

**Transcript of Bridget Roddy,
Education Program Specialist,
on the FLO CLO Role in Overseas Special Education**

Hi my name is Bridget Roddy and I am the program specialist for Education and Youth and Crisis Management and Support in the Family Liaison Office. Today I will be presenting the FLO and CLO role in special education. How many of you have used any FLO services while in the US or abroad? How many of you have used CLO services overseas? What were they...etc...

In the handout provided, you will be able to follow along with and reference to later the topics covered. Susan already mentioned our overall office programs and services, so now let's talk specifically about education. FLO is an advocacy office and in this capacity we like to be aware of the issues and concerns that affect you and advocate for changes in policy and regulations for others that may also be affected. If we keep hearing about a certain concern amongst parents, we would like to be able to address that issue with others in the Department to see what could be done to ameliorate the situation. We work very closely with all the offices represented today and rely often on their expertise.

In addition to advocacy, we hope people see our office has a place to find resources and guidance whether it's by reading information on our internet site, emailing or calling us, or stopping by our office in Main State. We are here to help you to evaluate the best educational method for your child whether it is attending a school at post, boarding school, home school, or returning (or going for the first time) to school in the US. We also encourage parents to join some of the Yahoo groups out there that are specific to the Foreign Service or foreign affairs agencies. Some of the more popular groups are FSSpecialNeed, FSParent, and Livelines which allow employees and family members to share information with each other. Even just by going on the archives and searching for certain key words, you are able to pull up a lot of information, some of which may be appropriate for you. Remember though that messages or postings in the archives can sometimes be years old, so it's always best to not rely solely on that posting and make sure the information is still credible.

Now I'd like to talk about specific topics of assistance.

Allowances and regulations – unfortunately these are often challenging to interpret and understand so while you are certainly welcome to contact the Office of Allowances with any questions, you are also welcome to contact us in situations where perhaps several allowances are interacting, or it's in relation to some other questions or intertwined into other allowance questions.

One focus of our office is on boarding schools. If there is not a school at post that will be able to fully meet your child's needs, you may be considering sending your child to a boarding school. We can offer information and guidance on how to decide if the boarding school option is right for your child, how to evaluate boarding school programs, questions to ask admissions counselors, and how to virtually 'visit' a boarding school.

Alternatively, you may be in a situation where you are exploring the option of home schooling your child - you can also contact us about home schooling.

Because FLO is concerned about your child's overall development, we also offer support with the college concerns such as financial aid, scholarships, essay writing, standardized testing, or

admissions. We try each year to hold a college application workshop in DC and last year Nancy Rosenberg spoke to families about college considerations for children with learning differences. This workshop was filmed and we are exploring different mechanisms for which we can have the program available to families.

Families may at some point in the employees' career, be posted to Washington DC and will look for either public or private schools in which to enroll their child. After being overseas and dealing with American or international schools, you may have some questions about schools in the DC area such as how the location of your house determines what school your child attends, public versus private, how to enroll your child, required testing, special education programs in different counties, and communicating with and how to talk to school personnel.

While you're back here, your child may be interested in attending some of the Foreign Service Youth Foundation activities such as the welcome back picnic each fall, swimming in the summer, or a ropes course in the spring. There are events geared towards elementary, middle, and high school age groups in the DC area. Whether you're overseas or in DC, there are a couple of monetary awards for community service, essay writing, and art co-sponsored by FSYF to which your child may want to apply.

If you're just going to be in the DC area for a short while such as R&R, home leave, or training and you are looking for either educational, athletic, artistic, or other summer programs and camps, we can point you in the right direction to find those.

I just wanted to point out that we have a publication on our internet site which may be of interest to you. The publication "Education Options for Foreign Service Family Members" has one chapter that highlights education for children with special needs. Of course, you may also find useful information in the other chapters.

Now that we've gone over the FLO role in special needs education, I'd like to shift gears to the CLO role. The CLO at post may be the first point of contact if you have a question or concern about your child and are not sure where to go. The CLO will be able to point you in the right direction to find the answers you need. When you are bidding on a post, or exploring your bidding options, you will be trying to identify appropriate resources at post to meet the needs of your child. Just as you would contact Overseas Schools and schools at post, talk to ECS, you should also contact the CLO who often has the most up to date information on options for and availability of schooling and resources at post. He/she is the one on the ground who should know if, for example, a local occupational therapist will be moving out of the area or if a school is hiring a new special education teacher. You can find a CLO's contact information be either contacting FLO, looking on the global address book for CLO, post (such as CLO, Athens to find Athens CLO) or by visiting the post's intranet site.

I hope this presentation has been helpful to you to learn how FLO and CLO can assist your family and your child with special education needs. There is much support in the Department (as we've heard from the various offices today) for you whether you are overseas or in the DC area and we welcome you to contact FLO or CLO at any point in your career and your child's development.