State employees and their family members find the programs, providers, information, and resources they need to manage personal and professional responsibilities. WL4Y provides child care listings and verifies whether providers have openings. New users will need Department of State log-on information, available from Global Talent Management, the Global Community Liaison Office, or the Overseas Briefing Center.

Tip: Personnel from other foreign affairs community agencies and offices are encouraged to contact their human resources (or human capital and talent management) offices to determine if similar support services are available.

GCLO maintains information about [private](#) and [public](#) schooling options in the Washington, D.C. area. For more information, contact GCLO at GCLOAskEducation@state.gov or visit their [Education and Youth](#) website.

Family Member Employment

The Global Community Liaison Office has a dedicated team of professionals working to expand employment options and information resources to internationally mobile family members, both at home and abroad. Contact GCLO at GCLOAskEducation@state.gov for any questions regarding employment in the United States and visit GCLO's [Employment Resources for Family Members Returning to the United States](#) website for extensive information about GCLO services and resources to support a transition to the United States, including:

- Career support through their Global Employment Initiative. For employment assistance for a return to the United States, contact GEIUSA@state.gov and visit GCLO's [Global Employment Initiative](#) (GEI) website.

- [The Network](#) publication, designed to connect family members with potential employers within the Department of State as well as with other outside organizations in the D.C. area. To receive The Network, email GCLONetwork@state.gov.
- Learn more about using non-competitive eligibility (NCE) for application to government positions. Eligible family members (EFMs) who have worked in U.S. missions overseas may be able to be hired into a federal job upon returning to the United States under a hiring mechanism known as non-competitive eligibility (NCE). Executive Order 12721, the legal hiring authority, allows Executive Branch agencies to non-competitively appoint, to a competitive service position in the United States, EFMs who have completed 52 weeks (or 2087 hours) of service in certain positions overseas. The family member must have received a fully successful or better performance rating. GCLO provides detailed information on this topic on GCLO's [Employment Resources for Family Members Returning to the United States](#) website.

Reverse Culture Shock When Returning to the United States

Returning to the United States from overseas can be difficult, compounded by the fact that life in the United States may not match expectations. It is likely that you will experience some degree of reverse culture shock. It may set in before leaving post, upon arrival, or several weeks or even months after arrival when most people make the mental switch from thinking of their new environment as a vacation to a more permanent stage of “new normal.”

Reverse culture shock has been described as a societal “uncanny valley” effect. American culture is familiar to those raised in the United States, but for the expatriate who has lived substantial time overseas, they may see their home country in a new light. The cumulative effect is strange and even unsettling rather than comfortable. You may be jarred by cultural traits you once found unremarkable, fixating on those things that have changed in your absence, and struggling to find the common ground between yourself and those who have not traveled abroad recently. Other common symptoms of reverse culture shock include feelings of isolation, depression, anxiety, and irritability.

Help is available through the Department of State Employee Consultation Service, where confidential counseling is free upon a return home. Contact MEDECS@state.gov for more information. For employees and their family members from other agencies, check with your human resources staff for similar counseling services.

For more information on reverse culture shock and for assistance working through anything you might be experiencing, review Chapter 31 - Resources and References.

SECTION 5 SECTION 5

FINANCES, LEGAL, AND ADMINISTRATIVE





CHAPTER 25

FINANCES



EMERGENCY FUNDS

Foreign Service life contains many potential situations in which funds may be needed quickly and in substantially greater amounts than usual: extended travel, paycheck problems, pet shipment, evacuation, medical emergencies, disability or death, change in family structure, or geographic separation of family members for educational, career or personal reasons.

People with overseas experience recommend having immediate access to cash in amounts equal to one month's worth of living expenses. While posted abroad, keep U.S. currency and small

denominations of the local currency hidden in case of emergency. Consider keeping prepaid cash cards, as well.

Other liquid assets may also prove useful. These include checking or saving accounts and credit cards in your own name. You can establish a line of credit with a bank or credit union that is almost the same as a pre-negotiated loan and can be drawn upon when needed; be sure that access to these funds does not depend on the employee signing. Experts recommend access to resources equal to living expenses for at least six months.

State laws vary on joint checking and savings accounts and safe deposit boxes. Many states close joint accounts and safe deposit boxes in situations when a lawsuit is pending, one member is permanently disabled, or one of the signatories dies. This could mean limited access to funds and important papers, including securities and bonds or life insurance policies kept in safe deposit boxes. Some states close joint bank accounts until a will is probated.

Many banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions offer services that benefit Foreign Service families immensely, including online banking options, 24/7 account access via telephone or internet, and instant loan approvals. Investigate to find the options that will best meet your needs and those of your family.

Some important tips include:

- Have two credit cards. It's always helpful to have a back-up card in case one is compromised. Seek a credit card that does not charge a foreign transaction fee. Some countries use "tap on" credit cards – do your research.
- Beware of using a debit card overseas. Debit cards, when stolen, can deplete money directly from your account and cause financial disruption until the bank resolves the issue.
- When moving overseas, take paper checks with you! Many embassies/consulates offer cash checking services whereby you write a personal check and receive funds from the cashier.

SAFE DEPOSIT BOXES

A safe deposit box provides an excellent storage place for important papers. Many financial institutions, including the State Department Federal Credit Union (SDFCU), offer boxes. You may need to shop around to find one that is available immediately or be prepared to put your name on a waiting list. Other establishments offer safe deposit services that are more extensive and usually more costly than those of financial institutions.

In some states the safe deposit box is sealed upon the death of one owner until the tax authority has assessed the financial value of the contents. You should determine whether this or any other restrictions apply to the box you rent. In general, one should not store unregistered property that belongs to others (such as jewelry or bonds issued “to bearer”) in a safe deposit box. Original wills should be left with a lawyer or some other trusted person. Cemetery deeds and letters of last instruction, needed quickly in the event of a death, should be kept in a safe, accessible place other than a safe deposit box.

Some Foreign Service families add the name of a trusted friend or relative to the signature card for their safe deposit box while they are overseas. Exercise caution: if the relationship changes, it may be difficult to remove the cosigner. In some states, the only way to change a co-owner is to close the box.

CREDIT RATING

Everyone should have access to credit in his or her own name. You do not have access to credit established in another person’s name if that person is unable to sign for it. A Foreign Service spouse without personal credit may be placed in a difficult situation if anything happens to the employee or the couple separates. Credit card issuers can cancel cards even if there are other authorized users. Loans paid off by allotment from the employee’s salary may be called in if the employee resigns or dies.

How does an individual with limited or no income establish credit? The first step is to open an account at a bank or join a credit union in your own name. Then apply for a credit card, a line of credit, or a loan. If an application for credit is turned down, the applicant has the right to know the reason. Any outside sources of information that prejudiced the application must be disclosed. If the applicant is not satisfied with the explanation, she or he should speak to the manager or department head.

For any joint account opened after June 1, 1977, the creditor is obligated by law to report credit information for each name on the account. If the account was opened earlier, determine how credit information is being reported. Request that it be reported for each name if this is not happening.

For the purpose of establishing a credit record, it is a good idea for a couple to take out major personal loans in both names even if one spouse is not employed. Because both parties are liable for payment, this should be for something jointly desired (for example: real estate, home improvement, car, etc.).

Credit bureaus collect information from banks, stores, and businesses and sell it to credit issuers. A good credit rating is an invaluable asset in times of transition or need. You can get one free copy of your credit file disclosure, often called your credit record, every 12 months from each of the nationwide consumer credit reporting companies: Equifax, Experian, and Transunion. You can either

get all three reports at once (which allows you to compare them), or spread out your requests in order to keep up with any changes or new information appearing in your file.

[Request the free report online](#) or by telephone (877) 322-8228 (toll free). TDD service is available at (877) 730-4104.

If you find an error, the credit bureau must report this to any credit issuers that received your file within the previous six months. If the credit bureau does not accept your view of the situation, you have the right to place a statement of your version in your file.

Some financial experts recommend freezing your credit report. By freezing your credit report, potential creditors will be unable to access your credit report, making it more difficult for an identity thief to open new lines of credit in your name. Such a “security freeze” can help protect against, for example, an identity thief using your name to take out a mortgage or other debts in your name.

INVESTMENTS

The overall purpose of investing is to accumulate assets. Specific goals may include purchasing a home, educating your children or providing for your retirement. Almost anything you own - stocks, bonds, your home, a car - may be considered an asset. It is helpful to categorize your assets according to whether you are using or consuming them or whether you are managing them to provide financial income or growth. Your car and household furnishings would belong in the first category - assets being used or consumed. A mutual fund would belong in the second category - assets intended to provide a financial return. Ordinarily investing involves only the second type of asset.

Making proper use of your checking account, savings account and credit cards plays a part in short-term money management. Investing, by contrast, should generally be thought of as a long-term activity. Your investment goals may take decades to achieve.

Types of Investments

There are numerous kinds of investment vehicles. Several of the most common are described below.

Certificates of Deposit (CDs)

Banks issue CDs for money invested with them for set periods of time. CD maturities may range from three months to five years. CDs typically pay interest at higher rates than ordinary savings accounts, particularly when the CDs have long maturities. You may pay a penalty if you redeem a CD before its maturity date, although some financial institutions now permit one change to the account at no charge. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, an agent of the U.S. Government, insures bank

deposits, including CDs, for up to \$250,000 per depositor per institution. To obtain FDIC protection for amounts greater than \$250,000, depositors would need to open accounts at multiple banking institutions.

Bonds

A bond is essentially an IOU issued by a company or governmental agency. When you buy a bond, you are lending your money to the issuer. In return, you receive bond interest for the life of the bond. Upon maturity, your principal, or the amount originally invested, is to be returned to you. Bonds are rated according to the creditworthiness of their issuers. U.S. Treasury bonds and those issued by large, well-established companies enjoy high ratings. Lower rated bonds are sometimes called “junk bonds.” These bonds pay higher rates of interest because of their issuers’ relatively lower credit ratings.

U.S. Savings Bonds

Bonds may be purchased at banks, through a payroll savings plan, or online at [Treasury Direct](#). Bonds must be held at least one year, and a three-month interest penalty applies to bonds held less than five years. Savings bond interest is exempt from state and local taxes, and federal tax can be deferred. The Savings for Education program allows federal tax on earnings to be excluded completely if the bond owner pays higher education expenses in the same year as the bond is redeemed. This program applies to I bonds or Series EE bonds issued after 1990, and certain conditions must be met.

Series EE bonds earn a fixed rate of interest that applies for the 30-year life of the bond. Electronic EE bonds are sold at face value (\$50 for a \$50 bond) and can be purchased in amounts of \$25 or more. Paper EE bonds are sold at half of face value (\$25 for a \$50 bond) and can be purchased in eight set amounts. I bonds offer interest for up to 30 years based on a fixed rate plus an inflation rate based on the Consumer Price Index. You can never lose money investing in an I bond. Both types of savings bonds offer an extremely safe method for investing but have little potential to provide for growth of your assets.

Treasury Securities

The U.S. government issues Treasuries, with a minimum purchase of \$1000. Treasury bills, or T-bills, are short-term securities with maturities of up to 26 weeks. They are sold at a discount and you receive the face value upon maturity. Treasury notes have maturities of 2 to 10 years and earn a fixed rate of interest. Treasury bills are an excellent way to invest money for short-term purposes with little risk. Longer-term Treasury notes and bonds will offer higher interest rates but also expose the holders to possible capital losses if sold prior to their maturity.

Stocks

A stock is a share of ownership in a company. As a stockholder you may receive dividends, which are a share of the company's profits, growth from increased value of the stock when you sell it, or both. Your "total return" consists of dividends received added to capital gains or growth. Depending on the fortunes of the company, you may or may not receive dividends or gains.

Hard Assets and Collectibles

Gold, other precious metals, art objects, baseball cards and various other items may be included in this category of investments. There are fairly well-established markets, including mutual funds, for investing in gold and silver. Gold is often considered an "inflation hedger" in investment planning in the belief that when inflation threatens the economy, the price of gold will rise because of its inherent value. Less credence is given to this theory nowadays, however, in part due to the complexity of global money markets. In general, investors should not enter this domain without solid knowledge of what they are doing.

Mutual Funds

A mutual fund is an investment company chartered under federal law. Mutual funds pool the money received from investors and invest in various types of securities. The most common type of mutual fund is "open-end," which means its sponsor offers to sell and redeem shares on a continuing basis. "Closed-end" funds, by contrast, issue a fixed number of shares that are then traded on markets like other securities. Mutual funds typically invest in stocks, bonds, and related securities. Funds accordingly vary in the degree of risk and reward they present to investors. At one extreme would be "aggressive growth" funds investing in new or other relatively speculative stocks. At the other extreme would be a fund investing in conservative bonds or Treasury securities. Investors should select the fund or funds best suited to their individual circumstances.

Traditional Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs)

A traditional IRA allows anyone under the age of 72 with earned income to contribute up to \$6,000 a year (\$7,000 starting in the year in which you turn 50). The biggest benefit of a traditional IRA is that your investment grows tax-deferred until you are required to begin withdrawing money at age 72. If you have a retirement plan at work and your spouse does not, the non-covered spouse's contributions are tax-deductible. You should be aware that IRS penalties may apply if you withdraw money from your traditional IRA prior to age 59 1/2. However, these penalties may be waived if you withdraw the money under certain conditions: for eligible higher education expenses, up to \$10,000 toward a first home purchase, or to pay qualifying medical bills, for example.

Roth IRAs

A Roth IRA allows your investment earnings to grow tax-free. You make after-tax contributions to your Roth IRA, as long as your modified adjusted gross income is below a certain level. In turn, you will not have to pay IRS penalties or income taxes on the investment earnings at the time of withdrawal if the money has been in your IRA for at least five years and you meet one of the following conditions: you are 59 1/2 or older; the money is used for a first-home purchase, within limits; or the withdrawal is due to death or disability. Another strong feature of the Roth IRA is that withdrawal of earnings will be IRS penalty-free, but not tax-free, when used for higher education expenses even if made within the first five years. A final benefit of the Roth IRA is that, unlike a traditional IRA, you do not have to start making withdrawals when you turn 72.

529 Savings Plans

A 529 Savings Plan is an investment plan operated by a state or educational institution designed to help families save for future college costs. As long as the plan satisfies a few basic requirements, the federal tax law provides special tax benefits to you, the plan participant (Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code). Many states offer a 529 Savings Plan and in most cases you do not need to be a state resident to enroll. However, you may receive additional state tax benefits by choosing your state's plan.

A 529 plan is usually categorized as either prepaid or savings, although some have elements of both. A prepaid plan guarantees a certain number of years of tuition. A savings plan has no guaranteed outcome, although many are backed by the states that offer them.

These plans offer a number of advantages:

- Income tax breaks. The investment grows tax deferred and distributions are federal tax-free until 2010 (if the law is not extended, distributions will be taxed to the beneficiary after that).
- Donor control. The named beneficiary has no rights to the fund, and owners can change the beneficiary.
- No upper income restrictions.
- Generous plan contribution limits. These reach \$319,000 per participant in some states—much more than you could amass with other savings devices.

Coverdell Education Savings Accounts

The Coverdell education savings account is a very attractive college savings vehicle for many people, including families that wish to save for elementary and secondary school expenses. Like a Roth IRA, a Coverdell account allows you to make an annual non-deductible contribution to a specially designated

investment trust account. Your account will grow free of federal income taxes, and, if all goes well, withdrawals from the account will be completely tax-free as well. You will need to meet certain requirements in the years you wish to make the contributions and take withdrawals.

Annuities

In general, an annuity is an arrangement in which you contribute money now in return for receiving periodic or lifetime payments in retirement. Life insurance companies and other financial institutions issue annuities. The advantage is that earnings on amounts contributed are tax-deferred until withdrawn. However, restrictions apply to withdrawal of your money, and a penalty is payable in most cases if the money is withdrawn before age 59 1/2. Fixed annuities earn specified amounts of interest and offer a wide variety of investment objectives.

Risk and Reward

Risk and reward are inextricably linked in investing. In simple terms, risk refers to the chance that you may lose some or all of the money you invest. Your tolerance for investment risk will be determined in part by your financial circumstances, including the overall level of your wealth and any discretionary assets. It may also be determined by your general tolerance for risk, for example, whether you are more cautious or aggressive in your personal life style.

Your investments should be selected to provide the best mix of risk and reward possible. It is generally impossible to find an investment that may deliver a high return without also assuming a correspondingly high degree of risk. Bank certificates of deposit (CDs), for example, are very safe because they are federally guaranteed up to certain limits. However, CDs will not provide income much above the rate of inflation and taxes.

The market value of investments may fluctuate over short-term periods. A stock market index will go up or down several points from day to day, sometimes without any obvious reason. When investing, however, you seek to take advantage of long-term trends that will, over time, increase the value of your assets. Investing, therefore, typically requires considerable patience on the part of the investor.

Investment Strategies

An optimal investment strategy might be described as one that combines maximum return with minimum risk. In practice, as indicated above, you need to plan your investments to provide the optimum mix of risk and reward for your situation. Consider the following strategies:

Time Frame. The first strategy is to plan your investments with an eye to the time frame of your investment objectives. When you need the money should influence your choice of investments. If you

are investing for a need 10 years away, for example, you can afford to be relatively aggressive. A portfolio for this purpose might well include all or a substantial portion of stocks or mutual funds investing in stocks. With the long investment period, the chances are good that any unfavorable downturns in the stock market will have worked themselves out and significantly positive results will have been achieved. This more aggressive, long-term type investment strategy might be suitable if you wish to save for a young child's college education, or if you are planning for retirement in 10 to 20 years or longer.

If investing for shorter periods, three to five years for example, you might combine a blend of 50 percent stocks and 50 percent bonds, CDs, or other similar income producing securities. Your expected return would be less but your chance of losing significant amounts of money would be reduced as well. This type of strategy might be appropriate if, for example, you were saving money for a down payment on a home or planned personal travel in a few years. For periods of less than three years, your money should be mostly put into CDs, money market accounts, Treasury bills or notes, or other income-producing assets.

Diversification. The second recommended investment strategy is related; diversify your investments. Diversification reduces the risk of loss in your overall portfolio while still permitting significant investment returns. Diversification can be achieved by combining appropriate classes of securities that do not necessarily move in tandem with each other upwards or downwards.

A well-diversified portfolio, for example, might include small company stocks, large company stocks, bonds, and international stocks (or mutual funds embodying the same mix). If U.S. stocks rise, part of this portfolio would go up. If international stocks rise, that part of the portfolio would rise even if the U.S. stocks did not. These different types of securities will not necessarily rise or fall in value together. Diversification is not a perfect hedge against investment loss. However, it can help protect against large losses while still providing an opportunity for significant returns. By using techniques of modern portfolio theory, securities can be combined into portfolios whose collective risk is smaller than their individual components.

Mutual funds would be a good way for many people to carry out a diversified investment program. Mutual funds offer a degree of diversification not attainable with most portfolios of individual securities. Funds provide professional management, comprehensive reporting and other valuable shareholder services, as well. Some funds charge high fees and management expenses, so check the prospectus carefully before investing in any fund, always remembering that past performance does not necessarily predict future results.

Investment Returns. There are no assured returns from investments. One way to estimate the return from your investments is "The Rule of 72." In this rule, if you divide 72 by the average annual

return from your investments, the result is the number of years it will take for your money to double. (This calculation assumes reinvesting any dividends and capital and does take taxes into account.) Conversely, divide 72 by the number of years until your money is needed, you will get the average annual return you must achieve with your investments.

Managing Taxes. For investment purposes, remember that income from dividends and interest is taxed at ordinary income rates, which historically have been higher than the federal rates for capital gains.

Earnings from traditional IRAs, the federal Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), and certain other retirement plans are taxed at ordinary income rates when money is withdrawn. This is true whether or not any of the earnings were actually derived from capital gains. One implication for IRAs is that investments that produce earnings each year taxable at ordinary income rates should be placed inside IRAs whenever appropriate. Investments that produce capital gains, particularly on a less-frequent basis, should be invested outside IRAs.

Notwithstanding the nature of taxation of retirement plans, money invested in the TSP and similar plans offered by other employers should ordinarily be invested for long-term growth, particularly for younger employees. This may mean allocating a substantial portion of the funds to growth-oriented investments.

Sources of Information

Several U.S. government commissions provide financial education and information on investing (see Chapter 31 - Resources and References). IRS publications now appear online as Web pages or PDF files. Numerous periodicals, books, media programs, and investment rating services also provide investment information, although users should evaluate materials carefully.

Some people feel comfortable handling their investments themselves. Others prefer to engage a financial planner or similar advisor. Foreign Service personnel overseas may find it particularly useful to engage the services of a financial professional to help them plan and monitor their investment activities, as appropriate. When considering engaging such a person, inquire about his or her background and professional qualifications and method of compensation. The Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards offers a list of suggested questions and an interviewing checklist. It is also advisable to use a fee-only advisor and one who upholds a fiduciary standard.

REAL ESTATE

Many members of the foreign affairs community own or hope to own real estate. Careful planning and research can make a difference if you need to buy a home quickly or manage rental property from overseas - situations that Foreign Service people commonly face. The first step in purchasing a property is to find out what you can afford. You can research mortgages even while overseas. The [Government National Mortgage Association](#) offers information on the different types of mortgage products, as well as various online calculators. You can apply for mortgages online but be aware that multiple applications negatively affect your credit rating.

Next, consider getting in touch with a realtor in advance. The realtor should be someone recommended to you by a person whose judgment you trust. In order to help you effectively, the realtor needs to know your housing requirements (number of rooms, special facilities, access to schools, and public transportation, etc.) and your financial data (income, assets, and liabilities). This kind of advance dialogue will make you a more educated buyer and will speed up the process of finding a home when you arrive.

Research the tax implications of each locality you are considering. Jurisdictions vary widely in the kinds of taxes they levy and in how they deal with residents who claim domicile elsewhere. When it comes to the actual purchase, some people take the precaution of having a lawyer read any contract they intend to sign. Preferably the lawyer would be someone who normally handles real estate matters. Another kind of protection available to the buyer is title insurance.

Managing property you own from far away, especially from overseas, can be difficult. Most people use the services of a property manager or the management department of a real estate firm. It is important to locate a manager in whom you have confidence. Managing property you own from far away, especially from overseas, can be difficult. Most people use the services of a property manager or the management department of a real estate firm. It is important to locate a manager in whom you have confidence.

Obtain a written management contract that clearly spells out the manager's responsibilities. Include provisions in the contract for adequately supervising the property, making timely repairs, checking with you before making nonemergency expenditures, depositing rental income to your account promptly, and returning security deposits within a specified period after a tenant moves out.

Be sure your property manager will assume the obligation of working out any problems with a vacating tenant. The manager should inform you or your lawyer immediately if the tenant is uncooperative. Once a tenant leaves the area, it can be quite difficult to collect unpaid rent. If your

tenant breaks the lease and moves out while you are away, they are still liable for the rent for the unexpired period of the lease or until you find a new tenant at the same or greater rental. As landlord, however, you are under a good faith obligation to seek a new tenant.

A good management contract should be sufficient to allow the agent to take care of routine matters. In this age of improved communication there is no reason to leave a power of attorney for these matters. If one is needed - for example, to refinance - then one can be sent for execution.

Most people use a pre-printed lease provided by the property manager or real estate agent. Read the lease over carefully. Some clauses are required by law, but many are a matter of private contract and can be changed to meet your special needs. For instance, Foreign Service families should have a cancellation clause, known as the Foreign Service Clause, to allow them to repossess the home if they are required to return to the Washington, DC area. If you need to make use of the cancellation clause, be sure that you provide notice exactly as set out in the lease and that your notice is clear and understandable. For information about the Foreign Service Clause, contact the Overseas Briefing Center at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov.

Other terms to consider for inclusion in a lease:

- What will and will not remain in the house or apartment? All items left with the house should be itemized in the lease (for example: lawnmower, garden tools, mirrors).
- An established time limit for return of the security deposit after inspection by the owner or owner's representative. (The security deposit should not be accepted as the final month's rent.)
- An agreement that the house or apartment will be inspected by the owner's representatives at least twice a year.
- Special requirements such as lawn care and names of companies to be used for maintenance and repairs (or the requirement that realtor use reputable companies).

Other steps to take before you leave:

- Provide the mortgage company, termite inspection company, insurance company (if paid separately from mortgage), service contract companies and any others with the name and address of the person or firm who will be handling payments for you. If possible, have correspondence sent to both the management address and your overseas address. Most mortgage services can use dual mailing addresses, and this will prevent problems if the manager is slow in dealing with problems.
- Be sure that the tax bill will be sent directly to the person, firm, or bank that will handle your tax payment. Avoid the serious problems that can occur when your tax bill is improperly addressed

and does not get paid on time.

- Convert homeowner's insurance to fire and hazard (extended coverage, broad form). Request an owner, landlord, tenant (OLT) liability on the insurance policy.
- Provide the property manager with data on appliances (model, age, where purchased, service agreements or warranties). Disclaim responsibility for old appliances.
- Provide written instructions for tenant and manager, including location of fuse box and water cutoff and any special information about your home.
- Arrange for a friend or neighbor to check on the house periodically.
- Request direct deposit into your account of the monthly rent check. This can easily be arranged through your bank and the bank of your renter. Determine a date each month for auto deposit to ensure your rent check arrives into your account before your mortgage payment is due.

There are a number of tax considerations in owning and selling real estate. It is to your advantage to research this area thoroughly. There are many IRS publications that can help. The [American Foreign Service Association \(AFSA\)](#) publishes an annual tax update with information of particular relevance to Foreign Service taxpayers. If you plan to rent your residence while on overseas assignment, you should be aware that tax treatment can be quite complex. Common mistakes include: deducting mortgage interest twice, as a personal deduction and then as a rental property expense; miscalculating the "basis" for depreciation by including the value of the land or certain expenses; or failing to claim depreciation, which will be taxed upon sale of the property whether or not you claim it. You may wish to seek advice from a tax expert before you go overseas.

RETIREMENT

It is a fact of life that everyone, even the new professional, needs to plan for retirement well in advance. Further, because some Foreign Service families leave the service early, retirement planning is useful as a contingency measure. Financial and estate planning, choice and location of future residence, lifestyle and interests, post retirement employment, volunteer activities, and anticipated health needs are all factors that employees, spouses, and their families should consider.

Once you are ready to retire, the Department of State Office of Retirement suggests beginning the process at least six months in advance if assigned overseas or at least three months in advance if assigned to the United States to complete departmental planning, arrange clearances (including medical), and process an application for retirement.

Information

There is a wealth of retirement information available to employees with retirement questions.

- You can review the Retirement Planning Guide for Foreign Service Employees on the Department of State Global Talent Management intranet site and on the [internet site](#).
- [RNet](#) (internet) provides information on retirement and serves retired personnel who do not have access to the intranet. The annual annuitant newsletter is posted on RNet in each November, as well as information about seeking REA (formerly WAE) positions.
- The FSI's Career Transition Center offers [courses](#) that help employees in all agencies in the international affairs community (State, USAID, FCS, FAS and Peace Corps) with retirement planning at all career stages.
- Early and mid-career employees are advised to enroll in the two-day [RV 105, Early/Mid-Career Retirement Planning Seminar](#).
- Employees within ten years of retirement eligibility are advised to enroll in the four-day [Retirement Planning Seminar \(RV101\)](#).
- Employees may also refresh their knowledge by enrolling on one or both of the one-day courses that are embedded in the RV 101 Retirement Planning Seminar: [Financial Management and Estate Planning RV103](#)) and [Annuities, Benefits and TSP \(RV104\)](#).
- CTC also offers a distance-learning option, [RV 106 Financial Planning/TSP and Annuity Benefits \(FERS and FSPS\)](#) which consists of a three-hour webinar plus viewing the video on FERS or FSPS.
- At the time of actual retirement from federal service, employees may enroll in the [RV 102 Job Search/Transition Program](#).
- RV 101, 103, 104, 105 or 106 may be taken as often as once per fiscal year. Spouses are welcome to accompany employees on a space-available basis.
- See [course descriptions and enrollment instructions](#).

Foreign Service Pension System

Employees hired after January 1, 1984, participate in the new Foreign Service Pension System (FSPS) that requires employee contributions to Social Security and the Foreign Service Retirement Fund.

The Foreign Service Pension System is a three-tiered federal retirement system:

1. Foreign Service Basic Annuity
2. Social Security
3. Thrift Savings Plan

Each pay period, mandatory deductions are made from your salary and go to the Foreign Service Retirement Fund and Social Security. You may choose to contribute to the Thrift Savings Plan, the third tier of FSPS.

Employees covered by FSPS pay Social Security taxes each year up to the maximum amount set by law. For tax year 2021, the Social Security (Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance, OASDI) maximum taxable earnings are \$142,800. When the maximum earnings are reached, the biweekly deductions for OASDI taxes stop.

Once an employee has at least 18 months of FSPS service, they are vested for disability and survivor benefits under FSPS. An employee with 10 years of service is vested for survivor annuity under FSPS. A survivor can be a spouse, former spouse or children.

Social Security and Medicare

Everyone, including children, should have a Social Security card. If you do not have one, you may apply for it overseas through the consular section of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. In the United States, you must complete an “Application for Social Security Number Card” (Form SS 5) that you can request by telephone from any Social Security office or [online](#). Then mail or take it to a Social Security office. New rules were implemented in March, 2006, with special requirements for non-U.S. citizens. Check the [Social Security Administration](#) website for details.

In general, Foreign Service employees who entered the service before January 1, 1984, and participate in the “old” retirement system (Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System) are not entitled to Social Security retirement benefits unless they or their spouses have acquired Social Security credits through other employment. Employees in the “new” retirement system (Foreign Service Pension System) have contributions to Social Security deducted from their pay.

Persons who have worked in jobs covered by Social Security (or who have paid Social Security taxes based on self-employment) and have acquired at least 40 quarters of Social Security credit are eligible to apply for Social Security retirement benefits when they reach age 62. Quarters are based on the amount of income earned rather than on the calendar year, although no more than four quarters of credit are counted for any year. This method of calculation benefits family members engaged in part-time or temporary work. Such family members should report earnings and pay Social Security tax (Schedule E of Form 1040). Even if you are eligible for the foreign-earned income exclusion from federal income tax, you should investigate paying Social Security tax as a self-employed person.

It is your responsibility to be sure that the income on which you have paid Social Security tax is accurately credited to your name. The SSA no longer mails statements. Instead, create an account on

SSA to access your earnings history. If you find any errors, contact Social Security right away to correct the record.

Retirement benefits are only one part of the Social Security system. Additionally, there are disability benefits and survivor's benefits for qualifying workers and their family members.

The government pension offset reduces Social Security spouse's or surviving spouse's benefits for people who receive a pension based on their own work for federal, state or local government that is not covered by Social Security. The offset does not affect benefits you would receive based on your own Social Security record but only those you would receive based on your spouse's record. The offset is applied against two thirds of the pension for people who first became eligible for a government pension after June 1983.

Anyone who is 65 and receives Social Security retirement benefits is automatically eligible for Medicare, a federal health insurance program that includes both hospital and medical insurance. Since January 1, 1983, federal government employees have had the Medicare hospital insurance portion of the Social Security tax deducted from pay. Federal employees are entitled to Medicare hospital insurance at age 65 provided they meet certain eligibility requirements, but they must apply for it. Under certain circumstances, the spouse and other family members of a federal employee may be entitled to Medicare hospital insurance as well. Those eligible for Medicare should apply three months before their 65th birthday.

The medical insurance portion of Medicare is optional and is available for a monthly premium. Medicare hospital insurance can also be purchased by those who do not qualify to receive it as a benefit.

If you are eligible for both Medicare and Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) health insurance, you should consult your agency's health insurance officer or a representative of your FEHB plan to determine the options and regulations that apply to you.

To retain Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) and Federal Employees Government Life Insurance (FEGLI) after retirement, the employee must have had coverage for the five years prior to retirement or from the first possible opportunity to enroll. FEGLI declines in value after retirement unless the retiree pays increased premiums.

Thrift Savings Plan

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a 401(k)-retirement savings plan. After an initial waiting period (the length of which is determined by the date of hire), the employing agency will automatically begin to contribute each pay period an amount equal to one percent of basic salary to a Thrift Savings Plan

account in the employee's name. This contribution does not come out of salary; it is an automatic agency contribution.

Employees may also choose to contribute to their TSP accounts. This is an entirely voluntary contribution, whereas the Foreign Service Basic and Social Security are mandatory deductions. The employing agency will make a matching contribution on a sliding scale for the first five percent that the employee contributes. If the employee chooses to contribute more than five percent there is no further agency matching.

Most financial planners encourage employees to maximize their contributions to the TSP throughout their careers. The contributions to a traditional Thrift Savings Plan are on a before tax basis. This means that the contribution is deducted from salary before income taxes are calculated, thereby reducing taxable income and the amount of tax owed. Second, the money contributed to the Thrift Plan account, along with all the earnings generated, is tax deferred. No income tax is paid on this money until it is withdrawn from the plan, usually after retirement. In a Roth Thrift Savings plan, money is deposited into the account post-tax, but can be withdrawn tax free upon retirement. For 2021, the maximum employ contribution to the TSP is \$19,500. An additional \$6,000 "catch-up" contribution can be made starting in the year in which an employee turns 50. The total annual TSP contribution can exceed \$30,000 through the combination of regular, catch-up, and matching contributions.

Employees receive a Thrift Savings Plan booklet prior to the first opportunity to contribute to the plan. It contains detailed information about all aspects of the plan. Additional information is [available online](#).

Civil Service Retirement Spouse Equity Act of 1984, Public Law 98 615

This law also applies to Foreign Service. Public Law 98 615, the Civil Service Retirement Spouse Equity Act of 1984, dated November 8, 1984, and effective May 7, 1985, amends the Civil Service Retirement Law in several significant respects. It provides additional survivor election opportunities to retiring Civil Service employees and annuitants.

The major provisions of PL 98 615 applicable to employees:

- Permit employees retiring on or after May 7, 1985, to elect survivor annuities for former spouses at and after retirement if the marriage is dissolved on or after May 7, 1985.
- Require Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to comply with a qualifying court decree or order that provides a survivor annuity for a former spouse from whom the employee or annuitant who retired on or after May 7, 1985, was divorced on or after May 7, 1985.

- Require the written consent of an employee's current spouse before that employee can elect an annuity without full survivor benefits.
- Require that an employee notify their current spouse and former spouses from whom they were divorced on or after May 7, 1985 when applying for a refund of retirement contributions.
- Bar payment of refund or retirement contributions if a qualifying court order or decree provides for annuity payments to a former spouse.
- Change to 55 the age at which certain survivor annuitants (spouse died in service or retired on or after May 7, 1985) can remarry without losing benefits.
- Change the marriage duration requirement for widows/widowers to nine months when the employee dies in service or retires on or after May 7, 1985 (formerly one year).
- Allow married employees in good health to elect, at time of retirement, an "insurable interest" survivor annuity in addition to survivor annuity provided for a current or former spouse (formerly available only to unmarried employees).
- Provide Federal Employees Health Benefits coverage to certain former spouses of employees and annuitants whose marriage was dissolved on or after May 7, 1985.

Detailed information regarding the above provisions is available from the [U.S. Office of Personnel Management \(OPM\)](#).

Several non-profit membership associations offer activities of interest to retired Foreign Service professionals. [DACOR](#) and the [American Foreign Service Association \(AFSA\)](#) offer good ways to keep up with friends and remain informed after retirement. [The Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide \(AAFSW\)](#) focuses on Foreign Service family members and has a large number of retirees. [The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training \(ADST\)](#) also welcomes retirees with Foreign Service connections.



CHAPTER 26

INCOME TAXES



Every year U.S. citizens and resident aliens must prepare for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) an accounting of income, exemptions and deductions, and taxes paid. Tax forms are available at the [Internal Revenue Service \(IRS\)](#) website, via commercial tax preparation software, at the Employee Services Center, certain IRS and state offices, banks, libraries, or post offices. Each post abroad should also have a supply.

Every effort has been made to keep the information in this chapter current and accurate. However, it is strongly recommended to consult with a tax professional about your own personal tax issues and to use this chapter strictly as a starting point. Department of State employees may wish to contact

[WorkLife4You](#), a service that can help you locate tax and financial professionals. Employees from other agencies should check with their human resources department for similar assistance programs.

STATE TAXES

You must prepare an accounting for your state of domicile if it has an income tax. (For more information on determining domicile, see Chapter 29 - Legal Considerations.) The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) publishes a summary of state tax requirements every year. The most important thing to remember is that most states and the District of Columbia require that Foreign Service personnel continue to pay taxes while on assignment abroad. Alaska, Florida, Nevada, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming do not collect income tax. New Hampshire and Tennessee have no tax on personal income but do tax businesses and profits from the sale of property and bonds.

States which allow their domiciles (i.e., taxpayers who are permanent legal residents of the state) to file as nonresidents under certain state-specific conditions include California, Connecticut, Idaho, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. To qualify for the exemption, most require a permanent place of abode outside of the state and limit the number of days allowed in the state. (Be careful about home leave). Many of these states require additional reviews or documentation before the state will accept a nonresident tax return, so it is best to consult a qualified tax advisor when domiciled in one of these states but filing your tax return as a nonresident.

Some states consider you liable for taxes if you have been physically present in that state more than 183 days of the calendar year even if you are domiciled in another state. If you have any uncertainty about your liability to a state jurisdiction, consult tax authorities, prior to departure if possible. If you fail to meet your state tax obligation, you face paying interest and penalties, as well as the unpaid taxes.

FEDERAL TAXES

The following information is organized according to the basic federal tax form, Form 1040, and its supporting schedules. The IRS offers many online [publications and guides](#). The AFSA Tax Guide, published each year in the January-February issue of the [Foreign Service Journal](#) provides information for the foreign affairs community. Various publishers produce tax information guides that try to cover the whole field in one book. These often have good indices so that you can easily find the information you need. Higher end tax preparation software includes reference materials as well.

INCOME

To prepare your tax return, you must first calculate your income. In January, employers prepare W-2 forms, which are mailed to you or posted online. These forms give totals for the amount earned in the previous year and show the federal and state taxes withheld. One copy of each set of W-2s must be sent with your tax return to the IRS and another to the state(s) to which you owe tax. An additional copy is for you to keep with your copy of your tax return.

Other income must also be reported. Banks and companies send you Form 1099 to report interest and dividends earned. Use the information on these forms to fill in Schedule B. Interest earned on money loaned to someone also must be reported. More information is given in IRS [Publication 17](#), "Your Federal Income Tax."

Money earned from self-employment is taxed, including freelance work such as tutoring, catering or selling your written work or artwork. Certain expenses incurred in connection with self-employment may be deducted; these are listed on Schedule C, the form used to report this kind of income. It is essential to keep good records of expenses if you plan to deduct them. Refer to [Publication 17](#) for the definition of hobby income and deductions.

Earning more than \$400 annually from self-employment obliges you to pay Social Security tax by using Schedule SE.

Many Foreign Service spouses find self-employment attractive as a means of earning additional credit toward Social Security retirement benefits, particularly when they are serving abroad and unable to continue regular employment. Some income earned abroad, however, is exempt from Social Security tax if the spouse must pay social security taxes in the host country and the host country and the United States have a totalization agreement in place. This area must be explored carefully.

If you sell capital assets such as stocks, bonds, virtual currency or real estate, you must pay tax on the profit. Some losses can be deducted from your taxes. Capital gains and losses are reported on Schedule D. See the instructions for this schedule to find out whether your situation qualifies.

The capital-gains exclusion on the sale of a principal residence on or after May 7, 1997, applies to all homeowners, regardless of their age. Current tax laws allow an exclusion of up to \$500,000 for couples filing jointly and up to \$250,000 for single taxpayers on the gain from the sale of their principal residence. This exclusion does not apply to gain resulting from prior mandatory depreciation expensed during rental periods of the property. The [Military Families Tax Relief Act of 2003](#) benefits Foreign Service families who would not meet the "two-year occupancy within the five years preceding the date of sale" requirement because of overseas assignments. The law states that the five-year

period may be extended for up to ten years while serving on qualified official duty. It is to your benefit to research this provision thoroughly to familiarize yourself with the intricacies of and qualifications to this exclusion. Above all, keep good records of purchase price, costs of improvements, and documents such as deeds, and titles and settlement sheet.

In addition to [Publication 17](#), other good sources of information are the following:

- [Publication 523, "Selling Your Home"](#)
- [Publication 530, "Tax Information for Homeowners"](#)
- [Publication 554, "Tax Guide for Seniors"](#)

Rental income you receive is taxable and is reported on Schedule E. If you show a net loss on Schedule E, you are allowed up to \$25,000 of such loss against your other income, as long as your modified adjusted gross income does not exceed \$100,000. A prorated portion of the \$25,000 max loss is permitted for taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income between \$100,000 and \$150,000. Mortgage interest, property manager payments, depreciation and other expenses can be deducted from your rental income. Depreciation is a mandatory expense and must be researched carefully as you need to begin with the right "basis." Even if you do not claim depreciation, you must still reduce your basis in the property by the depreciation you should have claimed during rental periods of the property. There are ways to "catch up" if you mistakenly did not claim depreciation. Consult a tax advisor for assistance. For more information, see IRS [Publication 527, "Residential Rental Property."](#)

Form 1040 provides space for reporting other income such as taxable pensions, IRA distributions, unemployment compensation (part of which could be taxable) or alimony received. The portions of Foreign Service and Civil Service annuities that exceed what the employee paid into the retirement system are taxable.

Social Security benefits have been partially taxed since 1984 and need to be reported. Keep records of any Social Security benefits you receive. Child support payments are not taxable. Separate Maintenance Allowances, like most allowances Foreign Service employees receive while serving abroad, are not taxed and need not be reported. Note, however, some allowances (primarily the Post Differential and Danger Pay) are considered extra compensation and are taxed; these will be included in the W-2 statement of income received at the end of the year. In addition, tax-exempt interest, although not taxed, must be reported and may not be exempt on your state returns.

ADJUSTMENTS TO INCOME

The next major section of Form 1040 covers adjustments to income. In this section, you claim eligible contributions to Individual Retirement Arrangements (IRAs), alimony payments, self-employed

health insurance deductions, and penalties on early withdrawal of savings.

IRAS

Individual Retirement Arrangements (IRAs) are personal savings plans that give you tax advantages for setting aside money for retirement. If you or your spouse receives taxable compensation during the year, you may set up a traditional IRA, which may be tax-deductible under certain circumstances. Permitted contributions and deductions are based on earnings and adjusted gross income. While contributions may be tax-deductible, distributions (which also have defined conditions and amounts) are generally taxable. If your modified adjusted gross income is too high in a tax year to make a deductible contribution to an IRA, you can still make a nondeductible contribution. You can then evaluate if converting your IRA to a ROTH is an appropriate tax strategy for your financial situation. For more details, see [Publication 590-A, "Contributions to Individual Retirement Arrangements \(IRAs\)"](#), and [590-B, "Distributions from Individual Retirement Arrangements \(IRAs\)"](#).

Contributions to Roth IRAs are not tax-deductible, but qualified distributions are tax-free. Again, income affects contribution limits and participation.

A self-employed family member may set up a SEP (Simplified Employee Pension), SIMPLE (Savings Incentive Match Plan for Employees), or qualified plan (sometimes known as a Keogh or H.R. 10 plan). If you would like to make larger contributions to a retirement plan and have self-employment or small business income, investigate these options. IRS [Publication 560, "Retirement Plans for Small Businesses"](#) provides extensive information. However, note the impact that claiming the Foreign-Earned Income Exclusion may have on the contributions you are permitted into each type of plan.

Foreign-Earned Income Exclusion

Family members may benefit from the Foreign-Earned Income Exclusion while working overseas, up to the first \$107,600 USD earned in 2020. This applies to work on the local economy or work performed as an independent contractor. It does not apply to any unearned income or salaries paid by the U.S. government.

To be eligible in any instance, you must have a tax home in another country and meet either the *bona fide* residence test or the physical presence test (being outside the United States for 330 days out of a full 365-day year). To find out if you qualify for the Foreign-Earned Income Exclusion, obtain [Form 2555, "Exemption of or Reduction from Income Earned Abroad,"](#) with instructions.

Other helpful publications include:

- [Publication 54, "Tax Guide for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad"](#)
- [Foreign-Earned Income Exclusion](#)

TAXES AND EDUCATION

[Publication 970, "Tax Benefits for Education"](#), explains education credits and deductions. These include two credits: the American Opportunity Tax Credit and the Lifetime Learning Credit. Other potential benefits allow you to:

- Deduct student loan interest.
- Receive tax-free treatment of a canceled student loan.
- Receive tax-free student loan repayment assistance.
- Deduct tuition and fees for education.
- Establish and contribute to a Coverdell education savings account (ESA).
- Participate in a qualified tuition program (QTP, also known as a 529 plan).
- Take early distributions of an IRA for education expenses without paying 10% additional tax on early distributions.
- Cash in savings bonds for education costs without having to pay tax on the interest.
- Receive tax-free educational benefits from your employer or take a business deduction for work-related education.

You generally cannot claim more than one of the above for the same educational expense.

DEDUCTIONS

After you have determined your adjusted gross income, you need to consider your deductions. You can claim either a standard deduction or itemized deductions, which are figured on Schedule A (Form 1040). The standard deduction differs according to your filing status, which is explained further in the instructions accompanying Form 1040 and in [Publication 17](#). If you are single or head of a household, be sure to look up the definition before you claim this status.

If your itemized deductions total more than the standard deduction, you may itemize them on Schedule A. You must have good records to prove that the deductions you claim are valid, in case you are audited by the IRS.

Medical/Dental Expenses

You may deduct only certain items, summarized on Schedule A and described more fully in [Publication 17](#) and [Publication 529, "Miscellaneous Deductions."](#) Medical insurance premiums paid by

you, prescription drug expenses, and other medical and dental outlays are deductible to the extent that they exceed 7.5% of adjusted gross.

Transportation to source of medical care at a specified rate of reimbursement can be included. [Publication 17](#) tells you more, as does [Publication 502, "Medical and Dental Expenses."](#)

Real Estate Expenses

You may deduct the interest portion of your home mortgage. If your house is rented while you are abroad, you can deduct the taxes and mortgage interest from the rent received, using Schedule E. For interest expense, see [Publication 17](#). Mortgage "points" on the loan on the house you live in are deductible on Schedule 1040 the year of purchase (see IRS [Topic No. 504 Home Mortgage Points](#) webpage for an explanation of mortgage points) if you paid cash to cover the points at the closing. If paid through refinancing, they are amortized over the life of the loan.

Charitable Contributions

You may deduct qualifying charitable contributions as an itemized deduction on Schedule A and perhaps even the use of your car and other out-of-pocket expense for volunteer work connected with charitable purposes within certain limits (for example, only U.S.-based charities are eligible). For current guidelines, see [Publication 17](#) and [Publication 526, "Charitable Contributions."](#)

Other Deductible Expenses

After determining your taxable income, find your tax by looking at the tax tables that come with the instructions. Now determine if you are eligible for any of the following credits or deductions:

- **Child and Dependent Care Credit:** Credit for expenses paid to care for a child, disabled dependent or disabled spouse so you could work or look for work. Limits and qualifications apply. See [Form 2441, "Credit for Child and Dependent Care Expenses,"](#) and [Publication 503, "Child and Dependent Care Expenses."](#)
- **Child Tax Credit:** Credit if you have a qualifying child. See [Publication 972, "Child Tax Credit and Credit for Other Dependents."](#)
- **Adoption Credit:** Credit for qualifying expenses paid to adopt an eligible child. Complete [Form 8839, "Qualified Adoption Expenses."](#)
- **Foreign Tax Credit:** Credit for foreign taxes paid. Use [Form 1116, "Foreign Tax Credit,"](#) and see [Publication 514, "Foreign Tax Credit for Individuals."](#)
- **Credit for the Elderly and Disabled:** Credit for people over age 65 or permanently disabled below a certain income level. See [Publication 524, "Credit for the Elderly and Disabled."](#)

After subtracting the credits you might have to add other taxes, such as Social Security tax on self-employment income (Schedule SE).

REPORTING

After determining your total tax, compare it with the tax you have paid during the year. If you owe more, pay it by enclosing a check with your return or by using a credit card if you file electronically. Be sure to write your Social Security number on your check. If you owe less, the IRS will send you a refund.

The law states that you must pay your taxes as you earn your money. For this reason, taxes are withheld from salaries. If the amount being withheld is insufficient, the employee should arrange to change the amount with the appropriate personnel officer. For Foreign Service employees and families whose income is mainly or entirely from Foreign Service salaries, the tax withheld should be adequate to cover most tax liability. However, if you have additional income, such as capital gains, interest, dividends, or self-employment income, it may be necessary to file a Declaration of Estimated Tax (Form 1040 ES) to prepay the additional tax in quarterly installments or have payroll withhold more from your pay check. Anyone taking a lump sum retirement or annuity benefit should be especially careful about these regulations. The rules about who must file a Declaration of Estimated Tax are spelled out in [Publication 17](#) and should be studied carefully. The penalties for underpaying the tax are substantial.

[Publication 17](#) also describes the conditions under which you may be excused from the penalty. This is a complicated area and it may be advisable to consult a tax professional.

Income of Child

Under certain circumstances, dependent children must file tax returns. See [Publication 929, "Tax Rules for Children and Dependents"](#), to investigate filing requirements.

Filing

Federal income tax is payable on or before April 15 each year. U.S. citizens and resident aliens who live abroad are given until June 15 to file their federal returns, but they must attach a statement indicating they were living and working outside the United States on April 15. They will be billed for interest from April 15 on any tax due.

If you cannot meet the April 15 deadline (or June 15, as described), you may file a [Form 4868, "Application for Automatic Extension of Time to File."](#) The automatic extension is six months, to October 15. Note that the extension of time to file does not mean extension of time to pay. If you do

not pay the estimated amount due at the time you file Form 4868, you will be assessed interest and penalty charges.

TAXES FOR NON-U.S. CITIZENS

Some Foreign Service officers marry citizens of other countries who may be considered resident or nonresident aliens for tax purposes. Resident aliens are generally subject to tax in the same manner as U.S. citizens. Nonresident aliens generally owe tax only on U.S.-source income. Nonresidents may choose to be considered residents for tax purposes. For more information, see [Publication 519, "U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens"](#) and, if relevant, [Publication 54, "Tax Guide for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad."](#)

GENERAL ADVICE

Tax calculation is complicated. You should stay informed of changes in regulations and allowances. government publications, IRS booklets, and consultations with visiting tax specialists are ways to do this while you are overseas. You may want expert advice as to whether it is in your interest to itemize deductions or take the standard deduction. The expense of tax consultation is deductible.

If you are a do-it-yourself taxpayer, you will still need expert counsel if you have special concerns about community property income, if your spouse is a nonresident alien, if you are ordered to evacuate to a safe haven post and incur expenses not covered by the government allowances, and if you believe the cost of domestic help or out-of-pocket costs constitute legitimate business expenses.

Consider discussing your situation with a professional before departing for post. You will then be able to call upon that person as need arises with greater confidence that you will receive sound and timely advice.

When you go overseas, leave copies of tax records in a safe, accessible place in the United States so that you can get them easily in case of an emergency such as evacuation from post. Do not put them into storage with other household effects. Also, use an address on your return where you can be sure any notices sent by the IRS will reach you at least through several years in the future.

Consider taking the "Tax Considerations for the Foreign Affairs Community" webinar. The Transition Center (TC) offers this two-day course annually in February. For details, contact the TC's Training Division at FSITCTraining@state.gov.



SECTION 5



CHAPTER 27

ALLOWANCES CONNECTED WITH POST ASSIGNMENTS



Allowances exist as incentives for service and as assistance to Foreign Service families in meeting the expenses incurred in moving to and living at a foreign post. The Department of State [Office of Allowances](#) in the Bureau of Administration (ALS) develops and coordinates policies, regulations, standards and procedures to administer the government-wide allowances and benefits program for foreign post assignments under the Department of State Standardized Regulations (government Civilians, Foreign Areas), commonly referred to as the DSSR. The DSSR applies to all USG agencies (unless they have their own authority). Agency-implementing regulations/policy may be more restrictive than the DSSR but cannot go beyond the scope of the DSSR. The implementing policy for the foreign affairs agencies is the Foreign Affairs Manual and Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAM/FAH).

ALS compiles statistics on foreign living costs, quarters allowances, education allowances, hardship differentials, and danger pay allowances to compensate U.S. government civilian employees for living costs, hardships and dangers related to foreign assignments. The office is also responsible for establishing maximum per diem rates for foreign areas.

All allowances, except the Subsistence Expense Allowance (SEA) during an evacuation, are payable to the employee only. Some allowances and benefits are not subject to federal income tax because they are considered reimbursement for expenses incident to a foreign assignment. However, Post Hardship Differential, Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential, and Danger Pay are considered extra compensation and are subject to tax. They are included in gross income on the employee's Form W-2.

The allowances discussed below are followed by a DSSR reference. For more information, visit the Department of State [Office of Allowances](#). Information about specific allowances can also be found in DSSR Section 920, Post Classification and Payments Table [by location](#) and [by type](#).

On April 28 and May 17, 2023, the Office of Allowances released the Transfer Allowance Modernization to Support the Workforce cables (MRN 23 STATE 46708 and 23 STATE 55906) that outline the changes to the Home Service Transfer Allowance (HSTA) and the Foreign Transfer Allowance (FTA) specific to Department of State Employees. The changes are reflected in the paragraphs below that describe those allowances.

BEFORE DEPARTURE FROM THE UNITED STATES

Advance of Pay Allowance ([DSSR 850](#))

Advance of Pay is intended to ease the financial burdens of the transition period by ensuring that funds are available to meet required expenses and emergencies. It allows up to three months' advance pay upon the assignment of the employee to a foreign post. The amount advanced must be paid back to the Department of State over a maximum of 18 pay periods. Advance of Pay can be received only after getting travel orders and not more than 45 days before departure or within 60 days after arrival at post. Advance of Pay may also be authorized for medical emergencies that may arise while assigned to a foreign post. Note: It is not available on return to the United States, however, is available for transfers between foreign posts.

Foreign affairs agency employees claim the advance of pay through the payroll system, using DS-4315, Advance of Pay Request in myData. Employees of other agencies should check with their managers about how to claim.

Foreign Transfer Allowance (DSSR 240 and Section 960 FTA Worksheet)

The purpose of the Foreign Transfer Allowance is to help defray an employee's extraordinary but necessary and reasonable costs when they transfer to a post in a foreign area. The Foreign Transfer Allowance is composed of four elements: a miscellaneous expense portion, a wardrobe expense portion, a pre-departure subsistence expense portion, and a lease-penalty expense portion. This allowance is not subject to federal tax.

1. **The Miscellaneous Expense Portion** is to help cover "miscellaneous" expenses incident to a foreign assignment such as car rental; vehicle registration; driver's license; lithium battery replacement; internet installation/disconnection; replacement of technology devices – phones, desktops, laptops, or tablets; utility fees or deposits not offset by an eventual refund; and conversion of appliances. As of FY21, the flat amount for an employee without family is the lesser of either one week's salary or \$750. For an employee with family it is the lesser of two weeks' salary or \$1,500. A higher rate is available if the employee provides itemized receipts for all expenses claimed (see [DSSR 242.1b](#)).
2. **The Wardrobe Expense Portion** is granted when an employee transfers across one or two climate zones to their new foreign post of assignment. Climate zone information for foreign areas can be found in the column headed "Transfer Zone" in [DSSR Section 920](#). Non-foreign area climate zones are listed in [DSSR 242.2b](#). DoD does not authorize this part of the FTA for its personnel. For those employees who qualify, the flat amounts (no itemization; no receipts required) as of 7/1/2023 are: for a one-zone transfer \$350 for employee without family and \$700 for employee with family. For a two-zone transfer the amounts as of 7/1/2023 are: \$700 for employee without family and \$1400 for employee with family. For more information, see [DSSR 242.2](#).
3. **The Predeparture Subsistence Expense Portion** is granted to assist employees with the costs of temporary lodging, meals, laundry, and dry cleaning that are incurred when an employee transfers to a foreign post from a post in the United States. This allowance may be granted for up to 10 days before final departure from a post in the United States, beginning not more than 30 days after the employee has vacated permanent residence quarters. According to the government-wide DSSR, the 10 days may be taken anywhere in the United States as long as the employee or family members have not begun travel on orders and the final departure is from the U.S. post of assignment. Note: Agency implementing regulations may restrict the 10 days to within reasonable proximity of the U.S. post of assignment. An agency may consider reasonable proximity as a fifty-mile radius from the U.S. post of assignment. The Department of State follows this more restrictive provision.

- There are two methods by which employees may be reimbursed. The Total Actual Subsistence Method is the primary method of reimbursement. However, agencies may alternatively offer the Partial Flat Rate Method of reimbursement. Please check your agency's implementing regulations for guidance on which method of reimbursement your agency offers. [DSSR 242.3](#) explains how to calculate the Partial Flat Rate Method and the Total Actual Subsistence Method. Regardless of the method, the calculation is always based on the employee's U.S. post of assignment per diem and not the per diem of where the employee/family members may be staying. Note: The Department of State uses the Partial Flat Rate Method.
4. **The Lease Penalty Expense Portion** is to offset a residential (not car or cell phone) lease penalty unavoidably incurred by an employee when transferring to a foreign post. In order for the employee to qualify for the lease penalty portion, the employee and agency must meet several requirements. Information on the lease penalty expense portion is found in [DSSR 242.4](#).
 5. **The Pet Shipment and Required Quarantine Expense Portion** is to assist with getting family pet(s) from a U.S. post of assignment to a foreign post of assignment or between foreign posts or when necessary to a different location if the pet cannot go to the next post. Allowable pet shipment and quarantine expenses may be reimbursed up to a total of \$4,000 under the new allowance. This \$4,000 reimbursement covers the transfer of the pet/s from one post of assignment to the onward post of assignment (with eligible stops in between including home leave, consultations, and training), or delivery of the pet to a third location if the employee is unable to bring their pet to their onward assignment due to personal reasons or post restrictions. **This allowance is per employee and not per pet.** Pet shipment and quarantine expense related receipts may only be dated within the validity period of the employee's travel orders. See [DSSR 242.5](#) for additional information.
- Employees may ship multiple pets, up to a total cap of \$4,000 per employee.
 - Employees may ship any type of pet if it is legal to be exported/imported by the locations on their route and post policy does not restrict the pet type in post housing. Posts may deny expediting/clearance services which go above and beyond the normal clearance process for pets.
 - Only one tandem employee may claim pet shipment expenses for the same pet – for the same leg of travel. For example, Tandem #1 can claim the cat (assume it costs \$7,000, only gets reimbursed \$4,000) and Tandem #2 can claim the dog (assume it only costs \$1,000), but Tandem #2 cannot claim any balance over Tandem #1's \$4,000 ceiling voucher (in this example, the additional \$3,000 it cost to ship the cat) for pets claimed under Tandem #1's voucher.
 - Receipts must be provided for all expenses.

- Required quarantine expenses such as fees, facility's pet food, inspections, medications, and boarding (to include mandatory boarding expenses such as vaccinations) at a government or Commercial quarantine facility are reimbursable.
- Employees on long term training status may only claim hotel pet fees once the employee arrives at their next post of assignment and submits their FTA voucher. Employees may not claim these costs on their 30-day vouchers while in training.

Allowable versus Non-allowable - Commercial Pet Shipping Breakdown

- Commercial pet shipper coordination fees, including fees for pet airline ticket, pet as cargo shipment, customs clearance/ broker services and delivery to new post – allowable
- Direct transportation charge by a commercial carrier when the invoice is itemized and shows the pet transportation fee separate from the employee's transportation – allowable
- Commercial pet shipper, airline, airport, and/or office fee for after-hours charge due to departure/arrival after regular business hours – allowable
- Commercial or government boarding/kennel fees (not limited to quarantine) – allowable
- Commercial pet shipper or employee obtains the required export/import certificates, both the fee for the service (pet shipper or vet) and the actual certificate costs – allowable
- Commercial pet shipper or veterinarian charges for required export/import vaccinations or medications (such as parasite treatment) required for export/import, required bloodwork and express shipment of bloodwork (for example, for titer test for rabies) – allowable
- Lab fee to test for required export/import tests as well as rush lab fees – allowable
- Import/export government or airline required microchip – allowable
- Export/import host government fee for export/import permit (example stamp on documents and veterinarian inspection) – allowable
- Export/import country's pet license or pet registration fees (equivalent of U.S. county Animal Services licensing and registration) – non-allowable
- Purchase of pet crates/pet carriers – non-allowable
- Commercial Pet shipper fee to prepare owner's crate for shipment – allowable
- Pet shipper (at home leave location) picks up pet from home leave location airport and takes them to employee's home leave location or to their boarding facility – allowable
- Pet shipper takes pet to the airport for flight – allowable
- Pet shipper picks up pet at new post airport, clears customs, and drives pet to residence – allowable
- Mandatory Airport fee for pet's layover care (example Frankfurt Airport) – allowable
- Employee's mileage and per diem expenses if employee (or a non-commercial pet shipper) drives pet from post to post – non-allowable

- Requests for per diem due to unusual delays, rerouting, or any issues or delays arising from pet travel to include the purchase of personal tickets to accompany pets – **non-allowable**
- Daily hotel pet fees or commercial temporary lodging pet fees (not including expenses for damage caused by the pet) while on HSTA or FTA – **allowable**

A worksheet is available to calculate expenses. See [DSSR 960 Foreign Transfer Allowance Worksheet](#).

Claim reimbursement using the [SF-1190, Foreign Allowance Application, Grant and Report](#).

Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA) (DSSR 260)

This allowance has three distinct categories - involuntary, voluntary, and transitional. It is available to employees whose family members do not accompany the employee to their post of assignment. It is not subject to federal taxes.

SMA is designed to help an employee who is compelled by reasons of dangerous, notably unhealthful or excessively adverse living conditions at the foreign post of assignment, or for convenience of the government, or because of family considerations, to defray the additional expense of maintaining family members at another location.

Involuntary SMA may be granted when an agency determines that adverse, dangerous, unhealthful living conditions, such as lack of medical facilities, warrant exclusion of your family from your post of assignment or when the agency determines that there is a need to exclude family members from accompanying an employee to the area. Children are eligible for Involuntary SMA until they reach 21 years of age.

Voluntary SMA may be authorized when there are special family needs or hardship prior to or after arrival at post for reasons including but not limited to career, health, educational or family considerations for the spouse, children or other family members. Dependent children must be under age 18 or incapable of self-support to receive voluntary SMA, unless they are attending secondary school.

Transitional SMA may be paid for the following reasons:

■ **Following the termination of an evacuation:**

- Following termination of an evacuation and conversion of a post to an unaccompanied status.
- Following termination of an evacuation and reversion of post to accompanied status, to allow a child to complete a current academic term.

- Following termination of an evacuation and reversion of post to accompanied status but an employee and family members cannot return to post for reasons beyond the employee's control.
- **In connection with commencement/termination of an unaccompanied tour of duty:**
 - When family members must depart from an accompanied foreign post because the employee's next foreign post is unaccompanied.
 - When family members on ISMA prepare to depart the ISMA point for the employee's next foreign post or domestic post (accompanied).

The rates for Involuntary and Voluntary SMA are at [DSSR 267.1a](#). The rates for Transitional SMA are at [DSSR 267.1b](#).

Please see [DSSR 260](#) for details on each type of SMA. Note carefully the limits on some types of SMA, particularly the 90-day separation requirement and the one-change-of-election provisions for VSMA and separation/divorce/dissolution and legal-custody-of-child provisions at [DSSR 263](#).

Foreign Per Diem Allowance ([DSSR 925](#))

The Foreign Area Per Diem allowance is intended to cover the cost of lodging and meals at adequate, suitable, and moderately-priced facilities, plus costs for mandatory service charges such as tips and taxes. It is also paid for necessary incidentals such as laundry and dry cleaning for employees and eligible family members. (Expenses relating to actual transportation, baggage, and household effects do not fall within this category.) Rates are established monthly by the Office of Allowances as maximum U.S. dollar rates for reimbursement of U.S. government civilians traveling on official business in foreign areas. Lodging and M&IE (Meals & Incidental Expenses) are reported separately followed by a combined daily rate.

The Per Diem Supplement to the Standardized Regulations (government Civilians, Foreign Areas) (referred to as [DSSR 925](#)) lists all foreign areas alphabetically. Where a country or island is listed it is intended to include all territory within the boundaries of that country or island including any offshore islands in the same general vicinity. It will not include territories or possessions located elsewhere even though considered an integral part of the parent country or island. These separate locations may be listed alphabetically elsewhere in the [DSSR 925](#). When a political subdivision smaller than a country is named, such as states, provinces, departments, cities, towns, villages, etc., it will include the corporate limits of such political subdivision or the limits of territory within the normal boundary thereof if it is not incorporated. Any further clarification of the area covered by a specific

listing is contained in associated footnotes which can be viewed by selecting [Foreign Per Diems by Location](#).

Note: Any location not listed for per diem under a country takes the "Other" rate for that country. An unlisted suburb of a listed location takes the "Other" rate, not that of the location of which it is a suburb unless the suburb is mentioned in a footnote.

Some key points:

- Foreign Per Diem rates are based primarily on costs reported in the Hotel and Restaurant Report [Form DS-2026](#) submitted by foreign posts.
- Payment is provided to employees and eligible family members for daily expenses while on temporary travel status on official business away from an official post of assignment.
- Reimbursement may be authorized based on Actual Subsistence Expenses for travel involving special or unusual circumstances. The reimbursement of actual and necessary itemized subsistence expenses shall not exceed 300% of the applicable foreign travel per diem allowance (rounded to the next higher dollar). Approval for actual expense reimbursement must be gotten prior to beginning travel.
- Per Diem for foreign areas is calculated in two portions: the maximum lodging amount and a portion for meals and incidental expenses.
- Receipts for lodging are necessary to support actual expenses for claims.
- Per Diem allowance is paid following submission of a Travel Reimbursement Voucher or online through Travel Manager.
- It is not subject to taxes.

The Bureau of Public Affairs of the Department of State offers a [subscription service](#) that permits individuals to receive notices when Foreign Travel Per Diem rates are updated.

WHILE IN A FOREIGN AREA

Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance ([DSSR 120](#))

The Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance (TQSA) is available to pay the costs of temporary quarters, meals, and laundry and dry cleaning expenses after initial arrival at a foreign post or upon final departure from the post. Post will determine if you receive this allowance. Most posts make every effort to put you into permanent quarters upon arrival or prior to final departure.

- This allowance is paid for reasonable costs for periods up to 90 days after first arrival at post and, when authorized, for 30 days immediately preceding final departure from post. The 90 and 30-day periods may be extended up to an additional 60 days when the head of an agency determines that compelling reasons beyond the control of the employee require continued occupancy of temporary quarters.
- It is not paid concurrently with the Living Quarters Allowance (see exception at [DSSR 124.1](#)) and Post (Cost of Living) Allowance.
- It is intended to assist in covering the average cost of adequate but not elaborate or unnecessarily expensive accommodations in a hotel, pension or other transient-type quarters at the post of assignment, plus reasonable meal and laundry expenses.
- Actual expenses are reimbursed up to a maximum rate, based on the foreign post per diem rate as shown in [DSSR 925](#). Maximum rates payable also depend upon the children's ages and number of family members.

Calculate claims on [DSSR 960 Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance Worksheet](#).

Process your claim using the [SF-1190, Foreign Allowance Application, Grant and Report](#).

Living Quarters Allowance (DSSR 130, 920, and LQA Worksheet)

The Living Quarters Allowance (LQA) is granted to an employee to help defray the annual cost of suitable, adequate living quarters for the employee and their family at a foreign post where government-leased or government-owned housing is not provided. The LQA rates are designed to substantially cover the average employee's costs for rent, utilities, required taxes levied by the local government, and other allowable expenses. Living quarters allowance rates are categorized by "quarters groups" based on the employee's grade level or rank and their family size. Additional amounts of up to 10%, 20%, or 30% above the LQA rates may be allowed for larger families. For further information on LQA, see [DSSR 130](#). [DSR 136](#) contains guidance for employees occupying personally-owned quarters.

- This allowance is not paid concurrently with the temporary quarters subsistence allowance (see exception at [DSSR 132.41](#)). It is not paid if government quarters are available.
- It covers the average employee's costs for rent, gas and electricity.
- The allowance is designed to be paid at an amount equal to the employee's allowable expenditures up to the applicable maximum rate listed by foreign post in [DSSR 920](#).
- The maximum rates vary by post costs, grade, and family size.
- It is paid with biweekly salary. It is not subject to federal income tax.

Calculate expenses on the [DS 130 LQA, Living Quarters Allowance Annual/Interim Expenditures Worksheet](#).

Process your claim using the [SF-1190, Foreign Allowance Application, Grant and Report](#).

Extraordinary Quarters Allowance (DSSR 138, 920 and 960 EQA Worksheet)

Extraordinary Quarters Allowance (EQA) is designed to assist with lodging and meal costs when an employee and eligible family members are required to partially or completely vacate their permanent quarters because of renovations/repairs or unhealthy or dangerous conditions for a time not to exceed 90 days. If the permanent quarters do not require vacating, but kitchen facilities are unavailable, then the meal portion alone of the EQA may be paid.

- The employee may continue to receive the post (cost-of-living) allowance and LQA when receiving EQA.

Calculate expenses on the [DSSR 960 EQA Extraordinary Living Quarters Allowance Worksheet](#).

Process your claim using the [SF-1190, Foreign Allowance Application, Grant and Report](#). Lodging receipts are required.

Post (Cost of Living) Allowance (DSSR 220, 920 and 960 Omnibus Exhibit)

Commonly referred to as the "cost-of-living allowance" or COLA, this is an allowance based on a percentage of "spendable income," i.e. money you have available to spend on goods and services. The amount varies depending on salary level and family size. The post allowance is calculated by comparing the costs for goods and services in the foreign location with costs of the same goods and services in the Washington, D.C. area for the following categories: food (consumed at home or in restaurants), tobacco/alcohol, clothing, personal care, household and operations, medical, recreation, POV expenses and public transportation.

A post allowance is established if the overall cost of goods and services at a foreign post, taking into account expenditure patterns, is at least 3% above the cost of the same goods and services in the Washington, D.C. area.

- It is payable upon arrival of employee or family at post unless they are receiving a temporary quarters subsistence allowance. It varies by salary and family size. The Office of Allowances provides a COLA calculator on their internet website.
- It is paid with biweekly salary and is not subject to federal income tax.

- For USDH employees permanently assigned to posts, post initiates the TM-5 (arrival at post cable) and that starts the allowances. Upon departure from post, the TM-8 (departure cable) terminates the allowances.

Post (Hardship) Differential (DSSR 500, 920 and 960 Omnibus Exhibit)

Post hardship differential is meant to compensate employees for service at places in foreign areas where conditions of environment differ substantially from conditions of environment in the continental United States and warrant additional compensation as a recruitment and retention incentive. It is paid as a percentage of basic compensation in 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35% increments. In addition to being paid to permanently-assigned personnel, post differential may also be paid to employees on extended detail either from the United States or from foreign posts. See [DSSR 500](#) for further information.

- Post Differential is provided only to employees whose foreign residence is attributable to their employment by the U.S. government. It is paid to employees on temporary detail to one or more hardship posts from the 43rd day on of such detail (see [DSSR 541](#) for special rule for employees at footnote 'n' posts – as of 11/3/2020 those are Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria).
- It is subject to federal income tax.
- It is paid with biweekly salary.
- Posts having extremely adverse conditions carry a maximum of 35% differential. Posts having lesser degrees of hardship have differentials of 30%, 25%, 20%, 15%, 10%, and 5%.

Difficult to Staff Incentive Differential (DTSID) (DSSR 1000)

Also known as the Service Needs Differential (SND), this differential is paid to an employee assigned to a post with a Post Hardship Differential rate of 15% or higher, after an agency has determined that especially adverse conditions of environment warrant additional pay as a recruitment and retention incentive to fill the employee's position at that post. The differential is a percentage of basic compensation (up to 15%). Check with your agency representative for more information because each agency develops unique procedures to implement the differential (or may choose not to implement it). Note that DTSID/SND and Danger Pay compensation together may not equal more than 35% of an employee's basic compensation. General guidance can be found in [DSSR 1000](#).

- The amount of the DTSID/SND is up to 15% of basic compensation and is subject to federal income tax.

- Restriction (in Law): The combination of Danger Pay for the post of assignment plus the DTSID/SND cannot exceed 35% of basic compensation. Therefore, if Danger Pay becomes effective at a post (where Danger Pay is 25% or 35%), the DTSID/SND would be reduced or eliminated while Danger Pay is in effect.

Danger Pay Allowance (DSSR 650, 920 and 960 Omnibus Exhibit)

The Foreign Service Act of 1980 initially mandated Danger Pay. The Danger Pay Allowance provides additional compensation for employees serving at designated danger pay posts. It is paid as a percentage of basic compensation in 15, 25 and 35% increments. In addition to being paid to permanently-assigned personnel, danger pay may also be paid to employees on temporary duty or detail to the post.

For those not qualifying for the Danger Pay Allowance described above, a Danger Pay Allowance may be granted to civilian employees who accompany U.S. military forces designated by the Secretary of Defense as eligible for imminent Danger Pay. The amount of Danger Pay will be the same flat rate amount as the imminent Danger Pay amount paid to uniformed military personnel, currently \$225 per month. While uniformed military personnel are paid once every 30 days, civilian employees eligible for this type of Danger Pay will be paid on a daily basis. The two types of Danger Pay may not be paid simultaneously. See [DSSR 650](#), [DSSR 920](#), and [footnotes "p" and "v"](#) for further information.

- Danger Pay does not apply where economic crime is the chief element of threat.
- It may not exceed 35% of the basic compensation of employee.
- It is subject to federal income tax.
- This allowance may be paid to part-time and temporary duty employees, as well as to full-time employees.
- The amount of Danger Pay Allowance shall be at a rate of 15%, 25% or 35%, based on the determined level of danger and the presence of non-essential personnel and eligible family members.
- Those employees who travel to post for a temporary duty (TDY) assignment must complete the DS-4235 (Confirmation of Post Presence Certificate) to initiate danger pay while in country.

Education Allowance (DSSR 270, 920, DSSR 960 Education Allowance Worksheet)

The purpose of the education allowance is to assist an employee in defraying those costs necessary to obtain educational services (grades K-12) that would normally be free of charge in the United States. The allowance is normally based on the least expensive "adequate" school at post. A school is deemed adequate if, upon completion of a grade at the school, a child of normal ability could enter the next

higher grade at a public school in the United States. When a school is adequate, the rates for attending a school "at post" and attending a school "away from post" will be the same. The "away-from-post" Education Allowance can be used to pay for tuition, room and board, unaccompanied air baggage and periodic transportation between the post and the school.

- Educational Allowance is granted at posts where the cost of adequate schooling exceeds the cost in a U.S. public school, grades K-12.
- If adequate schools are available at post and the child is sent to school away from post, no higher allowance than the at-post rate will be paid. If some grades at post are inadequate, then an additional higher boarding school allowance is established for the inadequate grades. If a school at post is adequate and the child goes away from post, tuition, room and board, and periodic transportation to and from post may be reimbursed.

Special Needs Education Allowances (SNEA): The regulations also provide a "Special Needs Education Allowance" in [DSSR 274.12c](#) in lieu of the "at-post" or "away-from-post" or "Home Study/Private Instruction" education allowances listed by country/post in [DSSR 920](#) and [DSSR 274.12b](#) for children qualifying per [DSSR definition 271m](#) for the SNEA. See [DSSR 274.12c](#) for rates and [DSSR 276.8](#) for allowable expenses. Application to SNEA funding is on an annual basis. SNEA eligibility is outlined in [3 FAM 3283](#). Families should coordinate with MED/Child and Family Programs (MED/CFP). Contact MEDCFP@state.gov.

Supplementary Instruction Allowance: In addition to the at-post rate (when a child attends a school at the foreign post), a Supplementary Instruction Allowance, up to a maximum amount per school year, may be paid. Its purpose is:

- Instruction in basic U.S. subjects or advanced placement courses not offered by the local school.
- Necessary language tutoring if the local school offers its curriculum in a foreign language.
- Additional instruction to enable the student to enter a grade or remain in the same grade in school.
- Additional instruction to successfully complete the current school year for a student returning to post following authorized/ordered evacuation.
- Instruction for a Gifted and Talented (GT) academics-only program if the school does not offer a GT or equivalent program.

To be reimbursable, the supplementary instruction must be given by a competent person other than the employee or a family member. (See [DSSR 274.12a](#) and [276.9](#) for amount and allowable expenses.)

Away from Post Education Allowance: If local schools are inadequate, a higher allowance (away from post) will assist with costs of tuition, room and board, and periodic transportation for adequate schooling elsewhere. The Away from Post Education Allowance also defrays once-yearly shipping expenses for unaccompanied personal baggage between the employee's foreign post and the school. At the election of the employee, in lieu of the transportation of the unaccompanied personal baggage, the costs incurred to store the baggage at or in the vicinity of the school during the dependent's annual trip between the school and the employee's duty station may be paid or reimbursed to the employee at not to exceed the cost of shipping the baggage between the school and post.

Travel may be allowed between the school and the home of a designated relative or family friend or to join the parent at any location as long as the expense does not exceed the cost between post and school. The Away from Post Education Allowance up to the maximum may be used in these circumstances for boarding schools in either the United States or foreign area. If the student attends a public school in the United States and resides with friends or relatives other than parents, a room and board amount is allowed. Nonresident public school fees, periodic transportation to/from post, and local school transportation costs to/from private residential or non-dormitory facility on school days are also allowed up to the maximum Away from Post Education Allowance rate.

Home Study/Private Instruction Allowance: An employee also has the education method option of Home Study/Private Instruction. This choice may also be necessary in situations where school attendance is not practical. This allowance is for homeschooling-oriented online or correspondence courses as well as virtual schooling and covers the cost of tuition, books and supplies, shipping costs, and online advisory service for lesson correspondence and material. See [DSSR 274.12b](#) for amounts and [DSSR 277.3](#) for allowable expenses.

If the school at post charges allowable nonrefundable one-time fees (e.g., registration, matriculation, building), the fees may be granted in addition to the basic allowance. ([DSSR 274.12e](#))

No education allowance is available if the child attends school in the United States while a parent with legal custody also resides in the United States. ([DSSR 276.3](#))

Employees may be reimbursed against the school "at post" allowance for education costs when the school has established a program to provide continuity of education via the internet when the post is under evacuation ([DSSR 621.1d](#), Education Allowance).

DOD employees come under separate authority for education benefits.

You must apply for the education allowance at post ([SF-1190 - Foreign Allowance Application, Grant and Report](#) and [DSSR Section 960 DS 270 Education Allowance Worksheet](#)).

The Education Allowance is paid to the employee as reimbursement upon presentation of receipts. For more information, see [DSSR 275, Payments](#).

Note: The transportation portion of the "away-from-post" rate should not be confused with the separate benefit of educational travel described below. See [DSSR Section 270](#) for more information on the education allowance.

Educational Travel (DSSR 280)

Also see [DSSR Section 960 Omnibus Exhibit, Educational Travel](#).

This allowance permits one round trip annually between a school attended and the foreign post of assignment. This benefit is primarily intended to reunite a full-time post-secondary student attending college (including the post-baccalaureate level), technical or vocational school with the employee/parent serving the U.S. government in the foreign area. However, Educational Travel may be paid for a child in secondary school (grades 9 through 12) instead of the education allowance described above.

Educational Travel cannot be paid at the same time as the Education Allowance and should not be confused with the transportation component of the Away from Post Education Allowance.

Educational Travel can commence from either the school or the post, but only one round trip between school and post is allowed in a 12-month period. Based on a change in law, the DSSR changed effective July 22, 2007 eliminating the restriction that the school attended full-time had to be in the United States. The educational travel benefit ceases once the student dependent reaches the age of 23, except for in limited cases when the child's education is delayed by military service (See [DSSR 284](#) for further information).

- It covers actual expenses for transportation of the student at lowest available fare rates, travel per diem, and expenses for unaccompanied personal baggage between the employee's foreign post and the school. At the election of the employee, in lieu of the transportation of the unaccompanied personal baggage, the costs incurred to store the baggage at or in the vicinity of the school during the dependent's annual trip between the school and the employee's duty station may be paid or reimbursed to the employee, provided that the storage costs do not exceed those of shipping the UAB from school to post.
- To be eligible for post-secondary Educational Travel, the student must be enrolled full-time in a program at an undergraduate, graduate, or post-secondary vocational or technical institution and must not have reached their 23rd birthday. (This age ceiling can be extended one year for each year or fraction of a year of military service if it is established that the student normally

resides with the employee/parent when not attending school.) The age limit for high school travel is up to the 21st birthday.

- An anniversary date is established with the first leg of the first Educational Travel. The anniversary date stays the same as long as the employee is assigned to a foreign area. If the employee is assigned to a post in the United States for more than 12 months then the anniversary date is reestablished once the employee is again assigned to a foreign post. The annual trip for educational travel is defined as one round trip at any time within the 12-month period established by the anniversary date. Any portion of the round trip not used in the 12-month period does not accrue to the subsequent period. ([DSSR 283.1](#))
- Educational Travel is available in addition to any other travel for which the child may be eligible (i.e., home leave, transfer, and rest and recuperation), however, it is recommended to contact GTMLLeave@state.gov to check on limitations when combining travel.
- Educational Travel may commence from either school or post.
- A return trip to post is not authorized under Educational Travel where the employee's transfer to the United States or departure for home leave is anticipated within 30 days of the scheduled date of the child's departure for the post.
- The travel-authorizing officer generally writes Educational Travel orders at post.

Representation Allowances ([DSSR 300](#))

Representation allowances are intended to reimburse employees, including foreign national employees and adult family members of employees, for expenses incurred in establishing and maintaining relationships of value to the United States in foreign countries. Reimbursement may include costs for entertainment and customary gifts or gratuities. Funds are limited and specific guidelines are formulated at each foreign post depending on need, custom, and budget. See [DSSR 300](#) and [15 FAM 730](#) for further information.

Its purpose is to defray expenditures for official entertaining and related authorized activities of employees in establishing and maintaining those relationships valuable to the U.S. government in furthering foreign policy objectives.

Allowable activities include entertainment of a protocol nature, such as on the Fourth of July and other holidays and important occasions; entertainment of members of the U.S. government other than solely those who are members of the executive branch and their families; and entertainment by employees to promote personal relationships that are necessary to the performance of their duties.

This allowance is available under the following conditions:

- Only those expenses incurred in a foreign area are allowable.

- Claims not covered due to insufficient funds may be tax deductible, when expenses are properly certified by appropriate authorizing officials. (See [IRS Publication 516](#).)
- Because of variable factors, posts are not classified for representation allowances nor are a table of rates prescribed. Rates are based on an annual review and analysis of each post's requirements based upon previous expenditures, cost of living at post, political and economic importance of post, and the relative requirements of the several categories of personnel at diplomatic missions.
- Vouchers for previously authorized expenses must be submitted.

Official Residence Expenses (ORE) (DSSR 400)

In order to carry out the representational functions, a principal representative at a post often requires reimbursement for those unusual housekeeping expenses incurred in the operation and maintenance of an official residence. Keeping official residences staffed and operational during intervals such as the recall or transfer of the principal representative also incurs Official Residence Expense.

The purpose of ORE is to reimburse a principal representative (e.g. an Ambassador) at a foreign post for expenses related to operating and maintaining a suitable official residence when those expenses exceed the usual expenses incurred if they were serving at the post in any other official capacity. Generally the principal representative will contribute three and one-half percent of salary ([DSSR 040 1.](#)) - on an annual basis for "usual" expenses. Allowable expenses above that amount will be reimbursed. See [DSSR 400](#) as well as [3 FAM 3250](#) and [3 FAH-1 H-3250](#) for further information.

Reimbursement of the Official Residence Expenses (ORE) is based on the normal living pattern of principal representatives at the posts. It is also based on the difference between normal housekeeping expenses and the cost the principal representative is required to bear and the size and condition of the official residence at the post. It should be noted that:

- Reimbursement is paid in a lump sum to the employee.
- Vouchers must be submitted for specific expenses.

The Office of Allowances offers a helpful [FAQ on Official Residence Expenses](#).

WHEN RETURNING TO THE UNITED STATES

Home Service Transfer Allowance (HSTA)(DSSR 250)

The purpose of the HSTA is to help defray an employee's extraordinary but necessary and reasonable costs during transfers from a foreign post to a post in the United States. To qualify for the allowance, the employee must sign the attestation in [DSSR 252.5b](#), stating that they agree to complete 12 months of USG service after they transfer to the United States. The HSTA is also available to family members who relocate to the United States following the death of an employee assigned to a foreign area.

1. **The Miscellaneous Expenses (DSSR 252.1) and Wardrobe Expenses (DSSR 252.2) portion** covers such expenses as disconnecting and connecting appliances, converting household appliances, rental car expenses if POV from foreign post is delayed; lithium battery replacement if unable to ship in HHE/HHG from foreign post, replacement of technology devices due to foreign post environmental conditions causing irreparable damage, and internet installation or disconnection fees. The following amounts may be granted without receipts or itemizing (DSSR 252.1a): (a) for an employee without family - \$750 or the equivalent of one week's salary, whichever is less; (b) for an employee with family - \$1,500 or the equivalent of two weeks' salary, whichever is less.
2. **The Wardrobe Expenses portion (DSSR 252.2)** offsets costs when transferring between posts with different climates. Posts are grouped into three zones according to climate (1-cold, 2-moderate, or 3-hot). When departing and arriving posts are in the same transfer zone, an employee is not eligible for allowance. With the new "One Zone Transfer" allowance, employees transferring between zone 1 and zone 2 or between zone 2 and zone 3 are eligible for: 1) employee without EFMs - \$350; or 2) employees with EFM(s) - \$700. With the existing "Two Zone Transfer" allowance, employees transferring from zone 1 to zone 3 or zone 3 to zone 1 are eligible for: 1) employee without EFMs - \$700; or 2) employees with EFM(s) - \$1,400.
3. **The Subsistence Expense portion (DSSR 252.3)** offsets costs of temporary lodging, meals, dry cleaning, and laundry for up to 60 days. This may be extended for up to an additional 60 days when, in the judgment of the head of an agency, there are compelling reasons beyond the control of the employee. Funds for the subsistence expense portion of the Home Service Transfer Allowance may be advanced by the authorized disbursing officer. The FAM does not authorize advance of other portions of this allowance. (However, employees of non-foreign affairs agencies may still be granted advances of the other portions under the DSSR.)
4. **The Lease Penalty Expense (DSSR 252.4) portion** helps offset the expense of a lease penalty unavoidably incurred at the foreign post as a result of a transfer to the United States by an

employee receiving the living quarters allowance. Reimbursement and certification are as discussed earlier under Foreign Transfer Allowance.

5. **The Pet Shipment and Required Quarantine Expense Portion (DSSR 252.5)** has the same reimbursement items as the Foreign Transfer Allowance (FTA).

There are two methods of reimbursement based on the standard CONUS rate if transferred to the continental United States. If transferred to a non-foreign area outside the continental United States then the locality per diem rate is used for the calculation. The two methods are the Actual Expense Reimbursement Method and the Partial Flat Rate Reimbursement Method. The Department of State follows the Partial Flat Rate Reimbursement Method. Maximum rates payable depend upon the children's ages and number of family members. There is also a fixed rate reimbursement method that an agency can choose to offer its employees in addition to one of the above methods, however, the Department of State does not offer this additional method.

Under the Partial Flat Rate Reimbursement Method, final claim and payments are made upon application with supporting receipts for lodging only. The Home Service Transfer Allowance is claimed after arrival at the new U.S. post of assignment using [the SF-1190, Foreign Allowance Application, Grant and Report](#) form submitted through the employee's bureau.

Calculate claims on the [DSSR 960 HSTA Worksheet](#).

Process your claim using the [SF-1190, Foreign Allowance Application, Grant and Report](#).

The Office of Allowances offers a helpful [FAQ on Home Service Transfer Allowance](#).

Evacuation Payments (DSSR 600)

Evacuation payments are made when an employee/family member is authorized or ordered to evacuate a foreign post. Evacuation payments consist of:

1. A Subsistence Expense Allowance (SEA) to help cover the costs of lodging, meals, laundry, and dry cleaning.
2. Local transportation at the safehaven.
3. An air freight replacement allowance if air freight is not shipped from post.

Subsistence amounts are based on the safehaven's per diem rate, whether the family is occupying commercial or noncommercial quarters and vary based on family size. M&IE payments decrease after the first 30 days. Evacuation payments terminate no later than 180 days after the evacuation order is issued.

Generally, the United States (anywhere in the 50 States and the District of Columbia and effective 4/10/2020 also includes non-foreign areas: territories, possessions, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) is designated as the official safehaven (at times, when necessary, an official foreign safehaven may also be designated), and evacuees are required to return to the United States (or official foreign safehaven) to receive allowances. An employee may request designation of an alternate foreign safehaven for special family needs but approval is not guaranteed. See [DSSR Sections 600 and 960 \(Evacuation Payments Worksheet\)](#) and the Evacuation Manual available at each foreign post for more information. For the Global Authorized Departure see [Evacuation G/AD FAQs](#).

Authority is granted to facilitate payment of salaries, post differential, and allowances in the event of an emergency evacuation or authorized departure of employees or their eligible family members, or both, from post because of military action or because of imminent danger to their lives.

Travel expense allowances are granted to and from the designated safehaven, usually the continental United States. Your eligible family members may travel to any place in the United States (as defined above), while employees are authorized travel only to Washington or another duty station.

Air freight may be authorized for both departure from and return to post. Although conditions may preclude shipments from post, shipments back to post may still be authorized. In lieu of an air freight shipment when evacuating from a post, an air freight replacement allowance may be authorized.

Following arrival at the authorized safehaven, a daily local transportation allowance of \$25 is authorized regardless of family size.

The Subsistence Expense Allowance (SEA) (DSSR 632) commences on the date following arrival at the authorized safe haven and terminates when the evacuation is ended, or on the 181st day after the evacuation order is issued, whichever arrives first. The rate of payment varies according to your use of commercial or non-commercial lodging and reduces after 30 days following arrival at the authorized safe haven. A higher lodging amount may be approved for special family composition. The following conditions therefore exist:

- The maximum period covered is 180 days.
- It provides salary advance for 30 days, if necessary, and continuance or adjustment of allowances at evacuated post, depending upon circumstances.
- Salary will continue and certain allowances may continue to be paid for up to 180 days, but regulations provide for terminating or reducing the Post Differential, Danger Pay and most allowances after various periods of absence from the post and under other varying conditions. See DSSR 621.

- Special allowances may be paid to offset the direct added expenses incident to the evacuation. These expenses normally are those incurred for travel, meals, lodging, children's education, and miscellaneous items.
- It is paid by various methods to employee, adult eligible family members, or a designated representative of the employee.

Payment of an Education Allowance may be affected by evacuation, but the circumstances are so specific that you should refer to [DSSR 633](#).

Under educational travel, the official safe haven replaces the post as the travel destination from school, if the employee/parent so elects.

Calculate claims on the [DSSR 960 Evacuation Payments Worksheet \(EPW\)](#).

The Office of Allowances offers a helpful [FAQ on Evacuations](#). The Global Community Liaison Office also offers information on [Evacuation Benefit and Allowances](#).



CHAPTER 28

TRAVEL AND LEAVE BENEFITS



All employees earn leave and travel benefits in accordance with their status in the Foreign Service. Family members also qualify for certain benefits.

ANNUAL LEAVE (3 FAM 3410 AND 3 FAH-1 H-3510)

Employees accrue annual leave on the following basis:

Years of Service	Per Pay Period	Per Year
1-3	4 hours	13 days
3-15	6 hours	20 days
15+	8 hours	26 days

The years of service are based on the employee's service computation date, which generally includes all federal government service. Employees are paid for accrued annual leave upon separation or retirement.

Leave Ceilings

The maximum amount of annual leave that may be accrued and carried over from one leave year to another is 240 hours (30 days) if serving on a domestic assignment and 360 hours (45 days) if serving overseas. The ceiling for Senior Executive Service (SES) and Senior Foreign Service (SFS) members is 720 hours — 90 days.

Employees who transfer to a domestic assignment from an overseas assignment and have an annual leave balance of 240 to 360 hours may carry a personal ceiling with them on the domestic assignment. For example, when an employee transfers back to the United States from an assignment abroad with 340 hours, 340 hours will become the employee's personal ceiling for that leave year. If the number of hours of annual leave drops to 270 at the end of the leave year, the employee will have a new personal ceiling of 270 hours for the next leave year. If the employee's annual leave balance drops to 180 at the end of that leave year, they will then have the regular 240-hour leave ceiling while serving domestically.

Note: The leave year generally corresponds with the calendar year, and accrued annual leave over the maximum must be used by the end of the leave year to avoid forfeiture.

Restoring Forfeited Annual Leave

Employees with leave balances above the leave ceiling at the end of the leave year may qualify for restoration of annual leave forfeited because of administrative error, illness, exigencies of public business, or national emergency work. To qualify for restoration of forfeited leave, employees must be able to show that they scheduled leave which later was cancelled or attempted to schedule leave, a request which was denied. An employee whose request to schedule leave was denied must try again to schedule it. To qualify for restoration of leave that was forfeited because of the exigencies of public business (the most common reason), an employee must submit written requests for annual leave before the end of pay period 23 (usually the end of November). When denying leave, the supervisor or manager must document in writing the reason for its denial.

In the Department of State, executive directors of regional and functional bureaus have the delegated authority to approve restoration of annual leave. Restored leave is placed in a separate annual leave account and generally must be used within two years after restoration.

A Department Notice and cable are issued annually describing the leave restoration requirements, the process for requesting restoration of forfeited leave, and other leave restoration issues.

Voluntary Leave Bank Program (VLBP) (3 FAM 3340)

To be eligible to receive leave from the Voluntary Leave Bank Program (VLBP), an employee must be a member of the Leave Bank (must have contributed 4, 6, or 8 hours of annual leave to the bank during the open enrollment season) and must be experiencing a medical emergency or have a family member (as defined per [3 FAM 3340 - Shared Voluntary Leave Programs](#)) with a medical emergency that is likely to require the employee's absence from duty for a prolonged period of time. The employee must have exhausted all accrued annual and sick leave and face a period of leave without pay of at least 24 work hours for a full-time employee or 30% of the average number of work hours in a part-time employee's biweekly schedule. The Leave Bank Board is responsible for determining how much leave can be provided to a member and for the equitable distribution of leave available in the pool.

A Department Notice and cable are issued annually describing provisions of the Voluntary Leave Bank Program.

Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP) (3 FAM 3340)

Under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP), federal employees may donate annual leave directly to eligible colleagues who are absent from duty due to a personal or family medical emergency and who have exhausted their available paid leave which may result in a substantial loss of income.

To be eligible for the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP), a Foreign Service or Civil Service employee must be experiencing a medical emergency or have a family member with a medical emergency that is likely to require the employee's absence from duty for a prolonged period of time. The employee must be facing a period of absence from duty without available paid leave (accrued annual or sick leave) because of the medical emergency is or is expected to be at least 24 work hours for a full-time employee or 30% of the average number of work hours in a part-time employee's biweekly schedule. Employees serving on family member appointments overseas are eligible to participate in the VLTP.

Some posts have adopted a VLTP for locally-employed staff, but because local leave systems are separate and distinct, it is not possible for U.S. citizen federal employees to contribute to locally employed staff, or vice versa.

A Department Notice and cable are issued annually describing provisions of the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program.

SICK LEAVE (3 FAM 3420 AND 3 FAH-1 H-3420)

Employees accrue sick leave at the rate of four hours per pay period, or 13 days per year, and there is no maximum limit on accumulation.

Use of Sick Leave

Sick leave may be used under the following conditions:

1. When incapacitated for performance of duty, because of sickness, injury, or pregnancy and confinement, or exposure to contagious disease.
2. For medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment.
3. For general family care (to care for an immediate family member for illness, injury, or medical treatment).
4. For adoption-related activities.
5. For bereavement purposes.
6. To care for a family member with a serious health condition.

General Family Care or Bereavement Purposes

A covered full-time employee may use up to 104 hours (13 workdays) in a leave year for general family care—caring for a family member with a physical illness or injury or a mental illness, or accompanying him or her to medical appointments—or for bereavement purposes.

Sick Leave to Care for a Family Member

A full-time federal employee may use a total of up to 12 administrative work weeks of accrued sick leave each leave year to care for a family member with a serious health condition. If an employee previously has used any portion of the 13 days of sick leave for general family care or bereavement purposes in a leave year, that amount must be subtracted from the 12-week entitlement. If an employee has already used 12 weeks of sick leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition, they cannot use an additional 13 days in the same leave year for general family care purposes.

Family member means an individual with any of the following relationships to the employee:

- Spouse and parents of the spouse.
- Sons and daughters, including adopted children and stepchildren, and their spouses.
- Parents and their spouses.
- Brothers and sisters and their spouses.
- Grandparents and grandchildren and their spouses.
- Domestic partner and parents of the domestic partner, including domestic partners of any individual in paragraphs (2) through (5) of this definition.
- Any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.

Serious Health Condition

The term “serious health condition” has the same meaning as used in the Office of Personnel Management’s regulations for administering the [Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 \(FMLA\)](#). That definition includes such conditions as AIDS, cancer, heart attacks, strokes, severe injuries, Alzheimer’s disease, pregnancy and childbirth. The term “serious health condition” is not intended to cover short-term conditions for which treatment and recovery are very brief. The common cold, the flu, earaches, upset stomach, headaches (other than migraines), routine dental or orthodontia problems, etc., are not serious health conditions unless complications arise.

Sick Leave for Adoption

Employees are permitted to use sick leave for purposes related to the adoption of a child (there is no limit on usage). Employees may use sick leave for appointments with adoption agencies, social workers, and attorneys; court proceedings; required travel; and any other activities necessary to allow the adoption to proceed. However, sick leave may not be used for the purpose of bonding with a newly adopted child.

Disposition of Sick Leave

Employees who entered government service prior to January 1, 1984, and are covered under what is sometimes called the “old” retirement system (FSRDS – Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System or CSRS – Civil Service Retirement System) may use accrued sick leave to gain additional service credit for retirement purposes at the rate of 176 hours of sick leave for each additional month of service credit (2,080 hours for one year).

The rules are slightly different for employees covered by the Foreign Service Pension System (FSPS) or by the new Civil Service pension systems (FERS, FERS-RAE, and FERS-FRAE). The unused sick leave is not counted in determining average pay or annuity eligibility. However, at retirement, the employee will receive:

- 50% of unused sick leave in the case of an entitlement to an immediate annuity, and based on a separation from service from October 28, 2009, through December 31, 2013.
- 100% of unused sick leave in the case of an entitlement to an immediate annuity occurring after December 31, 2013.

In the case of any employee who is excepted from coverage under the leave provisions in 5 U.S.C. chapter 63 by section 6301(2) (x) through (xiii) (i.e., chiefs of mission and certain political appointees), the employee’s days of unused sick leave include any days of sick leave standing to the employee’s credit when they were excepted from Title 5 leave coverage.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) ([3 FAM 3530](#))

[The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993](#) provides federal employees who have 12 months of government service with the entitlement to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for the following purposes:

- The birth of a son or daughter of the employee and the care of that child.
- The placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care.
- The care of a child, spouse, or parent of the employee who has a serious health condition.
- A serious health condition of the employee that makes the employee unable to perform any one or more of the essential functions of the job.
- Qualifying exigency leave arising because the spouse, son, daughter, or parent of the employee is on covered active duty in the Armed Forces or has been notified of an impending call or order to covered active duty.

An employee also is entitled to 26 weeks of unpaid leave under the FMLA in a single 12-month period to provide care for a covered service member who has a serious injury or illness incurred by the

member in the line of duty on active duty in the Armed Forces – or has a condition that existed before the beginning of the member’s active duty that was aggravated by service in the line of duty on active duty in the Armed Forces – that may render the member medically unfit to perform his or her duties.

An employee may elect to substitute other paid time off, as appropriate, for any period of unpaid leave under the FMLA. When medically necessary, leave may be taken intermittently or the employee may work a part-time work schedule.

If not medically necessary, an intermittent or part-time work schedule requires agreement of both the supervisor and the employee.

Paid Parental Leave (FMLA) (3 FAM 3535)

The Federal Employee Paid Leave Act amends the FMLA and provides up to 12 administrative workweeks of paid parental leave (PPL) to covered Federal employees in connection with a birth or placement (for adoption or foster care) of a child occurring on or after October 1, 2020. An employee may substitute the 12 weeks of PPL for unpaid FMLA leave and must use PPL within the 12-month period following the birth or placement.

Employees requesting PPL must complete and sign the new form DS-5155, Paid Parental Leave Request Form, in addition to the form DS-1923, Family and Medical Leave Act. Employees must also provide documentation certifying the birth or placement.

Statute and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations also require that employees complete and sign a written agreement (form DS-5144, FEPLA Work Obligation Agreement) to work for the Department for 12 weeks after the conclusion of the PPL period. Employees who do not complete the 12-week work requirement must reimburse the Department for any agency contributions paid toward the employee's Federal Employee Health Benefit coverage during the period of PPL. Information about the work obligation and reimbursement can be found in [3 FAM 3535.5](#).

To be eligible for PPL, an employee must be eligible for FMLA leave under [3 FAM 3530](#).

HOME LEAVE (3 FAM 3430 AND 3 FAH-1 H-3430)

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. Foreign Service employees who are assigned abroad earn home leave at the rate of 15 days for each year of overseas service. There is no maximum limitation on the accrual of home leave. Employees are not paid for unused home leave

upon separation or retirement. Home leave can be used only in the United States, in the U.S. Commonwealths, or in the territories and possessions of the United States.

Home leave should be taken in one continuous period, although, with approval in advance from the Office of Career Development and Assignments (CDA), it may be interrupted for training, consultation or for other purposes. Any trips made outside of the United States before, after or during the home leave must be charged to annual leave, leave without pay or compensatory time off.

Home leave is normally taken at the end of the tour, and most tours are 24 to 36 months, depending upon the post differential rate. Except for posts experiencing extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Director General of the Foreign Service, a minimum period of 18 months of continuous overseas service is required to qualify for home leave. Time spent in the United States on annual leave, emergency visitation travel, rest and recuperation (except R&R from posts experiencing extraordinary circumstances), and any time in a nonpay status will delay the 18-month minimum period of eligibility.

Eligible family members residing at post (or students on education allowances or educational travel who reside at post when possible during holidays and school breaks) qualify for home leave based on the eligibility of the employee. Children must be under 21 or, regardless of their age, be unmarried and incapable of self-support in accordance with the definition of EFM's in [14 FAM 511.3](#). Normally, the employee and family members travel together on home leave.

At least 10 days of home leave is mandatory following 12 months of service at posts experiencing extraordinary circumstances as identified by the Director General. Employees extending their tour of duty to 24 months at such posts must take a minimum of 10 days of home leave after 12 months and an additional minimum of 10 days at the end of the assignment or they must take a minimum of 20 days at the end of the tour. (Foreign Service officers returning to a domestic assignment who are ineligible for home leave because they will not return to service abroad due to mandatory retirement but who meet all other home leave eligibility criteria must take 10 days of transition leave at the end of 12 months of service at a post experiencing extraordinary circumstances. See [3 FAM 3464.3](#) in [3 FAM 3460 Other Paid Leave](#).)

The amount of home leave that can be authorized varies depending upon the employee's next assignment. If the employee's next assignment is overseas, the amount of home leave that can be authorized varies between 20 days (minimum) to 45 days (maximum), with 20 days as the normal, established standard. Employees returning to the United States for a domestic assignment are not required to take home leave but may take a maximum of 25 days.

Under specified circumstances, the leave may be deferred for up to six months. Requests for exceptions on the prescribed time limits are considered on a case-by-case basis. All home leave that is approved is taken in working days, not on an hourly basis.

The only expense paid by the U.S. government in connection with home leave is the round-trip air fare (and per diem while in travel status) for the employee and family members from post to the home leave address of record that is officially documented on the OF-126 form, Foreign Service Residence and Dependency Report.

Expenses for food, lodging and other expenses connected with home leave are the responsibility of the employee. Since home leave is a statutory requirement, all of the unreimbursed expenses for the employee (but not for EFMs) are tax deductible. Receipts should be retained and employees may wish to consult with a tax advisor before filing tax returns.

Home leave is not authorized for Department of State Civil Service employees serving under limited non-career appointments (LNAs) or other temporary Foreign Service appointments when they return to a domestic position upon completion of the assignment. See [3 FAM 3464.3](#) in [3 FAM 3460 Other Paid Leave](#) for policies on transition leave for Civil Service employees and certain Foreign Service employees returning from overseas service.

REST AND RECUPERATION TRAVEL (R&R) ([3 FAM 3720](#) AND [3 FAH-1 H-3720](#))

The purpose of R&R is to give employees relief from onerous conditions at the post of assignment. Approximately 70% of all posts worldwide are certified for R&R, with the majority of the non-certified posts in Western Europe. If a post is R&R certified, employees are eligible to take one R&R trip during a two-year tour and two trips during a three-year tour that is unbroken by home leave. R&R travel must begin and end at post, and the time away from post is charged to annual leave. See [3 FAH-1, H-3722, Exhibits 1-5](#) for a list of posts certified for R&R and their designated relief areas.

Employees have the choice of traveling to:

- The designated overseas relief point.
- Another overseas location, provided that the purpose and objectives of R&R travel are met, and cost constructing against the travel costs to the designated relief point.
- Any city in the United States or its Commonwealths, territories or possessions, including American Samoa, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Employees or family members who travel both to a point abroad and to the United States on their R&R trip must cost-construct against the official relief point abroad, not against a destination in the United States.

Normally, R&R is not taken during the first or the last six months of the tour. Employees who fail to complete their full tour of duty will be required to repay all R&R travel expenses incurred, including those of their eligible family members, except in circumstances described in [3 FAM 3722](#). The eligibility of family members for R&R stems from that of the employee, and once the employee is eligible, that eligibility is usually automatically extended to family members residing at post. Employees and family members may travel at separate times and to separate locations.

The family may take R&R even if the employee is not able to travel. Travel eligibility for children ceases at age 21, except for unmarried children of any age who are incapable of self-support (see the definitions of eligible family members in [14 FAM 511.3](#)).

OTHER ABSENCES IN PAY STATUS

There are a variety of other situations that may qualify for time off. Read the FAM references for full details on the following situations:

- Military Leave ([3 FAM 3440](#))
- Court Leave ([3 FAM 3450](#))
- Leave and Reassignment of Duties for Maternity or Paternity Reasons ([3 FAM 3350](#))
- Local Holidays ([3 FAH-1 H-3462](#))
- Leave to Serve as a Bone Marrow or Organ Donor ([3 FAM 3464.6](#))
- Excused Absences (Administrative Leave) ([3 FAM 3464](#))
- Blood Donations ([3 FAM 3464.1-1\(5\)](#))
- Absences of Less than One Hour ([3 FAH-1 H-3461.3](#))
- Voting ([3 FAH-1 H-3463](#))
- Time Zone Dislocation ([3 FAH-1 3464](#))
- Transit Time ([3 FAM 3463](#))
- Packing and Unpacking ([3 FAH-1 3465](#))

Advances of Leave

- Annual Leave ([3 FAM 3416](#))
- Sick Leave ([3 FAM 3428](#))

Unpaid Leave

- Leave Without Pay (LWOP) ([3 FAM 3510](#)) (Also see OPM's [Effect of Extended LWOP on Federal Benefits and Programs](#))
- Absent Without Official Leave (AWOL) ([3 FAM 3520](#))

EMERGENCY VISITATION TRAVEL (EVT) ([3 FAM 3740](#); [3 FAH-1 H-3740](#))

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 person (for exceptions, see [3 FAM 3744 General Provisions](#), paragraphs D and E).

There are five categories of EVT:

- Medical EVT is authorized when a family member is facing imminent death (i.e., death within days).
- Eldercare EVT is authorized to care for a parent who has become incapacitated and requires medical treatment or assessment of their living situation and care.
- Death EVT is approved for travel to the funeral of a family member, which in this EVT category includes siblings.
- Unusual personal hardship EVT is requested in situations of extreme and unusual emergency involving a family member.
- Unaccompanied post EVT is authorized in cases where an employee at an unaccompanied post is critically ill or injured and the Foreign Service medical provider (FSMP) determines that family members or agent should be called to the employee's bedside.

For purposes of medical, eldercare and unusual personal hardship EVT, eligible family members are defined as: the spouse or domestic partner of the employee; the parents, including stepparents or adoptive parents; and the children, including stepchildren, adopted children, and those who are or were under legal guardianship of the employee and the employee's spouse or domestic partner.

For purposes of death EVT, travel to attend the funerals of siblings, including stepbrothers and stepsisters of the employee, spouse or domestic partner, is authorized as well.

For purposes of unaccompanied post EVT only, the term "family members" includes eligible family members as defined in [14 FAM 511.3](#) and may include other immediate family (parents/guardians or

siblings, including stepparents or step-siblings, and nondependent children), regardless of whether such individuals are designated on the employee's assignment travel orders.

"Agent" ordinarily is an individual other than a family member who holds medical power-of-attorney for the employee.

See [3 FAM 3745 Definitions](#) for more information.

The Office of Medical Services, Foreign Programs (MED/FP) is responsible for determining eligibility for Medical EVT for all foreign affairs agencies. Only one trip is approved for each serious illness or injury of an immediate family member. The patient or representative must authorize release of medical information to MED/FP by the physician or hospital. MED/FP will then proceed to contact the physician or hospital in order to determine whether or not the request meets medical EVT criteria (see [3 FAH-1 Exhibit H-3742.1](#) for procedures).

Post HR authorizes death EVT travel for an individual upon the death of their family member; MED approval is not part of this process (see [3 FAH-1 Exhibit H-3743.1](#) for procedures).

Eldercare EVT entitles an employee, spouse or domestic partner to two trips each throughout the employee's career. Only the person directly related to the ill parent is eligible for eldercare EVT travel. "Parent" may include the traveler's mother or father, step-parents, adoptive parents or individuals who have stood in place of a parent. Both eldercare trips may be used for one parent. Employees, spouses or domestic partners decide when to use the travel benefit and for which parent. An employee may also designate a spouse to travel in their place (this would be counted as one of the employee's eldercare EVT trips). Under no circumstances may an individual be deemed to have more than two parents for purposes of all EVT trips.

The first time an individual visits a parent under eldercare EVT, that parent is designated for future medical EVT purposes also; only one other parent may be designated for EVT, regardless of gender. For example, an employee who is approved for two elder-care EVT trips to attend to a biological mother and a stepmother cannot be approved for a medical EVT for a biological father at a later time. Employees request eldercare EVT authorization through post HR to the Office of Employee Relations (HR/ER) by submitting a cable that includes a self-certification with the details of the parent's health issue. See [3 FAH-1 H-3744.1](#) for procedures.

The Office of Employee Relations (HR/ER) has the authority to approve unusual personal hardship EVT in extreme and unusual situations involving a family member. See [3 FAH-1 H-3745.1](#) for procedures.

If the traveler decides to commence travel prior to authorization, the employee must sign a Repayment Acknowledgement. Upon receipt, post HR can initiate travel arrangements. If the employee decides to seek reimbursement for a self-purchased ticket, reimbursement will depend on whether Fly America and other travel regulations and restrictions have been observed.

Employees assigned abroad who are away from post of assignment on TDY are eligible for EVT regardless of TDY location. Employees, spouses or domestic partners who are on other official travel (R&R or home leave) or on personal leave are eligible for cost-constructed EVT (see [3 FAM 3749.1](#)) as long as the traveler's EVT point of departure is not in the same country as the ill or deceased family member. Employees who are away from post of assignment should make every effort to consult with the EVT authorizing office and post management officer before initiating EVT travel. This consultation is essential in determining the most appropriate course for continuation of travel, and will minimize but may not exclude employee liability for fare change penalties, etc.

Travel may be authorized outside the United States to the location of the seriously ill, injured, or deceased immediate family member or incapacitated parent. Such travel is on a cost-constructed basis, not to exceed the travel cost from post to the separation residence of record.

Post HR coordinates directly with the corresponding offices of other foreign affairs agencies (USAID, Agriculture, Commerce and the U.S. Agency for Global Media); see [3 FAH-1 Exhibit H-3741 \(2\)](#).

All time away from post on EVT, with the exception of travel time to and from the place of emergency, is charged to annual or sick leave.

TRAVEL OF CHILDREN OF SEPARATED FAMILIES ([3 FAM 3750](#) AND [3 FAH-1 H-3750](#))

This travel authority provides for the payment of one round trip per year to enable each child under age 21 of a member of the Foreign Service stationed abroad to visit either of the child's separated parents. Travel cannot be authorized within the employee's first or the last 30 days of assignment or return from home leave.

A child may travel to visit: (a) the member abroad if the child does not regularly reside with the member and the member is not receiving an educational allowance, educational travel, or voluntary separate maintenance allowance for the child; or (b) the other parent of the child if the other parent resides in a country other than the country to which the member is assigned, and the child regularly resides with the member and does not regularly attend school in the country in which the other parent resides.

See [3 FAM 3753.1](#) for a list of eligibility factors that apply to children. Stepchildren are eligible for this travel benefit. The benefit also can extend to children of tandem couples provided that the parents are stationed overseas, and all other eligibility factors for the travel benefit are met.

FAMILY VISITATION TRAVEL ([3 FAM 3730](#))

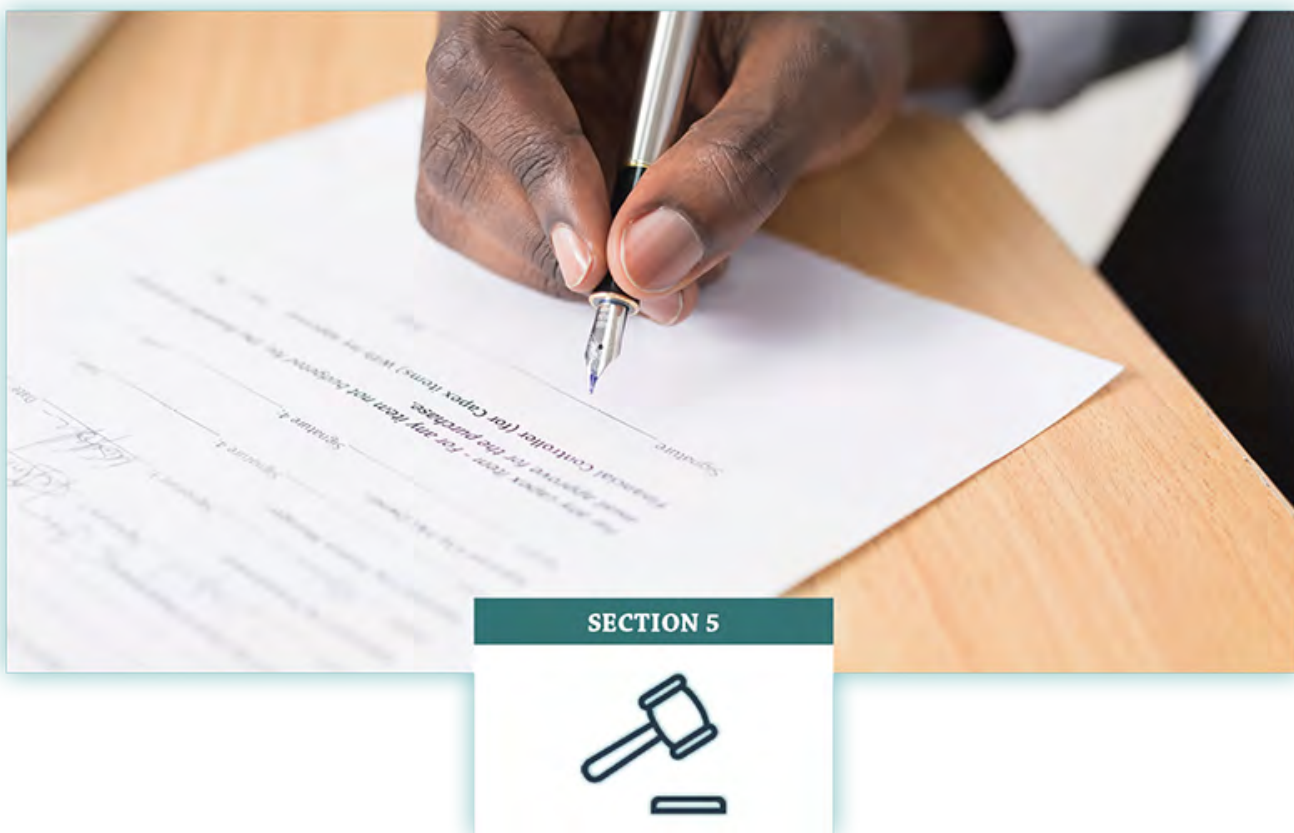
When a post has been designated by the Director General of the Foreign Service as an imminent danger area at which family members are not authorized to reside, employees who are serving at that post are authorized periodic travel to visit their family members at U.S. government expense.

Generally, employees are authorized up to two round trips for each 12-month period of service abroad. For a fractional part of a year, one trip may be authorized for each full six-month period of service in an imminent danger area. Time away from post, including travel time, is charged to annual leave.

Employees with family members located in the United States are authorized up to two roundtrips in each 12-month period, with no travel during the first or last three months of the tour. Trips must be spaced three months apart.

For employees with family members located abroad, more than two visits may be permitted during a 12-month period provided the cost does not exceed the cost of two round trips to Washington, DC. Visits to family members outside the United States are not permitted during the first or last four weeks of the tour, and a four-week interval must separate the trips.

When a post is designated for both family visitation travel and R&R travel, eligible employees have the option of taking two family visitation trips and no R&R, or they may elect to take one family visitation trip and one R&R. In exceptional circumstances involving unusual personal hardship, an individual may be authorized two family visitation trips and an R&R trip, if eligible. Requests for exceptions are approved by the Director General at the Department of State and counterparts in other foreign affairs agencies.



CHAPTER 29

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS



POWERS OF ATTORNEY

Definition

A power of attorney (POA) is a document by which one person authorizes another to take actions on their behalf. The person signing the POA (generally referred to as the principal or the grantor) states, in effect, that they are not or cannot be present to perform a certain action or sign a certain document, and that they are authorizing another person (generally referred to as the attorney in fact or agent) to take that action or sign that document. A POA assures the person or institution that

needs the signature that the principal will honor the signature of their attorney in fact (agent) and be legally bound by it, just as if the principal had been there and signed it. Do not confuse the term “attorney in fact” with attorney at law; your POA agent does not have to be a lawyer.

Frequently, the principal designates their spouse as the agent; often each spouse gives a POA to the other. But the agent need not be a spouse. You might choose to give a POA to a parent, friend, lawyer, broker, banker, adult child, or accountant.

If you are signing another person’s name, using authority that you hold under a POA, you should sign as follows: “John Smith, by Mary Smith as attorney in fact.”

Types of Power of Attorney

There are two types of powers of attorney:

1. A general power of attorney says that the agent can do anything and everything on behalf of the person who signed it (the principal).
2. A special power of attorney (sometimes called a limited power of attorney) sets limits on what the agent or attorney in fact may do, or specifies the particular action that is to be taken on behalf of the principal. For example, the principal might authorize the agent to sell a car.

Another example might occur if a Foreign Service spouse traveled alone with a minor child. There are many countries where the authorities could stop the child from traveling without the written consent of the other spouse. The solution is to have an authorizing statement prepared by the second spouse, sealed at the country’s foreign ministry, and given to the traveling spouse.

Moreover, if a child is away from post for a significant period of time, e.g., at boarding school, and the parents are incapacitated, someone needs to have a special power of attorney to access funds for the minor’s maintenance.

Either a general POA or a special POA can be limited in other ways. For example, it might be valid only until a certain date, during assignment to a particular country, or in the event of hostage taking, evacuation, or physical disability. The most common and familiar use of POAs (usually a special POA) at overseas posts is for cashing checks.

Health Care Power of Attorney

This specialized power of attorney designates someone to make medical decisions for you in case you are unable to do so. A medical directive includes both a health care POA and a living will, which gives your treatment preferences in case of terminal illness or permanent unconsciousness.

The Department of State offers one free electronic copy of “Five Wishes” to each employee as part of the Eldercare Program. This easy-to-use living will meets District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia requirements, although it may not be suitable for use outside of the United States. Employees of other agencies can check with their employers or obtain documents online.

In Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, a living will must be signed by two witnesses, with DC being the most restrictive about who qualifies as a witness. All accept various forms.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Although it is obviously impossible to prepare for every conceivable emergency or contingency, families should reflect on the following activities and consider what would happen if the employee or spouse were unavailable:

- Withdrawing funds from checking and savings accounts; financial institutions generally have their own in-house POAs.
- Obtaining or extending loans (including educational loans) from banks or credit unions, opening charge accounts or lines of credit.
- Renting, buying, or leasing real estate.
- Invoking the diplomatic clause to reoccupy own home.
- Borrowing to buy a house.
- Buying, selling, or registering a car.
- Borrowing for consumer items (clothing, furniture, appliances).
- Selling or buying stocks, bonds, mutual funds, certificates of deposit (CDs).
- Reinvesting when bonds, money markets, or CDs mature.
- Signing for minor children (hospitals, schools, legal matters).
- Managing the affairs of elderly parents.
- Borrowing on life insurance.
- Filing federal, state, and local tax returns.

The advantage of having a POA is obvious: a trusted agent or attorney in fact can take care of your affairs, even if you are unavailable to make decisions or sign the documents. However, consider the disadvantages as well. Trust in agents may change, and the only certain way to cancel or revoke a

POA, unless it has an expiration date, is to tear it up. Furthermore, even though you may want and trust someone else to handle certain affairs, there may be some matters (such as a sizable trust fund) that you do not want handled for you even in an emergency. Consider such factors before giving anyone a general POA.

Another difficulty with POAs is that other persons or institutions are not obligated to accept them. Banks and investment firms may prefer the use of their own in-house forms with a signature by the principal and the agent. To cope with some of these situations, joint accounts or joint ownership of investments may serve better than a POA, if the intention is to permit either spouse to have ready access to the funds (even if the account is small). This is something you should check with your bank, broker or investment firm. Different laws apply in different states. You would want to ask whether there are any special tax implications of joint versus separate accounts, and whether accounts are frozen—even if they are “joint accounts with right of survivorship”—if one spouse dies, or if there is a lawsuit against one owner.

The ideal is for families to plan ahead considering the situations that may occur and to consult attorneys, realtors, banks or other institutions on the acceptability of POAs for the uses they may anticipate or obtain advice on better alternative contingency plans.

RESIDENCE AND DOMICILE

Where is “home”? Foreign Service families, more than most, have difficulty answering that question. The query, “Where is your residence?” may be even more troublesome. It depends how you use the term “residence,” who is asking the question, and the reason for the question.

Foreign Service personnel forms use differing contexts about place of appointment, home leave address, and separation address. These may or may not all be the same, and they may or may not be the same as your domicile or legal residence. Defining these terms is difficult, and we recommend that when legal issues are at stake—such as wills, inheritance, and taxes—that you consult a competent lawyer to get a clear answer.

Definitions

Residence is a term with no precise definition. In general terms, your residence is where you live at the moment, even if it is temporary. To cite one example, the state of Maryland says that you are a resident of Maryland in any particular year—for purposes of determining whether you have to pay resident income taxes—if you have a place of abode within the state for more than six months of that year, even though you may have a domicile in some other state.

Thus you may have more than one residence. You may be residing overseas but still be a resident of Maryland under the definition just given. But, regardless of how many residences you may have under the law, it is generally considered possible to have only one domicile. States have different rules on how long it takes to be considered a resident or have a domicile, and the same state may require different lengths of time, depending on the reason the question has arisen. These might be, for example:

- Driver's licenses—30 days.
- State university—one year.
- Divorce—six months.

You will need to investigate each item with the state in question.

Domicile is a legal term. (Sometimes the term “legal residence” is used to mean the same thing, but to avoid confusion we will use only “domicile.”) Under English Common Law you acquire at birth the domicile of your parents (which may or may not be where you are born), and your domicile is the same as that of your parents as long as you are a minor. Thereafter, you may acquire a new domicile of your own. The general rule is that to do so you must go to the new location, establish actual residence there, and concurrently have the intention of remaining there indefinitely or of returning there after any temporary absences. Although you may have many residences, you only have one domicile.

Moreover, because everyone must have a domicile, you do not lose the one that you were born with or acquired later unless you acquire a new one. It is usually not enough just to say that you are giving up your domicile in a particular state. You must show that you have given it up by moving to another state and simultaneously showing that you intend to make that state your permanent home. Your intention is thus an important element—but not the only element—of determining your domicile.

One important exception to the rules above is that intention historically has not been an important element in determining domicile after a marriage. In many states, either spouse can choose to assume the other's domicile, or each can retain the prior domicile. It is important to check the laws of your state if you have been recently married.

The Importance of Domicile

In several situations, determining domicile is crucial. The following discussion of some of the more common ones is not intended as a substitute for legal advice.

State Income Tax

If you are domiciled in a state that has an income tax, that state has a claim on you for taxes even when you are absent from the state. You may also owe income tax to another state because of temporary residence there (place of abode). If so, reciprocal agreements often determine which state gets your tax money, or what proportion of it, but you may have to file tax returns in both states and claim a credit for taxes paid to one of them. (Note, however, that a state may relinquish its right to collect state income tax from one of its residents.)

Foreign Service families who are assigned overseas or to Washington for the first time need to think carefully about state and local income taxes from the beginning. If you are assigned overseas, most, but not all, states continue to tax your income if you maintain your domicile in that state, even if you are not physically present there.

A tour of duty overseas does not constitute a change of domicile to the overseas location. (See [AFSA's annual tax guide](#) for a list of those jurisdictions that in certain circumstances do not tax income of nonresident domiciliaries.)

If you are assigned to Washington and decide to make it a permanent move—i.e. give up your previous domicile and make Maryland, Virginia, or the District of Columbia your permanent home—you can expect to pay income tax in your new jurisdiction from the time you move there (and also later when you go overseas).

If, however, you wish to keep your domicile in your home state while temporarily residing in the Washington area in connection with a Washington assignment, you will continue to owe income taxes to your home state unless it is among those that do not tax nonresident domiciliaries in certain circumstances. Your income tax liability to a local jurisdiction in these circumstances will depend on how long you have a place of abode there in any particular year. Generally, if you reside for more than six months in a local jurisdiction, you will owe income taxes to that jurisdiction for that year even if you are not domiciled there. Again, a credit is usually allowed to prevent double taxation.

If you have not changed your domicile to the Washington area, any tax liability to a local jurisdiction should end when you move overseas, though you may continue to owe tax to your state of domicile. One suggestion is to write to the local tax authorities at the end of your Washington assignment, stating that you are no longer a local resident. If a state bills you for back taxes incurred during a period you lived overseas, it is usually necessary to prove that you never intended to establish a domicile in the state that is billing you. The factors that states consider in determining your intent are discussed below under [How Is Domicile Proved?](#).

Education of Children

Tuition charges at state universities are normally significantly lower for residents than for nonresidents; residents may also receive preferential admission. What most universities are talking about when they use those terms is really “domicile,” and a Foreign Service child who has been moving about the world with their parents is sometimes able to establish eligibility for resident fees if the parents can demonstrate to the university that they have retained their domicile in that state. If a child is interested in a Maryland or Virginia state university, it may be worthwhile to establish a domicile there, offsetting the possible disadvantages that come from incurring income tax liability in that state. Contact state educational institutions and ask how they determine resident status.

Attending School Outside Your Domicile

Each jurisdiction in the Washington area has regulations about children living in one jurisdiction and attending school in another. Foreign Service students temporarily living with friends or relatives while the parents are stationed overseas must pay out of county tuition in most districts.

In Northern Virginia, children who do not reside in the county must pay tuition even if they are waiting to move into their permanent home in the county. Parents should consider choosing their temporary housing arrangements in the same school district where they plan to settle permanently. Maryland counties handle each situation on a case by case basis and will often permit a child to attend classes if the parents can prove they are about to move permanently into the county. For information, contact the Office of Community Relations or Information of the appropriate school district:

- [Virginia](#)
- [Maryland](#)
- [District of Columbia](#)

In the District of Columbia, parents who wish their children to attend a District school located outside their neighborhood must apply each year between February and April. Students are accepted on a space available, first-come, first-served basis. Several thousand transfer requests are processed by the DC school system each year, with justifications ranging from economic hardship or inconvenience to a desire for a child to take a particular class or program, or to be in a school with high test scores.

Voting

In a normal situation, a person votes in the state in which they are domiciled. Remember that where you vote is one of several factors that state authorities consider in determining your domicile for

other purposes. Absentee voting guidelines are available online through the [Overseas Vote Foundation](#) and the Department of Defense [Federal Voting Assistance Program](#).

Deaths and Estates

When you die, taxes on your estate might be levied by the state where you were domiciled or by the state where your real property is located. If your estate is large enough, your heirs may find that two or more states claim the right to tax the estate if a question exists as to which was your domicile. Domicile also may have a bearing on who inherits your property.

If you die without a will, the laws of the state where you are domiciled generally determine dispersal of your property. But if you own a house or other real estate in some other state and that state has different inheritance laws, an expensive conflict is likely, particularly if there is a question as to your domicile.

If you die with a will, the will is probated in a court in the state where you are domiciled. Because formalities for making a valid will are different in different states, it is wise to consult a lawyer about your will.

Discuss with your lawyer the question of domicile, including where you would expect the will to be probated. This may be particularly important if you have property in more than one state.

Divorce

Filing for divorce requires your physical presence in the state where you file the petition. Usually, you must have been a resident of that state for a certain length of time. However, your spouse does not need to be a resident of that state or to be domiciled there.

How Is Domicile Proved?

An important element in establishing domicile is your intention. How do you prove that intention? Following are types of questions often asked—sometimes in the form of a questionnaire of domicile—when a state tax authority, state university, or court has to decide where you are domiciled:

- What do you consider your permanent home? How long have you lived there?
- Where do you actually reside? How long have you lived there?
- Do you own or rent your residence there?
- Do you pay income tax there?
- What other ties do you have to that state? (Examples: family or organizations)
- Do you own retirement property? Where?

- Where do you have investments?
- Where do you vote? How long have you voted there?
- Are you a member of a religious organization such as a church, synagogue, or mosque? Where?
- To what professional and civic organizations do you belong?
- What is the location of your bank accounts (checking and savings)? Where are your safe deposit boxes located?
- In what jurisdiction have you obtained licenses (driver's, marriage, professional)?
- What is your home leave address?

How much weight is given to the answers to questions such as these often depends on why the question is being asked. A state may rule on the basis of rather limited evidence that you are domiciled there and therefore required to pay income tax even while you are away. The same state may require much more evidence, or weigh it differently, if you are trying to prove that you are domiciled there and therefore your child is entitled to resident status at the state university.

In sum, no easy answers exist. The closest thing to a rule of thumb would be this: if you do not intend to give up your old domicile when you move, keep as many ties there as you can, and build a record that shows your intention. To apply this rule to the state income tax, it might be worthwhile to inform tax authorities in your state of temporary residence, in writing, when you file your first tax return that you are doing so only on the basis of physical presence in the state and not because you intend to make it your permanent home. When you leave to go overseas, another letter explaining your status could also help establish your intent.

To avoid problems it is wise to consult a lawyer familiar with the tax situation in your state of temporary residence and your domicile. You may wish to contact [WorkLife4You](#), a service provided by the Department of State that can help you locate tax and financial professionals.

WILLS AND ESTATE PLANNING

A will is a legal document by which a person makes a disposition of their property to take effect at death. Besides designating the persons to whom property is to be distributed, a will also states who should be responsible for seeing that the distribution is properly carried out (the executor), and may also name a person to act as guardian for minor children. A will may also establish who is to get custody of the children upon the parents' deaths, especially if a child is away from post for a significant length of time, e.g., at boarding school.

There are formal requirements for making a will that vary from state to state. These requirements affect how the will is signed, the number of witnesses, and other similar matters. It is important to

have professional assistance or advice in the preparation of a will. Unless the formalities are observed, the will may not be valid.

When a person dies without a will (intestate), property is distributed according to a plan set out in the laws of the state in which the person was domiciled at time of death. For instance, if you are married and have children and die intestate while domiciled in the District of Columbia, one-third of your estate will go to your surviving spouse and the remainder will be divided equally among your children. In both cases, the children's share will be the same whether they are minors living at home or adults who have long since left home. If the children are minors, the guardian will have to file annual reports in court accounting for management or disposition of the property that the child has inherited.

State law rarely provides the kind of estate plan that parents would choose. Therefore, it is particularly important for parents of young children to have current valid wills.

Wills should be reviewed whenever there is a major change in one's personal situation, such as the birth of a child, the death of a beneficiary, any major change in financial status, or any change in marital status.

Tips on Wills for Foreign Service Families

A will can be a complex or simple document. Generally, a simple will, revised when circumstances change, is better than a will that attempts to take account of every turn of events far into the future.

A sensible plan for storing the original will is to leave it for safekeeping with the lawyer who drew it up. Copies may be kept in your personal safe deposit box and with important papers that you take when you travel. The people concerned with settling your estate need to know where the original will is stored. You may wish to send them a copy of the will, information about where the original is stored, and instructions on your wishes should an emergency occur while you are overseas. (A letter of last instruction can be used to explain such matters as location of vital papers, current business affairs, and funeral arrangements desired. It may also be used to dispose of small items of sentimental value or to explain any special provisions of the will such as disinheritance, but it should be reviewed by the lawyer to ensure that it does not conflict with the will.)

You do not need to have a will in each jurisdiction where you own property. Your will can be probated in the state where you have your principal residence or domicile. Once authenticated in the state where it is probated, this will can be used as authority in other states where property is owned.

If you own property in more than one state, or if your state of residence is not certain or is likely to change, your will should take account of this. In such a case, the powers of the executor and of any

trustee appointed in the will should be spelled out carefully, since the presumptions about such powers may vary in important ways from state to state.

Destroy the originals of outdated wills as soon as the new will is signed.

ESTATES AND FINANCIAL PLANNING

Many people find that in addition to a will it is helpful to have an estate plan. Although the will is an integral part of such a plan, the estate plan itself includes much more. Your estate is the sum total of your assets and liabilities at any particular moment. Therefore, the first step in preparing an estate plan is to prepare an inventory:

Liquid Assets

- Yearly salary and other income
- Pension and retirement rights
- Social Security benefits
- Veteran's benefits
- Bank and credit union accounts
- Stocks, bonds and other securities
- Life insurance cash values

Fixed Assets

- Real estate
- Household furnishings
- Personal property

Liabilities

- Taxes: federal and state income taxes, property taxes, and others. In case of death, estate and inheritance taxes, plus all of the above if unpaid
- Long-term debts (mortgages, etc.)
- Short-term debts (charge accounts, car payments)
- Household expenses (utilities, repairs and maintenance, food)
- Educational expenses (for self and children)
- Insurance payments (life, medical, liability, accident, travel, property, personal, and household)
- Contributions to retirement (pension, Social Security, and IRAs), savings, and other investment plans
- Other contributions and gifts

- Vacations and entertainment
- Children, aged parents, and relatives
- Pets

The next step is to set short-term and long-term financial goals, taking into account such major items as college costs for children and a comfortable income level after retirement.

Then you need to determine whether, in light of your current financial situation, these goals are realistic and attainable. Develop a plan, perhaps with one or two alternatives, to achieve these goals or to approach them as closely as possible. A family dependent upon two wage earners needs to assess insurance coverage to be sure that the goals will be met even if there are drastic changes in income as the result of death or disability. In an estate where the surplus exceeds the anticipated lifetime needs of the owner, the plan can provide for orderly disposition of the excess in order to minimize the effect of estate and gift tax laws.

An estate plan can be as elaborate or simple as you wish. Computer-generated plans are often available from financial planners and advisers. Such plans can take into account a multitude of variables, from projected Social Security and pension benefits to projected increases in the costs of college education. These plans, which attempt to predict the future, are fallible. However, properly used, they can help the estate owner to get a better idea of whether financial goals are realistic and attainable and provide guidelines for achieving them.

PLANNING AHEAD WITH TRAINING COURSES

The Transition Center offers several courses that assist with knowledge in the areas of legal considerations, retirement planning and federal benefits, taxes, property management, and estate planning. They include:

- [Legal Considerations in the Foreign Service](#)
- [Personal Finance and Investment for Foreign Service Personnel](#)
- [Tax Seminar](#)
- [Managing Rental Property from Overseas](#)
- [Financial Management and Estate Planning \(RV 103\)](#)
- [Annuities, Benefits, and Social Security \(RV 104\)](#)
- [Retirement Planning Seminar \(RV 101\)](#)

For more information on these and other Transition Center courses, [visit the FSI catalog](#).



CHAPTER 30

INSURANCE



In the foreign affairs community, international moves become a way of life. As part of a transfer, you might need to ship an automobile, which other people will drive to or from a port. Moving companies will pack your belongings and arrange to either transport them to your post of assignment or to place them in storage. Your luggage will be handled by airline employees. Anywhere in the process, loss or damage can occur despite care taken in packing and shipping. Therefore, you will benefit from investigating and purchasing adequate insurance.

THE CLAIMS ACT

The U.S. Government does not insure your household effects. However, the [Military Personnel and Civilian Employees' Claims Act of 1964](#) (the Claims Act) provides some compensation – but not full coverage – for loss or damage to personal belongings. The Department of State regulation [14 FAM 640](#) (Claims for Personal Private Property Losses) implements the Claims Act.

The Claims Act provides a maximum amount of \$40,000 for a single incident, unless the claim arises from an emergency evacuation or from extraordinary circumstances, in which case the maximum amount is \$100,000. In addition, [14 FAM 640](#) offers depreciated rather than replacement value in most cases. For additional clarification, refer to the Table of Maximum Amounts Allowed ([14 FAM Exhibit 644.2A](#)). The table is not all inclusive of the items that have limits.

The Department of State strongly urges all employees to obtain private insurance for the full value of personal belongings and household effects, as stated in 14 FAM: “Employees are strongly encouraged to carry private insurance to offset damage to or loss of their personal property. The Department settles payable property claims based on the depreciated value of an item and not the replacement or repair cost of that item. For this reason, the Department strongly recommends purchasing private insurance. Employees should insure for both loss and damage of household goods and privately owned vehicles shipped and/or stored. Since many insurance policies only reimburse missing or still-wet water damaged items, employees should confirm full coverage for moving damages to include ‘breakage, rubbing and marring.’”

Some U.S. companies specialize in Foreign Service insurance. Purchase full protection that covers marine/transit losses, contingencies at your foreign post, and effects left in commercial storage warehouses. Most storage companies offer very limited liability coverage. Create a detailed inventory of items in storage and keep it with you, leaving a copy with the Department of State’s Claims Office.

HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS INSURANCE

Insurance coverage for an overseas move differs greatly from your typical stateside policy. Choose a policy specifically designed to cover the unique aspects of international assignments. Consider coverage for the following types of possessions:

- Belongings left in commercial storage
- Items shipped by sea, air and ground transportation
- Effects at your residence abroad in case of fire, theft, natural disasters, etc.
- Baggage while you travel within the United States or other countries

“All-risks” transportation coverage provides broader protection, and “replacement cost” coverage assures a non-depreciated claims settlement.

Do not rely on insurance provided by shippers and packers, since such policies may be inadequate, expensive or simply unavailable. In the event of a loss, it may be difficult to determine which party is fully responsible, resulting in the possible denial of your claim.

Again, it is advisable to complete a full inventory of effects, both transported abroad and left in U.S. commercial storage. This will allow you to file comprehensive claims with your insurance company in the event of a loss. It is also worth taking photos or a video of your items, especially those that are of higher value. Contact the Overseas Briefing Center at FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov for a sample inventory of household effects and a listing of insurance companies.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Because you ship and drive your automobile overseas, you need to understand the separate components of international automobile insurance. In most cases, you will purchase the following two distinctive areas of coverage separately.

Physical Damage

This includes collision, comprehensive, and marine transit coverage for the automobile. Collision insurance protects your vehicle when driven. Comprehensive insurance provides coverage while the vehicle is parked, including for theft, vandalism, etc.

Companies may provide both types of coverage under one policy. The Overseas Briefing Center maintains a list of U.S. companies that offer overseas automobile insurance, which is available on the OBC’s websites or by email request (FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov). Purchasing this coverage in the country where you are located may carry a substantial risk – check with your post of assignment.

Liability

Most posts require that an automobile primary (third-party) liability policy be issued in the country in which you are posted. You can buy this directly at post or through U.S. insurance agents or brokers representing overseas companies. Coverage and premiums may vary dramatically. Adequate coverage is highly recommended. If the locally-purchased primary automobile liability policy provides inadequate limits of coverage, excess liability coverage (also known as “gap insurance”) is available through U.S. companies. Many posts will not allow you to take delivery of your vehicle until local third-party liability insurance has been purchased. Check with your post’s general services office (GSO) for details.

PERSONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

Foreign Comprehensive Personal Liability

It is becoming more critical than ever to secure appropriate personal liability insurance. This type of policy covers you if you are legally obligated to pay because of bodily injury and property damage to others. This coverage typically includes defense costs and provides protection for you and family members living in the same household.

Known as foreign comprehensive personal liability coverage, it is usually available in conjunction with household effects insurance. This type of policy provides an adequate baseline of coverage when residing abroad, with levels of protection ranging between \$100,000 and \$500,000. Foreign comprehensive personal liability insurance may be purchased through U.S. insurance companies specializing in the needs of Foreign Service members.

International Umbrella

Additional liability insurance protection can be purchased in the form of international umbrella insurance, which extends both foreign comprehensive personal liability and automobile liability insurance. This coverage becomes important for families with young drivers and those who entertain frequently or own pets. Additionally, it protects you against areas that are typically not covered elsewhere, such as libel, slander, and defamation of character, among others.

STATESIDE INSURANCE WHILE ON ASSIGNMENT

When you move abroad, your U.S. insurance policies may need to be changed. For example, when renting your home to others, you must cancel your current homeowner's policy and change it to an appropriate fire dwelling policy, which should also include owners', landlords' and tenants' liability coverage. Make sure your domestic insurance agent knows about your move and is familiar with the necessary changes in coverage while you are residing abroad.

HEALTH INSURANCE

The Federal Employees Health Benefits Program helps pay for health care for you and your family. When transferring between domestic and overseas assignments, you may need to change your health and life insurance plans. Changes must be made within 31 days before leaving the old post and 60 days after arriving at a new post.

In the United States, newer options include consumer-driven plans, which provide funds spent at the members' discretion for approved health-related expenses, and high-deductible plans attached to health savings accounts.

Before going abroad, members of household and visitors should learn what medical services their health insurance will cover overseas. Although many health insurance companies will pay "customary and reasonable" hospital costs abroad, very few will pay for medical evacuation back to the United States. This can exceed \$75,000, depending on the location and medical condition.

The Social Security Medicare program does not provide coverage for hospital or medical costs outside the United States.

The Overseas Briefing Center offers a list of supplementary insurance providers (available on OBC websites or by email request from FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov). Also see [Consular Affairs Internet site](#).

FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS

While not insurance products, flexible spending accounts (FSA) can help reduce medical and child care expenses by allowing you to use pretax dollars to pay for them. A Health Care FSA pays for uncovered or unreimbursed portions of qualified medical costs, while a Dependent Care FSA may be used to pay for the care of children under age 13 or incapable of self-care while you and your spouse work, look for work, or attend school full-time. You may establish flexible spending accounts when hired or during the FEHB Open Season each fall. Benefits must be claimed by April 30th of the following year, after which time unused contributions over \$500 are lost. See [complete information online](#).

LIFE INSURANCE

The Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Program (FEGLI) provides term insurance for the employee, including accident and dismemberment coverage. The insurance builds no cash, loan or paid up or extended insurance equities, nor can it be assigned to anyone before a loss occurs. It is intended as a form of immediate protection against financial hardship or loss in the event of death. Therefore, it is not offered as a form of life insurance with cash values which might be purchased through non-government insurance agents.

The basic insurance amount equals the greater of your annual basic pay rounded up to the next \$1,000 plus \$2,000, or \$10,000. If you have Basic insurance, you have your choice of three types of optional insurance:

- Option A: standard optional insurance — \$10,000
- Option B: additional optional insurance — one, two, three, four or five times your annual basic pay after rounding up to the next \$1,000
- Option C: coverage for your spouse and eligible children comes in one, two, three, four or five multiples of coverage. Each multiple is equal to \$5,000 (\$25,000 maximum) for your spouse and \$2,500 (\$12,500 maximum) for each of your eligible dependent children.

For more information of FEGLI, visit the [OPM website](#).

FEDERAL LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE

Long-term care insurance provides services needed by people with chronic illnesses or other conditions that limit their physical or mental abilities. It covers a broad range of health and social services as well as assistance with activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, eating, and moving from place to place. Long-term care can be provided in the home, in a community setting such as an adult day care center, or in a residential facility such as a nursing home, a board and care home or an assisted living facility.

The cost of coverage will be based on the person's age on the date the application is received. There is no government contribution and employees will be responsible for the entire premium. Employees as well as their qualifying relatives (spouse, same-sex domestic partner, adult children, parents and parents-in-law) may apply.

For more information on long-term care insurance, visit the [OPM website](#).



CHAPTER 31

RESOURCES



The following resources, offices, and organizations can help you transition successfully overseas and navigate the foreign affairs lifestyle.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE - FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE RESOURCES

Foreign Service Institute (FSI)

The mission of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) is to deliver world-class diplomatic training and provide the career-long learning opportunities that U.S. government foreign affairs professionals need in order to excel in today's global arena, advance U.S. foreign policy and deliver on behalf of the American people. To fulfill these critical responsibilities, the personnel we serve require a unique combination of specialized expertise, operational skill sets, and a broad capacity for innovative and visionary leadership. FSI training and resources promote substantive, regional, and linguistic expertise, leadership finesse, personal resilience and problem-solving.

- [Course catalog](#)
- [Directions, maps, parking and other information](#)

Transition Center (TC)

The Transition Center (TC) provides security awareness and life skills training, post-specific bidding and assignments materials, resilience training, and retirement planning courses for U.S. government foreign affairs employees and family members assigned to diplomatic posts abroad. The Center's mission is to prepare the Department of State and interagency community for competence and success in U.S. foreign affairs through transition training, resources, and information, with the vision of a resilient foreign affairs community that successfully manages repeated career transitions and stands ready to execute U.S. foreign policy goals across a full career span. Values: We are people focused. We are innovators. We empower. We care.

- Phone: +1 (703) 302-7272
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)
- [TC e-News newsletter subscription](#)
- [TC publications and online resources](#)
- [E-books via OverDrive](#)

Career Transition Center (FSI/TC/CTC)

The Career Transition Center (CTC) provides training in retirement planning and job search/career transitions to Civil and Foreign Service employees of the Department of State and other federal foreign affairs agencies. The training includes three primary programs: the flagship Job Search/Transition Program; the Early/Mid-Career Retirement Planning Seminar; and the Retirement Planning Seminar. CTC also offers a distance learning webinar covering financial planning, the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), and annuity benefits.

- Phone: +1 (703) 302-7407
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Center of Excellence in Foreign Affairs Resilience (FSI/TC/CEFAR)

The Center of Excellence in Foreign Affairs Resilience (CEFAR) provides resilience education and training, including stand-alone resilience courses, high-threat assignment outbriefs, and resilience modules in over 30 existing FSI classes. CEFAR also offers the no-cost Resilience Boosting Webinar series. Additional resources include:

- Resilience consultations and customized trainings for offices and overseas posts seeking to improve resilience practices and awareness at the individual, team, and organizational level.
- Resilience support for the Department of State workforce and the wider foreign affairs community looking for ways to foster resilience as they plan for or recover from challenging events, crises, or ongoing uncertainty.
- Resilience for families through courses and consultations that address parenting strategies and the unique opportunities and challenges faced by foreign affairs youth.

- Phone: +1 (703) 746-2936
- Internet on [TC](#) and [FSI](#) webpages
- [Email](#)

High Stress Assignment Outbrief Program

- Email: FSITCOutbrief@state.gov

Overseas Briefing Center (FSI/TC/OBC)

The Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) provides U.S. government employees and their family members with extensive country research materials for an overseas or domestic assignment; logistical information for an international move; cultural adjustment resources; and customized assistance for individual and family transitions — both for moving overseas and a return to the United States. Popular resources include Post Info to Go, Personal Post Insights, Post Videos, KidVids, Ready Set Travel app, CultureGrams, logistics and lifestyles handouts, the children's guided journal with parent tips, and a protocol guide.

- Phone: +1 (703) 302-7276 / (703) 302-7277
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Training Division (FSI/TC/T), Foreign Affairs Life Skills (FALS)

Foreign Affairs Life Skills (FALS) courses help employees and their families successfully navigate the foreign affairs experience from orientation to retirement. The training continuum begins with presentations targeting those new to the foreign affairs lifestyle. Categories of training include: preparing for foreign affairs life; employment for family members; education overseas; protocol and U.S. representation; financial planning; logistics of an international move; and foreign affairs families with children. Courses combine materials and instruction for both employees and adult family members, including members of household. Some courses focus specifically on children's issues and concerns. Specialized sessions, depending on staff availability and resources, can be designed to meet agency needs.

- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Training Division (FSI/TC/T), Security

Security Awareness training seeks to raise the security awareness profile for those serving at a U.S. mission overseas by helping class participants identify risks and reduce their vulnerabilities to criminal and terrorist threats. Security seminars are designed to meet the needs of the U.S.G. employee, their adult family members and partners, private sector organizations, and study abroad administrators.

- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

OTHER DEPARTMENT OF STATE RESOURCES

Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM)

The Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM) strives to recruit, retain, and sustain a diverse, talented, and inclusive workforce that is prepared to advance U.S. national security interests and American values in every corner of the world. Under the leadership of the Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Global Talent, the Bureau of Global Talent Management leads the recruitment, assignment, and career development processes to build an engaged and effective workforce.

- [Internet](#)

Bureau of Medical Services (MED)

The mission of the Bureau of medical Services (MED) is to promote and safeguard the health and well-being of America's diplomatic community and to facilitate the diplomatic efforts of the Department of State. They manage and provide services for the Deployment Stress Management Program, Medical Clearances, the Office of Child and Family Programs (CFP), the Employee Consultation Service (ECS), and the Department's Medical Information Technology.

- Phone: +1 (202) 663-1611
- [Internet](#)
- [Travax](#) (contact the Overseas Briefing Center for login information)

Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program (MED/MHS/ADAP)

- Phone: +1 (202) 663-1904

Child and Family Program (MED/CFP)

- Phone: +1 (202) 663-1815
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Deployment Stress Management Program (MED/MHS/DSMP)

- Phone: +1 (703) 875-4828
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Employee Assistance Program (MED/ECS/EAP)

- Phone: +1 (703) 812-2257
- [Email](#)

Employee Consultation Service (MED/MHS/ECS)

- Phone: +1 (202) 663-1815
- [Email](#)

Medical Clearances (MED/Medical Clearances)

- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Mental Health Services (MED/MHS)

- Phone: +1 (202) 663-1903

Travel, Health and Immunization Clinics (MED/Travel Clinics)

- Telephone: HST +1 (202) 647-2546 | SA-1 +1 (202)663-3974 | FSI +1 (703) 302-7450
- [Email](#)

Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA)

The Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) is the public face of the Department of State for millions of people around the world. CA is responsible for the welfare and protection of U.S. citizens abroad, for the issuance of passports and other documentation to citizens and nationals, and for the protection of U.S. border security and the facilitation of legitimate travel to the United States.

- [Internet](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Road safety overseas](#)

Career Development Resource Center (CDRC)

The Career Development Resource Center (CDRC) provides comprehensive career development services to help individuals make effective career decisions. The CDRC is available to all Civil Service and Wage Grade employees at the Department of State as well as to Foreign Service family members. Experienced career counselors are available to provide individual, confidential coaching by appointment.

■ Phone: +1 (202) 663-3042

■ [Email](#)

Careers at the Department of State

Careers at the Department of State describes the career opportunities of the Department, including the various roles at a U.S. mission.

Diplomatic Pouch and Mail (A/LM/PMP/DPM)

The Diplomatic Pouch and Mail Division (A/LM/PMP/DPM) is in charge of the Diplomatic Pouch and Mail (DPM) system used by the Department of State to transport both official and unofficial parcels and letters between all Foreign Service Posts.

■ Phone: +1 (202) 663-1850

SA-32 Unclassified Pouch Facility

■ Phone: +1 (703) 302-7777

Diplomatic Security Command Center (DS/DSS/CC)

The Diplomatic Security Command Center (DS/DSS/CC) tracks and reports threats 24-hours a day and assists the Department of State, law enforcement and DS federal agents as needed. The Center, which falls under the Office of the Director of the Diplomatic Security Service, is a 24-hour call-in center.

■ Phone: +1 (571) 345-3146 / +1 (866) 217-2089

■ [Internet](#)

■ [Email](#)

Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)

- [Internet](#)

Global Community Liaison Office (GTM/GCLO)

The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) serves U.S. government direct-hire employees and their family members, from all agencies under chief of mission authority serving overseas and returning to the United States. GCLO's mission is to improve the quality of life of all demographics we serve by identifying issues and advocating for programs and solutions, providing a variety of client services, and extending services to overseas communities through the management of the worldwide Community Liaison Office (CLO) program.

- Phone: +1 (202) 647-1076

- [Internet](#)

- Emails:

- [General Information](#)
- [Community Liaison Office \(CLO\) Program](#)
- [Education and Youth](#)
- [Evacuation Support](#)
- [Expeditious Naturalization](#)
- [Family Member Employment](#)
- [Family Member Training](#)
- [Global Employment Initiative](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Support Services](#)
- [Unaccompanied Tours](#)

Office of Accessibility and Accommodations (GTM/OAA)

The Office of Accessibility and Accommodations (**OAA**) provides centralized disability services and expertise to advance the Department of State's mission worldwide. We implement effective accommodation solutions, support equal employment opportunities, and promote equal access to the physical and digital environments.

- [Email](#)

Office of Allowances (A/OPR/ALS)

The Office of Allowances (A/OPR/ALS) in the Bureau of Administration develops and coordinates policies, regulations, standards, and procedures to administer the government-wide allowances and benefits program abroad under the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR). The office compiles statistics of living costs abroad, quarters allowances, hardship differentials, and danger pay allowances and computes the established allowances to compensate U.S. government civilian employees for costs and hardships related to assignments abroad. The office is also responsible for establishing maximum per diem rates for foreign areas.

- Phone: +1 (202) 261-8700
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Office of Casualty Assistance (GTM/OCA)

The Office of Casualty Assistance (OCA) has provides administrative assistance and support to families and posts following the serious injury or death of direct-hire Department of State employees serving around the world, the serious injury or death of eligible family members (EFMs) on orders overseas, and the death of civil service employees. OCA also plays an advisory supporting role to posts following the death of a locally employed (LE) staff member or of a non-State U.S. government employee who falls under chief of mission authority.

- Phone: +1 (202) 736-4302
- [Email](#)

Office of Emergency Management (A/OEM)

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) provides planning, training, and exercises to ensure preparedness for the Department of State leadership and workforce to respond to and recover from all domestic hazards affecting the Department and to ensure the continuation of the Department's mission. OEM aspires for the Department's workforce to be prepared for responding to and recovering from any domestic incident, and for the interagency to recognize the Department as a center of excellence in emergency management and continuity planning.

- Phone: +1 (202) 647-1853
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Office of Employee Relations, Work/Life Division (GTM/ER/WLD)

The Work/Life Division (WLD) of the Office of Employee Relations serves as a link among the Department's Human Resource Specialists, managers, and employees on work/life issues. It provides up-to-date information, technical assistance, policy direction, and guidance to our employees worldwide on work/life initiatives and benefits.

- Phone: +1 (202) 261-8180
- *Five Wishes*. To obtain a copy of the “Five Wishes” document, one copy per employee, please contact GTM/ER/WLD (the Office of Employee Relations Work/Life Programs) or the Overseas Briefing Center. Additional copies can be ordered through <http://www.agingwithdignity.org>.

Office of the Legal Adviser (L)

The Office of the Legal Adviser (L) furnishes advice on all legal issues, domestic and international, arising in the course of the Department's work. This includes assisting Department principals and policy officers in formulating and implementing the foreign policies of the United States, and promoting the development of international law and its institutions as a fundamental element of those policies. The Office is organized to provide direct legal support to the Department of State's various bureaus, including both regional and geographic offices (those which focus on specific areas of the world) and functional offices (those which deal with specific subject matters such as economics and business, international environmental and scientific issues, or internal management).

- Phone: +1 (202) 647-1074 / +1 (202) 647-5036
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Office of Overseas Schools (A/OPR/OS)

The mission of the Office of Overseas Schools (A/OPR/OS) is to promote quality educational opportunities at the elementary and secondary level for dependents of U.S. citizens carrying out our programs and interests of the U.S. government abroad. The office assists U.S.-sponsored overseas schools in the operation and expansion of programs that embody the best educational practices employed in the United States and promotes a mutual understanding among peoples through education.

- Phone: +1 (202) 261-8200
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Office of Retirement (GTM/RET)

The Office of Retirement (GTM/RET) has retirement planning guides for Foreign Service and Civil Service employees that detail key retirement planning considerations, outline the retirement application process, and describe services available to retirees. Foreign Service retirement information is available on the Office of Retirement's internet site, The Retirement Network.

- Phone: +1 (202) 261-8960
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Office of Safety Health and Environmental Management (OBO/OPS/SHEM)

The Office of Safety, Health and Environmental Management (OBO/OPS/SHEM) provides the technical support needed to prevent fatalities, injuries, property damage incidents and environmental contamination. SHEM analyzes the hazards associated with post operations and develops the policies and programs to mitigate the risk. SHEM promotes safe and healthful living and working conditions at diplomatic and consular posts abroad for all employees, eligible family members and host country nationals.

- Phone: +1 (703) 875-4137
- [Email](#)

Operations Center (S/ES-O)

The Operations Center (S/ES-O) is the Secretary's and the Department's communications and crisis management center. Working 24 hours a day, the Operations Center monitors world events, prepares briefings for the Secretary and other Department principals, and facilitates communication between the Department and the rest of the world. The Operations Center also coordinates the Department's response to crises and supports task forces, monitoring groups, and other crisis-related activities.

- Phone: +1 (202) 647-1512
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Lodging Program

Sponsored by the Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM/EX), the Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Lodging Program provides temporary housing for employees traveling on PCS orders authorized and funded by GTM/EX. Lodging charges are billed directly to GTM/EX and participating

employees do not have applicable out-of-pocket expenses. Eligible employees should have training/consultations at FSI; and/or pre-departure from Washington in preparation for a new assignment; or training at FSI funded by Student Per Diem (SPD).

- [Facebook](#)

- [Email](#)

Ralph J. Bunche Library (A/GIS/IPS/LIBR)

The Ralph J. Bunche Library (A/GIS/IPS/LIBR) of the U.S. Department of State is the oldest federal government library. It was founded by the first Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson in 1789. It was dedicated to and renamed the Ralph J. Bunche Library on May 5, 1997. The Library has a large and important collection of unclassified and published information sources on foreign relations.

- Phone: +1 (202) 647-1099

- [Internet](#)

- [Email](#)

Stephen B. Low Information Center

The Stephen B. Low Information Center serves the teaching, learning, research, and information needs of Foreign Service Institute students, faculty, and staff. It provides access to high quality reference and research services, instruction in library use and information literacy, authoritative, relevant, and timely resources in print, audio, video, and digital formats, and technologies for study, research, and productivity.

- Phone: +1 (703) 302-7119

- [Email](#)

TalentCare (GTM/Talent Care)

TalentCare (GTM/Talent Care) serves as a single touchpoint for employees to access information on programs and policies that promote well-being, community, safety, and workplace flexibilities. The TalentCare Council serves as a conduit and advisory board for Department leadership and is responsible for coordinating, developing, and promoting initiatives across the Department that address our diverse employees' work and life needs.

Transportation and Travel Management Division (A/LM/OPS/TTM)

The Transportation and Travel Management Division (A/LM/OPS/TTM) provides support for the moving of people and personal possessions of employees and families to or from an overseas post or domestic post. These programs include: transportation of personal effect shipments, travel, supply shipments, and claims.

- Phone: +1 (202) 663-0891 / (202) 663-0892 / +1 (800) 424-2947
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

U.S. Embassies

U.S. Embassies is an official list of Embassies from the U.S. Department of State.

OTHER U.S. GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

Federal Voter Assistance Program (FVAP)

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) works to ensure Service members, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens are aware of their right to vote and have the tools and resources to successfully do so - from anywhere in the world.

- Phone: +1 (800) 438-8683
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – Ready.gov

Ready is a National public service campaign designed to educate and empower the American people to prepare for, respond to and mitigate emergencies, including natural and man-made disasters. The goal of the campaign is to promote preparedness through public involvement.

- Phone: +1 (800) 621- FEMA (3362)
- [Internet](#)

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

The Internal revenue Service (IRS) is organized to carry out the responsibilities of the secretary of the Treasury under section 7801 of the Internal Revenue Code. The mission of IRS is to provide America's taxpayers top quality service by helping them understand and meet their tax responsibilities and enforce the law with integrity and fairness to all.

- Phone: +1 (800) 829-1040
- [Internet](#)
- [IRS Taxpayer Assistance Centers](#)

Office of Government Ethics

The United States Office of Government Ethics (OGE) leads and oversees the executive branch ethics program which is at work every day in more than 130 agencies. The executive branch ethics program works to prevent financial conflicts of interest to help ensure government decisions are made free from personal financial bias. OGE leads and oversees the executive branch ethics program by: making and interpreting ethics laws and regulations, supporting and training executive branch ethics officials, administering the executive branch financial disclosure systems, monitoring senior leaders' compliance with ethics commitments, ensuring agencies comply with ethics program requirements, and making ethics information available to the public

- Phone: +1 (202) 482-9300 / TTY: +1 (800) 877-8339
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) serves as the chief human resources agency and personnel policy manager for the federal government. OPM provides human resources leadership and support to federal agencies and helps the federal workforce achieve their aspirations as they serve the American people. OPM directs human resources and employee management services, administers retirement benefits, manages healthcare and insurance programs, oversees merit-based and inclusive hiring into the civil service, and provides a secure employment process.

- Phone: +1 (202) 606-1800
- [Internet](#)
- [Federal Employees Group Life Insurance \(FEGLI\)](#)
- [Health Insurance](#)
- [Leave Administration, including Family and Medical Leave Act](#)
- [Long Term Care Insurance](#)

Social Security Administration

The mission of the Social Security Administration (SSA) is to administer national Social Security programs. SSA assigns Social Security numbers and administers the Social Security retirement, survivors, and disability insurance programs. SSA also administers the Supplemental Security Income program for the aged, blind, and disabled.

- Phone: +1 (800) 772-1213 / TTY: +1 (800) 325-0778
- [Internet](#)

Thrift Savings Plan

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a retirement savings and investment plan for federal employees and members of the uniformed services, including the Ready Reserve. It was established by Congress in the Federal Employees' Retirement System Act of 1986 and offers the same types of savings and tax benefits that many private corporations offer their employees under 401(k) plans.

- Phone: +1 (877) 968-3778 / TDD: +1 (877) 847-4385
- [Internet](#)

The U.S. Administration on Aging

The Administration on Aging (AOA) is the principal agency of the U.S Department of Health and Human Services designated to carry out the provisions of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (OAA), as amended (42 U.S.C.A. § 3001 et seq.). The OAA promotes the well-being of older individuals by providing services and programs designed to help them live independently in their homes and communities.

- [Internet](#)
- [AOA Eldercare Locator](#) or telephone: +1 (800) 677-1116

U.S. Financial Literacy and Education Commission

The Financial Literacy and Education Commission was established under the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003. The Commission was tasked to develop a national financial education web site (MyMoney.gov) and a national strategy on financial education. The Commission's vision is of sustained financial well-being for all individuals and families in the United States. In furtherance of this vision, the commission sets strategic direction for policy, education, practice, research, and coordination so that all Americans make informed financial decisions.

- Phone: +1 (800) FED-INFO
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

RESOURCES OUTSIDE U.S. GOVERNMENT

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)

The American Association of retired Persons (AARP) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that empowers Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age.

- Phone: +1 (888) 687-2277
- [Internet](#)

American Bar Association (ABA) Legal Services Division

The American Bar Association (ABA) Legal Services Division's mission is to support and expand access to justice for all persons through the provision of, and appropriate funding for, legal assistance, counsel, and representation in the nation's civil, criminal, and military justice systems.

- [Internet](#)

American Foreign Service Association (AFSA)

The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), established in 1924, is both professional association and exclusive representative for the U.S. Foreign Service. AFSA's members include active-duty and retired Foreign Service officers and specialists at the Department of State, as well as members of the Foreign Service from the U.S. Agency for International Development, Foreign Agricultural Service, Foreign Commercial Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and U.S. Agency for Global Media. AFSA is both the principal advocate for the long-term institutional wellbeing of the professional career Foreign Service and responsible for safeguarding the interests of AFSA members. AFSA also seeks to increase understanding among the American people about the vital role of the U.S. Foreign Service in sustaining American global leadership.

- Phone: +1 (202) 338-4045
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)
- [AFSA Tax Guide](#)

American Hospital Association (AHA) – Medical Directives

The American Hospital Association (AHA) with the cooperation of other organizations has compiled key resources to enhance educational efforts and raise awareness around advance directives.

- Phone: +1 (800) 424-4301
- [Internet](#)

Annual Credit Report.com

The official site to get your free annual credit reports. This right is guaranteed by Federal law.

- [Internet](#)

Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW)

The Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) is a non-profit organization that has been representing Foreign Service spouses, employees, and retirees since 1960. 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.

■ Phone: +1 (703) 820-5420

■ [Internet](#)

■ [Email](#)

Diplomatic and Consular Officers Retired (DACOR)

Diplomatic and Consular Officers Retired (DACOR) has been a private organization for foreign affairs professionals since 1952. DACOR fosters frank dialog about current foreign policy matters in the trusted environment of the DACOR Bacon House. Within this historic mansion, DACOR provides networking opportunities to advance the professional and social needs of members. Through a range of programs, DACOR sustains and supports community amongst those who have dedicated their lives to Foreign Service through governmental and non-governmental work, research and academia, trade and development, and communications and media.

■ Phone: +1 (202) 682-0500

■ [Internet](#)

Flexible Spending Accounts Program (FSAFEDS)

The Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS) is sponsored by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and administered by HealthEquity, Inc. A Health Care FSA (HCFSA) is a pre-tax benefit account that's used to pay for eligible medical, dental, and vision care expenses that are not covered by your health care plan or elsewhere. With an HCFSA, you use pre-tax dollars to pay for qualified out-of-pocket health care expenses.

■ Phone: 1 (877) 372-3337 (FSA-FEDS) / TTY: +1 (866) 353-8058

■ [Internet](#)

■ [Email](#)

Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF)

Established in 1989, the Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF) is the only non-profit organization dedicated exclusively to the support of children of employees of the U.S. foreign affairs agencies. Growing up in the Foreign Service can be challenging. Through publications, contests, workshops and regular family events, FSYF helps young people adapt to their changing environments during transitions between posts worldwide. FSYF helps children embrace the adventure by encouraging resilience, fostering camaraderie, and celebrating achievements.

- Phone: +1 (703) 731-2960
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

glifaa - LGBT+ in Foreign Affairs Agencies

glifaa- LGBT+ in Foreign Affairs Agencies is a Department of State and USAID employee affinity group, advancing diversity and workplace equity in U.S. foreign affairs agencies and human rights for LGBT+ people around the world. glifaa and its 120 post representatives have on the ground knowledge of the LGBT+ environment at post and can provide additional guidance.

- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Martindale Hubbell Law Directory

Martindale-Hubbell is an information services company to the legal profession that was founded in 1868. The company publishes the Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory, which provides background information on lawyers and law firms in the United States and other countries.

- [Internet](#)

National Council on Aging (NCOA)

The National Council on Aging (NCOA), founded in 1950, works to improve the lives of millions of older adults, especially those who are struggling. NCOA's goal is to impact the health and economic security of 40 million older adults by 2030, especially women, people of color, LGBTQ+, low-income, and rural individuals.

- Phone: +1 (571) 527-3900
- [Internet](#)

The Overseas Vote Foundation

The U.S. Vote Foundation provides nonpartisan voter services for U.S. citizens overseas and uniformed services members. It provides online tools to assist U.S. citizens living anywhere in the world to register to vote and request their absentee ballot using their state's specific voter forms.

- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline in partnership with more than 1,000 local sexual assault service providers across the country and operates the DoD Safe Helpline for the Department of Defense. RAINN also carries out programs to prevent sexual violence, help survivors, and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

- National Sexual Assault Hotline: +1 (800) 656-HOPE (4673)
- [Internet](#)
- [Email](#)

State Department Federal Credit Union (SDFCU)

The State Department Federal Credit Union (SDFCU) financial products include savings accounts, mortgages, credit cards, auto loans, share certificates, interest checking options, and IRAs. SDFCU also offers a wide array of services to help its members reach their financial goals such as home-buying and auto-buying resources, investment services, scholarship opportunities, and debt counseling. SDFCU is headquartered in Old Town Alexandria, VA with 6 branch locations.

- Phone: +1 (703) 706-5000 / +1 (800) 296-8882 / TTY/TTD: +1 (703) 739-3099

- [Internet](#)

- [Email](#)

WorkLife4You (WL4Y)

The Department of State's resource and referral service for employees and their family members. Contact the Overseas Briefing Center for login information.

- Phone: +1 (866) 552-4748 / TTY: +1 (800) 873-1322

- [Internet](#)

- [Email](#)



CHAPTER 32

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS



A

Bureau of Administration

A-100

The orientation program for incoming U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Officers.

AAFSW

Association of the American Foreign Service Worldwide.

ACS

American Citizen Services (in the Consular Section)

AD

Authorized Departure

Adjusted Basic Pay

The sum of an employee's rate of basic pay and any basic pay supplement, after applying any applicable pay cap.

AEFM

Appointment Eligible Family Member

AETN

American Embassy Television Network

AF

Bureau of African Affairs

AFGE

American Federation of Government Employees

AFSA

American Foreign Service Association

AL

Annual Leave

ALDAC

All Diplomatic and Consular Posts (cable delivered to all diplomatic missions and consulates)

ALS

Office of Allowances, Bureau of Administration

AMB

Ambassador; Diplomatic title and form of address for Chief of Mission

Annuitant

A person who receives an annuity which is the annual sum payable to a retired employee.

Annuity

The annual sum payable to a retired employee

APHIS

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

APO

Army Post Office

APP

American Presence Post

A/S

Assistant Secretary

ASEAN

Association of Southeast Asian Nations

ASHA

American Schools and Hospitals Abroad

AU

African Union

AVC

Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance

AWOL

Absence Without Leave

AWS

Alternative Work Schedule

BP

Bureau of Budget and Planning

Break in Service

A time when an employee is no longer on the payroll of an agency.

BWA

Bilateral Work Agreement

C

Counselor

CA

Consular Affairs

CA-AEFM

Consular Affairs-Appointment Eligible Family Member

CAA

Controlled Access Area

CAC

Compound Access Control

CAO

Cultural Affairs Officer

Career Appointment

Competitive service permanent appointment given to an employee who has completed 3 substantially continuous, creditable years of Federal service.

Career Tenure

After serving three years of substantially continuous creditable service, a career conditional employee becomes a career employee and gains career tenure.

Career-Conditional Appointment

The employment status of a permanent employee who has not completed three years of substantially continuous, creditable service.

CBP

Customs and Border Protection

CdA

Chargé d'Affaires

CDA

Office of Career Development and Assignments

CDC

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CDO

Career Development Officer

CDRC

Career Development Resource Center

CEFAR

Center of Excellence in Foreign Affairs Resilience

CFP

Office of Child and Family Program, Bureau of Medical Services

CG

Consul General; Diplomatic title and form of address for a Consular Officer

CGFS

Comptroller, Global Financial Services

Chancery

The office of an embassy or legation.

CI

Counterintelligence Division, Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Office of Investigations and Counterintelligence

Civil Service Retiree

A person retired under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS).

Classification

A hierarchical structure of jobs, usually arranged into classes or pay grades according to some form of job evaluation. Also, the term generally used to describe the U.S. federal government's job evaluation system.

Classify

The process of evaluating the duties and responsibilities of a position and assigning a title, occupation series, and grade.

CLO

Community Liaison Office

CMR

Chief of Mission Residence

CODEL

Congressional Delegation

COLA

Cost of Living Allowance

COM

Chief of Mission; Functional title of Ambassador

Commissary

A duty-free import facility affiliated with an overseas mission.

ConGen

Consular Training

Consul General

Diplomatic title and form of address (Functional title/term used to refer to second-in-command at Consulate General, Senior person at a Consulate General.)

Consulate

Building, or office occupied by a Consul

Consumables

Allowance shipment provided to personnel assigned to designated consumables posts. Consumables are considered expendable products not readily available at posts.

CONUS

Continental U.S.

Creditable Service

Federal government employment (civilian or uniformed service) that meets requirements for a particular type of appointment or benefit, such as leave accrual or reduction in force retention. For career tenure, creditable service is three years of qualifying experience.

CS

Civil Service

CSCD

Center for the Study of the Conduct of Diplomacy, Foreign Service Institute's School of Professional and Area Studies

CSRS

Civil Service Retirement System

CT

Bureau of Counterterrorism

CTC

Career Transition Center of the Foreign Service Institute's Transition Center

D

Deputy Secretary

DACOR

Diplomatic and Consular Officers Retired

DAO

Defense Attaché Office

DAS

Deputy Assistant Secretary

DATT

Defense Attaché

DCM

Deputy Chief of Mission; Diplomatic title and form of address (Functional title and term commonly used to refer to second in command at Embassy.)

DCMR

Deputy Chief of Mission Residence

DEA

Drug Enforcement Administration

Detail

A temporary assignment of an employee to a different position for a specified period, with the employee returning to his or her regular duties at the end of the detail.

DETO

Domestic Employee Teleworking Overseas

DG

Director General of the Foreign Service

DH

Direct Hire

DHS/CIS

Department of Homeland Security / Citizenship & Immigration Services

DHS/ICE

Department of Homeland Security / Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Direct Hiring Authority

OPM-approved agency recruiting plans which expedite recruitment of persons for appointment to positions in shortage occupations.

D-MR

Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources

DOD

Department of Defense

DOE

Department of Energy

DOS

U.S. Department of State

DPO

Diplomatic Post Office

DRL

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

DS

Bureau of Diplomatic Security

DSTC

Diplomatic Security Training Center

Duty Station

The city or town, county, and state in which the employee works.

DVC

Digital Video Conference

E

Undersecretary for Economic Affairs

EAC

Emergency Action Committee

EAP

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs

EAP

Emergency Action Plan

EB

Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs

ECA

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

ECON

Economic Affairs Section

ECS

Employee Consultation Service

EEO

Equal Employment Opportunity

EER

Employee Evaluation Report

Effective Date

The date on which a personnel action takes place and on which the employee's official assignment begins.

EFM

Eligible Family Member

ELO

Entry Level Officer

EMR

Embassy Mission Residence

EMU

Evaluation and Measurement Foreign Service Institute's School of Language Studies

ENR

Bureau of Energy Resources

Envoy

A diplomatic agent. A special envoy is designated for a particular purpose.

EOD

Entry on Duty

eOPF

Electronic Official Personnel Folder

EPAP

Expanded Professional Associates Program

ESC

Employee Services Center

ETA

Estimated Time of Arrival

EU

European Union

EUR

Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

EX

Executive Office

Excepted Position

The position that has been removed from the competitive service and, therefore, may be filled without regard to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) competitive examining procedures.

Excepted Service

Unclassified service, unclassified civil service, or positions outside the competitive service and the senior executive service. Excepted service positions have been excepted from the requirements of the competitive service by law, executive order, or OPM regulation. (5 U.S.C. 2103 and 5 CFR part 213)

F

Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance

FACT

Foreign Affairs Counter Threat training

FAM

Foreign Affairs Manual

FAMER

Family Member Employment Report

FARA

Foreign Affairs Recreation Association

FAS

Foreign Agricultural Service

FAST

First and Second Tour Officer

FCS

Foreign Commercial Service

FEGLI

Federal Employee's Group Life Insurance

FEHBP

Federal Employee's Health Benefits Program

FEMA

Federal Emergency Management Agency

FERS

Federal Employee Retirement System

FLO

Family Liaison Office

FM

Facilities Manager

FMA

Family Member Appointment

FMO

Financial Management Officer

FMS

Office of Facilities Management Services

FOIA

Freedom of Information Act

FPO

Fleet Post Office

Frozen Service

The total number of years and months of civilian and military service that is creditable in a Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) component of a Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) employee.

FSAN

Foreign Service Assignment Notebook published by the Transition Center

FSFRC

Foreign Service Family Reserve Corps

FSHP

Foreign Service Health Practitioner

FSI

Foreign Service Institute

FSN

Foreign Service National (now known as LES)

FSO

Foreign Service Officer

FSPS

Foreign Service Pension System

FSRDS

Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System

FSS

Foreign Service Specialist

FSYF

Foreign Service Youth Foundation

FTE

Full Time Equivalent

FY

Fiscal Year

GEA

Global Employment Advisor

GEI

Global Employment Initiative

glifaa- LGBT+ Pride in Foreign Affairs Agencies

State Department and USAID employee affinity group advancing diversity and workplace equity in U.S. foreign affairs agencies and human rights for LGBT people around the world.

Go bag

A bag that contains health and travel documents, clothes, electronic devices, and other essential items in case of evacuation from post.

GPA

Bureau of Global Public Affairs

Grade

A level of work or range of difficulty, responsibility, and qualification requirements.

Great Seal

The Great Seal is a principal national symbol of the United States. The phrase is used both for the physical seal itself, which is kept by the United States Secretary of State, and more generally for the design impressed upon it.

GS

General Schedule pay scale

GSO

General Services Officer

GTM

Global Talent Management

H

Bureau of Legislative Affairs

Hatch Act

The Hatch Act of 1939 is a U.S. federal law whose main provision prohibits employees in the executive branch of the federal government, except the president, vice president, and certain designated high-level officials, from engaging in certain forms of political activity.

HDS

Historically Difficult to Staff posts

HHE

Household Effects

HHS

Department of Health and Human Services

High Side

The Department of State name for its worldwide National Security Information (Classified information) computer network. Can be used interchangeably with ClassNet.

HR

Human Resources (the Department of State's Human Resources bureau is now called "Global Talent Management" (GTM))

HRO

Human Resources Officer

HST

Harry S Truman (name for the Harry S Truman building that houses the U.S. Department of State; also known as Main State)

HTF

Hard to Fill positions/posts

HU

Health Unit

IA

Interaction that occurs between or involves two or more agencies, such as interagency communication an interagency task force.

IAHB

Interagency Housing Board

IC

Intelligence Community

ICASS

International Cooperative Administration Support Services

ICE

Immigration and Customs Enforcement

IG

Inspector General

IIP

International Information Programs

IMO

Information Management Officer

IMS

Information Management Specialist

INC

Information Network Center

INL

International Narcotics Liaison

INL

Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

INR

Intelligence and Research

INWS

Intermittent No Work Scheduled

IO

Bureau of International Organization Affairs

IPC

Information Programs Center

IPO

Information Programs Officer

IPS

Information Programs Supervisor

IRF

Office of International Religious Freedom

IRM

Information Resource Management

IRO

Information Resource Officer

ISC

Information Systems Center

ISN

Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation

ISO

Information Systems Officer (ISC)

ISSO

Information Systems Security Officer

IV

Immigrant Visa

IVG

International Voice Gateway

IVLP

International Visitor Leadership Program

J

Undersecretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights

J/GCJ

Office of Global Criminal Justice, within the Office of the Undersecretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights

JSP

Job Search Program

J/TIP

Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, within the Office of the Undersecretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights

L

Office of the Legal Advisor

Language Testing Unit

One of five functional divisions in the Foreign Service Institute's School of Language Studies. The Language Testing Unit (LTU) administers the language proficiency testing program, providing test administration oversight, testing records maintenance, and quality control.

Language Training Supervisors

At the Foreign Service Institute's School of Language Studies. Language Training Supervisors oversee training specialists, instructors, and students. The LTS is the immediate supervisor for students enrolled in the language school.

Layette shipments

A separate air freight allowance for items related to the direct care and feeding of an infant or child (less than 5 years of age) of an employee assigned to a post where suitable layettes are unavailable. Post of assignment determines items that are not available and confirms this information via cable to Office of Career Development and Assignments (HR/CDA).

LCI

Language and Culture Instructors, Foreign Service Institute's School of Language Studies

LDP

Language Designated Position

Leave Without Pay

A temporary nonpay status and nonduty status (or absence from a prescheduled tour of duty) granted at the employee's request.

Leave With Pay

An absence from duty with pay (in sick leave status) granted at the employee's request following the approval of a disability retirement application, or after application for optional retirement due to disability.

LEGATT

Legal Attaché

LES

Locally Employed Staff (formally known as FSN)

LMS

Leadership and Management School, Foreign Service Institute

Locality Pay

Localized pay rate for the federal workforce.

LQA

Living Quarters Allowance

LWOP

Leave Without Pay

M

Under Secretary for Management

Main State

The Harry S Truman Building, also known as Main State and HST, is the current headquarters for the U.S. Department of State.

MED

Bureau of Medical Services

Memo

Memorandum

MFA

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MGT

Management Office

MilAd

Military Advisor

Minimum Qualifications

Qualifications that an applicant must possess, at a minimum, to be eligible for hire or promotion under the competitive system.

Mission

A general term for a commission, delegation, embassy, or legation.

MLAT

Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty

MO

Management Officer

MOA

Memorandum of Agreement

M/OFM

Office of Foreign Missions

MOH

Member of Household

MOU

Memorandum of Understanding

MSG

Marine Security Guard Detachment

M/SS

Office of Management Strategy and Solutions

NATO

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NCE

Non-Competitive Eligibility

NCR

National Capital Region

NCTC

National Counterterrorism Center

NEA

Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs

NEC

National Economic Council

NFATC

National Foreign Affairs Training Center

NIC

National Intelligence Council

NIV

Non-Immigrant Visa

NSA

National Security Agency

NSC

National Security Council

OAS

Organization of American States

OBC

Overseas Briefing Center

OBO

Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations

OCA

Office of Casualty Assistance

OCE

Office of the Chief Economist

OECD

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OES

Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, often referred to as “Oceans, Environment, and Science” (OES)

OFAC

Office of Foreign Assets Control (Department of the Treasury)

OFDA

Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID)

OH

Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute

OIG

Office of Inspector General

OMB

Office of Management and Budget

OMIS

Office of Management Information Services, FSI

OMS

Office Management Specialist

OPM

Office of Personnel Management

Ops Center

Operations Center

ORE

Official Residence Expenses

OS

Office of Overseas Schools

OSCE

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

OSHP

Overseas Seasonal Hiring Program

P

Under Secretary for Political Affairs

PA

Public Affairs

PAO

Public Affairs Officer

PAR

Performance Appraisal Report

PAS

Public Affairs Section

PD

Public Diplomacy

PDAA

Public Diplomacy Alumni Association

PDAS

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary

PDF

Professional Development Fellowship

PII

Personally Identifiable Information

PITG

Post Info to Go through the Overseas Briefing Center

Plus One

An extra person that is allowed to attend an event or other meeting.

PM

Bureau of Political-Military Affairs

PMF

Presidential Management Fellow

PMO

Post Management Officer

PMO

Property Management Officer

PNG

Persona Non Grata

PO

Principal Officer

POI

Personnel Office Identifier

POL

Political Section

POLAD

Political Advisor

POL/MIL

Political/Military Section

POSHO

Post Occupational Safety and Health Officer

Post One

The bulletproof room in which the Marine Security Guards reside and control access to remote areas of a mission overseas.

POTUS

President of the United States

POV

Privately Owned Vehicle

PPD

Policy and Planning Division

PPD

Presidential Policy Directive

PPI

Personal Post Insights

PRM

Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration

Protocol

A term applied to diplomatic formalities (official ceremonies, precedence, immunities, privileges, courtesies, etc.).

PSA

Personal Services Agreement

PSC

Personal Services Contractor

PSP

Priority Staffing Posts

QDDR

Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review

QSI

Quality Step Increase

R

Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

R&R

Rest and Recuperation

REA

Reemployed Annuitant

Register (Civil Service)

A list of qualified applicants compiled in order of relative standing for certification.

Register (Foreign Service)

Prospective Foreign Service employees are ranked on the Register based on the specific career track they applied for at the time they applied for their generalist position, plus any additional credit for language ability or veterans' preference.

REO

Regional Education Officer

REP

Representational

RET

Office of Retirement

RIF

Reduction In Force

RMO

Regional Medical Officer

RMO/P

Regional Medical Officer/Psychiatrist

RSO

Regional Security Officer

S

Office of the Secretary of State

SA

State Annex

SAIT

School of Applied Information Technology, Foreign Service Institute

SBU

Sensitive But Unclassified

SCA

Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs

SCIF

Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (classified conference room)

S/CPR

Office of the Chief of Protocol

SEA

Subsistence Expense Allowance

S/ES

Executive Secretariat

SES

Senior Executive Service

S/ES-O

Operations Center

S/ES-S

Executive Secretariat Staff

SF 50

Standard Form 50: Notification of Personnel Action

SF 52

Standard Form 52: Request for Personnel Action

S/GAC

Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator & Health Diplomacy

S/GWI

Office of Global Women's Issues

SIP

Special Incentive Post

SIPR

Secure Internet Protocol Router

SLS

School of Language Studies, Foreign Service Institute

SMA

Separate Maintenance Allowance

Smith-Mundt Act

Also known as the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948. Smith-Mundt act specifies the terms in which the U.S. government can engage in public diplomacy. It institutionalized the Voice of America and created additional exchange programs beyond the original Fulbright programs.

SND

Service Needs Differential

SNEA

Special Needs Education Allowance

SOS

Security Overseas Seminar

S/P

Policy Planning Staff

SPAS

School of Professional and Area Studies, Foreign Service Institute

SPOX

Department of State Spokesperson

STAFFDEL

Congressional staff delegation

STAS

Office of the Science and Technology Advisor to the Secretary

Step

The step of the pay plan under which an employee is paid. For example, step 2 of GS 7; step 1 of WG 5.

T

Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Affairs

T&A

Time & Attendance

TalentMAP

A bidding tool for overseas and domestic assignments.

TC

Transition Center, Foreign Service Institute

TDY

Temporary duty

TEMP

Temporary Appointment

TIG

Time In Grade

TIP

Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

TM

Travel Message (a series of electronic messages between Washington and overseas posts for tracking the assignment, employee information, post information, and arrival and departure of employees during transition to and from posts worldwide)

TMEIGHT

Travel Message Eight (cable notification confirming employee arrival at post)

TMFOUR

Travel Message Four (personnel action and travel authorization for Foreign Service appointment, PCS, home leave/return to post, and separation)

TMONE

Travel Message One (assignment notification by GTM/EX)

TMTHREE

Travel Message Three (an employee's welcome to post message sent by GTM/EX and providing information regarding the employee's assigned post)

TMTWO

Travel message two (an employee's requested travel itinerary and allowances for permanent change of station travel)

TOD

Tour of Duty (Civil Service or Foreign Service)

TS

Top Secret

TS

Training Specialists

TSP

Thrift Savings Plan

TTM

Travel and Transportation Management Office

UAB

Unaccompanied Air Baggage

UN

United Nations

UNAIDS

Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNCHR

Office of the UN High Commission for Refugees

UNDP

UN Development Program

UNESCO

UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UNGA

UN General Assembly

UNICEF

UN International Children's Emergency Fund

UNODC

UN Office on Drugs and Crime

UNOPS

UN Office for Project Services

UNSC

United Nations Security Council

UNSCR

UN Security Council Resolution

U/S

Under Secretary of State

USA

U.S. Army

USAF

U.S. Air Force

USAID

United States Agency for International Development

USASEAN

U.S. Mission to ASEAN

USAU

U.S. Mission to the African Union

USCG

U.S. Coast Guard

USCIS

U.S. Citizen and Immigration Service

USDA

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDH

U.S. Direct Hire

USDOC

U.S. Department of Commerce

USDOJ

U.S. Department of Justice

USDOS

U.S. Department of State

USEU

U.S. Mission to the EU

USG

United States Government

USIC

United States Intelligence Community

USIP

United States Institute of Peace

USMC

United States Marine Corps

USN

United States Navy

USNATO

U.S. Mission to NATO

USOAS

U.S. Mission to the OAS

USOECD

U.S. Mission to OECD

USOSCE

U.S. Mission to OSCE

USUN

U.S. Mission to the UN

UT

Unaccompanied Tour

Veteran's Preference

An employee's category of entitlement to preference in the Federal service based on active military service that terminated honorably.

WAE

When Actually Employed

Welcome Kit

Typically provided by a mission overseas to new personnel from the date of arrival until they receive their Unaccompanied Air Baggage (UAB). The Welcome Kit may contain kitchenware, dishes, cutlery, glassware, linens, and other useful items.

WG

Wage Grade

WHA

Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

WHO

World Health Organization

SECTION 6 SECTION 6

ADDENDUM



ADDENDUM

RECOMMENDED READING, VIDEO, AND AUDIO



DEPARTMENT OF STATE - FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

Transition Center (TC) Online Publications

- *The Amazing Adventures of (Me): A Guided Journal to My International Move + Parent's Companion* guide, 2020.
- *So You're an American: A Guide to Answering Difficult Questions Abroad*, 2017.
- *ZINE - Transitions*

Transition Center (TC) Online Book Collection

The Transition Center (TC) online [book collection](#) is part of the Foreign Service Institute's Stephen Low Information Center. These e-books and audiobooks are available through OverDrive. Users can access them on their personal computer and mobile devices via the OverDrive app by signing up with their Department of State email address. The collection expands on a variety of essential aspects of life in the Foreign Service such as cross-cultural considerations, third-culture children, maximizing expat experiences, successful communication, building resilience, and guidance through career transition and retirement.

Resilience Materials Recommended by the Center Of Excellence in Foreign Affairs Resilience (CEFAR)

Videos/Audios

- *From Stress to Resilience*. Dr. Raphael Rose, NASA psychologist
- *Human Resilience in the Face of Loss and Trauma*. Dr. George Bonanno
- *Inside Resilient Children*. Dr. Ann Masten, Professor at the University of Minnesota
- *Measuring Human Resilience*. Dr. George Bonanno
- *Psychological First Aid for Leaders*

- *The Three Secrets of Resilient People*. Dr. Lucy Hone, Director of the New Zealand Institute of Wellbeing & Research

Articles

- *Building Resilience*. Seligman, Martin E.P. Harvard Business Review, April 2011.
- *How People Learn to Become Resilient*. Konnikova, Maria. The New Yorker, February 11, 2016.
- *Resilience is About How Your Recharge, Not How You Endure*. Achor, Shawn and Gielan, Michelle. Harvard Business Review, June 24, 2016.
- *The Clocklike Regularity of Major Life Changes*. Brooks, Arthur C. The Atlantic, September 2020.
- *The 4 Things Resilient Teams Do*. Kirkman, Bradley, Stoverink, Adam C., Mistry, Sal & Rosen, Benson. Harvard Business Review, July 19, 2019.
- *The Three Equations for a Happy Life, Even During a Pandemic*. Brooks, Arthur C. The Atlantic, April 2020.
- *Two Errors Our Minds Make When Trying to Grasp the Pandemic*. Brooks, Arthur C. The Atlantic, April 2020.

Books

- *Man's Search for Meaning*. Frankl, Viktor E. (Author), Winslade, William J. (Afterword) & Kushner, Harold S. (Foreword). Beacon Press; 1st edition, 2006.
- *Ordinary Magic: Resilience in Development*. Masten, Ann S., The Guilford Press; Reprint edition, 2015.
- *Resilience: The Science of Mastering Life's Greatest Challenges*. Southwick, Steven M., Cambridge University Press; 2nd edition, 2018.
- *Resilient Organizations: How to Survive, Thrive and Create Opportunities Through Crisis and Change*. Seville, Erica. Kogan Page; 1st Edition, 2016.
- *The Art of Living: The Classic Manual on Virtue, Happiness, and Effectiveness*. Epictetus and Lebell, Sharon. Harper One, 2007.
- *The Other Side of Sadness: What the New Science of Bereavement Tells Us About Life After Loss*. Bonanno, George. Basic Books; Illustrated edition, 2010.
- *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*. Sapolsky, Robert. Holt Paperbacks; 3rd edition, 2004.

Self-Help Books

- *Mind Over Mood, Second Edition: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think*. Greenberger, Dennis & Padesky, Christine A. The Guilford Press; Second edition, 2015.
- *One Small Step: Moving Beyond Trauma and Therapy to a Life of Joy*. Dolan, Yvonne M. iUniverse, 2000.

- *The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook: A Proven Way to Accept Yourself, Build Inner Strength, and Thrive*. Neff, Kristin. The Guilford Press; Illustrated edition, 2018.

Websites

- *Center on the Developing Child* - Harvard University
- *Child Development* - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- *Child Mind Institute*
- *Child Study Center* - Yale School of Medicine
- *Grater Good Magazine* - Parenting & Family Section
- *Psychology Today* - Parenting Section
- *Resilience in Positive Psychology*
- *The Road to Resilience* - American Psychological Association
- *Zero to Three*

Additional Resilience Reading

- *Brain Rules (Updated and Expanded): 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School*. Medina, John. Pear Press; Second edition, 2014.
- *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*. Seligman, Martin. Atria Books; 1st edition, 2012.
- *Promoting Resilience: Department Programs Help FS Staff Bounce Back*. Leki, Ray. *State Magazine*, May 2013 (pages 10-11).
- *Resilience*. Southwick, Steven M. Cambridge University Press; 2nd edition, 2018.
- *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Van Der Kolk, Bessel. Penguin Publishing Group; Reprint edition, 2015.

OTHER DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO)

- *Community Liaison Office*
- *Crisis Management – Foreign Service Evacuations, Personal Preparation, Health and Safety*
- *Education and Youth*
- *Family Member Appointment*
- *Foreign Service Life*
- *GCLO Facebook Page*
- *GCLO Global Podcasts*
- *GCLO Weekly Newsletter*
- *Naturalization of Foreign-Born Spouses*
- *Reports/Documents*

- *Bouncing Back - Transition and Re-entry Planning for the Parents of Foreign Service Youth*
- *Decision Tree: A Guide to Help You Decide Where to Live During an Unaccompanied Tour*
- *Divorce and the Foreign Service*

- *The Network* (email subscription service for Foreign Service family members seeking employment in the Washington, DC area)
- *Unaccompanied Tours*

Office of Overseas Schools (OS)

- *Resources*

OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS

Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW)

- *Articles*
- *Books*
- *Livelines Group*
- *Social Media*
- *Foreign Service Hub*
- *Global Link Newsletter*

American Foreign Service Association (AFSA)

- *The Foreign Service Journal*
- *AFSA News*
- *Foreign Service Books*
- *Other Publications*
- *Resources*

Families in Global Transition (FIGT)

- *Resources*

Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF)

- *Books for Younger Children*
- *FSYF Facebook Page*
- *Newsletters*
- *Publications*

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