



United States Department of State

# Foreign Service Career Candidate Guide

October 2023

*(The Career Candidate Guide is updated as frequently as possible, but policy changes may occur at any time. Information in the Guide is therefore subject to change. Please check frequently to ensure you are using the most recent version and seek the latest guidance from the relevant offices as needed.)*

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## SECTION ONE – Conditional Offer of Employment

### *Pre-Employment Information for Foreign Service Career Candidates*

**Congratulations!** You have successfully completed the Assessment phase of the Foreign Service selection process and been extended a **conditional offer of employment**. As you have received a conditional offer of employment you should be aware that Federal drug-free workplace regulations apply to you and your conduct will be held to a very high standard. All Foreign Service candidates must receive security and suitability clearances and meet the minimum medical qualification standard as conditions of employment with the Department of State to receive a **confirmed offer of employment**. Candidates applying for positions with a physical requirement (such as Facility Manager, Construction Engineer, Information Management and Technical Specialists) must certify they meet the requirements with or without reasonable accommodation. Diplomatic Security Special Agent candidates must also take and pass a pre-employment physical readiness test before a confirmed offer of employment can be made. Confirmed offers of employment to join the Foreign Service are extended based on the Department of State's resources and the hiring needs of the Foreign Service. While the clearance and minimum medical qualification process is often completed in less than a year, it can take longer in some cases. Your active engagement and responsiveness to information requests can help the process move as quickly as possible. Inquiries regarding the minimum medical qualification standard and security clearance should be addressed to the Bureau of Medical Services ([medcaremanagement@state.gov](mailto:medcaremanagement@state.gov)) or the Bureau of Diplomatic Security ([securityclearance@state.gov](mailto:securityclearance@state.gov)), respectively.

This Foreign Service Career Candidate Guide will provide you and your family with important information to complete the next steps in your candidacy and your entrance into the Foreign Service. You will need to act on several items with tight deadlines, especially regarding the security clearance process, so please pay close attention to what follows.

At this stage, you understand that a career in the Foreign Service, perhaps more than any other career, requires flexibility and adaptability. A Foreign Service employee changes posts every few years, and each new post may require learning a new language, assuming new job responsibilities, adapting to a new culture, and developing new relationships.

You signed a Conditions of Employment document stating that you understand and accept the following three conditions of employment:

1. **Flexibility:** During their careers, Foreign Service employees must be willing to serve in out-of-cone or out-of-specialty assignments, hardship posts, and unaccompanied posts, as the needs of the Service demand.
2. **Public Support for U.S. policy:** Foreign Service employees must publicly support and defend United States foreign policy.

3. **Acceptance of assignments based upon the needs of the Foreign Service:** Foreign Service employees must accept assignments anywhere in the world, including overseas or domestic assignments, based on the needs of the Foreign Service.

If you are a Diplomatic Security Special Agent candidate, you signed a Conditions of Employment document stating that you also understand and accept the fourth condition of employment:

4. **Firearms:** Willing to carry and use firearms, if necessary, in the performance of duties throughout their career.

As you undertake the final clearances required for employment, you should carefully consider the implications of these Conditions of Employment in your decision-making processes.

*Remember, the following requirement still apply to Foreign Service Generalists and Specialists, even if you have passed the Assessment:*

- *Twenty-one (21) years old and not yet 60 on the day you are appointed as a Foreign Service Officer or Specialist, unless you can claim veteran's preference \**

*\*Diplomatic Security Services Special Agents must be at least 20 years old and not older than 36 years, unless claiming veteran's preference.*

Assignments based on Service Need: During your career as a Foreign Service employee, you will serve several tours in hardship posts as many Foreign Service posts are in developing countries. While the Department attempts to work with each employee's individual and family needs, all employees – from day one and throughout their careers – must be willing to serve anywhere the Department determines is necessary. This can mean isolated, potentially unhealthy, dangerous, or unfriendly environments, or places where you might not have training in the local language. This also can mean family separations for a variety of reasons, most likely at the beginning but also throughout the course of your career.

For example, employees may be assigned to posts where an eligible family member (EFM) is not medically cleared to accompany them to that post. At other times security conditions can be a driving factor, or the limited availability of adequate schooling to meet your children's needs. Tandem employees (two legally married Foreign Service employees from one of the five Foreign Service agencies -- State, USAID, Commerce, Agriculture, and the U.S. Agency for Global Media) also often face separations for a variety of reasons.

While the Department does its best to meet the needs of families, there are no guarantees that employees will always be able to be accompanied by their families, or that members of a tandem will be able to serve together. **Individuals who are only willing to serve at particular**

posts or regions of the world, or who only are willing to serve where they can be accompanied by their families should not seek to enter the Foreign Service.

**BEFORE YOU MAKE YOUR FINAL DECISION TO ACCEPT A CONFIRMED OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT TO JOIN A FOREIGN SERVICE CLASS:**

- Please carefully read about the Directed Assignment Process for New Employees in **Section 2 of this Career Candidate Guide**. It is critical that you understand that your first two assignments will be directed based on the needs of the Foreign Service and career development. Directed assignments cannot be appealed.
- If you are – or plan to become – a tandem employee (two legally married Foreign Service employees from one of the five Foreign Service agencies, State, USAID, Commerce, Agriculture, and the U.S. Agency for Global Media), please read Guidance for Tandems in **Section 2**. It is important that you understand that the Department cannot guarantee that tandems will be assigned together.

Support for U.S. Policy: You should also remember that Foreign Service employees serve as representatives of the United States government and its foreign policy abroad. Although you may not have substantial exposure to foreign policy formulation during your initial assignments, you are nevertheless expected to support and articulate U.S. policy as defined by the President and Secretary of State throughout your career, even when it conflicts with your personal views.

***The next several pages contain important information  
for your immediate attention!  
Please note: All information in this Guide applies to  
both Foreign Service Officers and Specialists, unless  
specifically noted otherwise.***

## Updating Personal Information

The Registrar's Office, which manages the list of eligible candidates and sends invitations to candidates for entry into service, must have your current contact information, particularly your email address and telephone numbers. Confirmed offers of employment to candidates are often made on short notice. In addition, if you are offered a position, the Onboarding Team of the Registrar's Office needs accurate and up-to-date employment and education information to determine your entry-level grade and salary.

Please inform the Registrar's Office immediately in writing if there are any changes in your:

- Permanent or current mailing address;
- Cell or home telephone numbers;
- Email address (We strongly recommend providing a personal email address, even if you have a State.gov email address. Candidates may leave schools or jobs during the application process, losing access to the email addresses associated with those institutions;
- Marital or family status (marriage, divorce, birth of a child, etc.);
- Employment or military status;
- Medical situation; or
- International travel plans

For international travel plans, please contact Diplomatic Security ([securityclearance@state.gov](mailto:securityclearance@state.gov)) and copy the Registrar's Office ([registrar@state.gov](mailto:registrar@state.gov))

You can reach the Registrar's Office at [Registrar@state.gov](mailto:Registrar@state.gov).

## Tips for New Employees from Veterans of the Process

- Keep all official personnel papers, letters, memos, authorizations, travel orders, amendments to orders, etc., in one central, accessible location. You never know when you will need them.
- Keep a record of all communications with the Department related to your entrance on duty and assignments (e-mails, etc.).
- Keep all originals and surrender only photocopies whenever possible.
- Consider scanning important documents and inventories (including photos) of your personal belongings and saving them on your personal computer and/or a USB drive so you have electronic copies as well. Consider leaving copies in a safe but accessible place or with family.
- Copy everything – it's better to make too many copies than too few.

- Save an electronic copy of the Career Candidate Guide and print out the Career Candidate Checklist (found at the end of this document) and refer to it during the hiring and training process.

***NOTE: The Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and the Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH) referred to later in this document encompass the statutory and regulatory guidelines for the conduct of foreign affairs, to include personnel and assignments policies.***



## Security Clearance, the Minimum Medical Qualification Standard, and the Suitability Clearance

As noted in the information sent with your assessment results, a confirmed offer of employment depends upon the Department's budget and hiring needs, and cannot be made before you complete your security and suitability clearances and meet the minimum medical qualification standard. These three conditions can take several months or more to complete so it is imperative that you begin the process as soon as possible to meet mandatory deadlines.

### Security Clearance

To begin the security clearance process, you will receive an e-mail from your clearance coordinator at Diplomatic Security. The clearance coordinator works within the Office of Personnel Security and Suitability (DS/SI/PSS) and is responsible for helping you initiate and complete the security documentation required to apply for a security clearance. They will walk you through the process, answer any questions you may have, and provide expert guidance regarding security clearances.

The initiating component of the security clearance process is completing the online version of Standard Form 86 (SF-86), Questionnaire for National Security Positions (or e-QIP). After you pass the Assessment, the Board of Examiners (BEX) will notify DS/SI/PSS to initiate the security clearance process. If you do not receive an email from the Clearance Coordinator team within fourteen days, you may send a query to [BEXFSOAeqipquestions@state.gov](mailto:BEXFSOAeqipquestions@state.gov).

***NOTE: Once your clearance coordinator initiates your Standard Form (SF-86) and provides login information, you must complete and submit the form and all accompanying documents within five business days. If you are unable to complete the form within five business days, please reach out to your clearance coordinator.***

If you already have an active Top Secret (TS) security clearance, either from the State Department or another federal agency, you may qualify for reciprocity. The existing TS eligibility must be based on an appropriate background investigation completed by the Department of State or another U.S. government agency no more than three years prior to the date of your Assessment. Your clearance coordinator will determine possible eligibility for reciprocity and contact you via e-mail for associated documents as required. If you do not receive an email from the Clearance Coordinator team within fourteen days, you may send a query to [BEXFSOAeqipquestions@state.gov](mailto:BEXFSOAeqipquestions@state.gov).

## **USEFUL TIP**

While waiting for the link to the eQIP (or SF-86), gather information and documents you may need to fill out the form, such as:

- Passports (current and former); review your travel over the last seven years and recall the purpose of the trip (e.g., for business; attending a conference or trade show, tourism, etc.)
- Addresses for the places you've lived for the past ten years; note people who knew you during that period and how to reach them
- Information on prior employment for the past ten years, including supervisors and colleagues and contact information for them
- Full names, dates of birth, and addresses for family members
- Names, dates of birth, and contact information for three people who have known you for a combined period of seven years
- Names, dates of birth (ideally) and contact/employment information for foreign nationals with whom you have had close and/or continuing contact over the past seven years (e.g., friends, family, coworkers/colleagues, etc.); you will need to include foreign contacts for your spouse/significant other as well.

Please advise a clearance coordinator if you are undergoing (or recently underwent) a background investigation by another federal agency. You may do this via e-mail at [ClearanceCoordinator@state.gov](mailto:ClearanceCoordinator@state.gov). If you are currently in the investigative process with another agency, it could delay your candidacy as you may only have one investigation in process for federal employment at a time.

When filling out all security clearance related documents, ensure that you are completely honest and forthright on all questions. If necessary, provide any clarification or explanation for how you answered a particular question in the comments or continuation section. Provide as much information as you are able where clarification is needed. Misrepresentation or dishonesty at any step in the hiring process may lead to an unfavorable determination during the security clearance or suitability review process.

***Please note that when candidates have a foreign-born spouse or are cohabiting with a foreign national, the spouse or individual will be required to complete the SF-85P Questionnaire for Public Trust Positions & SF 85-P-S Supplemental via e-QIP. Your clearance coordinator will provide further instructions.***

It is extremely important that you complete the background investigation questionnaire and any additional forms accurately. Respond promptly to all correspondence related to the security clearance process and closely follow the deadlines and guidance provided by your clearance coordinator. Send an e-mail to [BEXFSOAegipquestions@state.gov](mailto:BEXFSOAegipquestions@state.gov) after completing

and releasing your SF-86 form. For Diplomatic Security applicants, you should send an email to [DSFSPREEMP@state.gov](mailto:DSFSPREEMP@state.gov).

Failure to complete your forms accurately or failure to submit the required documents will cause delays in, or cancellation of, your security clearance process.

Any missing information or release forms requested by your clearance coordinator can be submitted by e-mail.

### **Contact options:**

Clearance Coordinator Team: [ClearanceCoordinator@state.gov](mailto:ClearanceCoordinator@state.gov)

Customer Service Center: [SecurityClearance@state.gov](mailto:SecurityClearance@state.gov) or (771) 333-6740. ***Save a copy of all documents and mailing confirmations for your records and for future reference in security clearance investigations.***

Approximately 30 days after the DS Office of Personnel Security and Suitability receives a complete security package from you, a DS Special Investigator will contact you to schedule your personal interview, to review your SF-86 and ask additional questions that are used to establish your eligibility for access to sensitive and/or classified information.

**Important:** Once you have received a favorable security clearance determination and been added to the Register, you incur a special obligation to report instances that could impact your eligibility for a security clearance to Diplomatic Security.

Failure to report the data identified in 12 FAM 270: Security Reporting Requirements (publicly available at <https://fam.state.gov/fam/12fam/12fam0270.html>) may result in an investigation and subsequent suspension or revocation of your Top Secret security clearance. Questions or reports pursuant to 12 FAM 270 may be emailed to [DSDirectorPSS@state.gov](mailto:DSDirectorPSS@state.gov). Include information to identify yourself and the relevant data elements (listed under the scenario) where applicable.

If you have any questions about the security clearance process, please visit the security clearances website <https://www.state.gov/security-clearances> or contact the Office of Personnel Security and Suitability's Customer Service Center by e-mailing [securityclearance@state.gov](mailto:securityclearance@state.gov) or calling (771) 333-6740.

### **Medical Exam**

***Please contact [medcaremanagement@state.gov](mailto:medcaremanagement@state.gov) for any questions related to the information on the minimum medical qualification standard.***

All Foreign Service candidates who have received conditional offers of employment MUST undergo a pre-employment medical examination. The purpose of the pre-employment medical examination is to identify any physical or mental health condition that could limit assignment abroad. Diplomatic Security positions require supplemental medical examinations in addition to the pre-employment medical examination for the Foreign Service. **Pre-employment medical determinations are valid for five years or until the end of your first tour.**

- **Candidates must meet minimum medical qualification standards for acceptance of assignment based upon needs of the Foreign Service,** or they must obtain a waiver of the pre-employment medical qualification requirement (see [16 FAM 216](#) and [3 FAM 1911](#)). Information on the waiver process is available from the Office of the Registrar. Diplomatic Security applicants must also pass the supplemental medical examinations for their specialty.

*While meeting the minimum medical qualification standard for acceptance of assignment based upon the needs of the Foreign Service is an essential qualification for prospective Foreign Service employees, the Department does not consider the medical condition of Eligible Family Members (EFMs) in its pre-employment processes. The Department does require post-specific medical clearances for EFMs before they can travel overseas at U.S. government expense to accompany an employee on assignment. Eligible Family Members without a medical clearance should initiate the medical exam process prior to your arrival at orientation. Family members who, for medical reasons, are unable to accompany an employee on an overseas assignment are eligible for a separate maintenance allowance (SMA); information on SMAs may be found at [https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content\\_id=137&menu\\_id=75](https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=137&menu_id=75).*

**Note regarding Eligible Family Member (EFM) eligibility, the Department's medical program, and post-specific clearances:** For the purpose of eligibility for the Department's medical program, EFMs include your spouse, unmarried dependent children under the age of 21 who are included on official travel orders, and unmarried children under the age of 23 who travel to post on educational travel orders. Children who, regardless of age, are unmarried and have a medically documented disability that occurred prior to the age of 21 and who are incapable of self-support are also EFMs for the purpose of eligibility for the medical program. Parents, siblings, and grandparents are not eligible for the medical program, even if they are considered EFMs for travel purposes pursuant to [14 FAM 511.3](#). **If you have any questions on family member eligibility for medical clearances, please contact [medcaremanagement@state.gov](mailto:medcaremanagement@state.gov).**

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE PRE-EMPLOYMENT MEDICAL EXAMINATION**

As instructed in the document, *Next Steps in the Foreign Service Hiring Process* (which you received along with the results of your Assessment), **your first step in the Medical Examination process is to reach out to the Bureau of Medical Service (MED) at**

[MEDCareManagement@state.gov](mailto:MEDCareManagement@state.gov). The MED Care Management (MCM) needs you to confirm that information on the “Authorization for Medical Examination” (DS-3069) forms for you and your dependents is correct. Your name and social security number should be on your forms as well as the forms for any dependents, along with their names and dates of birth. Once confirmed, MED will get in touch with you within two weeks to send you any additional MED forms as needed. *Please do not download any forms from the internet.*

If you reside in the D.C. region and wish to make use of the MED clinical laboratory, please follow these steps:

1. Obtain a written order for the lab work required for the physical as specified on the age-specific exam forms (DS-1843 and DS-1622) from your personal physician.
2. Call 1-202-663-1735 to make an appointment at our facility at State Annex-1 (SA-1), a State Department building at 2401 E St. NW, in Washington, D.C.
3. Bring the order with you to your lab appointment.

**The Department of State’s Washington, D.C.-based Medical Exam Clinic is not currently conducting full medical exams.** Candidates should use their personal medical practitioners and healthcare providers for their medical exams. Candidates in the D.C. region, however, have the option of having their lab tests collected and processed in the Bureau of Medical Services (MED) clinical laboratory at no cost – OR they can have their labs completed by their personal healthcare provider.

**It is important that you and any medical personnel complete the necessary forms accurately and completely. The following forms are used to obtain a medical exam, depending on your individual circumstances:**

- **DS-1843:** Medical History and Examination for Foreign Service for Individuals 12 and Older (for you, your spouse, and children over age 12);
- **DS-1622:** Medical History and Examination for Foreign Service for Individuals 11 and Younger (for your children under age 12);
- **DS-3069:** Authorization for Medical Examination and payment for all diagnostic medical examinations as requested for each individual being examined (for you and any of your dependents who are examined by a private physician); **copies of form DS-3069 for you and each of your dependents were included in the package sent to you by email, along with your assessment results, following the Foreign Service Assessment. Use only the forms sent to you in the email, do not download them from the internet.**

- Supplemental medical form (DS candidates only). DS/EX/HRM will provide the appropriate supplemental medical form required for the DS specialty and the DS3069s for their DS candidates.

## **PRE-EMPLOYMENT EXAM WITH PRIVATE MEDICAL PROVIDER**

Your pre-employment medical exam paperwork must be submitted **within 90 days** of your conditional offer of employment. If you cannot meet that timeline, please contact the Registrar's Office ([Registrar@state.gov](mailto:Registrar@state.gov)) and explain the reason for the delay. For Diplomatic Security applicants, please contact [DSFSPREEMP@state.gov](mailto:DSFSPREEMP@state.gov).

### **STEP 1: Arrange Appointment with Private Medical Provider**

You should visit your own licensed medical care provider, (physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner) to complete the DS-1843 for yourself and adult EFMs and the DS-1622 for children aged 11 and younger.

#### ***You must take the following documents to your appointment:***

- DS-1843 or DS-1622 as required for each individual (candidate and EFMs): Complete and sign pages 1 and 2. Print the name of the examinee at the top of each page. MED will return all incomplete or unsigned forms.
- DS-3069 Authorization for Medical Examination and payment for all diagnostic medical examinations as requested for each individual being examined.

***Please Note: The DS-3069 form(s) came in your assessment results email following your BEX assessment. If your family has expanded to include more eligible family members after your BEX assessment, the Pipeline Team ([Registrar@state.gov](mailto:Registrar@state.gov)) can assist you with getting DS-3069s for these new family members.***

### **STEP 2: Ensure completion of all required procedures**

Your provider must complete all the required diagnostic procedures. If any results are missing, the adjudication process cannot be completed. If the provider believes you should have additional diagnostic tests, he or she must identify the health problem in the assessment and make a recommendation. If another medical specialist has completed a diagnostic exam that doesn't need repeating (such as a pap smear or mammogram), it need not be repeated, but results should be sent with your medical examination packet.

### **STEP 3: Double check your exam form to ensure you have addressed all requirements**

- You or the provider have commented on all questions where you have answered 'yes';

- Your name and DOB are at the top of each page;
- You have signed and correctly dated the form;
- You have an email address for correspondence;
- All results are included in your packet;
- All answers are legible; and;
- The examiner's printed or stamped name is legible.

Omissions or mistakes can delay the medical determination process.

**STEP 4: Scan and send the completed packet to [MEDMR@state.gov](mailto:MEDMR@state.gov).**

Scanning and emailing the completed packet(s) is the most expedient and preferred mode for submission. You may send each family member's packet in the same email, but as separate attachments following these guidelines:

- All documents must be in chronological sequence.
- Set scanner to Black and White, not colored. Keep resolution setting on 300x300.
- **Save the final image as a PDF.**
- If you do not have access to a scanner, you may FAX the packet to Medical Records at **202-647-0292**.

Each medical packet must be in PDF format:

- Signed copy of the Acknowledgement that you have read the Medical Notice of Privacy Practices; EFMs over age 18 must sign their own Acknowledgement.
- DS-1843 or DS-1622, including chest x-ray report, EKG tracing and interpretation, and copies of all laboratory or diagnostic test reports.
- DS-3069, authorization for examination form.

Medical Records will register you into the Medical database upon receipt of your documents. Medical Records must receive the employee's information prior to, or with the Family members' documents.

**STEP 5: Receive reply from MED**

Expect an automated reply from Medical Records advising you that your documents have been received. If someone from the Medical Office has not contacted you within four weeks, you may send an inquiry to [medcaremanagement@state.gov](mailto:medcaremanagement@state.gov).

**STEP 6: Complete any requested follow-up**

A MED Care Manager in the office of Medical Clearances will adjudicate your medical documents and may contact you if more information is necessary. At that time, if your

examining provider has recommended additional diagnostic examinations, or if MED needs additional information for a final determination, the MED Care Manager will send you a DS-616, which authorizes payment for additional diagnostic evaluations. Federal Regulations prevent MED from providing a retroactive DS-616 for diagnostic procedures that have already been completed, even if we agree that we would have authorized them had we been asked.

**FOR ALL EMPLOYEES WHO INCURRED EXPENSES OBTAINING THEIR MEDICAL EXAM**  
*This guidance is to assist you in submitting claims for payment of medical expenses authorized in conjunction with your pre-employment exam.*

At the time of your pre-employment medical examination with a private medical provider, your licensed medical care provider should submit all charges to your health insurance provider before you submit a claim to MED.

### **Step 1: Show the provider the DS-3069**

This is the authorization that MED will act as the secondary payer for charges incurred at the usual, customary, and reasonable fees, including any negotiated rates or discounts for all diagnostic tests included on the DS-1843 or DS-1622 and nothing more. This form was included in the email you received from BEX after passing the BEX assessment.

Your licensed medical care provider might not accept this guarantee that MED will act as the secondary payer for charges not covered by your health insurance company and therefore might expect you to be responsible for payment of outstanding bills. Either way, you can expect Medical Claims to promptly reimburse you or process disbursement to your providers after you complete step 2.

### ***DOMESTIC CLAIMS: For Pre-Employment Examinations Performed Domestically***

### **Step 2: Send documentation to MED**

After you receive the Explanation of Benefits (EOB) from your health insurance company, please send the following documents to MED:

- DS-3069 Medical Authorization Form
- SF-3881 ACH Vendor Payment Enrollment Form (can be found on the internet)
- Itemized copy of charges/invoice for each licensed medical care provider or service
- Health Insurance EOB with itemized information of each test covered
- Proof-of-payment for deductible or co-pay charges if you want reimbursement

**Preferred method:** Scan and e-mail to [MEDCLAIMS@state.gov](mailto:MEDCLAIMS@state.gov)

Alternatively: Fax to Medical Claims Office at 202-663-3858



**Or mail to:** U.S. Department of State  
Bureau of Medical Services  
SA-1 Room L-217 (ATTN: Medical Claims)  
2401 E Street NW  
Washington DC 20522-0101

**Step 3: Receive automatic response from MED**

After your email submission, expect an automatic response. If any necessary documentation is missing, MED Claims will be unable to process your claim and will ask you to re-send a complete claims packet again. After MED Claims has completed the claims process, the claims officer will forward it to another office within the Department of State for payment.

***OVERSEAS CLAIMS: For Pre-Employment Examinations Performed Overseas***

Requests for reimbursement for physical examinations must be submitted to the U.S. Embassy Health Unit closest to the applicant's location or as directed by the relevant State Department medical authority. The Health Unit or Financial Management Office must contact [MEDOseasPhysExams@state.gov](mailto:MEDOseasPhysExams@state.gov) for the next steps in the reimbursement process.

An overseas medical claim consists of the following:

- DS-3069 authorization form
- [SF-3881](#) ACH Vendor Payment Enrollment Form (can be found on the internet)
- Translated itemized bills
- Translated itemized receipts
- EOB Statement
- Proof of payment (if medical expenses were paid out of pocket)

**FOR EVERYONE:**

***The purpose of the pre-employment medical examination is for medical adjudication only. If the MED Care Manager needs additional information beyond what is provided in the DS-1843 and DS-1622 to make a determination, they will issue a DS-616 authorization for reimbursement for additional diagnostic medical tests or diagnostic evaluation with a medical specialist. MED can reimburse only the non-invasive diagnostic testing specifically authorized by the Medical Clearances office and/or the Mental Health unit for pre-employment medical exam adjudication. The procedure for submitting reimbursement claims for diagnostic tests is the same as submitting routine medical examination claims.***

***REMEMBER: Retain all the original examination reports and films for your personal records.***

You should bring hard copies of your medical records (including those for vaccinations) with you to Washington, D.C., when you join the Foreign Service. While the State Department may

not need these records, you may find it convenient to have them if you need any medical care while you are in Washington, D.C. Also, you will want to take copies of your medical records with you when you move overseas.

**Remember, pre-employment medical exams are valid for five years or until the end of your first assignment.**

*For questions related to claims, please contact [MEDClaims@state.gov](mailto:MEDClaims@state.gov).*

### **Special Agent Pre-Employment Physical Readiness Test** *[this requirement only pertains to Diplomatic Security Special Agent candidates]*

After Special Agent candidates have passed the suitability review (SRP) they are scheduled for their pre-employment physical readiness test (PRT) and must pass the PRT before being placed on the Register. Candidates who do not pass the PRT will be afforded one additional opportunity to retake the PRT within 30 days after a 60-day waiting period. If the candidate fails the PRT a second time, their candidacy will be discontinued.

### **Suitability Clearance**

In addition to receiving a valid security clearances and meeting the minimum medical qualification, all Foreign Service candidates must receive a valid suitability clearance as a condition of employment with the Department. Upon completion of the security background investigation, a Suitability Review Panel (SRP) will examine your background investigation reports to determine whether there is any information on behavior that indicates you fail to meet standards established in the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) relative to suitability for employment with the Foreign Service. As described in [3 FAM 4114](#), “[t]he attainment of U.S. foreign policy objectives depends substantially on the confidence of both the American and foreign public in the individuals selected to serve in the degree of integrity, reliability, and prudence. Given the representational nature of employment in the Service and the diplomatic privileges and immunities granted employees of the Service abroad, it is necessary that employees observe such standards during and after working hours or when the employee is on leave or in travel status.”

In evaluating suitability, the SRP applies standards defined in the FAM. Behaviors which violate these standards include misconduct or negligence in prior employment; poor or marginal job performance; criminal, dishonest, or disgraceful conduct; a lack of financial responsibility; an intentional and material false statement, deception, or fraud in the Foreign Service examination or appointment process; abuse of alcohol or other intoxicants that could affect the ability to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position; illegal use of narcotics, drugs, or other controlled substances; conduct that gives rise to reasonable doubt as to loyalty to the U.S. government; and conduct that clearly shows poor judgment or lack of discretion. For a full listing of suitability standards, please see [3 FAM 2215](#).

If the SRP finds a candidate not suitable for appointment to the Foreign Service, the candidate is notified in writing that their candidacy is terminated. There is a formal appeal process in connection with such a finding. Even in the case of a favorable suitability finding, prior to the candidate's actual appointment to the Foreign Service—that is, up until the candidate is sworn in as a Foreign Service employee, including time on the register, deferrals, and during initial training—the Department may, at its discretion, elect to review once again the candidate's suitability for employment should information become available that the SRP had not previously had access to that raises questions about the Panel's original suitability determination.

Suitability approvals are valid for two years. An updated suitability review may be necessary in the case of candidates who have not been appointed to permanent Foreign Service positions prior to expiration of that timeframe. This includes those persons who voluntarily choose to defer their candidacies.

Individuals who have been found not suitable for employment by a Department of State Suitability Review Panel within the previous two years are ineligible to apply for a Foreign Service position (unless the individual was a candidate for a Special Agent position with the Diplomatic Security Service and the decision to deny eligibility was based on the candidate's inability to fulfill the unique duties of that position).

If the candidate is found suitable for appointment, their candidacy is continued and their name is added to the rank-ordered Register of Cleared Candidates, where it can remain for 18 months pending receipt of a confirmed offer of employment.

### ***Child Support Caveat***

***U.S. law prohibits any individual from receiving a U.S. passport if he or she has been certified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services to the Secretary of State as being in arrears on child support payments by an amount exceeding \$2,500. This prohibition extends to the issuance of diplomatic and official passports and could exclude an individual from Foreign Service employment.***

### ***The Register***

Once you have received necessary clearances and met the minimum medical qualification standard, you will be placed on the Register – the list of candidates eligible to receive confirmed offers of employment as determined by your Assessment score, including any bonuses for veterans' preference or language proficiency. Your rank order on the register is dynamic; that is, people who come on to the list after you, but with higher scores, will be ranked ahead of you. Similarly, you will be ranked ahead of people with lower scores, regardless of how much time they have spent on the list. It will also change as others, voluntarily withdraw from the register, expire from the register, receive language points and/or submit proof of Veterans'

Preference, or are offered an appointment to an entry-level orientation class. Candidates will only be advised of the tier (top, middle, or lower) in which they rank, not a specific rank-ordered number.

### **Multiple Candidacies**

A candidate may qualify for more than one career track and be on more than one register at a time. However, if you accept an appointment offer from the Department in one career track while you are on an additional register or registers, effective the date that you sign the Letter of Offer, or send an e-mail confirmation, the written acceptance will close any other career candidacies on the register for the Foreign Service. The only exception is that a successful Consular Fellow candidate may accept an offer of appointment without terminating a candidacy for a career position in the Foreign Service. As U.S. government employees serving abroad, non-career Consular Fellow employees may request a deferral on any other register of up to 24 months, in order to fulfill their service obligation.

### **Office Management Specialists**

Office Management Specialist (OMS) candidates must have a Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certification in Word in order to continue your candidacy. Your certification in Word 2013 or later is due to the Registrar within 30 days of passing your Assessment. Certifications are obtained from an authorized testing center. Please go to [www.certiport.com](http://www.certiport.com) and locate a testing center near you. *NOTE: All costs incurred in connection with qualifying for this position are the responsibility of the candidate. You should send a digital copy of your certification to [OMSCertiport@state.gov](mailto:OMSCertiport@state.gov). If you experience difficulty in obtaining this certification or have any questions, please direct them to the same email address.*

### **Essential Physical Requirements (for some Specialist positions)**

The vacancy announcements for some Specialist positions advertise essential physical requirements that must be met for you to continue your candidacy; this issue will generally be addressed at the time a candidate is placed on the register.

- After the Virtual Foreign Service Specialist Assessment, you received information about meeting the physical requirements of the position you applied for. If you can meet those requirements without reasonable accommodation, no further steps are required.
- If you wish to request reasonable accommodation in order to meet all physical requirements, you must contact the Office of Accessibility & Accommodations, Disability and Reasonable Accommodations Division (GTM/OAA/DRAD) who will engage with you in an interactive process to determine if a reasonable accommodation is available. Please contact GTM/OAA/DRAD as soon as possible at [OAA@state.gov](mailto:OAA@state.gov).
- If you have a known disability that could reasonably interfere with the performance of essential physical requirements of the position, the Department committee that makes

final determinations on ability to meet physical requirements may provide you an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to perform those essential duties. If so, they will be in touch by mail or email to arrange a time to complete this step in the hiring process. In any event, once they have reviewed the information you provide, they will be in touch with you. Please contact [REGISTRAR@state.gov](mailto:REGISTRAR@state.gov) if you do not hear from them within a month following your assessment.

**Reasonable Accommodation:** Information regarding the Department's reasonable accommodation policy can be found at: <http://fam.a.state.gov/fam/03fam/03fam3670.html>. As explained on that site, requests for reasonable accommodation must be submitted to: [OAA@state.gov](mailto:OAA@state.gov).

## Improving Assessment Scores

You can improve your assessment scores in two ways: by proving Veterans' Preference and by demonstrating proficiency in foreign languages. In all cases, points are only awarded once a candidate has passed the BEX Assessment. For more information, please review the applicable sections of this guide. [mailto: REGISTRAR@state.gov](mailto:REGISTRAR@state.gov)

## Veterans' Preference

Candidates who can document creditable veterans' service by submitting form DD-214 (service 2 or member 4) or certification showing an expected honorable discharge date no later than 120 days after the certificate is submitted will be eligible to receive additional points on the register in their career track or skill group. Candidates will receive 0.175 veteran preference points for a five-point standing and 0.35 for a 10-point standing on a 7-point Assessment scoring scale as defined in 5 USC §2108. The Registrar's office reviews these documents against the OPM guidelines for veterans' preference.

Qualifying, active-duty military candidates may, upon request to the Registrar, be granted unrestricted additional time on the register. Candidates must document their active-duty military status. Candidates must also notify the Registrar when they are discharged from the service; their 18-month clock of eligibility on the register will begin or resume effective the date of separation from military service.

Unlike other candidates who must be hired before age 60, qualifying, preference-eligible veterans, including Diplomatic Security Special Agents, may be appointed from the rank-ordered register at any time before they turn 65. If appointed between the ages of 60 to 65, a qualifying, preference-eligible veteran may serve five years prior to being mandatorily retired.

## Foreign Language Bonus Points and Testing

Although not required to be considered for appointment in the Foreign Service, career candidates who have successfully completed the Assessment and speak a foreign language may

benefit from scheduling a language proficiency test with the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI); government training facility located in Arlington, VA – more on this in Section Two).

Please note that FSI language tests examine not only a candidate's general comfort and proficiency with a language, but also the level of sophistication with which they can employ that language. While many testers are quite skilled at their language of choice in casual settings, even native speakers can find these tests challenging as they ask test takers to respond to scenarios in professional work settings.

Language tests conducted by FSI's Language Testing and Assessment Division (LTA) rate candidates for both speaking (S) and reading (R) skills on a scale of 0 (lowest) to AP (Advanced Proficiency – awarded to scores of 4 or higher), with intermediate steps possible (e.g., S2+/R1+). Candidates currently may raise their overall scores on the rank-ordered register by 0.17 bonus points in a number of languages through tested proficiency. There are currently eight select languages eligible for a higher level of language points (0.25 and 0.38, depending on testing proficiency). Candidates may test as soon as they pass the Assessment. However, the LTA team provides language test results to the Registrar every two weeks, so candidates should be reminded that their language points often cannot be added immediately after their test. Language testing associated with orientation is discussed later in this document, under Section Two - Appointment.

***The language bonus policy and recruitment languages change periodically to reflect the hiring needs of the Foreign Service.***

### **Language Rating System**

FSI uses a language rating system that measures foreign language skills in terms of professional competency, listing speaking (S) and reading (R) scores respectively. FSI rates language skills on a scale of 0 to AP (Advanced Proficiency, awarded to scores of 4 or higher) for both speaking (S-1, S-2, etc.) and reading (R-1, R-2, etc.). The scores are independent of each other, so one may be rated, for example, S-2/R-3. There are also intermediate levels, denoted by a '+' (e.g., S-2+/R-3). For your reference, here is an explanation of each skill level:

***NOTE: As of October 1, 2022, FSI test scores are capped at 4. FSI will no longer attempt to assess proficiency at the 4+ or 5 level. All scores of 4 or above will be reported to the Examinee and recorded in the Student Information System and in employee profiles as "AP" (Advanced Proficiency). This change has been made due to the difficulty of differentiating higher-level scores and to the fact that 4 is the highest score required for Department of State purposes.***

- S-1/R-1 is considered Elementary Proficiency and consists of the ability to satisfy routine travel and courtesy needs and read basic material and common signs, etc.

- S-2/R-2 represents Limited Working Proficiency and consists of the ability to satisfy routine social and limited office needs and to read intermediate or simple colloquial texts.
- S-3/R-3 designates General Professional Proficiency, which means the ability to speak accurately and with enough vocabulary to handle social representation and professional discussions within special fields of knowledge; able to read most materials found in daily newspapers.
- S-AP/R-AP denotes Advanced Proficiency and requires the ability to speak and read the language fluently and accurately on all levels pertinent to professional needs.

### Qualifying for 0.17 Bonus Language Points

**Please note: Test takers with disabilities may request a reasonable accommodation by contacting the Office of Accessibility and Accommodation’s Disability Reasonable Accommodations Division at [OAA@state.gov](mailto:OAA@state.gov).**

To qualify for 0.17 bonus points, candidates who have passed the Assessment may take a remote test (often referred to as a “BEX (language) test”) administered by FSI in any of more than 60 languages listed at: <https://careers.state.gov/faq-items/language-bonus-points/>. Since 2020, the State Department has categorized eight recruitment languages as priority languages: Arabic (all dialects), Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Persian (Dari), Persian (Farsi), Pashto, Urdu, and Korean. For languages other than the eight recruitment languages, candidates must demonstrate proficiency in speaking at a minimum of level 3 to qualify for bonus points. Please note that test results for the remote (“BEX”) language test are reported to both candidates and the Registrar’s office as “Pass” or “Fail” results; numerical scores are not provided for these tests.

***In the eight priority languages, candidates who receive a speaking score of level 2 through FSI testing may be eligible to receive 0.17 bonus points. They do not assume an obligation to serve in a country or countries where the language is spoken nor are they required to be cleared to serve in one of these countries in order to receive the 0.17 level of language points.***

### Qualifying for 0.25 or 0.38 Bonus Language Points and Ensuing Service Commitment

If you pass a remote “BEX” test (conducted via videoconferencing platform) in one of the eight current priority recruitment languages, you will have the option to schedule an additional, two-hour speaking and reading test conducted by FSI in Arlington, Virginia. FSI will provide additional information. ***Any costs associated with an in-person test (travel, lodging in Washington, D.C., etc.) are at the candidate’s expense.***

***Information on how to schedule language testing at FSI appears in the next section.***

Candidates who receive a rating of at least level 2 speaking and level 1 reading (S2/R1) but less than level 3 speaking and level 2 reading (S3/R2) will be eligible to receive 0.25 bonus points.



Those who achieve a minimum score of level 3 speaking and level 2 reading (S3/R2) in one of the eight recruitment languages will be eligible to receive 0.38 bonus points.

**NOTE:** Generalist candidates who choose to take the in-person test and do not meet the minimum S2/R1 score forfeit ALL language bonus points in that tested language including any they may have earned through the earlier remotely administered test. Specialist candidates who choose to take the in-person test but do not meet the minimum S2/R1 score will still receive the 0.17 points received by passing the remote test.

**Generalists:** In order to receive the 0.25 and 0.38 bonus points, candidates must agree to serve in assignments where that language is used AND must not receive a DS country-specific assignment restriction. Generalist candidates who qualify for 0.25 bonus points must agree in writing to serve in one language-designated position (LDP) during their first two assignments or in a country where the recruitment language is a primary language. Generalist candidates who seek a 0.38 language bonus must agree to serve in language designated positions once during their first two assignments and once after reaching mid-level. The second, mid-level assignment must be completed in order for Generalists to compete for the Senior Foreign Service.

**Specialists:** To receive bonus points of 0.25 and 0.38 on their assessment score, Specialist candidates must agree in writing to serve one tour of their first two overseas assignments in a language-designated position or in a country where the recruitment language is a primary language. These benefits are subject to revision.

Candidates who pass the FSI in-person test for higher points must contact the Registrar's office to request elevated language points if they wish to pursue that option. After receiving such a request, the Registrar must confirm the test results with LTI and any potential service restrictions with DS before the office can provide a language points agreement to candidates. All candidates *must* return this language agreement, signed, to the Registrar confirming that they wish to receive the higher language bonus points and that they understand the assignment commitment. ***Absent a written agreement, 0.25 and 0.38 bonus points will not be awarded.***

Candidates who decline the service commitment and the higher language bonus points will receive the basic language bonus points of 0.17 awarded all other languages. Candidates who initially accept the bonus points but subsequently change their minds must notify the Registrar in writing of their decision to forego the higher language bonus points and service obligation. Candidates may change their decision any time prior to receiving a confirmed offer of employment to join an entry-level orientation class. ***Candidates whose security clearance or minimum medical qualification standard restricts them from service at a post with language-designated positions in the language in which they have tested will only receive 0.17 rather than 0.25 or 0.38 bonus points, regardless of their score.***

Candidates who do not pass their first extended two-hour language test may re-test once every six months while they remain on the register.



Results from remotely administered language tests are valid for 18 months, the life of your initial candidacy, or the life of any subsequent candidacy initiated during the 18-month remote test language validity period, whichever is longest. In-person test results are valid for a period of five (5) years, the life of your initial candidacy or the life of any subsequent candidacy initiated during the five-year, in-person test validity period, whichever is longest.

For information to help candidates assess their own speaking level, see the overview above and visit <http://www.govtilr.org> and click on “Speaking” under the skill level descriptions for a general description of the expected proficiency. The speaking self-assessment tool, available on the same site, will also help candidates estimate their language proficiency.

Bonus Points	<a href="#">Eight Priority Languages</a> Score	<a href="#">All Other Languages</a> Score
0.17	Speaking – 2	Speaking – 3
0.25	Speaking – 2; Reading – 1	N/A
0.38	Speaking – 3; Reading - 2	N/A

There are limits on language testing. **Candidates can receive bonus points in only one language.** They may only test in another language if they are unsuccessful during testing of their initial language choice or if the second language offers them a potential higher point value (is a priority recruitment language). Candidates must wait six months to remotely retest in their initial language choice.

### Scheduling a Remote Foreign Language Proficiency Test

To schedule a language proficiency test (aka the “BEX Test”), please create your profile in the Student Information System (SIS) via this link: <https://sis.fsi.state.gov/MySISWeb/s/new-admission>. Once your profile is created successfully, please complete the [BEX Test Request Form](#). You must complete both the SIS profile and the Test Request Form in order for FSI to schedule your test. The BEX test is administered via online videoconference.

Please note that tests will be scheduled between the hours of 7:30 am and 3:00 pm Eastern Time, Monday – Friday; please make sure you are scheduling in the right time zone.

In addition, many language testing teams are only available for set days and times each week, which limits scheduling flexibility. Once FSI has received your language test request, it will be scheduled in accordance with the availability of a testing team near or on the date requested.

When your test is scheduled, you will receive an automatic notification via email informing you of the date, time, and contact information for your test. **You will NOT be otherwise consulted prior to your test time/date being scheduled. Please keep in mind you will only be permitted to test again in the same language after six months, and every six months thereafter while you remain on the register.**

## Test Procedures

**Please follow all instructions provided by FSI, as procedures may change.** At the date and time specified, you are responsible for connecting with the FSI Language Testing and Assessment Division (LTA), at your expense. Remote “BEX” tests are normally conducted by Webex. If it is necessary to conduct your test by telephone, please use a landline telephone when possible, as mobile phone connections have frequently proven unreliable. Please be sure to connect at least five minutes before your scheduled test time. Those who pass the remote “BEX” test in one of the eight priority languages, are eligible to take a Language Recruitment Test for elevated language points. These tests are usually conducted in-person, though Webex tests may be available on a limited basis.

If you find you cannot keep your scheduled test time due to an emergency, please let the scheduling office know immediately. Rescheduling will be allowed once, for a compelling reason only, provided that you have called to reschedule 48 working hours in advance and an alternative test slot is available.

If you do not call in to begin your test at the appointed time or fail to give 48 working hours’ notice that you will not appear for the test, you will be considered a no-show and must wait six months to reschedule a test. After two no-shows, you will not be allowed to reschedule a test.

## What to Expect During the Test

At the start of the test, a LTA staff member will collect your contact information (e.g., name, and email address). A team of two testing staff – an examiner and a tester – will conduct the test, which will be recorded. The Examiner, who oversees the test, will interact with you in English. Then the Tester will engage you in the language being tested in a conversation on a variety of topics, including daily life situations and current events. You will want to take some initiative in this conversation, and if something is not clear you should ask the tester to repeat or clarify. Following this opening conversation, you may be asked to speak on a given topic, or to conduct a short interview to gather information from the tester, and then report what you have learned in English to the examiner. This test will usually take no longer than 30 minutes.

You will receive your test scores within a week of your test date. All test scores are reported to the Registrar’s office every two weeks; while you may receive your score as early as close of business the day after your test, Registrar staff may not be able to adjust your register score until they have received the official test results from LTA. Once you are notified that you have been placed on the register, you should ensure your bonus points have been included in your rank order standings. You do not need to reach out to LTA to ensure your points are added.

**Note:** For evaluation and verification purposes, the examination will be recorded by the FSI Language Testing and Assessment Division. You may not record the test and no portion of the testing materials may leave the room and/or virtual space at any time. Please be aware that if

someone other than you takes the test in your name, or if you are found to attempt to remove or record any testing materials, this will constitute fraud and is grounds for terminating your candidacy or dismissing you after you have begun work. Please also be aware that scores for this test are final, and are not eligible for review.

## **Retesting**

Positive test results are good for 18 months or the duration of any subsequent candidacy started during that 18-month period; do not seek to retest if you have tested in that period. If you test but do not achieve the threshold level in your chosen language, you may retest in that language every six months while you are on the register.

## ***Scheduling an extended Foreign Language Test***

If you pass the remote test in one of the eight recruitment languages that qualifies for higher language bonus points, you will have the option of scheduling a Language Recruitment Test, a full Speaking/Reading test, which takes approximately two hours. To schedule this test please submit the [Language Recruit Test Request Form](#). **NOTE: You must complete this test either from FSI or a Department of State facility (if overseas).**

Please note in-person tests at FSI will be scheduled at 8:15 am or 12:00 pm Eastern Time, Monday - Friday.

When your test is scheduled, you will receive an automatic notification via e-mail informing you of the date and time of your in-person test. ***You will NOT be otherwise consulted prior to your test time/date being scheduled unless an issue comes up with your requested dates.***

As with remote tests, please keep in mind that if you do not pass the full test, you may take a first retest after six months; any additional retests are authorized once every six months from the last full test in that language while you are on the register. Language scores are valid for 18 months or the length of any candidacy initiated during the 18-month language score validity period, whichever is longer.

## **In-Person Test Procedures**

At the date and time specified, you are responsible for getting yourself to the FSI Language Testing and Assessment Division in Arlington, Virginia, at your expense. If you find you cannot keep your scheduled test time due to an emergency, please let the scheduling office know immediately. Rescheduling will be allowed once, for a compelling reason only, provided that you have called to reschedule 48 working hours in advance and an alternative test slot is available. If you do not call in to the Language Testing and Assessment Division in connection with a scheduled test, there will be no rescheduling.

## What to Expect during the Test

This test is the standard full FSI language test administered to all Department of State staff as well as to employees of other agencies. As with the remote test, a team of two testing staff – an examiner and a tester – will conduct the test, which will be recorded. The Examiner, who oversees the test, will interact with you in English. The Tester, a native speaker of the recruitment language, will engage you only in the language being evaluated. The in-person test consists of speaking and reading components as described below.

### ***Speaking Test***

The speaking test, updated in January 2023, is a scenario-based conversation. In this scenario, you are at a welcome gathering the day before an event for Foreign Affairs personnel. During this welcome gathering scenario, you will be assigned to sit next to an invited guest who speaks the language of the test. Your job will be to establish and maintain rapport with this guest while discussing professional and foreign affairs-related topics.

During the Speaking test, the Tester interacts with you only in the language being tested. The testing team is only interested in your language proficiency. Points of view and opinions you express during the test do **not** affect your rating.

### **Part I: Social Conversation**

*(Up to 13 minutes)*

#### **Format**

- The Examiner introduces the Examinee to the scenario-based Tester. The Examiner does not participate in the social conversation.
- The Examinee makes a professional introduction to the Tester and the Tester reciprocates by introducing him/herself.
- The Tester engages the Examinee in casual conversation on topics such as food, weather, transportation, entertainment, cultural activities, or current events.

### **Part II: Q&A and Topical Conversation**

*(Up to 18 minutes)*

#### **Format**

- The Examiner displays and shares a link to the agenda for the upcoming conference. The Examiner does not participate in the Q&A and topical conversation.
- The Examinee chooses 3 content topics from the agenda.
- The Tester asks the Examinee a few questions about the agenda (e.g., schedule, transportation, food options).
- The Tester engages the Examinee in conversation about the 3 content topics.

### **Part III: Gather and Report Information**

*(Up to 13 minutes)*

#### **Format**

- The Examinee chooses 1 new content topic from the agenda.

- The Examinee asks the Tester 3 questions related to the chosen content topic in the language of the test.
- The Examinee relays both the questions and the Tester’s responses to the Examiner in English.

### **Reading Test**

During the Reading test, the testing team interacts with you in English.

#### **Part I: Reading for the Gist**

##### **Format**

- You will read 6 short texts at different levels of difficulty. The testing team will leave the room while you read. When the testing team returns, you will report in English about the subject matter and the general meaning of the texts. You may take notes directly on the text copy provided to you during the test.
- After your initial report, the testing team may ask you to return to one or more of the texts for further elaboration.

##### **Tips**

- Make effective use of your time. Make an educated guess if you are uncertain.
- Attempt to read all or a portion of the 6 texts, but don’t spend too much time on any one text.
- Do not get bogged down on unfamiliar words, phrases or texts you find too difficult.
- Stick to a general understanding of the text without word-for-word translation

#### **Part II: Reading in Depth**

##### **Format**

- You will read two different texts and provide your understanding of these texts as fully as you can. Texts are selected from 5 topic categories abbreviated as follows:
  - BEA = business / economics / administration
  - CS = cultural / social
  - GC = general / current
  - PM = political / military
  - STA = agriculture / science / technology
- The testing team will leave the room for 12 minutes to allow you to read. You may take notes directly on the text copy provided to you during the test. When the testing team returns, you will summarize the main ideas of the text in English and then provide supporting details and any other related information.
- After your initial report, the testing team may ask you to support or elaborate your statements with specific examples from the text.

##### **Tips**

- Make effective use of your time. Do not get bogged down on unfamiliar words or phrases.
- Attempt to read the entire text, but do not spend too much time on any one portion of the text.
- Provide as much information relevant to the text as you can. This may include the author’s intention, viewpoint, style, and nuance.

## How the Registrar Forms Classes

As stated earlier, a candidate who passes the Assessment is given a *conditional* offer of employment as a Foreign Service candidate. A *confirmed* offer of employment is contingent upon the candidate's receipt of security, and suitability clearances, meeting the minimum medical qualification standard, as well as the Department's own hiring needs and the candidate's rank on the Register of Cleared Candidates. As Foreign Service orientation classes are scheduled to meet the Department's personnel requirements, the Registrar's Office will contact candidates on the Register by e-mail or phone, based on their position on the rank-ordered register, to extend confirmed offers of employment until each class is filled. Even if on the register, unless you claim veteran's preference, you must be at least 21 years old and not yet 60 on the day you start orientation and are sworn in as Foreign Service Generalist or Specialist.

Once your clearances and minimum medical qualification standard are completed, your name will be placed on the Register of Cleared Candidates for up to 18 months. During that period, you may decline one confirmed offer of employment and remain on the Register. If you decline a second offer, your candidacy will be terminated. If you know in advance that you are unavailable during a specific period of time for placement in an orientation class – for example, because you are still working on an academic degree – you should notify the Registrar's Office that you will not be available by requesting a Do Not Call (DNC) order. In these cases, candidacies remain on the register, but candidates are not offered a slot while the DNC order remains in place. The DNC does **NOT** stop the 18-month count-down but does help candidates preserve their one-time declination option. Please include an end date for the order when requesting it.

The Registrar may process a one-time deferment, not to exceed a maximum of 24 months, based on the criteria listed below. If you are on more than one register, the deferment applies to all your register candidacies. You are encouraged to work with the Registrar's Office on the start of your deferral date. A deferment may be granted to any candidate who:

- 1) Is married to a Foreign Service employee currently assigned overseas;
- 2) Is a Peace Corps volunteer;
- 3) Is serving abroad on a Fulbright Grant;
- 4) Is a U.S. government civilian employee serving abroad;
- 5) Will be absent from duty due to pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, or foster care;
- 6) Experiences a serious health condition (i.e. injury or illness that makes the candidate unavailable for a period of weeks/months); or
- 7) Is performing service in a uniformed service, consistent with the requirements of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

Requests for deferments on any other grounds will be considered on a case-by-case basis to be decided by the Director of the Office of Talent Acquisition in the Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM/TAC) or its designee.

Deferments must be requested in writing to [registrar@state.gov](mailto:registrar@state.gov). Deferment requests in conjunction with declining an invitation to join an entry-level orientation class will still be logged as a declination. Supporting documentation is required to implement a deferment. A detailed SOP (107F) about deferrals is publicly available at <https://careers.state.gov/benefits/fs-entry-salaries/>

Should you decide to **withdraw** your candidacy, we request that you inform the Registrar's Office via e-mail ([Registrar@state.gov](mailto:Registrar@state.gov)) as soon as possible, including the reason for the withdrawal.

## Getting Invited to An Orientation Class

The Department of State utilizes an online hiring portal known as "Welcome to State" (WtS) for all onboarding tasks. Candidates being invited to a class will first receive an email notifying them of their invitation and providing them with instructions for accessing that portal. Once they have accessed the portal, they will receive their official invitation letter and be prompted to begin entering and uploading required information. The Onboarding Team will use this information to complete and release salary determinations and provide the candidate with all required forms. The portal will prompt candidates to complete tasks as they progress through the various stages of onboarding.

## Current Federal Employees

If you are employed by another federal agency and you wish to avoid a break in service, please provide the Registrar's Office with the name, telephone number, and email address of an HR contact at your present agency when you accept an offer to join the Foreign Service. ***After receiving the contact information, the Registrar's Office will contact your present agency to coordinate a release date and any additional action required, such as a transfer of your benefits, so that there is not a break in service.*** Once candidates have confirmed their decision to accept the State Department appointment, they should contact the HR office of their current agency to coordinate their final day of employment. Please be sure to discuss any leave you may wish to take in the days immediately prior to leaving your current agency.

## Terms of Employment

### Salary

The Registrar's Office determines a candidate's appointment salary based on a candidate's education, professional experience and, if applicable, current base salary. Please remember that a Foreign Service salary is not a negotiated pay package as in the private sector. Additional information is posted on the Department's "Foreign Service Entry-Level Salaries" website at: <http://careers.state.gov/work/domestic/benefits/fs-entry-salaries>.

Note: Every new FS hire, regardless of hiring location, has their duty station listed as "in transit" during orientation and is placed on the Overseas Comparability Pay (OCP) scale. Candidates who are hired from the D.C. area (local hires) and who are then assigned to training of at least six months following orientation (not including it) may request to be assigned to D.C. as a duty station and receive D.C. locality pay while in follow-on training until going to a post overseas. Non-local hires will continue to be paid using the OCP scale during follow-on training. D.C. locality pay is based on the Washington-Baltimore salary table. The salary tables may be found at: [www.state.gov/m/dghr/pay](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/pay). Non-local hires may not request locality pay for their follow-on training because they are receiving per diem.

**Generalists:** Foreign Service Generalists are hired at grades 4, 5, and 6 (generally written FS-04, FS-05, or FS-06). An appointment salary is based on a candidate's education and professional experience.

**Specialists:** Entry-level salary for Specialists will be indicated in the Department of State vacancy announcement. Additional steps within a grade may be added based on education, experience, and market conditions. The Department matches the salary of Specialists transferring from federal civilian agencies up to the top step of the applicable grade. Additional information is posted on the Internet at: [www.state.gov/m/dghr/pay](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/pay).

Candidates who believe their starting salary has been set at an incorrect level may request a review by the Salary Review Committee (SRC). For additional information, please refer to the "Salary Review Procedures" SOP on the Department's "[Foreign Service Entry-Level Salaries](http://careers.state.gov/work/domestic/benefits/fs-entry-salaries)" website.

## **Benefits**

Information on the various benefits for Foreign Service employees is available at [Foreign Service Officer Benefits - U.S. Department of State](#) (for Officers) and [Foreign Service Specialist Benefits - U.S. Department of State](#) (for Specialists).

## **Health Insurance**

Foreign Service employees are eligible to enroll in a wide variety of health insurance plans through the Federal Employees Health Benefit (FEHB) program, including fee-for-service plans and health maintenance organizations (HMOs). The available policies vary greatly in terms of coverage, cost, and applicability in overseas locations. Therefore, you are encouraged to review the various policies carefully before making a final decision. For information about the FEHB



program, please see the OPM website: [www.opm.gov/insure/health](http://www.opm.gov/insure/health). In accordance with a Supreme Court ruling in 2013, OPM determined that same-sex spouses of federal employees are eligible for the FEHB program.

The Registrar's Office cannot assist you in choosing a health care program that meets your needs. OPM's website has information about the various plans, including a comparison tool: [New / Prospective Employees: Guide Me - OPM.gov](#). "Checkbook," a Washington, D.C.-based consumer group, publishes a book that provides a description and analysis of the various health plans for which Foreign Service employees are eligible. You may wish to check its website ([www.checkbook.org](http://www.checkbook.org)), or e-mail Checkbook at [technical@checkbook.org](mailto:technical@checkbook.org) for information about its publication, "Health Insurance Plans for Employees."

*Effective Date of Health Insurance:* As background, the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) is managed by OPM which sets the rules and conditions of the program. Please be aware that, per OPM, enrollment is not retroactive, and it cannot be made effective the day you enter on duty, as you must have been in a pay status during some part of the pay period which precedes the one in which your enrollment becomes effective. Once this requirement has been met, if you completed the required form prior to or during the first week of orientation, the form was filled out correctly, and if applicable, you provided all the necessary documentation for your Eligible Family Members (EFMS), the earliest your enrollment will become effective will be on the first day of the first pay period that begins after your employing office receives your enrollment request. **Thus, the earliest your health insurance can possibly become effective is the beginning of the pay period that begins after the pay period in which you are hired.** For example, if you start orientation in pay period 4, the earliest your health benefits could be effective would be the start of pay period 5, two weeks later. You cannot be reimbursed for any medical expenses incurred prior to the effective date of your FEHB coverage. **You need to consider this when deciding when to cancel any other health insurance coverage you may already have, and for scheduling doctor visits or tests.**

***You will have 60 days from the effective date of your appointment to select a health plan (if you have not selected one prior to onboarding).*** After onboarding, once you have chosen a plan, your coverage will be effective at the beginning of the first pay period after the election form is received by the HR Service Center. Thus, it may take as long as ten weeks from your entry on duty before your health insurance takes effect. Therefore, you are encouraged to maintain any existing policies and to double-check the effective date of your new policy before terminating the old one. You will have an opportunity to change plans when you change duty stations (from domestic to overseas or overseas to domestic) or during the annual open enrollment period. Should you decide not to enroll in a health plan, an election form must still be submitted to document your decision.

**For Current Federal Employees:** You will not be eligible to change your FEHB plan at this time based on this employment change alone as it is not a Qualifying Life Event (QLE). Once you get your overseas assignment, you will be eligible to change your health insurance provider if you so desire. For more information on QLEs, please see the OPM website: [Enrollment \(opm.gov\)](http://www.opm.gov/enrollment)

Throughout your time in the Foreign Service, your health insurance will act as primary payer for medical expenses for you and your family, both overseas and in the United States. Family members that are eligible for coverage under your “Self and Family” enrollment are your spouse (including a valid common law marriage) and children under age 26, including legally adopted children, stepchildren, and recognized natural (born out of wedlock) children. Foster children are included if they live with you in a regular parent-child relationship. A child age 26 or over who is incapable of self-support because of a mental or physical disability that existed before age 26 is also an eligible family member. All employees should review the possible options for health coverage to determine which works best for their concerns. Please be aware that you should be prepared to provide documentation which verifies your relationship(s) to your listed EFMs during onboarding.

In cases where hospitalization overseas is required or if you are hospitalized in the United States as a result of an illness or injury occurring overseas and MED or a Foreign Service medical provider has approved that hospitalization, MED will cover the co-payment after your primary insurance company has reimbursed you for the hospitalization expenses. For out-patient cases, you will be responsible for the co-payment unless the condition was caused or materially aggravated by your service overseas. More detail on these matters is available in the Medical Expenses section of the FAM ([16 FAM 500](#)).

## **Life Insurance**

Unless you sign a waiver, you will automatically be covered, with Basic coverage, by the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) plan from your first day of employment. You may elect additional options within 60 days of appointment. You may also elect additional coverage during open season or after specific qualifying events.

## **Thrift Savings Plan**

Foreign Service employees participate in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), a long-term savings and investment plan similar to 401(k) plans offered by private companies. The TSP allows Foreign Service employees to invest money in a variety of investment funds. The Department automatically enrolls you in the TSP TSP at 5% of your salary, and contributions are automatically deducted from your paycheck into your TSP account. You can change this amount at any time., You’re eligible to receive matching contributions from your agency or service, which could mean thousands of additional dollars in your TSP account over time. You do not get the full match if you contribute less than 5%. Please go to [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov) for contribution limits, investment options, and further information about the TSP. For introductory information about TSP, please visit <https://www.tsp.gov/tsp-basics/>. The Department encourages employees to take full advantage of this program. The Traditional TSP provides three tax benefits:

- Contributions to the Traditional TSP are made on a before-tax basis. This means that contributions are deducted from an employee’s paycheck before income tax is calculated;
- Earnings grow tax-deferred; and,

- Taxes on contributions to the Traditional TSP and the account's earnings are deferred until the money is withdrawn from the account, usually after retirement. If the TSP is rolled over into an Individual Retirement Account (IRA), taxes are calculated according to IRA rules.

A Roth TSP option, where contributions are taxed and withdrawals are tax-free (within certain limits), is also available.

If you leave federal service, get deployed, or experience any other changes in your federal service, there are a number of things to consider when it comes to your TSP account. Please visit TSP.gov for additional information at <https://www.tsp.gov/changes-in-your-career/>

### **Student Loan Repayment Program**

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has implemented a program for the repayment of student loans. Under this program, and depending on funding availability, agencies may pay up to \$10,000 per employee per year, to a maximum of \$60,000 total per employee. Foreign Service employees are eligible if they are serving in positions at posts designated extreme hardship and/or danger-pay eligible. In recent years, the grants have averaged \$5,000-\$6,000 before taxes. Details are available for Generalists at <https://careers.state.gov/work/benefits/fso/#slrp> and Specialists at <https://careers.state.gov/work/benefits/fss/#slrp> under the "Benefits" sub-heading.

### **Retirement**

Members of the Foreign Service first hired by the government in a civilian capacity after December 31, 1983 participate in the Foreign Service Pension System (FSPS), a program designed to provide retired personnel with an annuity, Social Security benefits, Medicare coverage, and additional retirement income through the TSP.

Under the FSPS, Foreign Service employees who have reached the age of 50 and have served for more than 20 years are eligible for retirement with a full annuity. Those who have served for 10 years and are at least 57 (55 under certain conditions) are eligible to retire with a reduced annuity. Retirement by age 65 is mandatory for all Foreign Service employees.

### **Points of Contact**

**BEX Assessments** are managed by the Board of Examiners. They are able to confirm assessment scores and will provide candidates with their initial DS-3069s. They can be reached at [BEXFSOAeqipquestions@state.gov](mailto:BEXFSOAeqipquestions@state.gov). BEX Assessments for DS candidates are managed by DS and they can confirm DS assessment scores and will provide candidates with their supplemental medical form for their specialty and initial DS-3069s. They can be reached at [DSFSPREEMP@state.gov](mailto:DSFSPREEMP@state.gov).

**Language testing** is managed by the FSI Language Testing and Assessment Division. Candidates who need to arrange that testing should contact [PostFSOATesting@state.gov](mailto:PostFSOATesting@state.gov). If they wish to confirm their test results, they should reach out to .

**The Medical Qualifications team and Diplomatic Security** manage clearance processes and make clearance determinations. To check on your individual clearance processes, please contact their offices directly at [medclearances@state.gov](mailto:medclearances@state.gov) and [securityclearance@state.gov](mailto:securityclearance@state.gov) respectively.

**Once candidates have received an invitation to an orientation class**, their main contact in the Registrar's office will become the Onboarding Team, which can be reached at [FSOnboarding@state.gov](mailto:FSOnboarding@state.gov). The Onboarding Team and Pipeline Teams will coordinate on cases in which candidates are requesting a do not call order or deferral.

**For general Registrar questions not answered by this guide** or specific questions regarding your candidacy, please email the Pipeline Team at [Registrar@state.gov](mailto:Registrar@state.gov).

## SECTION TWO – Appointment

### *Moving to Washington, Orientation, Training and Beyond*

#### **Moving to Washington, D.C. for Orientation**

The government will pay for the travel of all new employees and their eligible family members, also known as “EFMs” (for a definition of which family members are considered to be EFMs and which are “members of household” (MOH), see Section Three), who are medically cleared and whose hiring location is at least **50 miles** outside the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. To determine whether you are within or beyond 50 miles of Washington, D.C., please calculate the straight-line distance from your point of origin to the Washington Monument using Google maps. Your hiring location is the location from which the State Department will fund your travel to Washington, D.C. for orientation and from which your belongings will be packed out. Please note that your hiring location may be different from your home of record, which may be where you own property, pay taxes or where your family resides. Employees who reside in the Washington, D.C. area when hired are considered to be “local hires,” and the State Department will not move them until their first overseas assignment, or for some Diplomatic Security specialists, until their first domestic assignment outside of the Washington D.C. area. In order to get the process started, complete the information in the Welcome to State portal. The Registrar’s Office will forward the necessary travel data to the Global Talent Management (GTM) PCS Customer Support office ([GTM-EX-IDSD@state.gov](mailto:GTM-EX-IDSD@state.gov)) which will issue your Travel Authorization (TA), also referred to as “travel orders,” or “orders.” You should receive your TA four to five weeks prior to the start of orientation. To inquire about the status of your TA, contact the GTM PCS Customer Support office at ☎ 202-453-8262 or email: [GTM-EX-IDSD@state.gov](mailto:GTM-EX-IDSD@state.gov).

For your initial orientation and certain additional pre-posting training, you will be in “temporary duty” (TDY) status if hired from outside the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, which permits the government to pay for your travel and per diem. Most of your training will be held at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC), aka FSI.

For **Diplomatic Security Special Agent Candidates**, please note that following your orientation training at FSI, you will not receive lodging and per diem for your family members during your law enforcement training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) and the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC). You also may not fly to training and then drive to your first assignment or vice versa. Only one of the two options is permitted.

### FSI – Your Home Away from Home

*The Department conducts the majority of its orientation and training at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC), historically and widely known as the Foreign Service Institute or FSI. FSI is a large campus with multiple buildings and facilities, including a gym, cafeteria, and child-care center, located in Arlington, VA, where the Department hosts a wide range of training programs including crisis management, public speaking, and area studies, to name a few. If extended a confirmed offer of employment, you will be invited to join an orientation class followed by any language or skills training you may require prior to arriving at your first posting.*

### **Travel to Washington D.C.**

You are urged to make your travel arrangements as soon as possible after receiving a confirmed offer of employment, following the procedures outlined below. You do not need travel orders to make reservations for your travel to Washington, but you will need travel orders to fund your ticket. If you have not received a copy of your travel orders four to five weeks prior to your departure, please contact the PCS Customer Support office at [GTM-EX-IDSD@STATE.GOV](mailto:GTM-EX-IDSD@STATE.GOV)

New employees hired outside the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and their authorized family members may be allowed to travel by air, train or privately owned vehicle (POV) to Washington, DC, depending on hire location and personal circumstances. Your TA will indicate status and the approved travel method. Employees authorized for POV travel will be reimbursed for mileage. Additionally, depending on travel distance, you may also be authorized per diem based on driving 360 miles or more per day. To determine the number of days for which you are eligible to be reimbursed, please calculate the straight-line distance from your point of origin to the Washington Monument using Google maps and divide that number by 360 which is the miles per day the State Department uses for its calculations. Current rates per mile can be found at the GSA [Privately Owned Vehicle \(POV\) Mileage Reimbursement Rates](#) website. Employees authorized to travel by commercial air must comply with all Department of State travel regulations, and are required to obtain airline tickets from a Department of State contracted travel management center (TMC). **Do not purchase your own airline ticket!**

### **If hired within the U.S.:**

CWTSato Travel (formerly known as Carlson Wagonlit Travel) is the Department of State's domestic-based TMC for booking travel. Once you have determined your travel plans, contact CWT at 📞 **866-654-5593** to reserve tickets by phone. Email your Travel Authorization (TA) to [DOSGlobal@cwtsato.com](mailto:DOSGlobal@cwtsato.com). You do not need your TA to make reservations but will need to provide it before you can obtain your tickets. You also need to identify yourself as a new hire who does not yet have access to the State Department systems.

### **If hired from overseas:**

If you are traveling from overseas, you should contact the Human Resources Office or Management Section of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate to advise them that you are a new Department employee and need their assistance with arrangements for travel. [You do not need your TA to make reservations but will need it before you can obtain your tickets.](#)

Keep all travel receipts, boarding passes, credit card statements, and any other supporting documentation that may be needed to file your travel voucher or to claim reimbursement.

### **Packing and Shipping Your Personal Effects**

You should schedule tentative packing dates as soon as possible after you have accepted your initial offer the formal, confirmed offer of employment and an orientation class date. Your personal effects cannot actually be packed or moved, however, until you have received your travel authorization. If you have not received a copy of your travel authorization/orders three to four weeks prior to your scheduled move, contact the PCS Customer Support office at [GTM-EX-IDSD@STATE.GOV](mailto:GTM-EX-IDSD@STATE.GOV) Most new employees are temporarily assigned to Washington for orientation and training, pending assignment to their first posting. If you are entering the Foreign Service and reside within a 50-mile radius of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, you will not experience pack-out until you prepare to depart for your first overseas assignment. You may determine whether you are within a 50-mile radius of Washington, D.C., by calculating the straight-line distance from your point of origin to the Washington Monument using Google maps. For those employees hired outside the Washington, D.C. metro area, you will be authorized to ship a limited amount of unaccompanied air baggage (UAB) to Washington, DC, and store up to 18,000 lbs. of your personal effects. UAB weight allowances are based on the number of eligible family members (EFMs) listed in your TA.

Should family members choose not to join the employee in Washington, D.C. while the employee is in training, the employee may defer pack-out until ready to depart for post. At that time, a member of the family or someone else designated by the employee may pack HHE to post and/or storage. The employee should contact the Transportation Office ([TransportationQuery@state.gov](mailto:TransportationQuery@state.gov)) and seek their guidance on deferring pack-out. Please note, the Department will not fund travel to return home for the pack-out.

For **Diplomatic Security Special Agent Candidates**, the law enforcement training you will receive following your orientation will be processed on a separate set of TDY training orders. These TDY Diplomatic Security law enforcement training orders are separate and distinct from your initial appointment orders from Global Talent Management (GTM) and only provide travel, lodging and per diem for you, the candidate. As stated above, you will not receive lodging and per diem for your family members during your law enforcement training following orientation at FSI. Your initial appointment orders from GTM bring you to Washington D.C. from your Home of Record. Toward the end of your law enforcement training, for those assigned outside the Washington, D.C. area, you will receive new GTM orders that provide for the transfer of you, your EFMs, and your personal property to your first assignment location when you have completed your law enforcement training.



**If hired within the U.S.:**

Once notified of your acceptance into the Foreign Service, contact the Transportation Office to start the process of shipping your personal effects and ask any questions you may have about transportation and travel entitlements. You can reach Transportation Management or Travel Management & Policy at [TransportationQuery@state.gov](mailto:TransportationQuery@state.gov), or via 202-472-8480/8481 (or 800-424-2947 if outside the D.C. area). Your questions and/or pack-out requests will be referred to a Transportation Counselor (TC) who will further assist you.

**If hired from overseas:**

Contact the General Services Officer (GSO) or Management Section at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate to arrange shipment of your UAB and storage of household effects (HHE). The employee can elect to have their HHE stored at their designated storage point while in training, either at the U.S. Logistics Center in Hagerstown, MD or the European Logistics Support Office (ELSO), or defer to a later date. Please note the Department will not pay for the employee to return to their hired location to supervise pack-out.

**Do not arrange your own move!** Transportation/GSO will arrange your pack-out, to include assigning the packing company. Once assigned, the packing company's contact information will be provided to you. Prior to the actual pack date, the assigned packing company will send a representative to your residence to conduct a pre-pack survey to determine materials needed, estimated weights of personal effects, and the number of days it will take to complete your pack-out.

The employee is responsible for pre-arranging necessary requirements for the packing company's vehicles and personnel to access your home. Advance preparations include reserving the loading dock and/or freight elevator for those who live in an apartment/condominium, or ensuring adequate parking is available for those who live in an apartment/single-family home. In some areas, the employee may be required to contact local police or the municipality to reserve space for a moving van to park conveniently close to your home. The packing company is responsible for any fees associated with required parking permits at residence.

For liability reasons, packers must inspect, inventory, and pack items themselves. If you have new items still in original boxes, or items already packed from a previous move, please bring this to the attention of the packing company during your pre-pack survey, and the packing company will provide you with further instructions/guidance. Due to heightened security concerns, no carton may be described on the inventory as "PBO"—Packed by Owner or "Contents Unknown." Shipments that contain "PBO" items on the inventory will be delayed at exit or entry points to the continental U.S. (CONUS). Furthermore, the Government will only accept claims for loss or breakage in cases where the goods were packed by the moving company—never by the individual.



You will be authorized two separate types of shipments: unaccompanied air baggage (UAB) and household effects (HHE).

### **Unaccompanied Air Baggage (UAB)**

In addition to luggage taken on your flight or in your POV (accompanied baggage), you are also entitled to UAB. UAB is a separate entitlement from your HHE shipment and is shipped more expeditiously via air. When transferring from one assignment to another, normally your UAB follows the itinerary in your TA. If your TA permits, you may ship UAB to your training location and then on to your authorized destination.

Consider sending items in your UAB shipment that you may need soon after arrival, including clothing, toiletries, small appliances such as a coffee maker and toaster, and essential light housekeeping items, such as pots, pans, dishes, sheets, and blankets. You may include limited quantities of electronic equipment depending on number and types of lithium batteries used to power the equipment (ask your Transportation Counselor for more details). Be sure to pack it well—preferably in the original cartons—because UAB can often encounter rough handling during transit. Due to UAB size limitations, your UAB cannot include large household items such as furniture, major appliances, or anything else that cannot fit into a 15 cubic foot carton. Bicycles are often too large for UAB as well. If you want your bicycle with you, plan on bringing it via vehicle or as accompanied baggage on the plane.

For **Diplomatic Security Special Agent Candidates**, your training orders will not provide for any storage or movement of a UAB shipment between the various training locations, so please plan carefully if you choose to send a UAB to orientation using your initial appointment orders. You will be responsible for moving those items with you throughout training or storing them at your own expense.

Do not pack urgent medications, important documents, or small, high-value items in UAB. Also, liquids and hazardous materials are forbidden.

Your UAB shipment is limited to the following weight allowances for the employee and Eligible Family Members (EFMs):

Employee or 1st traveler	250 pounds
First EFM or 2nd traveler	200 pounds
Second EFM or 3rd traveler	150 pounds
Each additional EFM	100 pounds

The weight allowances listed above are gross weights — they include the weight of packing boxes and packing materials. Items must fit into a 15 cubic foot carton with outside dimensions not exceeding 37 x 23 x 30 inches. A sole exception exists for a standard-size crib and crib mattress.

### **Household Effects (HHE)**

Shipments bound for export and storage are both considered HHE. HHE consists of furniture and household personal effects, including automotive spare parts, (tires, tubes, and accessories) for the use of you and your family.

HHE cannot include boats (including canoes and kayaks), plants, construction materials or hazardous materials such as ammunition, propane gas tanks and certain types/quantities of lithium batteries (ask your Transportation Counselor for more details).

If you are appointed to the Foreign Service from outside the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, the U.S. Government will pay to move your household effects (HHE), up to an 18,000-pound limit into storage until you receive your first assignment. The State Department will not pay for you to withdraw HHE from storage during training; the Hagerstown storage facility is located about 75 miles northwest of Washington and any withdrawal during that time would be at your own personal expense. You will have the opportunity to add to your HHE shipment when you pack out for your first assignment overseas. If you are appointed from inside the Washington metropolitan area, you will not have an entitlement to HHE until you are sent to your first assignment, after completion of training.

You can expect to be in Washington anywhere from 10 weeks to 10 months, and sometimes longer, as your first assignment determines how much training (including possible language training) you will require before departure. Generally, you will not know your assignment until well into the initial orientation training course, so you will need to do some creative packing to allow for seasonal changes and a possible extended stay in Washington. Diplomatic Security Special Agent Candidates will remain in Washington D.C. for up to several weeks of Diplomatic Security orientation and then relocate to Georgia and Central Virginia for approximately six months of law enforcement training.

Most posts have furnished housing, and your HHE shipment in these cases are limited to 7,200 lbs. When you are packing out for the first time from your hire location, anticipate what you might take with you as HHE on your first assignment abroad, and what will stay stored in the U.S. while you are overseas. If you can, you should group items somewhat according to these two categories. Ensure that your inventory provides you with enough detail to help you easily identify any items you will want to send as HHE when you head to your first posting. Please be aware that while you will have the opportunity to select line items from your inventory (e.g., box #32), you may not remove specific contents from boxes (e.g., your favorite ladle in box #32).

### **Privately Owned Vehicles (POV)**

Employees hired from a location inside of the contiguous United States travelling to Washington, D.C. for initial training are generally not authorized a separate POV shipment. In many cases the new employee self-drives the POV to Washington, DC. Following your training, the Department will normally authorize the shipment of a POV to your overseas post assignment from your point of hire, or from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The PCS

Analyst who prepares the travel orders needs to know if there will be a request to drive to DC and ship from there in order to amend the travel orders in advance.

Employees hired from an overseas location may request a POV shipment; the vehicle will be stored until training is completed and then shipped to your overseas post assignment. But be cautious - if the POV specifications do not meet the requirements of the country you are shipping it to (including the U.S.), it will be returned, destroyed, or will need to be brought to legal specifications – all at your expense!

### **Moving Tips**

Be sure that the packing company prepares an accurate inventory of your HHE and properly indicates what is in each carton. A well-prepared and accurate inventory of your HHE is important for two reasons: 1) you may not need everything that you own to be shipped to your first post of assignment and, if you have an accurate inventory, you can withdraw from storage only those items and boxes that you need; and 2) if any of your items are damaged or lost, you will need an accurate inventory to file a claim for loss and/or damage. Consider making your own household inventory, especially of your more valuable items, with a digital still or video camera, keeping one copy with you and leaving one in a safe place in the United States, such as with a family member or friend.

Because you are transferring under government orders, your possessions are partially covered by the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees' Claims Act. This law provides for reimbursement of loss or damage to your shipments, up to \$40,000. However, the Department recommends that employees obtain full private commercial insurance covering loss and damage for their effects for the following reasons:

- The Claims Office pays the lesser of the repair cost or depreciated value, not replacement cost. Thus, any item damaged, destroyed, or missing will be reimbursed at less than replacement cost.
- The Claims Office recognizes that some items appreciate, but appreciation is never awarded. Essentially, you can get paid what you paid for the item (without depreciation), but also without appreciation, which means you will not recover the full appreciated value of the item.
- There are limits on what can be paid on certain items and certain category groups, such as expensive hobby equipment, jewelry, furs, china, musical instruments, art, and more. The best way to cover the value of these items is to have them covered by personal property insurance; and
- Private insurance will enable you to cover the cost of replacement should you sustain a catastrophic loss. Be sure to ask your insurer about “full replacement value” insurance.
- The Overseas Briefing Center offers a listing of insurance companies frequently used by Foreign Service personnel. Email [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov) for the list.

### **Purchases**

We advise that you not/not make any major purchases (cars, television sets, stereos, cell phones, etc.) before you receive your post of assignment. Many foreign governments place restrictions on the size, make, and even color of automobiles that may be imported into their countries. Electrical systems vary throughout the world, and many countries have their own television standards, which are not compatible with television sets made to receive U.S. television broadcasts. Smartphones and other portable devices made to U.S. specifications may not be compatible with cellular networks in all parts of the world. Also, many automobile and electronics companies offer special diplomatic purchase programs that can provide considerable savings.

## **Your Stay in Washington**

For those hired from outside of the Washington, D.C. area, your first few weeks are likely to be very hectic as you attempt to find temporary living quarters, get acclimated to your new surroundings, and start classes at the Foreign Service Institute. This section contains information to help make the transition as easy as possible.

### **Temporary Address**

Until you have located housing, you may use the following address and telephone number for mail and telephone messages: Your Name, c/o FSI Registrar, The Shultz Center, Building F, Room 2210, Arlington, VA 22204. Telephone: (703) 302-7143.

### **Salary and Per Diem**

The following segment outlines salary, per diem, locality pay, and allowance entitlements for new employees of the Foreign Service:

#### Employee hired from the D.C. area and then assigned to the D.C. area:

- Initial salary based on Overseas Comparability pay chart but no per diem during training.
  - If assigned to follow-on training of six months or more after the conclusion of orientation, employees can request to be assigned to Washington, D.C. This will in turn change the salary base to the Washington locality pay chart. (Those assigned to less than six months of follow-on training will continue to be paid using the Overseas Comparability pay chart.)
- Once assigned to the D.C. area on a domestic assignment, subsequent salary is based on Washington locality pay chart (locality pay).

#### Employee hired from the D.C. area and then assigned overseas:

- Initial salary based on the Overseas Comparability pay chart but no per diem during training.
  - If assigned to follow-on training of six months or more after the conclusion of orientation, employees can request to be assigned to Washington, D.C. This will in turn change the salary base to the Washington locality pay chart. (Those

assigned to less than six months of follow-on training will continue to be paid using the Overseas Comparability pay chart.)

- Once assigned overseas, subsequent salary includes post differential (if applicable) and applicable allowances.

Employee hired from outside the D.C. area and then assigned to the D.C. area:

- Initial salary based on the Overseas Comparability pay chart and receives per diem during training.
- Once assigned to the D.C. area on a domestic assignment, subsequent salary is based on Washington locality pay chart (locality pay).

Employee hired from outside the D.C. area and then assigned overseas:

- Initial salary based on the Overseas Comparability pay chart and receives per diem during training.
- Once assigned overseas, subsequent salary includes post differential/allowances, if applicable.

Employee hired from outside the D.C. area and then assigned domestically outside D.C.:

- Initial salary based on the Overseas Comparability pay chart and receives per diem during training.
- Once assigned to domestic location outside the D.C. area, subsequent salary includes appropriate locality pay.

Employee hired from the D.C. area and then assigned domestically outside D.C.:

- Initial salary based on the Overseas Comparability pay chart but no per diem during training.
- Once assigned to domestic location outside the D.C. area, subsequent salary includes appropriate locality pay.

Per diem is allotted to employees only, not to members of their families. Per diem is provided on a reimbursement basis. Employees will receive per diem on weekends between training days. Per diem does not cover moving expenses. The per diem allowance is divided into two components: 1) lodging and 2) meals/incidental expenses (referred to as M&IE).

- **Lodging:** The lodging expense portion of the per diem reimburses employees for the actual costs of lodging up to a daily maximum rate. Hotel taxes are not included in the lodging portion and can be claimed separately. The lodging portion covers hotel bills, apartment rental, utilities, basic telephone service, and furniture rental. Receipts are required to obtain reimbursement for lodging expenses. You may not collect lodging per diem if you are staying with friends or house-sitting on an “informal” lease. You will

need receipts and an original lease agreement from a commercial rental property to be reimbursed.

- **Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE):** The meals and incidental expenses portion of the per diem reimburses employees for meals and incidental expenses such as laundry, subway fares, etc. This allowance is a standard amount that employees automatically receive; employees are not required to submit receipts other than for expenditures in excess of \$75.

For current per diem rates, check the GSA website, [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov) under “Travel.”

**Please note that during orientation and follow-on training the per diem rate drops after 60 days and again after 120 days, and that an employee cannot be on per diem for more than one year.** To receive full reimbursement for your expenses, keep all receipts related to housing. Also retain copies of all receipts related to travel, including copies of your travel authorization, government travel request (GTR), airline ticket stubs or boarding passes, payment for a second suitcase of checked baggage, etc. You will be required to produce these in order to file your travel voucher and to receive your per diem.

You must file an expense voucher for your per diem expenses every 30 days. The procedures for claiming these expenses and liquidating the travel advance will be explained to you during orientation prior to submitting your first 30-day voucher. There also be information in your orientation materials on vouchers.

### **Housing**

Most training and orientation for new Foreign Service employees takes place at the NFATC, more commonly referred to as FSI, in Arlington, Virginia. There are a number of options for housing.

### **The Answer for Many New Employees: The Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Lodging Program**

The Department entered into contracts with a number of vendors to provide housing at various locations in the Washington, D.C. area for eligible employees receiving a travel authorization to attend Entry-Level training at FSI. Participating employees ARE NOT responsible for paying housing costs. This system can result in savings of many thousands of dollars over the course of the training period, plus alleviating employees new to Washington of the effort necessary to find housing and deal with the administrative details of filing claims for lodging and per diem allowances. Participants in this PCS Lodging Program receive the meals and incidental expenses portion of the per diem allowance on the standard sliding scale and their housing costs are paid directly to the provider. **We strongly encourage all new employees to take advantage of this program.** The participating properties offer free shuttle transportation to and from FSI. An additional advantage is that participants do not have to deal with contractual pitfalls that may ensue when booking their own lodging (including lease arrangements and early lease

termination penalties). For more information about the PCS Lodging Program please contact: [GTMPCSLodging@state.gov](mailto:GTMPCSLodging@state.gov).

### **Hotels and Short-Term Housing**

At FSI, the Transition Center's Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) can provide names and addresses of short-term housing and hotel facilities within an easy commuting distance of FSI. OBC's listings note which accommodations allow pets. Special care must be taken to ensure that adequate transportation arrangements can be made. The OBC can tell you whether the hotels provide shuttle service or are convenient to the State Department shuttle. Call (703) 302-7277 or email OBC at [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov) for the lists. Short-term housing options can also be found on the OBC internet at <https://www.state.gov/short-term-housing-options-from-the-foreign-service-institute>.

When inquiring about rates, be sure to ask about possible "government" rates, which usually fall within your per diem. Keep in mind that your per diem rate will drop after 60 days and again at 120 days (see more details below); your lower per diem may not cover the government rate as charged by the hotel.

### **Finding an Apartment**

Apartments are plentiful in the Washington, D.C. area, but economic or seasonal trends may affect the ease in locating an apartment within a relatively short period of time. Most apartments are unfurnished, but you can easily rent furniture. The Overseas Briefing Center maintains a list of short-term housing options in Northern Virginia. Call (703) 302-7277 or email OBC at [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov) for the list. Because many landlords do not accept pets, the OBC housing list includes pet-friendly establishments.

When looking for an apartment, please remember that **the per diem rate is reduced to 50% of the authorized rate after 60 days, and to 25% of the authorized rate after the second 60 days.** An apartment that seems reasonably priced during the first month may become prohibitively expensive when the per diem changes. **For this reason, we strongly encourage new employees to participate in the GTM PCS Lodging Program, as described below, at the beginning of their Washington assignment.** The cost of subsequent moves to participating properties will **not** be picked up by the Department if you have started out elsewhere.

Please note that employees may submit vouchers only for actual lodging costs incurred and paid, and not for fictional costs calculated by determining the maximum amount of lodging and per diem available. All lodging costs must be supported by a lease and receipts for allowable expenses. You should be cautious in dealing with landlords who may make oral assurances, but then hold you to a written contract or lease that gives you less than promised, or keep you bound to fixed dates that will be hard to change without costing more money. The average employee will be in training for about six months, and some will be in training for a longer period of time, although some may depart for their post after only 8-10 weeks of training. Please include a diplomatic clause in any lease that you sign; the lease has to be flexible enough



so that you can terminate it or extend it without penalty. Please carefully read the paragraph that provides information on the sliding per diem scale.

Most people stay in temporary apartments that do not require leases. They submit receipts on a monthly basis; no lease agreements should be submitted. Non-refundable “move-in” fees are not reimbursed. Front-loaded leases, in which rent is higher in the early periods and lower in later periods, are not prohibited but must specify actual rent for each period. Luxury services that are included in the rent, such as premium cable or free long-distance calling, are not covered by the lodging allowance, and vouchers will be adjusted to reflect the difference between the basic services and the non-covered premium services.

The Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) Housing Office is another resource within the Department of State. The AAFSW Housing Office is on the second floor of the Harry S. Truman (HST) State Department building, in room 2612A. It is staffed by volunteers who provide information on area housing and who keep records of properties which employees wish to rent. They also have a large collection of pamphlets on area public transportation. Each year, the Housing Office produces an up-dated list of short-term housing divided up by region: The District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland. You can reach the Housing Office by calling (202) 647-3573 or emailing [office@aafsw.org](mailto:office@aafsw.org). AAFSW members can access copies of the housing lists on the AAFSW web site, [www.aafsw.org](http://www.aafsw.org).

### **Local Area Transportation and Parking**

Information on Washington’s Metro (subway) system can be found at <http://www.wmata.com/>.

FSI is a short ride on a municipal bus from the Ballston Metro station and can also be reached by taking a free Department shuttle bus from the Rosslyn station. Ballston is on Metro’s orange and silver lines; Rosslyn is serviced by the blue, orange, and silver lines. The Department’s shuttle runs a round-trip through Rosslyn between the Foreign Service Institute and the main State Department building approximately every 30 minutes during working hours. If you prefer to drive, parking is available at FSI at a reasonable rate, although there may be periods when high use of FSI facilities may limit parking spaces available. Parking and daily transportation expenses are considered to be a personal expense and are not reimbursable. Locally-hired employees who do not receive per diem may qualify to receive a public transport subsidy.

Information on State shuttle bus stops and schedules will be provided at orientation.

Information on parking at the Shultz Center campus is available at <http://fsi.state.gov/default.aspx?contentId=306>.

For additional information on getting to FSI facilities, go to: <https://www.state.gov/directions-to-the-foreign-service-institute>



### **Transferring to the Foreign Service from within the State Department:**

As it gets closer to the time for you to leave your current office, you will want to talk to your bureau's Executive Office (EX) or post's Management Officer regarding their check-out procedures. Please have your current timekeeper contact the FSI student timekeeper ([FSIStudentTimekeeper@state.gov](mailto:FSIStudentTimekeeper@state.gov)) to discuss the process and timing of transferring your T&A. As long as the break between your leaving your current position and joining the Foreign Service is less than three days, your leave balances, health and life insurance, and TSP should automatically transfer. If you have dental or vision insurance, you will need to contact Benefeds (<https://www.benefeds.com/>) to let them know your change of status once you join the Foreign Service since those benefits do not automatically transfer. The same is true if you have a Flexible Spending Account; you will need to contact FSAFeds (<https://www.fsafeds.com/>) and if you have FLTCIP (<https://www.ltcfeds.com/>).

If you have a Department of State email account and your account is active, please contact the Information Management team at your current State Department office or post and ask them to prepare your account for transfer. You do not need to submit a transfer request. You will receive additional information on transferring your account from the FSI Orientation Team in their Welcome Letter.

### **Changing Federal Agencies Without a Break in Service**

Generally, employees moving from one federal agency to another are eligible to transfer all accrued leave (sick, annual, and home leave if applicable) in their balances at the time of transfer – as long as there is no break in service of three days or more and if the employee does not receive a lump sum payment of annual leave when departing. The only caveat is that both federal agencies (losing and gaining) must be covered under Title 5 leave regulations. The employee should check with their current employer before leaving. The majority of federal agencies are covered, but there are a few of the smaller agencies which are not. If the current employer is covered under Title 5, the Registrar team that handles onboarding issues will request your leave record from your previous agency. To have your leave balances transferred, you must request your losing agency prepare an SF-1150 and provide this to [PayIntake@state.gov](mailto:PayIntake@state.gov). **Once [PayIntake@state.gov](mailto:PayIntake@state.gov) receives your SF-1150 from your previous agency**, your leave balances will be available for review on your State Department Earnings and Leave Statements within 2-3 pay periods.

If you transfer to the Foreign Service, your FEHB enrollment and coverage continue without change when you transfer from one payroll office to another without a break in service of more than 3 days. GTM/TAC will promptly take action to transfer your FEHB enrollment to the Department of State. You can view more information on FEGLI, health insurance, Vision and Dental, Flexible Spending Accounts, and Long Term care at <https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/life-events/memy-family/im-moving-and-or-going-to-work-for-another-federal-agency/> Your losing agency needs to provide your TSP-19 to move your TSP election to the Department of State. Please ensure your Human Resources representative from your previous agency provides a copy of your TSP-19 to the GTM/TAC office upon employment with the Department of State. If you have dental or vision insurance, you will need to contact Benefeds

(<https://www.benefeds.com/>) to let them know your change of status once you join the Foreign Service since those benefits do not automatically transfer. The same is true if you have a Flexible Spending Account; you will need to contact FSAFeds (<https://www.fsafeds.com/>) and if you have FLCIP (<https://www.ltcfeds.com/>).

## Orientation to the Foreign Service

This section outlines the information you, as a new Foreign Service professional, will need for your first six weeks with the State Department. All candidates entering the Foreign Service are enrolled in an entry-level orientation course. The course is designed to introduce new employees to the Foreign Service and to provide them with core skills they will need throughout their careers. The goals of the course are to:

- Introduce new employees to the profession of diplomacy, State Department culture and structure, resources, the function of Department employees posted domestic and abroad and the mission of the Foreign Service;
- Define the multiple categories of employment within the Department, with an emphasis on the importance of cross-functional collaboration as a means to achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the National Security Strategy.
- Explain the Department's career development system for all generalist and specialist career paths within the Foreign Service;
- Develop required core skills, through specialized training in critical thinking, Foreign Service writing, public speaking, active listening, professional conduct, management, and interpersonal skills; and provide opportunities to apply these skills to real-life scenarios.
- Instill a sense of service, professionalism, responsibility, and accountability, while preparing new employees for the demands and rigors of Foreign Service life throughout one's career;
- Build *esprit de corps*, within and across career paths of generalists and specialists, to reinforce our overlapping work to advance National Security.
- Promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and cultivate the skills that support a workplace where all employees feel seen and heard and know their contributions are valued and important to the success of the mission.

The FS Orientation course includes lectures and discussions, engagement with key offices and agencies, and development of communication and DEIA skills. A leadership and team-building exercise is held during the orientation program to put these skills into practice. While professional dress is required during FS Orientation, you will also need seasonally appropriate casual clothes for this portion of the course.

To help you plan for your first few months in the Foreign Service, please read the following important information carefully.

- **Length of training:**
  - Orientation: All entering Foreign Service professionals are enrolled in an entry-level orientation course and are expected to attend all orientation sessions, regardless of their cone or specialty.
  - Follow-on Training: Generalists should be prepared to remain in the Washington, D.C. area for possibly more than twelve months for additional training, though some generalists, especially former Consular Fellow Professionals, may head to their first posts within a few weeks of completing orientation if they do not require any significant follow-on training. The majority of Foreign Service specialists spend up to six or seven months in training, although a small number may depart for their first assignment after only eight-to-ten weeks of training (depending on assignment).
- **Leave (vacation):** Leave is generally not permitted during orientation and follow-on training, except as approved by course coordinators/instructors for mandated court appearances, illness, or family emergencies.
- **First Paycheck:** New employees should expect to receive their first paychecks four to six weeks after the start of orientation. There is a two-week lag time between when you do the work and when you get paid for that work. For example, if you start work in pay period 4, you will receive that pay in pay period 5. Your first paycheck will include only the first two weeks' pay, which will begin the day you report for official duty i.e. the first day of orientation when the oath of office is administered. Occasionally, this delay can create financial challenges for new employees. You must make the necessary arrangements to ensure that you have sufficient funds to cover your expenses prior to receiving your first paycheck. Salary advances are not available during orientation.

## Documents for Orientation

Bring the following documents with you during the first week of your orientation and training at the Department of State:

- **Two (2) valid forms of identification** that establish both your identity and citizenship. At least one must include a photograph
- If not previously provided, please bring a copy of your form **DD-214** if you are a U.S. veteran, to ensure credit for military service is recorded.
- Emergency contact information. You will need to provide the names; home, work and e-mail addresses; and telephone numbers of emergency contacts.
- A copy of your **travel orders**.
- Unaccompanied Air Baggage (UAB) /Household Effects (HHE) packing inventory list(s).

## Employment Eligibility Verification (Form I-9)

On your first day of orientation, you must complete a Department of Homeland Security [Form I-9, OMB No. 1615-0047, Employment Eligibility Verification](#) and provide **all required**

**documentation** for the Registrar’s Office to confirm your eligibility to work in the United States. A passport is the most common form of ID used for this purpose, but a complete list of document combinations is listed on the I-9 form.

To confirm employment eligibility, the Department utilizes E-Verify to compare information entered by the employee on the Form I-9 to data provided in records from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Social Security Administration. The Department reserves the right to terminate employment if eligibility to work in the United States cannot be confirmed.

More information on *Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification* can be found on the [USCIS website](#).

### **State of Domicile (aka “Home of Record”)**

During your orientation class you will be asked to indicate which U.S. state you wish to declare as your state of domicile (aka “home of record”). There is more information about selecting your state of domicile at the end of Section Two under “Financial Information,” below.

### **Directed Assignment Process for New Employees**

***Please remember that all Foreign Service employees must be available to serve at any post based upon the needs of the Foreign Service. This includes every Foreign Service employee being willing to do his or her fair share of assignments in danger zones or at posts where health, living conditions, or medical support may be rudimentary, or where dependents may not be allowed to accompany the employee.***

The Bureau of Global Talent Management Office of Career Development and Assignments Entry-Level Division (GTM/CDA/EL) will direct your first two tours on behalf of the Director General. Assignments may be made to priority overseas posts or, for certain specialties, domestic assignments as determined by the career track and needs of the Service.

Employees must complete two directed assignments in their entirety, regardless of tenure status or personal grade, before they are eligible to move to a non-directed assignment.

Directed assignments are designed to meet top Department staffing and career development priorities to allow every employee the opportunity to meet tenure requirements. Decisions regarding assignments are based on the needs of the Foreign Service.

During the first week of orientation, Foreign Service generalists and specialists will receive a list of available positions worldwide to which GTM/CDA/EL may direct them for their first assignment. New employees will have multiple opportunities during orientation to learn about posts, positions, and the assignments process. You will also meet with your Career

Development Officer (CDO) and the Career Development and Assignments (CDA) team responsible for making entry-level assignments to convey your personal and professional priorities as they relate to the list of positions you received.

- Employees should expect that at least one of their directed assignments will be to a hardship tour.

Entry-level generalists serve their first two tours overseas and must serve a minimum of one year in a consular position. Most will complete two to four years of consular work based on service needs.

- Employees who benefit from more than 0.17 extra points on the register granted under the Recruitment Language Program will be assigned to a post using their recruitment language for either their first or second assignment. Those who received bonus points for tests in more than one language should also be ready to use those skills as needed.
- Entry-level specialists only serve within their area of specialty and will have a limited number of priority positions to bid on during their first and second assignments. Some specialists will complete their first directed tour domestically.

You will receive your first assignment at a “Flag Day” ceremony toward the end of orientation. By agreeing to accept assignments based upon the needs of the Foreign Service, you should understand that you might not receive the assignment for which you believe you are best suited, and you may be assigned to a post that is not among your preferred options. Employees may not appeal directed assignments.

While you will have multiple opportunities to discuss your personal and professional goals with Career Development Officers (CDOs) as you bid on your first and second directed assignments, you – or others on your behalf – may not ask for a specific position to be added to your list in order to accommodate your personal or professional priorities.

- This is particularly important to understand in advance if you are – or plan to become – a **tandem employee** (two legally married FS employees from one of the five Foreign Service agencies: State, USAID, Commerce, Agriculture, and the U.S. Agency for Global Media).
- Please read further the **Tandem Assignments** guidance in Section 2 below before accepting an offer to join an orientation class. There are no guarantees that tandems can be assigned together.

Once you fully complete two directed assignments, you will bid in an open assignments process that requires you to lobby and compete for positions with other employees in your grade and skill code.

**Researching Posts:** You will be able to use the resources of the Overseas Briefing Center (OBC), located in the Transition Center, Building E, Room E2126, at FSI. Bidding is a family decision, and the Department encourages all members of the family to educate themselves about possible

posts. Family members not in Washington may use OBC's online resources. General information about the OBC can be found at <https://www.state.gov/overseas-briefing-center-obc>.

The OBC provides access to post-specific information through their online portal, "Post Info to Go," available on the Department's intranet, GO Browser, and on a password-protected internet network. For each post, OBC provides documents and information, which includes: post welcome materials; childcare and schooling options; employment opportunities for spouses/partners; housing; shipping pets and any post or country-related restrictions; technology; disability and accessibility; LGBTQI+ considerations, recreation and sports; safety and security; vehicle restrictions; personal insights from employees living at particular posts, and more. The OBC also maintains information on each domestic assignment location for Diplomatic Security special agents.

More details on the OBC and the Global Community Liaison Office (with specific information on education, employment, and other family-related issues) can be found in Section Three.

### **Additional Training for your Assignment:**

Soon after you receive your first assignment on Flag Day, you will also receive a schedule of additional training needed prior to your departure for post, which may include functional training for the job to which you've been assigned, and language training, if necessary. Other courses may be included, if time permits. Depending on the job to which you are assigned, beyond your orientation training you could be in training from six weeks to a year. Your Career Development Officer or Diplomatic Security Class Coordinator will explain further when the time comes.

### **Tandem Assignments**

A tandem couple is two legally married FS employees from one of the five Foreign Service agencies, State, USAID, Commerce, Agriculture, and the U.S. Agency for Global Media. Being married to someone in any other government agency or branch of service is not defined as a tandem.

You should not seek to join the FS as a tandem if you are not willing to serve apart during your careers – given the nature of the Foreign Service and the world in which we serve, family separation happens for many reasons, and that includes for tandem employees.

The number of tandem employees in the Foreign Service has increased dramatically to nearly 15% of the Service. This makes finding tandem assignments challenging, however a career in the FS as tandem can still be rewarding and provide opportunities to serve together.

While the Department makes every reasonable effort to identify opportunities for tandem employees to serve together, often it is not possible, and it can be particularly challenging early in your career when the Department must direct your assignment to meet service need and career development priorities for tenure.

- During your first two directed assignments, your assignment will take the lead if you are a member of a tandem and your spouse is a Mid- or senior-level officer or in another Foreign Affairs Agency).
- The Department cannot specifically add or create positions for tandem employees, nor direct an assignment based on tandem status as that would be advantaging an employee for an assignment based on marital status, which is not allowed based on EEO law/regulation/Department policy.
- Tandem spouses may serve apart at some point, and maybe more than once. Assignment flexibilities do exist for mid- and senior-level tandem employees to align their tours and serve together, and the Department expects them – not first- and second-tour employees – to take advantage of those flexibilities if the priority is to serve together. New workplace flexibilities may allow tenured employees (who have

completed two full directed assignment tours and met their EL service obligations) opportunities to serve in a domestic position while living with their FS spouse overseas (see Domestic Employee Teleworking Overseas ([DETO](#)) site for information). FS tandem spouses will have to weigh serving together against locations and the jobs you may want for other reasons.

- Nepotism regulations may prevent tandems from serving together during their careers. It is also illegal for an employee to advocate for the assignment of a family member (including a tandem spouse) for any reason. Whether you are a current FS employee or are considering the FS, do not advocate for assignments for or on-behalf of your spouse, or seek others to do so for you.
- The timing of joining the FS can affect employees' potential to serve together. Deferring an appointment may allow for a better alignment of assignments. For example, new FS Generalist employees do not serve domestically. New Diplomatic Security Agents only serve domestically on their first tour. Understanding that timing can help non-directed tandem employees plan their assignments accordingly. At times, waiting can allow the new employee to better align with a spouse who may be assigned domestically or overseas.

## Language Testing and Training

### Language Testing

Generalists: Shortly after beginning orientation, employees who took .17 bump up points will be directed to take a full language exam. In some cases, other employees will be directed to take exams depending on their declared language ability and the composition of the bid list. After Orientation concludes, employees can schedule exams in other languages with the FSI testing unit.

Specialists: Foreign Service Specialists who already passed a foreign language *remotely administered* test before orientation but have not taken an *in-person* language test are required to take an *in-person* language test during orientation. Orientation staff works with the Language Testing and Assessment Division before the class begins to ensure testing times for these students. There may be some Specialists with language skills who have not previously taken a language test but would like to be tested during orientation for bidding purposes. However, because the orientation course is relatively short, there is no time to schedule these additional language tests then. In those cases, Specialists must wait until they are in onward training to schedule a new language test.

### Language Training

Depending on your post of assignment and your previous language experience, you may receive from eight to a maximum of 44 weeks of language training. Adult EFMs are also eligible for language training on a space-available basis. Members of Household (MOHs) are eligible for



FSI's distance-learning language courses and so-called FAST courses of a few weeks' duration, also on a space-available basis.

## Tenure and Other Career Considerations

Most Specialists are considered for career tenure after 24 months of service while Generalists are considered after 36 months; this period is most inclusive of time spent in orientation and language training. The tenure board may defer a decision during the first review based on performance concerns or because the employee has not had the opportunity to demonstrate their clear potential for a successful career through the middle ranks of the Foreign Service.

Foreign Service Generalists and some Specialists operate under an "up-or-out" promotion system that limits the time an employee may continue to serve at the same rank ("Time in Class"). Promotion through the middle ranks of the Foreign Service is therefore a career requirement. Employees should consult with CDOs, formal and informal Foreign Service Mentors, and an extensive offering of brown-bag talks and webinars to understand how to demonstrate the skills and performance required to achieve promotion to the next highest rank. Rank (or Grade) also determines what jobs employees may aspire to fill through the mid-level bidding process.

The Foreign Service "counts down" to the senior ranks, i.e., FSO and FSS candidates enter at levels FS-09 to FS-04, depending on specialty and other factors, and are promoted through the entry level (highest rank FS-04), to mid-level (FS-03 and FS-02), to senior level (FS-01), which is the protocol equivalent to the military rank of Colonel. Senior Foreign Service (SFS) ranks are designated as FE-OC (Counselor), FE-MC (Minister Counselor), FE-CM (Career Minister), and FE-CA (Career Ambassador), in ascending rank.

Foreign Service employees are subject to mandatory retirement for age and for expiration of their time-in-class (TIC) and time-in-service (TIS) limits. Employees separated for age are retired at the end of the month in which they turn 65. TIC/TIS limits vary by occupational specialty and grade level.

## Leave and Allowances

The Foreign Service provides its employees with three basic types of paid leave: annual leave, sick leave, and home leave. In addition, the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act provides up to 12 administrative workweeks of paid parental leave in connection with the birth or adoption of a child.

- **Annual Leave** allows employees to take vacation and time off for personal purposes. Foreign Service employees accrue annual leave based on years of credited government service:

**Years of Service**

**Annual leave**

Fewer than 3 period)	13 days per year (accrued at 4 hours per pay period)
Between 3 and 15 period)	20 days per year (accrued at 6 hours per pay period)
More than 15 period)	26 days per year (accrued at 8 hours per pay period)

- **Sick Leave** may be granted when an employee is unable to perform his/her duties due to sickness, injury, or pregnancy. Sick leave may also be utilized to obtain medical, dental, and optical care, or for the care of a family member or bereavement.
- **Home Leave** is provided to employees by order of Congress to ensure that Foreign Service employees have the opportunity to spend significant periods of time in the United States while pursuing careers overseas. Home leave accrues at the rate of 15 workdays per calendar year while on overseas assignment and may be used at the end of a two or three-year assignment abroad, or at the midpoint of a three- or four-year tour. In addition to providing paid home leave, the U.S. Government will also pay for you and your family to travel to your home leave address in the United States; lodging and per diem are not paid during home leave and are the employee's responsibility.
- Foreign Service employees are entitled to all **federal holidays**. U.S. Government missions abroad frequently observe some local holidays in addition to federal holidays, but circumstances might require officers to work during certain holidays.

Under the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act, starting from October 1, 2020, direct hire Foreign Service or Civil Service employees who have completed at least 12 months of federal service are eligible for 12 administrative workweeks of **paid parental leave** in connection with the birth of a child of an employee or the placement of a child with an employee for adoption or foster care.

The Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 mandates that eligible employees be provided with up to a total of 12 workweeks of **unpaid leave** during any 12-month period to care for an immediate family member (spouse, child, or parent) with a serious health condition; or to take medical leave when the employee is unable to work because of a serious health condition. This law has since been amended to allow up to 26 weeks to care for a member of the Armed Forces. To apply for the Family Medical Leave Act, employees must have completed at least one year of federal service.

There is another option for leave without pay. The latest Leave Without Pay (LWOP) pilot program, launched in November 2019, allows **tenured** employees to take unpaid leave for up to three years. **Untenured Foreign Service employees** should be aware that they can apply for LWOP for up to 90 days, but it will not "stop the clock" on their tenure reviews if the LWOP is approved.

The U.S. Government provides several allowances to ease the financial difficulties associated with frequent moves around the world. The most common are:

- **Advance of Pay** is an option for employees who are transferring from the U.S. to a foreign post or from one foreign post to another. Under this program, you may receive up to three months of pay in advance to help meet the financial burdens associated with transferring to a foreign post. Advances of pay are interest-free and are repaid through payroll deductions over a period of several months.
- **Cost of Living Allowance** is paid to employees serving in posts where the cost-of-living is significantly higher than in Washington, D.C. This allowance is not taxable.
- **Post Differential Pay** is additional compensation of up to 35 percent of base pay paid to employees assigned to hardship posts where extraordinarily difficult conditions exist. Differential allowances are taxable.
- **Post Danger Pay** is paid to employees posted to exceptionally dangerous posts, who may receive additional danger pay of up to 35 percent of base pay. Danger allowances are taxable.
- **Foreign Transfer Allowance** is paid to those not receiving per diem who are leaving their own residence for temporary quarters prior to overseas assignment.
- **Home Service Transfer Allowance** is paid to help defray costs associated with reestablishing a household in the U.S. upon reassignment to the U.S. from a foreign post.

## Financial Information

### State of Domicile (aka “Home of Record”)

During your orientation you will be asked to indicate which U.S. state you wish to declare as your state of domicile (aka “home of record”). Factors to consider are outlined below.

### Income Tax

You will need to consider carefully which state to declare as your domicile because you must pay any applicable income taxes to that state. The following discussion is meant only to raise some pertinent issues. Human Resources Officers (HROs) at the State Department are not tax experts. Please contact your local tax authorities and/or a tax attorney before coming to Washington if you have any questions regarding your tax status.

Determining which state to call your domicile can be a confusing process, especially for those who have lived, worked and/or attended schools in a number of different states. Your answers to the questions presented below will give you some idea of which state you should declare as your domicile.

- Where do you own property?
- Where do you live now? How long have you lived there?

- Where do you presently pay state income taxes (if applicable)?
- What ties do you have in a particular state (e.g. family)?
- Where do you hold investments?
- Where do you maintain bank accounts?
- Where do you vote?
- Where have you obtained licenses (marriage, driver's, professional)?
- To what religious, civic, and professional organizations do you belong, and where are those organizations located?
- Where would you like to retire?

While your answers to these questions will not necessarily prove domicile, you will want to maintain as many ties to the state you choose as your domicile as possible. It is difficult to claim a state in which you have no ties as a domicile in order to obtain a tax break, and some states may insist that they are your state of domicile for tax purposes based on your time spent there, voting record, property ties, and school attendance by children.

When choosing your state of domicile, you should be aware that some states do not have state income taxes and that some states do not require that state income taxes be paid on earnings from outside the state. In sum, no easy answers exist. If you have doubts, contact your local tax authorities or a lawyer for assistance.

The IRS has issued a decision that all legally married, same-sex spouses may file their federal income taxes as either married filing jointly or married filing separately. You will need to consult your state/local tax authorities to find out how you should file your state/local tax returns. As a federal employee you must file annual tax returns.

## **Banking**

During the first two weeks of training, you will be given the opportunity to meet with representatives from the State Department Federal Credit Union (SDFCU). The SDFCU is located in the main State Department building (the Harry S Truman building) near the "Foggy Bottom" café on the lower level and is open to all employees of the Department and their families. The Credit Union offers services similar to a bank, and offers many services designed especially for Department of State employees. The Credit Union has ATMs and/or branches at many State Department annexes, including at FSI and the National Defense University.

You may find a major credit card helpful during your first few weeks in Washington because you will not receive a paycheck for at least one month. If you are coming from outside the Washington, D.C. area and you have not elected to participate in the GTM PCS Lodging Program, you are likely to incur many hotel and restaurant expenses during the first few weeks until you are settled.

## **Recap: Points of Contact**

[Registrar@state.gov](mailto:Registrar@state.gov): Registrar's Office assists candidates while they are go through clearance processes and throughout their time on a register, including deferral and do not call order requests.

[FSOnboarding@state.gov](mailto:FSOnboarding@state.gov): Registrar team that provides assistance to candidates who have received an invitation to join a Foreign Service class, including support for questions related to onboarding paperwork and processing

[TACFSNewHire@state.gov](mailto:TACFSNewHire@state.gov): Liaison team that answers questions related to administrative aspects of joining the Foreign Service and directs new hires to appropriate points of contact

PCS Customer Support ([GTM-EX-IDSD@state.gov](mailto:GTM-EX-IDSD@state.gov)): Questions about travel orders

[dosta@cwtsatotravel.com](mailto:dosta@cwtsatotravel.com): Carlson Wagonlit Reservation Office (Note: This email is for sending travel orders only, not for making reservations or general inquiries.) To reserve plane or rail tickets, call 866-654-5593

[TransportationQuery@state.gov](mailto:TransportationQuery@state.gov): Transportation Division (for moving and pack-out information for domestic new hires)

[FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov): Overseas Briefing Center for hotel/short-term housing options

[GTMPCSLodging@state.gov](mailto:GTMPCSLodging@state.gov): Reservations and questions about the Department of State Direct Bill/Lodging Program

[office@aafsw.org](mailto:office@aafsw.org): Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide Housing Office for short-term housing options

[OAA@state.gov](mailto:OAA@state.gov): Questions about disability accommodations and accessibility solutions.

## SECTION Three – You and Your Family

### *The Foreign Service and Your Family*

The Foreign Service experience is more than just a career: it is a way of life for employees and their families that requires frequent moves that necessitate adjustments to new cultures, languages, and environments.

Moving from Washington D.C. to Ouagadougou to Islamabad is not the same as moving around the United States. For this reason, potential Foreign Service employees must carefully consider the effects that a Foreign Service career will have on their families and ensure everyone is aware and prepared for what they may encounter. They must consider issues such as the potentially limited availability of employment (both within the Embassy or Consulate and on the local economy) for their spouses or partners, the sufficiency of educational opportunities for their children, the availability of adequate medical facilities, and the varying levels of physical security.

#### **Family Members and Members of Household:**

“Family” and “family member” are defined as:

1. Spouse – marriage is a prerequisite to receive benefits.
2. Children - are unmarried and under 21 years of age or, regardless of age, are incapable of self-support. This term includes, in addition to natural offspring, step- and adopted children and those under legal guardianship of the employee or the spouse, when such children are expected to be under such legal guardianship at least until they reach 21 years of age and when dependent upon and normally residing with the guardian;
3. Parents (including step- and legally adoptive parents) of the employee or the spouse, when such parents are at least 51 percent dependent on the employee for support;
4. Sisters and brothers (including step- or adoptive sisters, or step- or adoptive brothers) of the employee or the spouse, when such sisters and brothers are at least 51 percent dependent on the employee for support, unmarried and under 21 years of age or, regardless of age, are incapable of self-support;
5. A parent, sibling, or child, regardless of age or dependency, who acts as the official host or hostess for an employee who has no spouse residing with him or her at the post, **when determined by the Department to be in the interest of the government.**

All the above family members fall into the category of designated “Eligible Family Member” (EFM) at posts abroad, and as such, will be included on official USG travel orders and allowed to reside abroad with the employee. Please be aware, however, that only nuclear family (i.e., spouse and children) will be included on a new hire’s travel orders to come to Washington, D.C. for orientation and training. Most EFMs may also be eligible to receive the following types of benefits (this list is not all inclusive; check with the relevant office to confirm eligibility as needed):

- Included in post evacuations and/or “Medevac” at no cost to the employee
- Access to post health units
- Visa support (subject to the laws and policies of the host country)
- Preferential employment status within the U.S. Mission and at the Department of State (additional details can be found on the Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) website: <https://www.state.gov/gclo>)
- Issuance of embassy ID cards and compound access
- Access to post’s mail facilities (including DPO/APO/FPO)
- Access to long-term training opportunities

Here is a link to 14 FAM 511.3 that contains the definition of an EFM ([14 FAM 510 FOREIGN SERVICE TRAVEL REGULATIONS' AUTHORITY AND APPLICABILITY \(state.gov\)](https://www.state.gov/gclo)).

There is also a category designated **Member of Household (MOH)**, which refers to unmarried partners, adult children and aging parents who are not 51 percent or more financially dependent on the employee. MOHs typically do *not* receive the above benefits. Learn more about Members of Household on GCLO’s website: <https://www.state.gov/global-community-liaison-office/foreign-service-life/member-of-household/> Please note that if your family member does not meet the definition of an Eligible Family Member (EFM) for travel purposes, as noted in 14 FAM 511.3 ([14 FAM 510 FOREIGN SERVICE TRAVEL REGULATIONS' AUTHORITY AND APPLICABILITY \(state.gov\)](https://www.state.gov/gclo)), per 3 FAM 4180 ([3 FAM 4180 MEMBERS OF HOUSEHOLD \(MOHS\) \(state.gov\)](https://www.state.gov/gclo)), the MOH will not be included on your travel orders and the government will not pay for their travel expenses either to Washington, DC, for orientation and training or to post.

## Moving Around the World

Below is some basic information about moving overseas. More detailed information will be available during orientation.

### Travel Costs

The United States government pays the travel expenses that you and your EFMs incur when traveling to overseas assignments, subject to certain restrictions. Once a year, the government will also provide an educational allowance to cover the cost of one roundtrip travel between a child’s school and the employee’s post for children in secondary education (grades 9-12) and college education. Furthermore, if the parent is posted abroad and the child does not normally reside with the parent, the government will provide payment of one round trip per year for an unmarried child under the age of 21 to visit either of the child’s parents, or for one of the child’s parents to visit the child abroad, subject to certain criteria (3 FAM 3750). Finally, the government provides Emergency Visitation Travel (EVT) to all Foreign Service employees and certain EFMs residing at the employee’s post of assignment for the purposes of a family emergency. Generally, eligible EVT travelers are provided one round trip flight for emergency family visitation.

## **Housing**

Housing for Foreign Service employees varies around the world. At many overseas posts, employees live in accommodations that are either owned or leased by the United States government. Usually, these accommodations are furnished. Employees who live in government-sponsored housing do not pay rent; nor do they pay for basic utilities, except for telephone, cable, and Internet services.

At overseas posts where the government neither owns nor leases accommodations, employees are given a Living Quarters Allowance (LQA). This allowance is intended to cover the average costs of rent, heat, electricity, and water in the city where the post is located. LQA quarters may or may not be furnished depending on the post.

*Post management in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations and the Office of Accessibility and Accommodation will install modifications to accommodate the needs of employees or family members with disabilities.*

Detailed information on housing is available for employees to review in advance of assignment and travel to post.

## **Shipment and Storage of Effects**

As noted earlier, the United States government pays for the transportation of the household effects of new employees to the Washington, D.C. area. Throughout a Foreign Service career, the United States government will either ship or store the employee's household effects, up to a certain weight limit based on official travel orders. Generally, employees are entitled to a combined household effects (HHE) shipping and storage allowance of 18,000 pounds. Employees assigned to a post where furniture is provided may ship up to 7,200 pounds of HHE to post at government expense. The government will pay for the storage of the remainder of the employee's HHE as long as the combined shipment/storage total does not exceed 18,000 pounds.

Employees assigned to a post where quarters are not furnished by the U.S. government may ship up to 18,000 pounds of HHE to post. The government will pay for the storage of any HHE the employee elects not to ship, as long as the shipment/storage total does not exceed 18,000 pounds. Employees assigned to hardship posts where the acquisition of basic foodstuffs and dry goods is difficult or impossible may be granted a consumables shipment allowance in addition to the normal HHE shipping allowance. Finally, the U.S. government will pay for the shipment of one privately-owned vehicle to overseas posts, subject to certain restrictions.

## **Training for Spouses and other Eligible Family Members**



Adult EFMs and MOHs of Foreign Service employees are eligible to attend an orientation offered by the Foreign Service Institute's (FSI) Transition Center. The Spouse Orientation Program is offered online. Spouse Orientation dates are set in conjunction with the FS Orientation schedule. For more information, contact [FSITCTraining@state.gov](mailto:FSITCTraining@state.gov). EFMs are also encouraged to use the resources of the Transition Center at the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center, known as the Foreign Service Institute, and at [Transition Center - United States Department of State](#).

Acceptable forms of ID for those using State Department shuttles include formal documentation reflecting registration in an FSI course, when presented with a picture ID. More information will be provided to Foreign Service employees during their orientation to share with their family members.

## **The Global Community Liaison Office**

The Global Community Liaison Office (GCLO) at the Department of State 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 it serves 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 at more than 200 posts. GCLO's program and services focus on:

- [Family Member Employment](#): GCLO provides a dedicated team of professionals working to expand employment options and information resources for family members in the U.S. and abroad, through career advising, development of family member employment programs, and advocacy. Finding meaningful professional development options while accompanying a spouse or partner overseas on multiple tours can be challenging. About 25percent of family members find work inside the Mission and a smaller percentage find work outside the mission, most commonly by working remotely with an existing private employer or government agency, by starting a home-based business, or through teaching at an international school.
- [Education & Youth](#): GCLO provides support to families on all matters related to the diverse educational needs of children including boarding schools, home study, special needs education, college admissions, summer programs, and transitions from school to school and re-entry. GCLO's Education and Youth Team collaborates with the Office of Overseas Schools (A/OPR/OS), Office of Allowances (A/ALS), Bureau of Medical Services/Office of Child and Family Program (MED/CFP) and the Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF) to ensure that families have the information necessary to make the best education choices for their children.
- [Crisis Management](#): GCLO's Evacuations and Support Services Teams provide confidential assistance in coping with personal and post crises and assists with the

Department's efforts to support evacuees. Its guidance and referral services include providing information, support, and advocacy on issues related to divorce, eldercare, contingency planning, MOHs, and support for foreign-born spouses.

- [Unaccompanied Tours \(UT\) Support](#): GCLO's Unaccompanied Tours Support Team assists employees and their family members before, during and after their unaccompanied tour. The team provides guidance and resources to help employees make informed decisions and to support a family through their official unaccompanied tour experience. They also manage and operate the Children's Medals and Certificates of Recognition Program, which recognizes the sacrifice that children make while their parent is serving in a high-risk unaccompanied tour.
- [Expeditious Naturalization for Foreign-Born Spouses](#): GCLO assists foreign-born spouses of direct-hire Department of State Foreign Service employees with the expeditious naturalization process. GCLO provides spouses with instructions and resource materials to submit the naturalization application, liaises with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for updates on their cases, and helps them to schedule and prepare for their naturalization interview and exams.
- [Community Liaison Office \(CLO\) Program](#): GCLO extends its services to overseas communities through Community Liaison Offices at more than 200 posts worldwide. Community Liaison Office Coordinators identify the needs of their diverse community and respond with effective programming, information, resources, and referrals. They serve as the community advocate for employees and their families and advise post management on quality-of-life issues. A CLO Coordinator supports the diverse community at post through Eight Areas of Responsibility: Welcoming, Orientation, and Departures; Employment; Education; Crisis Management; Guidance and Referral; Communications and Outreach; Liaison with Mission and Community; and Events Planning.

Contact Information: GCLO is in Room 2133 of the main State Department building. The telephone number is (202) 647-1076 or (800) 440-0397; email: [GCLO@state.gov](mailto:GCLO@state.gov); website: <https://www.state.gov/gclo>.

## **Employment of Eligible Family Members (EFM)**

Family members are an important part of any Mission's overseas employee community. Embassies and Consulates may hire family members of U.S. direct-hire employees assigned to an overseas Mission provided they have a need and the budget. Employment opportunities can differ significantly from post to post due to a variety of factors such as the profile of the mission, size, budget, etc. Most positions available to family members are in administrative support, with a small percentage of roles offering expanded responsibilities. Citizenship of the family member, recent naturalization, ability to obtain a clearance, language skills, qualifications, and nepotism review may affect employment options.

When preparing for an overseas assignment, there are steps family members can take to maximize the options and be better prepared, such as learning who is eligible to apply for an advertised position, and under what authority they may be hired. Given the limited number of positions inside overseas missions, employment is never guaranteed, and EFMs may find it difficult to follow a traditional career path in their chosen field. Nevertheless, family members can succeed in finding challenging and satisfying work while posted abroad. GCLC's Employment Team helps EFMs identify and apply for employment overseas by providing the following employment services and resources.

- Information on its website: <https://www.state.gov/global-community-liaison-office/family-member-employment/>
- [The Family Member Employment Report \(FAMER\)](#): The FAMER is a snapshot of family member employment at post. It describes the employment situation, reports the number of family members employed both inside and outside the Mission, and outlines the work permit process at post.
- The Global Employment Initiative (GEI): GEI was established by GCLC to help family members explore employment and professional development options while posted overseas and when returning to the U.S.
- Global Employment Advisors (GEAs): GEAs provide employment coaching sessions, training workshops, and career development services at no cost to EFMs and MOHs. GEI is not a job placement service; instead, it supports family members in their job search by providing resources, guidance, and facilitating skills development. Currently, there are 20 regional Global Employment Advisors (GEAs) covering more than 200 posts including the U.S, creating a worldwide network of employment coaches who understand the challenges of working overseas and returning to the U.S. Find a full list of GEAs on GCLC's website.
- GCLC's email subscription connecting Foreign Service family members with potential employers within the U.S. Department of State as well as with other federal agencies and private organizations.

The Department of State has established the following programs to support family member employment:

[Expanded Professional Associates Program \(EPAP\)](#): EPAP provides [Appointment Eligible Family Members \(AEFM\)](#) with employment opportunities in key positions at missions abroad. EPAP is available to U.S. citizen spouses and represents a limited number of positions inside missions worldwide. It is important to note that a current EPAP position at post is not a guarantee of that position continuing in the future.

[Foreign Service Family Reserve Corp \(FSFRC\)](#): To more quickly mobilize AEFMs to fill available positions in missions overseas, the U.S. Department of State developed the Foreign Service

Family Reserve Corps (FSFRC). Upon acceptance, AEFMs are appointed into a Family Member Appointment ([FMA](#)), without compensation or benefits, allowing the Department of State to improve efficiency in the hiring process when filling positions at posts abroad. For general questions about the FSFRC, email [FSFRC@state.gov](mailto:FSFRC@state.gov). Family members who meet eligibility requirements should apply as soon as possible.

[Non-Competitive Eligibility \(NCE\)](#): NCE is a special hiring authority through which AEFMs can be appointed to federal positions without competing with the general public once they return to the U.S. EFM's who have completed 52 weeks of service (or cumulative 2,087 hours in a WAE position) with a fully successful (or better) performance rating in a Family Member Appointments (FMA) overseas will earn NCE.

[The Professional Development Fellowship \(PDF\)](#): The PDF program is open to EFM spouses and MOH partners of direct-hire U.S. government employees from all agencies serving overseas under Chief of Mission authority. PDFs support spouses and partners in their efforts to develop, maintain, and/or refresh their professional skills while overseas. PDFs range from \$1,000 up to \$2,500 and are awarded on a reimbursable basis for professional development activities.

[Bilateral Work Agreements](#): To increase opportunities for employment in foreign countries for family members of USG employees assigned to an embassy or consulate overseas, bilateral work agreements and *de facto* work arrangements are in place with over 150 countries to facilitate the work authorization process. These agreements and arrangements allow spouses of U.S. employees stationed abroad to seek employment on the local economy, subject to certain restrictions. Family members seeking employment on the local economy need to be aware of the work permit regulations in their host country.

Family members of U.S. direct-hire employees assigned to an overseas mission may be eligible for training through FSI. Find more information on GCLC's [Training Resources for Family Members](#) webpage. Please note, family members over the age of 18 who are employed by the U.S. government at the U.S. direct-hire employee's post of assignment, are required to attend the Foreign Affairs Counter Threat (FACT) training. However, FACT is not a condition of employment. Family members who receive an offer of employment with the U.S. government prior to overseas travel should plan to take FACT or receive a waiver.

## **Education of Children**

The Department of State strives to assist parents posted abroad to meet the educational needs of their children, both financially and with guidance and information about schools and educational programs. The Department provides grant assistance to nearly 200 schools in over 130 countries around the world. The educational standards of these schools reflect a similar pattern to high performing domestic schools. At posts without Department-assisted schools, the Department provides information on other options to parents. Parents can select their preferred educational option, including boarding school away from post and home study in countries where home study is legal.

The Department's Office of Overseas Schools assists families with their educational needs. The office is staffed with Regional Education Officers (REOs) who travel extensively throughout the world advising schools and families and gathering information about educational options, including services for students with exceptional learning needs. The REOs are available to provide detailed information about education at each post in their region. The Office also maintains a public website at [www.state.gov/m/a/os](http://www.state.gov/m/a/os) with Fact Sheets and Special Needs Profiles on all assisted schools and other bidding resources. Contact information: SA-1 (Columbia Plaza, 2401 E St. NW, Washington, DC), Room H328; phone: +1 (202) 261-8200; e-mail: [OverseasSchools@state.gov](mailto:OverseasSchools@state.gov).

The Department defrays the costs of educating children overseas through education allowances. The education allowance enables children to receive a level of education comparable to that provided without charge by public schools in the United States. The allowance varies by post and is designed to cover the costs of tuition at the designated adequate school(s) at post. Parents always have the choice of where and how to educate their children, but in some countries the allowance may not cover every available school. In some places, adequate educational programs, particularly at the high school level, may be unavailable. At such posts, parents will have the option of sending their children to boarding school using the "away-from-post school allowance," or to educate their children through a virtual school and/or home study if home study is legal in the host country. Parents can choose to send their child to boarding school and use the away-from-post education allowance, even if the school at post is considered adequate.

GCLC's Education & Youth Team specializes in assisting families in making educational decisions by providing guidance and referrals, including the decision to choose a boarding school. Families can get first-hand information about specific schools at post by contacting the Community Liaison Office (CLO) at posts overseas. Since schools at post are independent institutions not run by the U.S. Government for the most part, they are not bound by U.S. laws to provide the same level for disability support. Special needs education overseas may not be as robust as it is in the U.S. public school system, but many of the Department's assisted schools have been working to increase their special needs education programming to meet the needs of students. GCLC Education & Youth Team works in close cooperation with the Office of Medical Services/Child and Family Programs when there is a question of placement for a child with exceptionalities, and with the Office of Overseas Schools, which assesses educational supports in K-12 schools at post.

Daycare and preschool are at the expense of the employee. To help families going abroad anticipate childcare arrangements, GCLC publishes the annual Overseas Childcare Report outlining types of care available and approximate costs at posts around the world. Families can reach out directly to the CLO Coordinator at post to request the Overseas Childcare report or they can contact [GCLCAskEducation@state.gov](mailto:GCLCAskEducation@state.gov) to request reports for specific posts.

## **Child Care (Washington, D.C.)**

WorkLife4You (WL4U) is a comprehensive and confidential resource and referral service that assists employees who may be looking for ways to balance the demands of their professional and personal lives. Services are available at no cost to all Department employees, and their family members.

“Diplotots One” is the Department of State’s childcare center, providing day care for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and kindergarten-age children during the work week. Diplotots One is located in SA-1 (Columbia Plaza, at 2401 E St. NW, Washington, D.C.). It accommodates children from 6 weeks to 5 years old. For more information, please contact the center at [YMCADiplototsEarlyLearning@ymcadc.org](mailto:YMCADiplototsEarlyLearning@ymcadc.org) -FSI also has its own childcare facility. It accommodates children from 6 weeks to 5 years old. For more information, please contact the Deputy Director at: Phone 703-302-7501; Fax 703-302-7503; E-mail: [Childrensintlschool@gmail.com](mailto:Childrensintlschool@gmail.com). FSI’s Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) maintains information on other centers located near the Institute. For more information, call the OBC at (703) 302-7277 or email [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov).

## Eldercare

Employees caring for parents have access to the following Department support services:

- WorkLife4You (WL4Y) provides 24/7 assistance with issues such as selecting eldercare caregiving support, senior living arrangements, home safety, and more. WL4Y also offers senior care management (including one free in-person assessment and implementation care plan per year) that guides employees through care planning options step by step.
- Lunchtime seminars, literature, and virtual support groups that deal with caring for aging parents.
- Eldercare Emergency Visitation Travel offers a limited travel benefit that permits employees and their eligible spouses residing at an overseas post to visit a parent who needs family assistance due to a serious health problem.

## Health

The State Department is dedicated to a policy of obtaining medical care for its Foreign Service employees and their families in all parts of the world. Nevertheless, local medical support is uneven and, at some posts, virtually nonexistent. In an effort to care for the special health needs of Foreign Service employees and their families, the Department’s Bureau of Medical Services (MED) provides medical assistance to Foreign Service employees and their families serving in overseas posts.

If health problems require hospitalization while the employee and family are overseas on government orders, the State Department will act as the secondary payer to the employee’s personal health insurance.

If adequate medical care cannot be provided at post, MED can authorize medical evacuations, either to the United States or to the nearest designated point where appropriate care can be provided.

The State Department supports bereavement travel, allowing a Foreign Service employee or their spouse to travel to the United States to attend the funeral of an immediate relative, or, **on a one-time basis**, emergency visitation travel to visit an immediate relative suffering from a life-threatening illness.

MOHs, are generally *not* eligible for at-post medical services or Department-authorized medical evacuations. Please make sure that your MOHs have private medevac insurance to cover these needs. MOHs are also not eligible for bereavement travel or emergency visitation travel to visit ill relatives. The Overseas Briefing Center provides information on health insurance and emergency evacuation insurance for Members of Household. For a list of options, email [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov).

## Security

The Department spends more than one billion dollars per year to provide security for its employees, their families, and U.S. missions overseas. Unfortunately, terrorist acts and criminal activities do occur and may affect a Foreign Service family. Therefore, Foreign Service families occasionally have to live with certain restrictions at some posts, such as housing on compounds, curfews, or in-country travel restrictions.

FSI offers cost-free seminars to Foreign Service employees, EFMs, and MOHs concerning preparations and precautions to take in order to reduce security risks while overseas.

In addition, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security manages the FACT course, CT650, which is mandatory training for 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. The 40-hour FACT course provides participants with the hard-skills and practical knowledge necessary to recognize, avoid, and respond to an array of the most common and most deadly threats.

## The Transition Center

The Transition Center at FSI prepares employees and their family members for effectiveness in the foreign affairs community by facilitating transitions throughout their careers, including retirement.

The Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) provides:

- “Welcome to Washington” information including childcare resources, hotel lists, short-term housing lists, transportation, and school and community profiles.
- Logistical and planning information about Foreign Service life including preparation for an overseas assignment, allowances, household and vehicle insurance, auto purchase, financial and personal affairs, and traveling with pets.



- A collection of online and printed materials on every overseas post including post-specific information on spouse/partner employment, housing, LGBTQI+, disability and accessibility, security, technology, education and childcare, consumables, medical facilities, recreation, culture, the importation of pets, and more.
- [Foreign Service Assignment Notebook: What Do I Do Now?](#), a cornerstone publication that addresses all the details involved in an overseas move.
- [Resources for children and teens](#) experiencing international relocations.
- [Protocol and U.S. Representation](#) online resources.
- Internet website: <https://www.state.gov/overseas-briefing-center-obc> contains general information on international moves, from bidding to cultural information and logistics. Foreign Service employees and their adult family members will have access to specific OBC information on the pass-worded Post Info to Go internet website as well.

The [Overseas Briefing Center](#) (OBC) hours are M-F from 8:15 a.m.-5:00 p.m. For more information, email [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov).

**The Training Division** offers:

- A wide range of popular programs and special events designed to meet the diverse needs of employees and family members preparing for an overseas assignment or adapting to life in the Foreign Service. The training continuum includes presentations and courses targeting those new to the Foreign Service such as Moving Overseas Logistics for the Foreign Affairs Community, Cross Cultural Communication for the Foreign Affairs Community, and Protocol and U.S. Representation in the Foreign Affairs Community.
- Programs such as Basics of Overseas Employment for EFMs and Legal Considerations for EFMs Working Overseas seminars provide participants with career skills and knowledge they can use both at home and overseas. Children's concerns are addressed by the Going Overseas in the Foreign Affairs Community with Children workshop and the Young Diplomats Overseas Preparation program offered each spring and summer.
- The Security Overseas Seminar is targeted to meet the security awareness needs of U.S. Government personnel and families going overseas. All foreign affairs agency personnel are required to attend the seminar before serving abroad for more than 45 days in a 12-month period. Adult family members are highly encouraged to attend. Children in grades 2-12 are offered age-appropriate security training during the Young Diplomats Overseas Preparation program.
- For more information, email [FSITCTraining@state.gov](mailto:FSITCTraining@state.gov).

**The Center of Excellence in Foreign Affairs Resilience (CEFAR)** provides:

- Resilience courses, trainings, workshops and consultations to strengthen the well-being and performance of the Department of State and the wider foreign affairs workforce. These engagements offer evidence-driven, science-based solutions that foster individual, team, family and community resilience.



- Popular courses and workshops including *Resilience Leadership*, *Building Resilience in the Foreign Service*, *Strengthening Individual and Team Resilience*, *Building Resilience in the Foreign Affairs Family*, *Resilience Preparation for High Stress Assignments*, *High-Stress Assignment Outbrief*, *Managing and Preventing Burnout*, *Building Psychological Safety*, and *Rest and Recovery to Improve Performance*.
- Resilience experts and practitioners with decades of experience in the foreign affairs community whose consultations help create a workforce culture that embraces research-based resilience practices that reduce stress, enhance productivity, increase well-being and drive organizational change.
- Resources for individual, team, family and community resilience at the [CEFAR SharePoint site](#). For more information about resilience programs contact [FSITCResilience@state.gov](mailto:FSITCResilience@state.gov).

**The Career Transition Center provides:**

- Training in the areas of retirement planning and job search/transition to CS and FS employees of the Department of State and other agencies in the international affairs community (State, USAID, FAS, FCS, Peace Corps). Courses include:
- RV 105, Early/Mid-Career Retirement Planning Seminar (two days) for employees in early and middle stages of their careers and who have more than ten years until retirement;
- RV 101 Retirement Planning Seminar (four days) for employees with ten or fewer years until retirement;
- RV 103 Financial Management and Estate Planning (one day-embedded in RV 101);
- RV 104 Annuities, Benefits and TSP (one day-embedded in RV 101).

Employees may enroll in RV 103 and/or RV 104 as stand-alone courses.

In addition, CTC offers a distance learning course, RV 106 Financial Planning/TSP and Annuities (FERS and FSPS) (a three-hour webinar plus a video) and RV 102 Job Search/Transition Program, a four-week transition course that is a benefit of retirement, which addresses all aspects of job search and transition. RV 102 may be taken in the final 30 (CS) or 60 (FS) days of active service, or within twelve months after retirement, as long as enrollment is complete prior to retirement. The first four weeks consist of full-time classroom work (large and small groups and individual consultations) for all participants. The second month, for FS participants, is for independent job search and transition activity.

Note: Employees may enroll in RV 101, 103, 104, 105 or 106 as often as once per fiscal year.

Course descriptions: <https://fsitraining.state.gov/Search?q=RV>.

For more information, e-mail: [FSICTC@state.gov](mailto:FSICTC@state.gov).

## **Employee Consultation Services (ECS)**

The services of this office are available to all State Department staff and families. Licensed clinical social workers provide free counseling on personal or professional issues, from marital problems or job stress to grief or anxiety. Consultations (face-to-face or by phone) are

completely confidential. ECS can also help assess the educational requirements of a special-needs child.

Contact information: SA-1 (Columbia Plaza, 2401 E St. NW, Washington, D.C.), Room H-246; phone: 202-634-4874; e-mail: [MEDECS@state.gov](mailto:MEDECS@state.gov)

**Employee Organizations (EOs) & Independent Organizations  
Supporting the Foreign Service**

**Department of State's Employee Affinity Group (EAG) Recruitment Fair, January 2021** – Video introduction to EAGs: [Department of State's Employee Affinity Groups \(EAG\) Recruitment Fair – YouTube](#)

**The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA)** <http://www.afsa.org>; e-mail: [member@afsa.org](mailto:member@afsa.org)

**The Associates of the Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW)** [www.aafsw.org](http://www.aafsw.org)

**Americans by Choice (ABC)** [ABC@state.gov](mailto:ABC@state.gov)

**American Muslims and Friends at State (AMFAS)** [AMFAS@state.gov](mailto:AMFAS@state.gov)

**Balancing Act at State** [BalancingActExecutiveBoard@state.gov](mailto:BalancingActExecutiveBoard@state.gov)

**The Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF)** [www.fsyf.org](http://www.fsyf.org); [fsyf@fsyf.org](mailto:fsyf@fsyf.org)

**Arab-Americans in Foreign Affairs Agencies (AAIFAA):** Ms. Khulood Kandil, [KandilKH@state.gov](mailto:KandilKH@state.gov)

**Asian American Foreign Affairs Association (AAFAA)** [AAFAA@state.gov](mailto:AAFAA@state.gov)

**Carl T. Rowan Chapter of Blacks in Government (CTRBIG)** [bigctr@state.gov](mailto:bigctr@state.gov)

**Civil Service Association (CSA)** [CSADOSD@state.gov](mailto:CSADOSD@state.gov)

**Council for Career Entry Professionals (CEP Council)** [CCEPCouncil@state.gov](mailto:CCEPCouncil@state.gov)

**Disability Action Group (DAG)** [DAGCouncil@state.gov](mailto:DAGCouncil@state.gov)

**Executive Women at State (EW@S)** [EWS@state.gov](mailto:EWS@state.gov)

**FirstGens@state** [FirstGensState@state.gov](mailto:FirstGensState@state.gov)

**Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA)** [GLIFAA@yahoo.com](mailto:GLIFAA@yahoo.com)

**GRACE** [GRACE-SteeringCommittee@state.gov](mailto:GRACE-SteeringCommittee@state.gov)

**Hispanic Employees Council of Foreign Affairs Agencies (HECFAA)** [HECFAA@state.gov](mailto:HECFAA@state.gov)

**Jewish Americans in Diplomacy (JAD)** [JAD-Members@state.gov](mailto:JAD-Members@state.gov)

**Military/DoD Family Employee Organization** [militaryspouseandfamilyboarderg@usaid.gov](mailto:militaryspouseandfamilyboarderg@usaid.gov)

**Native American Foreign Affairs Council (NAFAC)** [NativeAmericans@state.gov](mailto:NativeAmericans@state.gov)

**Pickering and Rangel Fellows Association** [PRFABoardMembers@state.gov](mailto:PRFABoardMembers@state.gov)

**Presidential Management Fellowship Advisory Council (PMFAC)**  
[PMFAdvisoryCouncil@state.gov](mailto:PMFAdvisoryCouncil@state.gov)

**Returned Peace Corps Volunteers at State (RPCV)** [RPCVs@state.gov](mailto:RPCVs@state.gov)

**Singles at State** [SinglesAtState@state.gov](mailto:SinglesAtState@state.gov)

**South Asian-American Employee Association (SAAEA)** [SAAEA@state.gov](mailto:SAAEA@state.gov)

**Thursday Luncheon Group (TLG)** [TLG1973@state.gov](mailto:TLG1973@state.gov)

**Toastmasters** [ToastmastersatState@groups.state.gov](mailto:ToastmastersatState@groups.state.gov)

**Veterans at State (VETS)** [veterans@state.gov](mailto:veterans@state.gov)

**Veterans Support Program (VSP)** [StateVSP@state.gov](mailto:StateVSP@state.gov)

**Working parents at State (WP@S)** [WorkingParentsLeadership@state.gov](mailto:WorkingParentsLeadership@state.gov)

**Tales from a Small Planet** [www.talesmag.com](http://www.talesmag.com)

**Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training** [www.adst.org](http://www.adst.org)

**Diplomatic and Consular Officers Retired Foundation (DACOR)** [www.dacorbacon.org](http://www.dacorbacon.org)

*For a complete list of current diversity organizations affiliated with the State Department, visit [careers.state.gov/learn/diversity-inclusion/affinity-groups](https://careers.state.gov/learn/diversity-inclusion/affinity-groups).*

## Useful Resources

### E-MAIL ADDRESSES

[careers@state.gov](mailto:careers@state.gov): General questions about the Foreign Service

[BEXFSOAeqipquestions@state.gov](mailto:BEXFSOAeqipquestions@state.gov): Questions about initiating and/or releasing your e-QIP (SF-86)

[DSFSPREEMP@state.gov](mailto:DSFSPREEMP@state.gov): DS candidates point of contact during the pre-employment process until candidates are placed on the register. Once on Register, [Registrar@state.gov](mailto:Registrar@state.gov) will be point of contact.

[ClearanceCoordinator@state.gov](mailto:ClearanceCoordinator@state.gov): To reach the Clearance Coordinator team about your security clearance

[securityclearance@state.gov](mailto:securityclearance@state.gov): Questions about security clearances, information to be included in your e-QIP, or after your e-QIP has been submitted

[DSDirectorPSS@state.gov](mailto:DSDirectorPSS@state.gov): To report information as required of security clearance holders as outlined in .

[Registrar@state.gov](mailto:Registrar@state.gov): Registrar's Office assists candidates while they are go through clearance processes and throughout their time on a register, including deferral and do not call order requests.

[FSONboarding@state.gov](mailto:FSONboarding@state.gov): Registrar team that provides assistance to candidates who have received an invitation to join a Foreign Service class, including support for questions related to onboarding paperwork and processing.

[TACFSNewHire@state.gov](mailto:TACFSNewHire@state.gov): Liaison team that answers questions related to administrative aspects of joining the Foreign Service and directs new hires to appropriate points of contact

[GCLO@state.gov](mailto:GCLO@state.gov): Global Community Liaison Office

[dosta@cwtsatotravel.com](mailto:dosta@cwtsatotravel.com): Carlson Wagonlit Reservation Office (Note: This email is for travel orders only, not for general inquiries.)

[TransportationQuery@state.gov](mailto:TransportationQuery@state.gov): Transportation Division (for moving and pack-out information)

[FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov): Overseas Briefing Center for hotel/short-term housing options

[GTMPCSLodging@state.gov](mailto:GTMPCSLodging@state.gov): Reservations and questions on the Department of State Direct Bill/Lodging Program with Oakwood Apartments

[OAA@state.gov](mailto:OAA@state.gov): Questions about disability accommodations and accessibility solutions.

OverseasSchools@state.gov <mailto:overseasschools@state.gov>: Office of Overseas Schools

**Bureau of Medical Services (MED):**

[Medcaremanagement@state.gov](mailto:Medcaremanagement@state.gov): Questions about medical exams and the minimum medical qualification standard.

[MedMR@state.gov](mailto:MedMR@state.gov): Address where candidates submit their medical documents to establish their medical records and email their scanned medical reports; **NOT** for questions about the minimum medical qualification standard.

[MEDASEC@state.gov](mailto:MEDASEC@state.gov): Address to set up a medical examination at the State Department's Office of Medical Services

[medclaims@state.gov](mailto:medclaims@state.gov): Address to send information for DOMESTIC medical claims for payment of expenses

**Language Testing:**

[PostFSOAtesters@state.gov](mailto:PostFSOAtesters@state.gov): To schedule remote and in-person language tests

## WEBSITES

Benefits Information, including salary – Generalists: [careers.state.gov/work/benefits/fso](https://careers.state.gov/work/benefits/fso)

Benefits Information, including salary – Specialists: [careers.state.gov/work/benefits/fss](https://careers.state.gov/work/benefits/fss)

Career Transition Center:

<https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-management/foreign-service-institute/transition-center/>

Center of Excellence in Foreign Affairs Resilience: <https://www.state.gov/resilience-cefar>

Global Community Liaison Office (resources for family members): <https://www.state.gov/GCLO>

Foreign Affairs Manual: [fam.state.gov/](https://fam.state.gov/)

Foreign Service Assignment Notebook: What Do I Do Now?: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-service-assignment-notebook-what-do-i-do-now/>

Foreign Service Institute (FSI): <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-management/foreign-service-institute/>

<https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-management/foreign-service-institute>

FSI – Directions and Parking: <https://www.state.gov/directions-to-the-foreign-service-institute>

Health Insurance Information: [www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/](https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/)

Language Tests – Generalists (Under “Some Other Things to Consider”): [careers.state.gov/work/foreign-service/officer/test-process](https://careers.state.gov/work/foreign-service/officer/test-process)

Language Tests – Specialists (Under “Some Other Things to Consider”): [careers.state.gov/work/foreign-service/specialist/selection-process](https://careers.state.gov/work/foreign-service/specialist/selection-process)

Office of Overseas Schools: [www.state.gov/m/a/os](https://www.state.gov/m/a/os)

Overseas Briefing Center: <https://www.state.gov/overseas-briefing-center-obc>

State Department Credit Union: [www.sdfcu.org](https://www.sdfcu.org)

Thrift Savings Plan: [www.tsp.gov](https://www.tsp.gov)

Transition Center: <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-management/foreign-service-institute/transition-center>

Transition Center Training: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-affairs-life-skills-training>

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority: [www.wmata.com/](http://www.wmata.com/)



## Career Candidate Checklist

### Registrar's Office [Registrar@state.gov](mailto:Registrar@state.gov)

#### Security Clearance

- Clearance Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_
- Complete e-QIP/form SF-86 within **five** days of receiving the link or contact the Clearance Coordinator.
  - Date link received: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Date form due: \_\_\_\_\_
- Complete an SF-85PS if married to/cohabitate with a foreign national.
- Email [BEXFSOAeqipquestions@state.gov](mailto:BEXFSOAeqipquestions@state.gov) to confirm that you have released your e-QIP package. For DS applicants, email [DSFSPREEMP@state.gov](mailto:DSFSPREEMP@state.gov).

#### Medical (complete within 90 days of passing Assessment)

- Step 1: Schedule a medical exam. The medical exam may be completed for you and your family members by a licensed medical provider of your choice, to include medical doctor (MD), Doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO), nurse practitioner (NP), physician's assistant (PA) or a post's Health Unit medical provider, if resources are available.
- Step 2: Employee/EFM Medical provider complete DS-1843/DS-1622
  - DS-1843 Medical History and Examination for Foreign Service for Individuals Age 12 or Older
  - DS-1622 Medical History and Examination for Foreign Service for Children Age 11 and Younger
  - **Bring the DS-3069 for the provider to review.**
- Step 3: Send your completed forms and medical reports along with the DS-3069 signed by HR for authorization
  - Via e-mail in a PDF format to [MEDMR@state.gov](mailto:MEDMR@state.gov) (preferred)
  - Or fax to 202-647-0292 (less preferred)

#### Reimbursement of Medical Expenses

- Only the medical expenses related to your pre-employment medical exam that are not covered by your medical insurance may be reimbursed by submitting a copy of the DS-3069 payment authorization form given to you by human resources, your medical expenses invoices, and your insurance company's "Explanation of Benefits " to Medical Claims at [MEDCLAIMS@state.gov](mailto:MEDCLAIMS@state.gov) as a PDF.

#### Veterans

- Submit a DD-214 to your Registrar POC
- Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Language Testing

- E-mail [PostFSOAtesters@state.gov](mailto:PostFSOAtesters@state.gov) to schedule a language test for .17 bonus points.
- Date of test: \_\_\_\_\_ Score: \_P/F\_\_\_\_\_
- E-mail [PostFSOAtesters@state.gov](mailto:PostFSOAtesters@state.gov) to schedule an in-person test at the Foreign Service Institute (candidate bears all associated costs including travel to DC.)
- Date of test: \_\_\_\_\_
- Score: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Suitability Review Panel

- The Registrar's office notifies you via letter that your name has been placed on the register.

#### Appointment

- You receive the name of your HR Assignment Technician in your appointment letter from the Registrar's office:  
\_\_\_\_\_



*If you have suggestions for specific information you wish had been included in this guide, or that would have made your transition into the Foreign Service smoother, or simply comments on the contents of this guide, we would greatly appreciate hearing from you. Simply send an e-mail message to the [fsoaquestions@state.gov](mailto:fsoaquestions@state.gov) mailbox, with the subject line: "To the Attention of the CCG Editor." Thank you!*

