



Frequently Asked Questions

Medical Clearance

What is involved in the medical clearance process?

The requirement for pre-employment in the Foreign Service is that the applicant must be medically cleared for "worldwide assignment." Family members, however, must be medically cleared before traveling overseas to accompany an employee on assignment at U.S. Government expense. These medical fitness standards are more rigorous than those of most other professions as some overseas posts may be remote, unhealthy, or have limited medical support.

I'm a breast cancer survivor. It has been 10 years since I've shown any evidence of cancer in my regular screenings. Can I be cleared for appointment?

A full medical report from the oncologist is required to establish the type of follow-up that is needed. If, after 10 years, you are taking no medication for the breast cancer and your only follow-up care is an annual mammogram, there is a good possibility that your condition would not limit your medical clearance.

My ten-year old child is in a special education program and will need to continue to receive special education assistance for the foreseeable future. What are the implications for her medical clearance?

For any child who has special education needs, the Individual Education Program must be forwarded to Medical Clearances for further evaluation through MED's Mental Health Services. Because of the special education needs, your child is likely not worldwide available and would have the limited, Class 2, medical clearance. This means that approval of an overseas post from Medical Clearances will be necessary prior to your child's inclusion on your travel orders.

I have lived with Type I diabetes since I was a child. It is managed and I am completely capable of giving myself the necessary injections. Is this a limitation to a full medical clearance?

The standard for diabetes control is based on frequent blood glucose monitoring, testing for hemoglobin A1C every 4-6 months, and having access to emergency services in the event of a diabetic crisis, as well as routine monitoring by specialists as required. Due to conditions at some posts, one may encounter profuse sweating, diarrhea and vomiting, or other unforeseen chemical changes that may affect blood sugar levels very quickly and require the need for emergency care. The specific type of insulin you need may not be available in many locations worldwide and it may not be possible to ship you insulin at such locations. Given this range of considerations for the treatment and control of your diabetes, it is unlikely that you would be issued an unlimited medical clearance.

I'm 39 years old. I had a mild heart attack three years ago and was hospitalized briefly. I've had no further cardiac events and my doctor monitors me regularly. I am otherwise in good health. Does this history pose a clearance problem?

We would carefully evaluate the type of monitoring you require. Because your doctor monitors you regularly, it is likely that you would not be worldwide available. There are numerous Department of State posts where no cardiologist, indeed no physician at all, would be available to care for you.

If I am cleared medically for any post in the world but one of my family members is not, won't the Department of State simply assign me to one of those places where all my family members can accompany me?

If you accept employment as being cleared for worldwide assignment means that the Department may send you to any assignment in the world without regard to the ability of your family members to accompany you. Although in many cases it may be possible to locate an assignment where all family members can accompany you, there is no guarantee of this and, if the medical clearance for your family members does not change, the same problem will repeat itself with each assignment throughout a career. Accepting an appointment in the Foreign Service when one has family members with medical or learning disability problems that preclude them from receiving a Class One medical clearance is accepting the possibility of unaccompanied assignments. All prospective employees and their family members should understand that principle before pursuing a career in the Foreign Service.