

# Chapter 1

# PREPARATION CHECKLIST



## POST RESEARCH

- ❑ Determine your needs and those of the people and pets who travel with you. Creating a list of “essential” and “desirable” post criteria will help you quickly narrow down possible assignments. Factors might include: health and medical issues, pet entry restrictions—or lack of them, spouse employment opportunities, day care, schools appropriate for your child, personal preferences (“must jog daily”), and, of course, career development and financial considerations. Weighing all of these factors (not just the last two) can reduce hassles and expenses, while increasing the odds of a successful overseas assignment.

## OBC Resources

- ❑ Investigate Overseas Briefing Center materials. OBC country briefing boxes contain a wealth of post information. TMTHREE welcome cables outline practicalities such as housing, cars, and pet entry requirements. Post reports, welcome packets, Personal Post Insights, and post-specific information on employment, schools, security, shopping, consumables, and tourism fill in the picture. Over 1000 videos, DVDs, and CDs provide vivid glimpses of many posts. Embassy newsletters and school yearbooks give more details on everyday life.

For those who cannot travel to Arlington, Virginia, all post electronic files are now available via the State Department intranet at <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/epb/epb.asp>. The new Post Info To Go system allows files to easily be viewed from your desktop or e-mailed to others without intranet access.

*Users should remember that the information is provided and specifically intended for the use of U.S. Government employees and family members assigned to U.S. overseas missions. It is not designed nor intended for individuals not affiliated with a U.S. mission and should not be distributed to other individuals or entities. The documents are not intended and should not be construed as representing U.S. Department of State policy or guidance to the general public.*

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### RESOURCES

### Access to the Department of State for Family Members

*Family members without diplomatic passports must have an appointment (or be cleared by an employee) to be admitted to most Department of State buildings. A picture ID, such as a passport or a driver's license, is required to get a visitor's pass. Visitors must be escorted at all times in Department of State facilities. Holders of U.S. diplomatic passports do not need escorts.*

*Any person enrolled in training at the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center will be issued a pass. Individuals without a Department of State or Shultz Center pass will be admitted to the Overseas Briefing Center with a photo ID during regular weekday hours (8:15 a.m. – 5 p.m.). For information on after-hours entry, call (703) 302-7277 or see <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c7414.htm>.*

### Internet Resources

- Explore online information. Government policies limit Internet postings, but it is still possible to find a great deal of useful material. OBC links to helpful resources from our website: [www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc](http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc), select "Overseas Briefing Center," select "Bidding Resources."
- Get passwords to online subscriptions. OBC subscribes to CultureGrams, and Relocation International to supplement post-supplied cultural information. User names and passwords are available on the OBC intranet site (see end of chapter) or request them by e-mail ([FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov)).

### Intranet Resources

- Make the most of the State Department intranet, also known as the OpenNet. If you live overseas and do not have a log-on, many embassies now feature intranet "kiosks" for family members. These are well worth a visit when researching future assignments. In the U.S., ask the employee who has intranet access to e-mail information to you or print it for home use.
- Investigate the OBC intranet site. Helpful features include the Post Info To Go system, country-by-country pet entry requirements, "Destintation Iraq," updated links, information on short-term housing and hotels, handouts on related topics, and more. "Personal Post Insights" give the opportunity to provide (and read) anonymous opinions on everything from housing and schools to special delights of post and shopping advice.

## *Family Member Employment*

- ❑ Research employment options. The Family Liaison Office provides the primary point of contact for family member employment. The FLO Employment page (<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1959.htm>) contains information about different kinds of overseas employment, bilateral work agreements and de facto work arrangements, resource links, advice on networking and resume writing, and more. On the intranet, Family Member Employment Reports (FAMERs) list jobs spouses currently hold at post (<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo>).

Be sure to investigate employment possibilities before bidding on any post; don't make assumptions based on past experiences in other countries.

## *School Research*

- ❑ Find out whether posts have schools supported by the Department of State's Office of Overseas Schools. Fact sheets are available at <http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/>.
- ❑ Investigate other educational options. Some posts use many different schools. While these may not be considered "adequate" by official definitions (for instance, because of requiring religious instruction or not offering U.S. curriculum), parents may be pleased with them. Check post reports and other post-specific education information at the Overseas Briefing Center, and take a look at the Office of Overseas Schools' intranet listing of additional schools at <http://aopr.a.state.gov/pdf/schools.pdf>. For more information, see Chapter 16, "Education for Foreign Service Children."
- ❑ Research special education resources, if needed. Make sure that posts offer adequate opportunities for your learning disabled or gifted and talented child before bidding by contacting the Employee Consultation Service (M/MED/ECS) first at [medecs@state.gov](mailto:medecs@state.gov). ECS coordinates post approval and medical clearance recommendation for your special needs child. Facilities and school programs vary greatly from post to post.

## *Health and Medical Information*

- ❑ Consider health-related issues in each country. Factors that could affect your health include climate, altitude, presence of infectious diseases, sanitation, security issues, pollution, and more. The Office of Medical Service now offers online access to post medical handbooks and recommended immunizations at [www.travax.com](http://www.travax.com). To access Travax, email [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov) to receive the username and password for employees.

## *Pet Entry and Living Conditions*

- ❑ Investigate pet entry requirements and living conditions. OBC offers the "Pet Chart," which summarizes pet entry information primarily for cats and dogs. More details are available on the intranet (<http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc>, click on "Overseas Briefing Center," select "Traveling with Pets," select "Pet Entry Requirements by Country.") If you have a pet other than a cat or dog, you will need to do additional research to verify entry information before bidding.

Find out host country attitudes towards pets and consider living conditions. Posts providing housing primarily in apartments might discourage larger pets, for instance.

## **PRELIMINARY PREPARATIONS**

While you wait to find out your new assignment, you can begin some preparations. You may wish to sort out household effects, put important papers in order, make banking arrangements, attend to medical needs, and take available training.

## *Reference Materials*

- ❑ In addition to this publication, obtain "It's Your Move" from Transportation (available online at <http://logistics.state.gov> (password: "logistics") or 5th Floor, 2121 Virginia Ave., "SA-3").

### *Important Papers and Records*

- Draw up a power of attorney to leave with a lawyer, relative, or friend so that you have someone who can act legally on your behalf while you are abroad. (See Chapter 22, “Legal Issues.”)
- Update the will of each adult member of your family. Have it properly witnessed, with the original placed in a safe place or with a responsible person in the United States. Keep a copy in your possession.
- Draw up a “letter of instruction” to be followed in the event of death (with a copy for your lawyer, relative, or friend), including preferred funeral arrangements and names, addresses, and telephone numbers of relatives and close friends to be notified. This is not a legal document and does not substitute for a legal will.
- Consider setting up a revocable living trust and placing your real estate assets in it, especially if you own property in more than one state. This mechanism enables your survivors to bypass probate and offers other advantages.
- Update beneficiaries on insurance policies, retirement accounts including the Thrift Savings Plan, final salary, and so on.
- Consider creating a medical directive. This includes a health care power of attorney, which designates someone to make medical decisions for you if you are unable, and a living will, which lists your treatment preferences in case of terminal illness or permanent unconsciousness. State Department employees can get a copy of “Five Wishes” free for this purpose. (See “Resources.”)
- Scan important papers, including past tax returns, and save on CD or other portable storage device. Store a copy in a safe place or with someone in the U.S.
- Consider photocopying scrapbooks and irreplaceable photos, leaving the originals and negatives with a trustworthy person in the U.S.
- If in the U.S., rent a safe deposit box to store important records (although not wills) and consider

whether someone else should have access to it (See the section on safe deposit boxes in Chapter 23, “Finances.”)

### *Banking*

- Establish at least one joint checking account accessible to either partner.
- Arrange for all regularly recurring direct deposits, such as salary or rental income.
- Arrange for automatic deductions (i.e., mortgage, student loans) and online bill payments.
- Confirm that your account has overdraft protection.
- Make sure that your automatic teller machine (ATM) card can be used internationally. Ask about additional fees, if any, and international networks that might allow you to withdraw money for free at certain banks. If necessary, get a new personal identification number. Make sure both spouses or partners have cards and know the PIN.
- Investigate the fees that your credit card company charges for international transactions. Visa and MasterCard charge a one percent and American Express a two percent currency conversion fee. Some banks add up to two percent on top of that. Often smaller regional banks, online institutions, and credit unions (including USAA and the State Department Federal Credit Union) do not demand additional fees.
- Request credit files or confirm your credit ratings. You may request a free credit file disclosure from each of the national consumer credit reporting agencies once a year.



See [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) for more information.

- Establish sufficient credit to cover emergencies. Make sure that both the employee and the spouse or partner have credit cards.

### ***Insurance***

- Obtain additional term life insurance, if desired, before getting an international assignment. Most companies will not insure anyone with actual overseas orders. Choose a guaranteed rate for a number of years to avoid future difficulties in renewing policies while out of the U.S.
- Check whether your life insurance covers death in terrorist or “perils of war” incidents. (Federal Employees Group Life Insurance [FEGLI] and Worldwide Assurance for Employees of Public Agencies [WAEPA] do provide this coverage). American Foreign Service Protective Association (AFSPA) life insurance offers this for foreign affairs employees and family members.
- Consider enrolling in the Immediate Benefit Plan through AFSPA. This plan provides \$15,000 within two business days of official notification of death for just \$2 per pay period.

### ***Real Estate***

- Decide what to do with property you own: rent or sell? If selling, interview at least three real estate agents. If renting, get detailed recommendations for property managers and select a company. These steps should take place at least three or four months before your departure date.
- If possible, view the Transition Center’s DVD, *Managing Your Rental Property from Overseas*. This annually updated presentation features experts describing all aspects of rentals, including tax implications.
- Prepare your property for sale or rental. Based on recommendations from your real estate agent or property manager, clean, paint, and make repairs.

### ***Medical Services***

- Schedule appointments with personal physicians, specialists, and dentists.
- Request copies of records, x-rays, and prescriptions to take with you.
- Schedule eye examinations for all family members, including children.
- Obtain duplicate prescriptions for glasses and contact lenses for family members using them, as well as extra pairs of glasses and contact lenses if not available at post or by mail.

### ***Household Effects***

- Give away or sell unwanted items. Advertise in the post newsletter, the local newspaper, Craig’s List ([www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org)), or eBay ([www.eBay.com](http://www.eBay.com)) – do not use embassy mail services to transport sold items). Local charities welcome donations of better used goods, or you can give things away through a community organization such as Freecycle ([www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org), now active in a number of countries).
- Prepare a detailed inventory of all household and personal possessions, and copy it. Plan to take one copy with you and leave the duplicate in your safe deposit box or with a relative or lawyer for safekeeping in the United States. See the “Personal Inventory” section of Chapter 11, “Packing to Go.”
- Obtain a written appraisal for valuable items such as antiques, silver, furs, jewelry, musical instruments, carpets, and paintings. Insurance companies may require an appraisal every two years.

### ***E-mail and Mail***

- Since most e-mail services do not forward messages after you have moved, it may be most helpful to obtain a permanent e-mail address well before leaving.

Options include:

- Selecting a service that provides e-mail on the Web. Search the Internet for “Web-based e-mail”; [www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com) is one popular choice.
- Using a forwarding service. Use a search engine to find “e-mail forwarding”; [www.bigfoot.com](http://www.bigfoot.com) is one option. Also, many universities provide this service for their alumni.
- Obtaining your own domain name with a POP e-mail account or e-mail forwarding.

By using one of these options, you will not have to send out repeated e-mail address changes.

- Start creating a list of postal addresses to be changed. This can be as simple as slipping envelopes received into a folder.

### Training

- Enroll in courses such as “Logistics of Going Overseas,” “Realities of Foreign Service Life,” “Protocol and U.S. Representation Abroad,” or other Foreign Service life skills development offered by the Transition Center Training Division.

The Training Division also provides the Security Overseas Seminars, which are required (or the equivalent) for all foreign affairs agency personnel. Current course listings are available online. Go to the Transition Center website ([www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc](http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc), select “Training Division”), call (703) 302-7269 or e-mail [FSITCTraining@state.gov](mailto:FSITCTraining@state.gov) (for Foreign Service life skills classes) or [FSISOS@state.gov](mailto:FSISOS@state.gov) (for security classes).

- For family members with sufficient time remaining in the U.S., investigate training related to overseas employment.
- The Foreign Service Institute offers online FasTrac distance learning courses free to State Department employees and eligible family members. Courses cover computer skills, leadership, and hundreds of other topics. Employees must obtain log-on information for family members, after which family members can access courses from

anywhere via the Internet. The initial registration must be done on the intranet at <http://fsi.state.gov/fastrac> (scroll down to the “Apply Now” button; you will need the spouse’s name, birth date, and e-mail address to apply for him or her).

- The Family Liaison Office periodically offers three-day E-Entrepreneur seminars on starting your own business (<http://www.fse-entrepreneur.com/apply.htm> or contact the Family Liaison Office, see “Resources,” below).
- The FAST TRAIN program through George Mason University requires one year to earn a provisional Virginia PK-6 teaching certificate that can be used overseas (see <http://gse.gmu.edu/programs/fasttrain/index.shtml>).

## ONCE YOU HAVE AN ASSIGNMENT

### Information and Training

- Consult your Career Development Officer (CDO) to arrange for professional studies, language training, and area studies. Be sure to book child care as soon as possible, if needed.

For child care information, contact OBC (see below), check the FSI intranet website (<http://fsi.state.gov>, click on “Child Care Information”), or query IQ:INFORMATION QUEST, a referral service paid for by the Department of State (contact information below).

- Arrange language training for eligible family members (authorized on a space-available basis). Again, your CDO is the starting point in this process. If your spouse cannot attend regular classes, distance training may be possible for some languages, including German, Greek, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. (E-mail [onlinelanguage@state.gov](mailto:onlinelanguage@state.gov)). Ask about other options if necessary. Learning even a few phrases of the language can make a difference to your adjustment.
- Write to the person you are replacing and the Community Liaison Office Coordinator (CLO), if the post has one. Introduce yourself and ask for a

pre-arrival packet and any additional information that addresses your concerns.

- Learn more about your new post. If possible, visit the OBC Information Center, check out post audiovisuals, and go through the country briefing box in greater detail. OBC welcomes children accompanied by a parent; many particularly enjoy “KidVid” audiovisual materials. No matter what your location, access key country information through the OBC intranet site or Internet subscription services (contact OBC for user name and password information).

### ***Pet Requirements***

- Contact post directly to confirm entry and quarantine requirements for your pets. The process for some countries may require six months to complete, so be sure you verify this information as soon as you have an assignment.
- Ask which pet products and services will be available at post and which you should purchase in advance and ship.
- Make arrangements with your veterinarian for required shots and certificates.
- Determine whether your country requires a Certification of the Veterinarian's Examination Statement or other documents and get them.
- Make preliminary plans for shipping your pet, carefully considering the itinerary and booking travel as early as possible. For details on all of these points, see Chapter 9, “Traveling with Pets.”

### ***Family Member Employment Follow-up***

- Contact the Family Liaison Office and the CLO Coordinator at post for updated local family member employment information.
- Update your resume to reflect your most recent work and volunteer experience. For assistance in the Washington, DC, area, contact the Career Development Resource Center (see below).

- Research and follow up on employment opportunities even before traveling to post.

### ***Medical/Health***

- Make appointments with the Office of Medical Services well in advance for any required medical clearance examinations. Children under the age of six must be examined by a private health care provider.
- Allow adequate time for updating immunizations. See Chapter 5, “Medical Information and Issues.”
- Ask your pediatrician for a copy of the vaccination schedule used by the local schools so that you can follow it while overseas. Timing of shots can be important.
- Ask post if the local water is fluoridated and whether safe fluoride supplements are available at post. If necessary, ask your dentist to prescribe appropriate fluoride supplements for your children.
- Investigate the most convenient way to obtain prescription drugs at the new post, whether by mail, through your health plan, or from an online pharmacy.
- Ascertain that you have appropriate health insurance for the entire family and change your plan, if necessary, to one that provides overseas coverage. Do not discontinue coverage when you go overseas.

### ***Real Estate Arrangements***

- If not using a property manager, advertise for and interview tenants, conduct credit checks, and arrange for rent payments.
- Be sure leases include a “diplomatic clause” in case you need to return unexpectedly.
- Arrange for lawn service and/or periodic inspections (termite, furnace/AC checks) as needed.

- Change your policy from homeowner's insurance to a fire dwelling policy including owners', landlords', and tenants' liability. See Chapter 6, "Insurance."
- Gather together manuals on appliances, special instructions, and anything else tenants or property managers need to know.
- Ask a friend or neighbor to check on the property for you from time to time even if using a property manager.

### *Household Effects and Inventory*

- Schedule an interview with a counselor in the Transportation Office or at your agency. The counselor will work with you and assign a packer to handle your move. See Chapter 11, "Packing to Go," for more details.
- Survey your possessions, dispose of excess items, and decide which things to put into storage or ship to your post. If necessary, make arrangements to have them cleaned and repaired.
- Call the packing/storage company that you have been assigned by the Transportation Division to set up a prepack survey of your goods, including items stored in your attic or garage, as well as items yet to be purchased.

### *School Registration*

- Apply to school(s) and make a selection, when possible, prior to your arrival. Notify the school of your anticipated date of arrival and request that space be reserved at the appropriate grade level for your children. If your post has a Community Liaison Office Coordinator, he or she might be able to assist with advance registration.
- Notify your children's current school of impending travel plans if special arrangements are needed to complete term work.
- Request grade reports, test results, teacher evaluations, and samples of work, to facilitate grade

placement at your post. If your child will be applying for admission to a university in the coming year, request recommendations from teachers and counselors who know your child well.

- Obtain information on special education facilities, summer camps, boarding schools, college placement, or educational testing by contacting the Education and Youth Officer at the Family Liaison Office.

### *Shopping and Consumables*

- Find out which items will be unavailable or prohibitively expensive at your post. Check the OBC Personal Post Insights, contact the Community Liaison Office (CLO) coordinator, or ask others at post. Be sure to ask specifically about your personal "must-haves" and don't forget small hostess or thank you gifts.
- Check whether the Office of Allowances has designated your post as a "consumables post" (<http://foia.state.gov/masterdocs/14fam/14M0610.pdf>, see Exhibit 613.7 near the end of the document for the current list). Ask the CLO or others at post which items are most useful to include. OBC offers a handout on consumable shipments, available on our intranet site or by e-mail request ([FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov)). You do not have to send the entire shipment at once; you can request a supplemental shipment after arriving at post.
- Verify post options for receiving packages.
- Investigate online shopping sites.
- Consider making contact with a personal shopper. Make an appointment before departure to familiarize the shopper with your preferences. Once you are overseas, your orders can easily be placed by phone, mail, or e-mail.
- Get catalogues from your favorite mail-order stores and set up charge accounts if relevant.
- Arrange to have business cards printed after verifying the appropriate contact information with post.



## *Plan for Shipment of Automobile*

- Confirm with the Management Officer that the automobile you plan to take is acceptable and appropriate at your post and whether you will need to ship spare parts.
- If unleaded gas is not available at post, check whether you need to have the catalytic converter removed and whether it can be done without damaging your car's engine. The Transportation Operations Office issues the "letter of authorization" for removal from the Environmental Protection Agency and can provide information on Washington area companies that perform this service.
- Make sure you have a valid title or certificate of origin for your vehicle (and that you can find it). If the car is titled under the spouse's (rather than employee's) name, you will need a marriage certificate as well. To ship a car belonging to a member of household, the employee's name needs to be on the title.
- If you are still paying for the car, make sure that your loan company will allow you to take the vehicle out of the U.S. If there is a lien on your title, you will need a letter from the lien holder permitting the vehicle to leave the country. If you must refinance, the State Department Federal Credit Union does provide loans for cars being shipped overseas.
- Investigate marine transit insurance and overseas coverage. See Chapter 6, "Insurance."
- The Transportation Operations Office will provide an Automobile Shipment Form and information on how to plan car shipment. Call (800) 424-2947.
- Purchase spare parts if post has indicated that you will need them.
- Make a note of your serial and motor numbers.

## *Driver's Licenses*

- If possible, renew your license so it will be valid for as long as you will be away. A current U.S.

license facilitates getting one overseas—and you will need it when visiting or returning to the U.S.

- Check the renewal procedures for your state to learn whether a renewal can be mailed to you overseas.
- If you wish to obtain an international driver's permit, the American Automobile Association (<http://www.aaa.com>) provides this service for those with valid U.S. licenses. International permits expire after one year.

## *Letters to Post*

- As the employee, you should write a letter to the Chief of Mission or Principal Officer at post to report your assignment and the anticipation with which you look forward to joining the staff. This is an official letter that should be written on official letterhead, and should arrive no earlier than six weeks before you do. If sent from within any State Department facility, use the official pouch address (Washington, DC, zip code), and no postage will be needed. If you do not have access to official pouch, ask post which address to use.

For more information on this topic, get the Overseas Briefing Center handout "Writing to Your Post of Assignment" either by e-mailing [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov) or via OBC's intranet site at <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/> (select "Overseas Briefing Center," then "Top 10 Topics").

- Write to the Management Officer informing him or her of your assignment, estimated time of arrival, number of family members who will be accompanying you, and your mode of travel. Remember that arrival over the weekend may not be convenient for post personnel. Inform post management staff well in advance of arrival if you are traveling with pets and ask if you need to make any special arrangements for their entry and boarding.
- Clear any domestic staff accompanying you to post well in advance. In addition, call the appropriate embassy in Washington for specific information on third-country entry/visa requirements if relevant.

## ***Change of Address and Absentee Ballots***

- Obtain change-of-address kits from your local post office or online at <http://www.usps.com>.
- Send change-of-address forms to your local post office, federal and state income tax bureaus, County Treasurer, mortgage company, Department of Motor Vehicles, magazine subscriptions, book clubs, insurance companies, investment firms, credit card companies, your college or university, stores where you have accounts, and any companies in which you own stock.
- Make address changes, when possible, at least one month prior to departure. List the addresses that you need to change in a small notebook or on your computer to facilitate notification each time you move.
- Make sure your property manager or tenant has your updated contact information (very important).
- Provide updated contact information to the Employee Services Center. If you have access to the State Department intranet, you can do this online at <http://aoprsm.a.state.gov/esclounge.htm>.
- Make sure family members can reach you. In case of emergency, they may try these numbers if other means have failed:

### **State Department**

(weekdays 8:15 am to 5 pm, EST)  
Office of Casualty Assistance (202) 736-4302

**All agencies** (after business hours, weekends, and holidays)  
Operations Center (202) 647-1512

- Check absentee voting procedures in the state where you vote to determine if any special registration is required. Since registrations must be mailed, check on this well in advance of any elections.
- Obtain an address to write for absentee ballots. Continued voting can help maintain your state of domicile.

Both of these things can be done online at [www.overseasvotefoundation.org](http://www.overseasvotefoundation.org). The U.S. Department of Defense sponsors the Federal Voting Assistance Program, [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov), which provides extensive information, links, and forms for overseas voters.

## ***E-mail Address Changes***

- If you have chosen a “permanent” option (described previously), notify everyone in your online address book at least one month prior to departure. Also change your address with online stores, directories, and so on.
- If you will be using a local e-mail address at post, send changes as soon as your new address is functional. You may want to keep your old address for a few months; find out if there is a way to access your account via the Internet.

## **WHEN YOU HAVE YOUR TRAVEL ORDERS**

### ***Passports***

- If a new employee, apply for your family's diplomatic passports. Applications can be filled out and signed in the Employee Services Center (see “Resources”) from 9:00 am to 2:45 daily. The passport office and ESC cannot escort family members into the building. If the employee is not present, family members will either need a diplomatic passport for identification (if they are simply renewing) or an escort. You must present your travel orders. First-time applicants must also present proof of U.S. citizenship (certified copy of birth certificate or naturalization papers). For renewal, a former U.S. passport is sufficient.
- Have passports issued for each child. If children are on the parent's passport, neither the parent nor the children can travel outside the country of assignment independently.
- Arrange to have your digitalized passport photographs taken in Room B266 of the Harry S Truman building. These photos will be needed for obtaining visas or identification cards while you are abroad. If your post has requested more photos than the ID unit can provide, place your

photos on a sheet of paper and use the photo duplication (*not* photocopy) machines at stores such as Wal-Mart or Motophoto to make additional sheets as needed.

- The Passport Office, Employee Services Center, or the Post Management Officer can assist you in arranging for visas for countries you will transit as well as for the country of destination. This should be done as early as possible, since it may take a long time to get visas for some countries.

### ***Currency***

- Investigate whether countries you plan to visit en route have laws prohibiting the entry or withdrawal of even small sums of local or foreign currency.
- Check with post to find out whether you need to obtain traveler's checks or local currency before you arrive. If purchasing traveler's checks, ask for small denominations.

### ***Finances***

- Arrange for an advance on your travel allowance.
- Request the Advance of Pay Allowance (up to three months' pay in advance upon assignment to a post in a foreign area). The amount advanced must be paid back to the Department over 18 pay periods. See Chapter 3, "Allowances and Benefits" for details.
- Cancel Internet and television services, health club memberships, newspaper delivery, and so on. Cancel or transfer utilities as needed.
- Decide how to pay all bills that may arrive after your departure; automatic (direct-pay) or Internet payment options can be helpful, if available. Record the monthly closing date for each credit card account. In the process of moving, and at your new post, monthly statements may arrive late. Again, check to see if there is a way to view your statements or make payments online.
- Anticipate heavy initial expenses at post, such as membership in embassy associations or rental

car costs. Arrange your personal finances to meet such needs, if necessary.

### ***Auto Shipment***

- Arrange with the U.S. Despatch Agent (DA) for shipment of your car. The DA will select a drive-away firm to drive your car to the port of Baltimore, or you can drive it yourself. Remove any loose equipment (tires or tools) for shipment in the household effects.

### ***Travel Arrangements***

- If traveling with or shipping a pet, double check the arrangements and make sure that you have a back-up plan in case of unexpected changes. Verify that you have completed all entry requirements.
- Request and pick up airline tickets.
- Send an e-mail to the Management Officer at your assigned post detailing your travel arrangements, including en route stops, arrival date and time, carrier, and number of family members accompanying you. If you are shipping a pet, send travel information. Also pass along shipping dates for your unaccompanied air and surface freight and automobile.

### ***Luggage (Checked and Carry-On)***

- Decide what should be included in the suitcases that travel with you, and make sure that everything fits. Remember that these may be the only possessions you have for several weeks or longer, depending upon when your air freight arrives. Make sure to check on the limits for carry-on baggage. See Chapter 11, "Packing to Go."
- Check to be sure your luggage is in good condition (in case of rough handling) and make the necessary



repairs or purchases. Secure identification tags for each piece of luggage and mark pieces with something distinctive, such as a colorful ribbon.

### ***Pack-out***

- Decide which items will be sent by air and which by surface. Plan unaccompanied air freight items that will meet your immediate needs and serve for holidays falling within the first few months. Most posts have a welcome kit that you can use until your household effects arrive. Find out what this contains and how long you will be allowed to keep it.
- Arrange with your assigned moving company for the packing of your air freight. Ask if the movers provide waterproof cartons. Packers are required to bring a scale so that you will know when your weight limit is reached; exceeding the air allowance is costly. Remember, though, that this weight is only approximate, as scales that are moved around cannot be calibrated. When your unaccompanied airfreight shipment is picked up, be sure to get a receipt from the air carrier or the agent. Later you can call them to get the Airway Bill of Lading (ABL) number.
- Coordinate with your assigned moving company for the packing of sea freight and storage items.
- Advise the Transportation Operations Office of your travel plans and a telephone number and/or address where you can be reached prior to arriving at or en route to your destination.
- Check with the Transportation Office before you leave town to ensure there are no last-minute problems. Your effects will NOT be shipped until you pay any overweight charges or remove items to bring your shipment within the allowed weight.
- Give your relatives the appropriate emergency telephone numbers so that in the event of serious illness in the family, or of a sudden death, you can be notified immediately and can receive authorization for Emergency Visitation Travel.

## **APPENDIX**

### ***Safekeeping of Papers and Valuables***

Safeguard the following items in an accessible place. Do not put them into storage with household effects. Make a copy of documents you need to take with you. Some may need to be certified.

- Birth certificate for each family member
- Proof of marriage
- Proof of termination of any previous marriage
- Proof of citizenship if a naturalized citizen
- Military service papers
- List of all bank and savings accounts (with addresses and account numbers), including names of persons authorized to make withdrawals and sign checks
- Inventories of stored and shipped household effects
- Real estate records—deed, mortgage papers, title insurance policy, closing statement, insurance policy on house, survey of property, tax receipts, leases, building cost figures, and receipts for any improvements, or cemetery deeds
- Insurance policy on household effects
- Policy on separately insured valuables such as furs, antiques, jewelry, paintings, with written appraisals
- Social Security card for each family member, including cards for each child
- List of instructions for survivors \*
- Will \*

\* *The signed original wills and instructions for survivors should be left with a lawyer, family member, or friend in the United States. Also leave a copy of the "letter of instruction" with someone at the embassy or mission.*

- Employment records for each adult—names, places, dates, copies of any instrument entitling employee or survivors to special benefits such as insurance, pensions, and stock options
- Medical history of each family member that might be difficult to collect if parents are unavailable or if necessary for insurance purposes
- Income tax papers (state and federal) and tax returns
- Life, medical, disability, group insurance policies—amount and beneficiary of each policy with their names and addresses.

- Children's school records, including transcripts, standardized test scores, and work samples
- Power of attorney
- Personal address list. Make a copy of your address book.
- Stocks, bonds, and other securities—consider leaving these with a broker or financial advisor, in case you want to sell. Record purchase dates and costs, serial numbers, who purchased them and in whose name they are registered, list of stocks pledged as security for a loan, name of stockholder, and serial numbers.
- Proof of membership in any professional, fraternal organization, or union that entitles estate to any benefits
- List of charge accounts and credit cards with numbers
- List of all assets and liabilities, including personal debts and debts owed to you, personal valuables, with data on any insurance coverage (policy numbers and location of policies)

### ***Papers to Take Overseas***

The following are important papers to hand carry with you to your post. Never place important documents in your checked baggage. Keep them in your possession at all times. Once you arrive, put them in a safe but accessible place (NOT in an embassy vault).

- Passport for each family member
- International immunization record for each family member
- Copies of insurance policies
- Social Security cards
- Driver's licenses
- School records
- Medical and dental records for each family member and current prescriptions
- Powers of attorney
- Copy of will(s)
- Credit cards
- Inventories of accompanied baggage, unaccompanied air freight, surface shipment, and stored possessions
- Copy of packer's inventory
- Airway bill number and receipt for air freight
- Extra passport-size photos for each family member for use on arrival at post
- Travel orders

- Car papers, including record of car serial and motor ID numbers, and extra set of car keys
- Business cards and/or personal cards

### **RESOURCES**

#### **Foreign Service Institute Transition Center (M/FSI/TC)**

George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center (SA-42)

Department of State

Washington, DC 20522-4202

Physical location: 4000 Arlington Blvd., Arlington, VA (do not send mail to this address)

Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/>

Intranet: <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/>

Directions, maps, parking and other information  
<http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c16687.htm>

#### **Overseas Briefing Center (M/FSI/TC/OBC)**

Room E2126

Tel: (703) 302-7277

Fax: (703) 302-7452

E-mail: [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov)

Related videos that can be checked out OBC Information Center:

*Managing your Rental Property from Overseas*  
2 hours 20 minutes. (2006)

#### **Transition Center Training Division (M/FSI/TC/T)**

*Foreign Service Life Skills Training*

Tel: (703) 302-7268

E-mail: [FSITCTraining@state.gov](mailto:FSITCTraining@state.gov)

*Security Overseas Seminars*

Tel: (703) 302-7269

E-mail: [FSISOS@state.gov](mailto:FSISOS@state.gov)

#### **Related Transition Center Training**

Realities of Foreign Service Life (MQ 803)

Going Overseas for Singles and Couples without Children (MQ 200)

Going Overseas for Families and Couples with Children (MQ 210)

Going Overseas – Logistics for Adults (MQ 220)

Going Overseas – Logistics for Children (MQ 230)

Security Overseas Seminar (SOS) (MQ 911)

Youth Security Overseas Seminar (MQ 914)  
Plus many other courses listed in the chapters that follow <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c6950.htm>

**Family Liaison Office** (M/DGHR/FLO)  
Room 1239, Harry S Truman Building  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520-7512  
Tel: (202) 647-1076 or (800) 440-0397  
Fax: (202) 647-1670  
Intranet: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/index.html>  
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/>  
E-mail: [flo@state.gov](mailto:flo@state.gov) for general questions  
[FLOAskEducation@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEducation@state.gov) for education questions  
[FLOAskEmployment@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEmployment@state.gov) for questions about family member employment  
[FLOAskEvacuations@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEvacuations@state.gov) for questions about evacuations

**Office of Overseas Schools** (A/OPR/OS)  
Room H328, SA-1  
Columbia Plaza  
2401 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20522-0132  
Tel: (202) 261-8200  
Fax: (202) 261-8224  
Intranet: <http://aopros.a.state.gov>  
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/>  
E-mail: [OverseasSchools@state.gov](mailto:OverseasSchools@state.gov)

**Office of Medical Services** (M/MED)  
Room L209, SA-1  
Columbia Plaza  
2401 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520  
Tel: (202) 663-1611  
Intranet: <http://med.state.gov/>  
Internet: [www.travax.com](http://www.travax.com)

**Employee Consultation Services**  
(M/MED/MHS/ECS)  
Room H246, SA-1  
Department of State  
2401 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520  
Tel: (202) 663-1815  
Fax: (202) 663-1456  
E-mail: [MEDECS@state.gov](mailto:MEDECS@state.gov)  
Intranet: [http://med.state.gov/mentalhealth\\_ecs.htm](http://med.state.gov/mentalhealth_ecs.htm)

**Employee Services Center** (A/OPR/GSM/ESC)  
Room 1252, Harry S Truman Building  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520-1252  
Tel: (202) 647-3432  
Fax: (202) 647-1429  
Intranet: <http://aoprgsm.a.state.gov/esclounge.htm>  
E-mail: [EmployeeServicesCenter@state.gov](mailto:EmployeeServicesCenter@state.gov)

**Transportation Operations Branch**  
(A/LM/OPS/TTM)  
5th Floor, 2121 Virginia Ave.  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20037  
Telephone: (800) 424-2947  
Intranet: <http://almopstm.a.state.gov>

**"It's Your Move"**  
Intranet: <http://lm.a.state.gov/> (click on "Household Moves")  
Internet: <http://logistics.state.gov>  
(password: "logistics")

**WebMove**  
Intranet: [http://lm.a.state.gov/index.cfm?fa=user\\_list\\_content&Folder\\_ID=4](http://lm.a.state.gov/index.cfm?fa=user_list_content&Folder_ID=4)  
Internet: <https://webmove.state.gov>

**Career Development Resource Center**  
(HR/CSP/CDRC)  
Room L321, SA-1  
Columbia Plaza  
2401 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20522-0108  
Tel: (202) 663-3042  
Fax: (202) 663-3146  
Intranet: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/cdrc>  
E-mail: [CDRC@state.gov](mailto:CDRC@state.gov)

**"Five Wishes"**  
Contact Patricia Huff (Office of Employee Relations Work/Life Programs) at [HuffPA@state.gov](mailto:HuffPA@state.gov) or (202) 261-8180 or visit the Overseas Briefing Center (above)

**IQ: Information Quest**

Tel: (800) 222-0364 or (800) 262-7848 (TDD)

Internet: <http://www.worklife4you.com>.

New users enter company code: statedepartment;  
User ID is: FirstnameMiddleinitialLastnameMMDD,  
(Month and Day—four digits from your birthdate)  
e.g., JaneCDoe0927. Other U.S. Government em-  
ployees should check with their agencies about how  
to access these services.

**State Department Federal Credit Union**

1630 King Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2745

or

Room 1827, Harry S Truman Building

2201 C Street, NW

Washington, DC

Tel: (703) 706-5000 (both locations)

Toll-free: (800) 296-8882 in the U.S.

Fax: (703) 684-1613

TDD: (703) 519-8360

Internet: [www.sdfcu.org](http://www.sdfcu.org)

E-mail: [sdfcu@sdfcu.org](mailto:sdfcu@sdfcu.org)

**USAA**

[www.usaa.com](http://www.usaa.com)

**Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)**

<http://www.opm.gov/insure/life/>

E-mail: [fegli@opm.gov](mailto:fegli@opm.gov)

**Worldwide Assurance for Employees of Public  
Agencies**

[www.waepa.org](http://www.waepa.org)

**American Foreign Service Protective Association**

[www.afspa.org](http://www.afspa.org)