

*Chapter 16***EDUCATION FOR  
FOREIGN SERVICE  
CHILDREN****EDUCATION ALLOWANCES**

You may choose whichever type of school best suits your family. There are allowances to support:

- home schooling
- school at post
- school away from post
- special needs children

Supplementary instruction allowances are also available. See DSSR 276.9 (<http://aoprals.state.gov>)

The Foreign Service provides an education allowance for children from kindergarten through grade 12 when the family is living outside of the United States. The amounts of these allowances vary from post to post, so please verify before making any important decisions. This allowance is intended to provide an education similar to what you would receive free in the States if your children were attending public schools. Parents are expected to pay for preschool or college costs, just as they would in the U.S. You can find these allowances explained in the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR) 270 posted on <http://aoprals.state.gov>. Education allowances by post are also listed online. There is also an Educational Travel Allowance, DSSR 280, which pays for college-age students to visit their families overseas. (See Chapter 3, "Allowances.")

**EDUCATION AT POST**

Many Foreign Service children accompany their parents to a post abroad and receive their education there. Options may vary from home school to an American school to a school that follows the curriculum of another country and is not taught in English—or anything in between.

With the exception of the few Department of Defense schools, the schools most children attend abroad are usually non-profit, independent

**CONTENTS****EDUCATION ALLOWANCES****EDUCATION AT POST****BOARDING SCHOOL**

Communication

Finances

Miscellaneous Precautions

**SPECIAL NEEDS**

Evaluation Process

Clearance Process

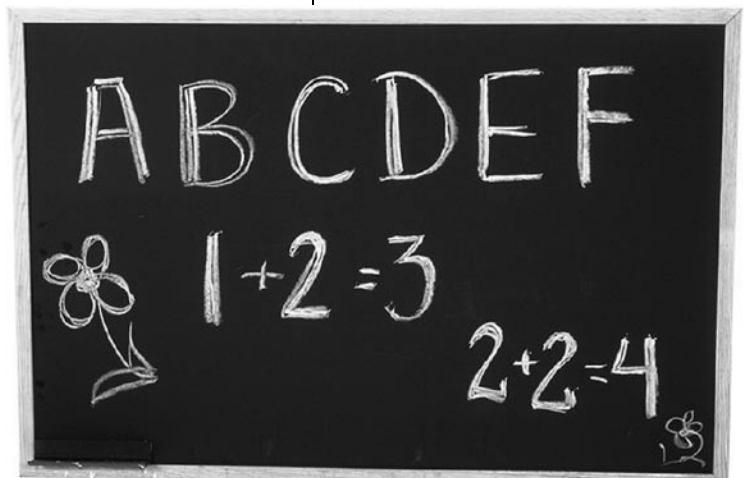
Special Education Allowances

Before Bidding

Before Going

At Post

Gifted and Talented

**RESOURCES**

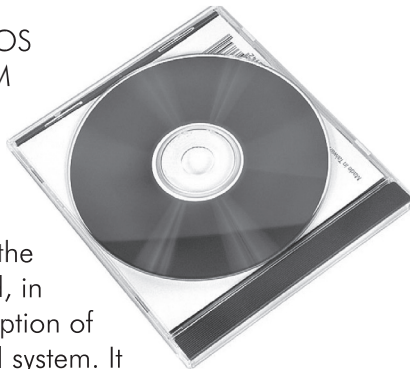
schools, controlled by a local school board. Though they may be called “The American School of [city or country name],” they are not owned or operated by the U.S. Government or the Department of State.

Usually the overseas schools take on at least some of the flavor of the host country. In some countries the international school may have many local students. In other places students at the international school may come from dozens of different countries. Among the schools that are assisted by the Department of State, the children of U.S. Government employees make up only 10 percent of the total school population. Your children will not only learn a great deal about the culture and country where you are living, but about many other countries as well.

Your family chooses which school to use. Sometimes there is clearly one school that is right for your children. Other times, however, there may be several choices to consider. Past reports often list both State Department-supported and other schools attended at post, providing a good starting point for your research.

The Office of Overseas Schools (A/OPR/OS) publishes a one-page fact sheet for each of the 194 schools it assists, which can be accessed on their Internet (<http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/>) and intranet sites (<http://aopros.a.state.gov>). Through these fact sheets, you can link to a school’s website and e-mail address.

In addition, A/OPR/OS publishes a CD-ROM containing information on about 500 schools and preschools around the world, including the assisted schools, and, in some cases, a description of the local educational system. It is mailed to all posts, can be accessed on the intranet at <http://aopr.a.state.gov/pdf/schools.pdf>, and is available upon request from [overseaschools@state.gov](mailto:overseaschools@state.gov) or (202) 261-8200. This information is gathered at posts by the Community Liaison Office (CLO) Coordinator and compiled by A/OPR/OS in Washington. It gives basic information, including school size, location, curriculum, student body make-up, and



available facilities. A/OPR/OS also maintains a small library containing yearbooks, newsletters, school profiles, and curricula.

You may also want to contact the Office of Overseas Schools regional education officers (REOs) for specific information about the schools in the country where you are assigned or that you are considering. REOs are experienced educators who oversee a geographic region and are well informed about schools attended by U.S. Government children. When they visit your post, be sure to participate in meetings they call for parents so you can share knowledge about the local school situation with them.

A/OPR/OS provides financial, professional, and technical support to the schools the Department assists. This support can be in the form of grants, curriculum advice, board training, regional conferences, administration and faculty training, and/or other services as requested by these schools.

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

The Overseas Briefing Center has Country Briefing Boxes filled with information on each post. Some of the information can be obtained on the intranet or by e-mail. Education reports, school brochures, KidVids (videos of posts produced by children), applications, yearbooks, Personal Post Insights (including opinions on schools), and other information may be available for your post. Many schools also have provided CDs on their facilities and programs.

The Education and Youth Officer at the Family Liaison Office is an advocate for Foreign Service families on educational issues and the emotional well being of

Foreign Service children. This office provides resources, encourages support networks, and can help you sort out your educational options. It has information on international schools, boarding schools, private and public schools in the Washington, DC, area, home schooling, allowances, college admissions, third culture kids (TCKs), and more. It also maintains an extensive website devoted to educational issues with links for more information.

The CLO Coordinator at your post of assignment will have a wealth of information on the available schools at that post and likely could put you in touch with other parents who have children of a similar age.

## BOARDING SCHOOL

You may not be able to imagine considering a boarding school for your child, but the time may come when it is your best choice. When the school at post is not adequate (as based on the above definition) there will be an away from post allowance, commonly referred to as the boarding school allowance. This amount varies from post to post since it is based on an average of 30 boarding schools' costs and three round-trip airfares to the nearest place where American curriculum boarding schools exist. If the school at post is deemed "adequate," then the away from post allowance is based on the amount authorized for local schooling. Parents may use the school at post allowance toward the cost of boarding school, but will have to pay out of pocket for the remaining expenses. For more information on boarding schools and making these choices, see the FLO paper, *The Boarding School Option* (<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/14686.htm>). The FLO Education and Youth Officer is the resource for boarding school information.

If you make the decision to send your child to a boarding school, two very important issues should be discussed in advance: communication and finances.

### *Communication*

Parents overseas should develop alternate systems for communicating with their children while they are abroad. A family friend or relative can be identified as the person to contact if the parents cannot be reached. If the student is under 18, parents should

consider leaving a power of attorney with this adult to arrange for hospital admission, give permission for an operation, or otherwise act for the parent in matters involving health or school-related questions. Some boarding schools also require you to leave permission with them to act in loco parentis in case of emergency.

Other sources of assistance in emergency situations could include the Family Liaison Office, the country desk officer (with permission), or the school's Dean of Students. Parents should be sure to provide—and update—emergency contact numbers with the school.

### *Finances*

A clear discussion of finances and financial expectations can foster a student's independence and resourcefulness, as well as forestall serious misunderstandings.

The distance from "home" and the inaccessibility of parents may make the school's recommended student expense allowance insufficient. Parents need to set up emergency access to funds: leaving money with a friend or relative, establishing a custodial bank account, or providing the student with a credit card or ATM card. The State Department Federal Credit Union (SDFCU) will open an account in the name of any dependent of a Foreign Service member. A paycheck allotment can be deposited automatically to the student's account, ensuring a regular cash supply regardless of any delay or cutoff in communication. No matter how careful a student may be, overdraft protection for the account is valuable peace of mind.

Choosing the most appropriate method of providing emergency funds must take into consideration the student's reliability and experience in the use of money and credit. Clear parental guidelines should help prevent misunderstandings.

### *Miscellaneous Precautions*

Students should be briefed on key elements of Department of State regulations that apply directly to them, such as the importance of making advance plans for overseas travel, staying long enough at post



to qualify for U.S. Government-reimbursed travel back to school, arranging for their personal effects to be brought to school with them, and knowing how to get a visa and keep it up-to-date.

The family should discuss in advance where the student will spend short holidays or periods when the school closes early for some reason.

If the student does not have a driver's license to serve as identification, other identification should be obtained. Many state drivers' license divisions provide identification cards for non-drivers. In many situations, passports are not accepted as identification, and students will need to produce their original birth certificate and Social Security card.

Students should be prepared for medical emergencies by holding cards showing their health insurance plan and entitlement. Parents should not necessarily rely only on school-sponsored health insurance plans. Some clinics are closed on holidays, have limited commitment to the student during certain types of illnesses or accidents (specifically, automobile accidents), or provide no emergency services.

Students will need names and addresses of those who can give advice when the student faces the normal problems of being away from home. Telephone calls to post can be expensive or logistically difficult, given differences in time zones, and e-mail does not provide personal contact. An important question to ask a prospective boarding school is what forms of support it offers students. Often there will be a counselor, mentor, or advisory group available. Parents should know who their child's advisor is and maintain close contact with that individual.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS**

If you have a child with special needs, you will need to do additional research both before bidding and before going to post. You will need to complete and track extra paperwork to obtain an official evaluation and special clearance for your child. On the positive side, you may benefit from special education allowances. Further resources are available on the FLO Internet site (<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/9856.htm>) and the Office of Overseas Schools' special

needs section (<http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/27909.htm>). Both sites are essential reading for Foreign Service families with children who have or might have special needs.

Overseas schools may offer small class sizes and individual attention, which could benefit your special needs child. However, these schools, even those assisted by the Department of State, are not covered by U.S. legislation requiring public schools to provide a comparable education for children with special needs (Public Law 94.142). Some may be hesitant to accept children with anything more than mild learning difficulties. Even when the U.S. mission holds a seat on the board, schools do not have to accept students they feel they cannot serve. It is critical for parents to research post options and to allow enough time for the relevant Department of State offices (Employee Consultation Service, Office of Allowances, Office of Overseas Schools, Family Liaison Office, and Human Resources) to complete their parts in helping to find a workable solution that meets the needs of the child.

### ***Evaluation Process***

In order to apply or qualify for the special needs education allowance, the Employee Consultation Service (ECS) must agree that the child meets the special needs definition. This office is a good starting point in the process of obtaining assistance. ECS staff helps parents arrange evaluations, which may include psychological, educational, speech/language, occupational therapy, and/or psychiatric assessments.

If a child is due for a medical clearance examination, the evaluations can be authorized by ECS as part of the clearance process. If potential problems are identified while the family is abroad, the special needs education allowance can cover diagnostic testing and the travel of a child and one parent to a testing site. Testing cannot be authorized if the family is posted to the United States unless it is part of the pre-clearance process, since U.S. public schools provide evaluations of children with special educational needs. Overseas, the mission health unit, CLO Coordinator, or Administrative Officer can help you begin this process. Testing can be a trying time for parent and child alike. If possible, look for professionals using a "team approach," in which they are all located at the same

facility and coordinate their work. Going to one location for all evaluations can make the process easier.

### ***Clearance Process***

Evaluation reports become part of the child's medical records and are used in determining medical clearance. The Office of Medical Services will only give clearance for posts where the child's developmental needs can be met. Parents are required to obtain written confirmation that a school at the proposed post of assignment can meet the child's needs. The child will not be cleared for a specific post until that information is provided to the Office of Medical Services.

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

### ***Special Education Allowances***

Once a child's special needs have been properly identified in conjunction with a medical/educational authority, the overseas employee becomes eligible for the special education allowance on behalf of the child. Benefits are available from birth through the school year in which the child turns 21, if still in secondary school. A child less than three years old must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or the equivalent prepared by a medical or educational professional in order to qualify for any education allowances. Parents are strongly encouraged to get regular ECS review and concurrence on the IEP.

The special education allowance can be used to fund services specified in the child's IEP or equivalent. Allowable expenses could include: school tuition, transportation, periodic diagnostic testing, rental of specialized equipment, individual tutoring, and so on. Regulations on special education allowance benefits can be found in the DSSR Section 276.8 (the DSSR is posted at <http://aoprals.state.gov>).

### ***Before Bidding***

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

The Office of Overseas Schools puts together a list of schools that offer support for children with special needs, available on the intranet ([http://aopro.s.a.state.gov/3\\_Special%20Needs/specialneeds.doc](http://aopro.s.a.state.gov/3_Special%20Needs/specialneeds.doc)) or by request. It includes self-reported information on overseas special needs programs (including programs for highly gifted children). Contacting the Office of Overseas Schools' regional education officers could also be helpful.

Families with special needs children should also be in touch with the Employee Consultation Service about services available at potential posts. ECS maintains the Post Capability Database, which gives additional information about resources available at post.

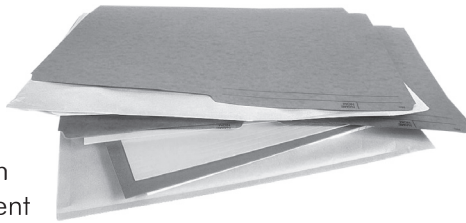
After doing initial research, you may wish to contact potential schools directly with questions. Remember that, if your child has been evaluated as having a special need, he or she will only be cleared to go to post if you have confirmed that a school at post can meet his/her needs. Your potential post will be thoroughly scrutinized before your child is given a clearance. *The intent is to be sure that a child's needs can be met at the next post BEFORE the assignment is finalized to avoid any unhappy consequences.*

On a less official level, you may want to investigate posts to find out if there are any local prejudices or attitudes that could make your child's life difficult. Find people to contact at post (possibly through the CLO coordinator or Management Officer) or use the Overseas Briefing Center's returnee file to find people who have recently returned. E-mail groups such as Livelines, sponsored by the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, or Foreign Service Special Needs may also be helpful if you are looking for anecdotal information from Foreign Service members. To subscribe to FS Special Needs, send an e-mail to [fsspecialneeds-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:fsspecialneeds-subscribe@yahoogroups.com), or for Livelines, send one to [livelines-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:livelines-subscribe@yahoogroups.com), or go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fsspecialneeds/> or <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/livelines/>. This

extra research may even help you identify exceptional opportunities for your child at a potential post.

### *Before Going*

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



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

Get specific recommendations from people currently working with your child. If you explain that you are moving to another country where services may not be available, these professionals will often be happy to cooperate, providing specific, detailed therapeutic programs, plans, and recommendations. Ask if there are therapeutic activities you can learn to do with your child.

Find out if there are items you will not be able to obtain at post (therapy equipment, learning aids, etc.) and look for alternatives. Locate a mail order company that can send them or buy supplies in the United States and ship them with your household effects.

### *At Post*

Once at post, you will want to meet with school personnel to discuss the educational or therapeutic strategies that will be implemented to help your child. They will need to see the most recent assessment of

your child's needs and abilities and will be interested to know more about your child's developmental history and progress, so prior records are also important. As the parent, you will continue to play an important role in the school/home partnership. Be sure to keep ECS updated on your child's development.

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

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

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

### *Gifted and Talented*

Under the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR), the families of most U.S. Government civilian employees overseas who have gifted children who are not sufficiently challenged in their overseas school and where the overseas school does not offer a gifted program may avail themselves of up to \$3,000 per school year to supplement the education in academic areas (mathematics, science, languages, and social studies). Information is available in the DSSR 276.9 (e) (<http://www.state.gov/m/a/als/1740.htm>) and also in the Office of Allowances FAQ section at <http://www.state.gov/m/a/als>.

## RESOURCES

### Office of Overseas Schools

(A/OPR/OS)  
 Room H328, SA-1  
 Columbia Plaza  
 2401 E Street, NW  
 Department of State  
 Washington, DC 20522-0132  
 Tel: (202) 261-8200  
 Fax: (202) 261-8224  
 Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/>  
 Intranet: <http://aopros.a.state.gov>  
 E-mail: [OverseasSchools@state.gov](mailto:OverseasSchools@state.gov)  
 REO contact information:  
<http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/c1686.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  
[www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm)  
 Extensive papers and resources on education

### Employee Consultation Service

(M/MED/ECS)  
 Office of Medical Services Main Office  
 Room H246, SA-1  
 Columbia Plaza  
 2401 E Street, NW  
 Washington, DC  
 Tel: (202) 663-1815  
 Fax: (202) 663-1613  
 E-mail: [MEDECS@state.gov](mailto:MEDECS@state.gov)

### American Foreign Service Association Scholarship Program

2101 E Street, NW  
 Washington, DC 20037  
 Tel: (202) 944-5504  
 Fax: (202) 338-6820  
 Internet: <http://www.afsa.org/scholar/index.cfm>

### Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW)

5555 Columbia Pike, Suite 208  
 Arlington, VA 22204-3117  
 Tel: (703) 820-5420  
 Fax: (703) 820-5421  
 Email: [office@aafsw.org](mailto:office@aafsw.org)  
 Internet: <http://www.aafsw.org>

The Associates of American Foreign Service World-  
 wide (AAFSW) and the American Foreign Service  
 Association (AFSA) provide merit-based scholarships  
 to high school seniors for their freshman year in col-  
 lege. AFSA also provides need-based financial aid for  
 undergraduates.

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

George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training  
 Center (SA-42)  
 Washington, DC 20522-4202  
 Physical location: 4000 Arlington Blvd., Arlington, VA  
 (do not send mail to this address)  
 Intranet: <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc>  
 Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/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  
 OBC e-mail: [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov)  
 Intranet Post Info To Go, which include Personal Post  
 Insights: <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/epb/epb.asp>

### 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)  
 The Transition Center offers resources for parents  
 and children through the OBC and the Training  
 Division. OBC keeps files on post schools, including  
 handbooks, newsletters, personal comments, and  
 yearbooks. They have videotapes or DVDs for some  
 schools.

**Office of Allowances**

(A/OPR/ALS)  
Room L314, SA-1  
Columbia Plaza  
2401 E Street, NW  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20522-0103  
Tel: (202) 261-8700  
Fax: (202) 261-8707  
Intranet: <http://aoprals.state.gov>  
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/als/>  
E-mail: [AllowancesO@state.gov](mailto:AllowancesO@state.gov)

**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)

**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.  
Use this service to find summer camps, private  
schools, preschool programs, and more.