

Federal Government Employment

The Civil Service

The Federal Government's Civil Service program employs people in every conceivable occupation from accountant to zoologist. Although the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) controls the rules and regulations for government employment, actual hiring is done by each agency. Candidates must actively look for job vacancies in each agency and submit an application to each. See Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography**, for a list of publications to help in the Federal job-search.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is the Federal government's human resources agency. OPM provides up-to-date employment information and ensures that the nation's Civil Service remains free of political influence and that Federal employees are selected and treated fairly and on the basis of merit.

OPM has developed the "Federal Employment Information System," composed of user-friendly components for conducting a job-search. This system provides access to Federal job listings, some state and local governments as well as private sector listings; salary and employee benefits information, special recruitment messages, and general and specific employment information. In many cases, it is possible to complete an application on-line and submit it electronically to the advertising personnel office. The system provides current information, updated daily and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Career America Connection. This is a telephone-based system. Call 912-757-3000 to request application packages, forms, and other related literature mailed or FAXed to you. Request Fact Sheet EI-42 "Federal Employment Information Sources" for a complete listing of local telephone numbers to this nationwide network.

Federal Job Opportunities Bulletin Board. This computer-based bulletin board system can be reached at 912-757-3100. You must have a personal computer with a modem to access this system. You may also contact the bulletin board by Telnet (**fjob.opm.gov**) or ftp (**ftp.fjob.opm.gov**). For information on bulletin boards, see Chapter 3, **Using the Internet in the Job-Search**.

Internet Web Site. OPM's web site, **www.usajobs.opm.gov**, provides access to the Federal Jobs Data Base, full text job announcements, answers to

frequently asked questions, and access to electronic and hard copy application forms.

Touch Screen Computer Systems. This is a computer-based system utilizing touch screen technology. Kiosks, located throughout the nation in OPM offices, Federal office buildings, and other locations, provide access to employment information. You can leave a request to have application packages, forms and other materials mailed to you.

FedFax. Using a touch-tone telephone or FAX machine, you can select from a variety of employment-related topics and forms you wish to have FAXed to you. FedFax allows for the retrieval of hardcopy information at any FAX machine in the world, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. FedFax is available at the following telephone numbers:

Atlanta: 404-331-5267
Denver: 303-969-7764
Detroit: 313-226-2593
San Francisco: 415-744-7002
Washington, DC: 202-606-2600

Job Definitions

There are thousands of Federal Government jobs in all categories of work. Each job has a series of definitions, one for each grade level. These definitions indicate the skills, experience, and education needed for each grade. The *Operating Manual for Qualifications Standards for General Schedule Positions* defines each job, and often contains “buzz words” that you can adapt in describing your own experience. Another useful resource is the Handbook of Occupational Groups and Series that describes the tasks performed in most government jobs. See the OPM web site, www.opm.gov to view these documents. They can also be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents.

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402
Telephone: 202-512-1800 (order desk)

Outstanding Scholars Program

The Outstanding Scholars Program is a special hiring authority that offers a direct appointment by a Federal agency without having to go through the normal competitive hiring procedures. The direct appointment process cuts through red tape and can save weeks of time. The Outstanding Scholars Program is designed for entry-level administrative positions at the GS-5 and GS-7 level.

To qualify, you must be a college graduate and have maintained a grade-point average (GPA) of 3.45 or better on a 4.0 scale for all undergraduate course work, or have graduated in the upper ten percent of your class or university subdivision. A college degree in any major is qualifying for most of the career fields covered by the program. A few, however, require some course work in subjects related to the job.

When applying as an Outstanding Scholar applicant, you should identify yourself as an Outstanding Scholar applicant in your cover letter and attach your college transcripts.

Civil Service Grades

The Civil Service has an elaborate system of grades for all GS (General Schedule) positions. The grades that define the complexity of the work to be performed run in rank order from GS-1 to GS-15. Grades above GS-15 are part of the Senior Executive Service. Grade levels also determine salary: the higher the grade, the higher the salary. Each grade contains 10 steps each with a higher salary (Foreign Service grades contain 14 steps). Steps give employees the opportunity to earn “raises” even though their grade does not change. For more information on Federal Position Classification and job grading standards, see the OPM web site, www.opm.gov/fedclass/.

Civil Service grades reside in the position not the person. If a person with a GS-9 job takes another job at GS-7, he/she “becomes” a GS-7. If this occurs, the employee may be eligible for “highest previous rate” (HPR). (Highest previous rate is discussed in detail later in this chapter.)

Citizenship

Under Executive Order 11935, only U.S. citizens and nationals (residents of American Samoa and Swains Island) may compete for Civil Service jobs. A noncitizen can be hired only when no qualified citizens are available. A noncitizen, hired in the absence of any qualified citizens, may be given

only an excepted appointment and cannot acquire competitive civil service status.

For any work performed in the United States, immigration law requires private and public employers to hire only individuals who are eligible to be employed (i.e., U.S. citizens or nationals, or aliens authorized by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)). Questions about an individual's citizenship, nationality, immigration status, and eligibility for employment under immigration law, should be directed to the local INS office. The INS web site address is www.ins.usdoj.gov.

The Excepted Service

Most Federal civilian jobs are in the competitive service. To obtain a Federal job, you must compete openly with all other applicants. Some agencies are excepted from the competitive Civil Service procedures (e.g. U.S. Postal Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the FBI). These agencies have their own hiring system which establishes the evaluation criteria they use in filling their internal vacancies. These excepted service positions usually require specific expertise and may be time limited. All the positions in the Family Liaison Office and some of the Overseas Briefing Center's positions are excepted service.

For more information about the Excepted Service, call OPM's Career Connection (see above) at 912-757-3000 to request Fact Sheet EI-6 "Excepted Service Employment."

Civil Service Appointments

When you are hired by the Federal Government, you receive either a temporary, term, or career-conditional appointment.

A **temporary appointment** is for one year or less. Temporary workers cannot be promoted and cannot transfer to another U.S. Government job. They are not under the Civil Service retirement system and are not entitled to health or life insurance benefits (although service as a temporary can count for retirement credit if the individual subsequently receives a career appointment). See special rules for Foreign Service spouses serving in appointments abroad in Chapter 7, "**Employment Abroad.**"

A term appointment is made for work on a specific project that will last less than 4 years. Term employees can be promoted or reassigned to other positions within the agency for which they were hired as long as the new position is also a term appointment. Employees with term appointments are eligible for retirement, health, and life insurance benefits.

A **career-conditional appointment** is the first step to a career in the Federal service. Employees with career-conditional appointments must complete a

1-year probationary period. They receive all fringe benefits and have transfer and promotion privileges. If they have a break in Federal service of more than 3 years, they cannot return without going through the regular competitive appointment procedures (except for individuals with some type of noncompetitive eligibility).

After 3 years of service, career-conditional employees receive career status. Employees who leave the Federal service after achieving career status may be reinstated by agencies at any time in the future.

Special Exception

If an employee leaves a career-conditional position to accompany his/her spouse, a U.S. Government employee, on an official assignment abroad, the allowable break-in-service period is extended for the length of the tour. At the time of return, that individual has a 3-year period of reinstatement eligibility into the competitive service.

Civil Service Work Schedules

Regular Civil Service employees work either a full-time, a part-time, or an intermittent schedule.

Full-time Positions. Full-time work usually consists of 5 full (8-hour) days for a total of 40 hours each week. About 90 percent of Federal employees work full-time schedules. Full-time employees earn annual and sick leave, receive Civil Service retirement coverage, and are eligible for health and life insurance.

Part-time Positions. Part-time work usually consists of a regular schedule of from 16 to 32 hours each week. Part-time schedules can be set up in many ways, e.g., four 8-hour days each week, five 4-hour days. However, part-time employees must work a regular schedule during both weeks of a pay period (i.e., at least during 1 day in each week). Part-time employees receive the same hourly rate of pay as full-time employees in the same grade level. They are eligible for annual and sick leave (on a prorated basis), health, and life insurance. Part-timers receive the same service credit for retirement and within-grade increases as full-time employees.

Job-Sharing in the Federal Government

By law (5 U.S.C. 3402), nearly every Federal agency is required to have a program for part-time employment. Any job may be filled by a part-time employee or by a team of job-sharers if the arrangement meets the needs of the agency and the employee(s). In some situations, job-sharing may

not be appropriate, and agency managers can have good reasons for not approving requests for job-sharing.

The following information applies to job-sharing in Federal positions:

- Each member of a job-sharing team must have his/her own performance standards. These will be identical if the job-sharers are jointly responsible for the entire position. Each job-sharer must be evaluated separately, although the evaluation will often be based on work to which both have contributed. To make the supervisor's job easier, it would be wise to build in a mechanism for determining the relative contributions of each job-sharer.
- Job-sharing employees under permanent appointments are eligible for the same benefits as full-time employees: leave, retirement, health, and life insurance coverage. Job-sharing employees who participate in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program receive the same coverage as full-time employees but pay a greater percentage of the premium because the government's share is prorated based on the number of hours the employee is scheduled to work each week. For example, an employee on a 20-hour-per-week schedule receives one-half of the normal government contribution towards the premium.
- Gross pay is computed by multiplying the employee's hourly rate by the number of hours worked during the pay period. Overtime rates apply only to the hours in excess of 8 in one day or 40 in a week. Non-overtime hours above those normally scheduled are paid at the basic rate.
- Annual leave is earned according to the number of hours worked per pay period. An employee with less than 3 years of service earns 1 hour of leave for each 20 hours worked; with from 3 to 14 years of service, the employee earns 1 hour for each 13 worked; and with 15 or more years of service, earns 1 hour for each 10 hours worked. All part-time and job-sharing employees earn 1 hour of sick leave for each 20 hours worked and are also eligible for other kinds of leave.
- If a holiday falls on a day the employee normally works, the employee is paid for the number of hours he/she was scheduled to work.
- A job-sharing employee earns a full year of service credit for each calendar year worked (regardless of schedule) for the purpose of computing dates for retirement eligibility, career tenure,

completion of probationary period, within-grade pay increases, change in leave category, and time-in-grade restrictions on advancement.

For general information about job-sharing, see Chapter 1, **Introduction**.

Intermittent Positions. Intermittent work is sporadic in nature, and employees serving under this arrangement have no fixed or guaranteed schedules. They are ineligible for leave and receive no health or life insurance benefits.

The Civil Service does have mechanisms for using flexitime and flexiplace work schedules. For more information about these schedules, see Chapter 1, **Introduction**. For more information on flexitime and flexiplace, see the OPM web site, www.opm.gov/oca.

Civil Service Benefits

Civil Service employees are eligible for the following special benefits.

Reinstatement Eligibility. Former career or career-conditional employees are eligible for noncompetitive reemployment. This means that they can be reinstated without open competition to a position at a grade no higher than they previously held. To be eligible, an employee must have either completed 3 years of substantially continuous service as a career-conditional employee or have been separated no more than 3 years from a career-conditional appointment. Those with reinstatement eligibility may apply for jobs in which the job announcement specifies “Civil Service status required.”

Even if you do not have three years of substantially continuous service, you may still have reinstatement eligibility if you held a temporary, term, or similar appointment, were on active duty military service terminated under honorable conditions, or have a veterans preference. Any period of residence abroad by a spouse who leaves a career-conditional appointment to accompany his/her sponsor on official assignment does not count against the 3-year limit on reinstatement eligibility.

Transitional Leave Without Pay. Some agencies allow career or career-conditional employees whose sponsors are being reassigned to another duty station, to switch to a brief period of leave without pay (LWOP) when their formal employment ends. Transitional LWOP allows the employee to move to the sponsor’s new duty station, apply for vacancies, and take a new job without experiencing a break in service.

Highest Previous Rate. If an individual held a Civil Service appointment for more than 90 days or worked continuously in one or more positions

for 90 days at a higher grade or rate of pay than his/her current employment, the agency may authorize a rate of pay above the initial step to approximate the employee's previous pay level (for example, GS-5, Step 4 if the employee has previously served as a GS-6). Highest previous rate is discretionary on the part of the agency and is not an employee right.

Civil Service Job Vacancy Announcements

A vacancy announcement is a document utilized by Federal agencies to recruit applicants. The vacancy announcement specifies who may apply, the period during which applications can be received, the targeted grades and salary levels, the basic qualifications — both educational and professional, and if any specialized experience is required. Potential applicants should read the information contained in the announcement carefully before submitting an application. Information about vacancy announcements can be found in OPM's "Federal Employment Information System".

Types of Federal Job Announcements

- Open announcements. Used for positions with high turnover rates; applications can be submitted and considered at any time.
- Examination announcements. Announce when an examination for a Federal position will be given.
- Vacancy announcements. Lists a specific job opening with a closing date.

The Family Liaison Office receives many Federal job announcements. Many of these announcements are listed in the Washington Area Jobs Network and can be seen in the FLO Office.

Federal Government Job Vacancies Listings

There are a number of established private sector companies that specialize in providing information on Federal job openings including the "Federal Employment Bulletin," the "Federal Jobs Digest," the "Federal Employees News Digest," and the "Federal Times." (See Chapter 13, **Resources and Bibliography**, for contact information.) Current publications are available in area public libraries.

Web Sites on the Federal Jobs Search

Internet Career Connection: www.iccweb.com/federal

Federal Web Locator: www.law.vill.edu/Fed-Agency/fedwebloc.html

FEDWORLD: www.fedworld.gov

USACareers: www.usacareers.opm.gov

USAJobs: www.usajobs.opm.gov

Labor and OPM: <http://safetynet.doleta.gov>

Worklife Center: www.worklife.com

Areas of Consideration. All Federal job announcements state, under “Area of Consideration,” who can apply for the position.

- **All Sources** — Any qualified person can apply.
- **Status Candidates** — Only those candidates with career or career-conditional status, reinstatement eligibility, Intermittent No-Work Schedule (INWS) and noncompetitive eligibility can apply.
- **Limited to Department Employees** — Only current employees of the agency or bureau can apply. Spouses with E.O. eligibility, and on Leave Without Pay (LWOP), or Intermittent No-Work Schedule (INWS) are also qualified to apply for these positions.

Disabled veterans, Vietnam-era veterans, or persons with disabilities automatically have noncompetitive eligibility. Noncompetitive eligibility for Foreign Service and military spouses is discussed below and in Chapter 7, **Employment Abroad**.

Applying for a Federal Job

When you learn about a job vacancy that you are interested in, you apply for the position. The job announcement will indicate what type of application (SF-171, OF-612, SF-1950, or Federal Resume) is acceptable. See Chapter 9, **Applications and Resumes**, for information on the Federal Application package. In addition to the application, required tests may have to be taken.

What happens to your application after it has been submitted? First, a personnelist logs in your application and determines whether you meet the minimum qualifications for the position. Then, a panel or subject matter expert examines the applications and gives each one a numerical rating based on preestablished job-related criteria (the ranking factors listed on the vacancy announcement). After all applications have been

rated, they are rank ordered and the best-qualified candidates are certified and forwarded to the selecting official or interview panel (this is what is called “making the cert”).

The selecting official is normally the person who hires for a specific office. The selecting official may either make a “paper selection,” i.e., choose one of the certified candidates, or he/she may interview all the referred candidates and make a selection based on the interviews. See Chapter 10, **Interviews and Job Offers**, for information on how to prepare for an interview.

Important Note

An applicant’s basic eligibility and the evaluation of his/her experience, education, and training is based solely on a review of the application package. Panel members can only rank what is actually written on the application; they are not allowed to make assumptions. It is critical that the applicant include a supplemental statement that specifically addresses his/her qualifications based on the announcement’s ranking factors.

Counselors in the Career Development Resource Center can critique your resume or Federal application against the job announcement to make sure that all factors have been covered.

For general and specific information about Department of State Civil Service and Foreign Service positions, call the State Department’s Employment Information Service at 703-875-7490.

Foreign Service Employment

One solution to the employment concerns of Foreign Service family members is to join the Foreign Service, either as an officer or a specialist (including secretarial/office management positions). Increasing numbers of Foreign Service employees are members of a tandem couple (approximately eleven percent of the Foreign Service and thirty percent of the office management specialists.)

Tandem Couples

A tandem couple is defined as a married couple each of whom is a career employee of one of the Foreign Affairs agencies. The Foreign Affairs Manual states that, “The Department makes every reasonable effort to assign both members of a working couple to the same post in positions appropriate to their class levels and qualifications.” If the tandem couple indicates they desire to avoid separation, the couple’s tandem status will be taken into consideration along with all other factors applicable to the

open assignment's policy. Other members of the Foreign Service will receive equal consideration when the various factors are weighed.

When submitting their bid lists, tandems should advise their Career Development Officers (CDO) which member's assignment/career interests should take precedence. An effort will be made to assign that member first according to standard assignment procedures. When only one member of a tandem couple is a Department of State employee, that person's CDO will consult with the appropriate personnel office in the other member's agency to develop a joint assignment.

When it is not possible to arrange a joint assignment, both members of a tandem couple will be consulted on the alternatives such as separate assignments or LWOP for one member. If the assignments of tandems to a specific post entail differing tours of duty, the Bureau of Human Resources (HR/CDA) may approve extension requests in conformance with the tour of duty guidelines applicable to the category of employment of the tandem member.

A tandem couple may not be assigned in a supervisor/subordinate relationship because of the nepotism provisions of U.S. Code (5 U.S.C. 3110) and the implementing regulation (3 8200 App. A). Tandems should consult closely with their CDO's concerning nepotism issues. See Chapter 7, **Employment Abroad**, for a detailed discussion of nepotism issues.

Foreign Service Officer Corps

Although many U.S. government agencies send personnel abroad, the Foreign Service Officer Corps is technically limited to Foreign Service officers who are members of the Foreign Affairs agencies assigned to the Department of State, the Foreign Agriculture Service, and the Foreign Commercial Service of the Department of Commerce, and commissioned officers of the U.S. Agency for International Development. Entry into the corps involves extensive screening, including a written examination and an oral assessment of the candidate (the so-called "Foreign Service exam").

To be eligible for the Foreign Service Officer Corps, applicants must be U.S. citizens, between the ages of 20 and 59 on the date of the written examination, and be available for worldwide assignment, including Washington, D.C. No specific educational background is required. However, most successful officers have a broad knowledge of international and domestic affairs, U.S. and world history, government, foreign policy, and culture.

The Foreign Service written exam is the first step toward a career in diplomacy. The examination is offered in some 200 locations nationwide

and at all U.S. diplomatic and consular posts. The test measures a candidate's knowledge and understanding of a range of subjects determined by a job analysis to be important to perform the tasks required of a Foreign Service officer. Although the test is constantly being revised, it will likely contain three multiple choice sections: job-related knowledge; English expression and usage; and a non-cognitive component. There is also an essay writing exercise at the beginning of the examination. Only those candidates who pass the multiple choice segments will have their essays scored.

Based on their performance on the written exam, some candidates will be invited to participate in a full day of assessment activities. These activities are based on an analysis of the skills, abilities, and personal characteristics deemed important or essential to the performance of a Foreign Service officer. During the oral assessment, candidates will deliver a demarche and write a report on it, answer hypothetical questions, and participate in a group negotiation exercise.

Candidates who successfully pass the assessment then undergo a thorough background investigation to determine eligibility for a security clearance. This investigation can take several months. Medical clearance for duty abroad is required for all candidates and their family members. As the last step in the selection process, the candidate is evaluated by a Final Review Panel that carefully reviews the entire file, especially the background investigation report, to determine the candidate's suitability. Candidates who are unsuccessful in any phase of the process may reapply following one year from the date of that decision if the announcement is open at that time.

For further information, contact the following:

U. S. Department of State
Recruitment Division /Exam
2401 E Street NW
Room H518, SA-1
Washington, DC 20522
Telephone: 703-875-7490 or 1-800-205-6358
Web site: www.state.gov

The Mustang Program

The Mustang Program offers the opportunity to full-time, permanent, career employees to convert to the Foreign Service as Junior Foreign Service Officers (JO's). Foreign Service employees must currently be in classes FP-8 through FP-4; Civil Service employees must currently be in competitive Civil Service grades GS-5-through GS-12.

Candidates will be selected for the program on the basis of projected staffing needs for Foreign Service Officers in each of the five generalist functional cones (Administration, Consular, Economic, Political, or Public Diplomacy).

Candidates must have one of the following:

- Bachelor's or advanced degree; or
- A passing score on the FSO written examination; or
- Completion of an approved FSI, university, or correspondence course comparable in difficulty and duration to one college semester. This self-improvement course should be related to one of the four functional cones of the Foreign Service. If an applicant has taken a recent course, he/she may consult with HR/CDA/EL (see below) to see if it meets the requirements. If an applicant is unsure of the applicability of a certain course, he/she should contact HR/CDA/EL.

Examples of self-improvement courses include the following:

- Public administration
- Accounting
- Organizational theory and behavior
- Industrial relations
- Human or cultural geography
- University history course of a country or region
- Social psychology
- Public law
- Social services administration
- Principles of economics
- International trade
- Analytical writing
- University course in area or regional studies
- History of diplomacy
- International relations

The application for the Mustang Program must include the following:

- DS-1950 application for Federal employment.
- Transcripts of all university-level work completed even if it did not lead to a degree.
- An autobiographical statement of approximately 1,000 words. This statement will serve as an indication of writing ability, and should be representative of the applicant's best written effort.
- A one page statement of interest describing how the applicant's experience, abilities, and personal attributes relate to the unique challenges U.S. diplomacy faces today.

- A statement signed by the applicant agreeing to the provisions for failure to attain tenure (see HR/CDA/EL for text).

A Qualifications Evaluation Panel reviews the application for evidence of the applicant's potential to assume broader responsibilities, motivation to enter the Foreign Service officer corps, and the ability to work harmoniously with others. If recommended by the Qualifications Evaluation Panel, Mustang Candidates undergo the same oral assessment as regular junior officers (see above). Following completion of all examination requirements, including updated security and medical clearances as appropriate, and a final review process, successful Mustang candidates will be certified by the Board of Examiners for appointment as Foreign Service Officer Career Candidates. Successful candidates are subject to the same language probation, tenure regulations, and assignments as other junior officers.

For more information on this program, see State Cable 98/058541 or contact the following office:

HR/CDA/EL, Room 2830
 Department of State
 Washington, DC 20520
 Telephone: 202-736-7439

**Foreign Service
 Specialist
 Program**

The Foreign Service Specialist Program offers career opportunities to professionals in a wide variety of functional areas, providing technical, support or administrative services in Washington, DC or abroad. Specialist positions can include the following:

- Communications Electronics Officer
- Construction Engineer
- Diplomatic Security Agent
- Facilities Maintenance Specialist
- Financial Management Officer
- General Services Officer
- Information Management Specialist
- Information Management Technical Specialist
- Medical Officer
- Medical Technologist
- Nurse Practitioner
- Office Management Specialist (formerly FS secretary)
- Personnel Officer
- Physician Assistant
- Psychiatrist
- Security Engineering Officer

Specialist positions are recruited on an as needed basis and not all positions are currently available.

An applicant for the specialist program does not have to take the written Foreign Service exam. Applicants must be U.S. citizens, between the ages of 20 and 60, have specific education, experience, and licensing requirements, be able to pass medical and background investigations, and be available for worldwide assignment.

The following office has information about the Specialist Program:

Recruitment Division
U.S. Department of State
2401 E Street NW, SA-1
Washington, DC 20522
Telephone: 202-261-8932

Current information about the FS specialist positions also can be obtained by calling the State Department's Career Line at 703-875-7490 or by visiting the web site at www.state.gov.

Executive Order 12721 Eligibility

The rules governing Executive Order Eligibility have been changed to make it easier for Eligible Family Members (EFM's) to get career Federal jobs when they return to the United States. The most important changes concern the elimination of the "ten year rule," and new definitions of "service waivers." The complete text of Executive Order 12721 is found in 5 CFR part 315.608 as amended on March 8, 1996.

Executive Order 12721 on Noncompetitive Eligibility represents a unique opportunity for EFM's to earn eligibility for Civil Service employment while they serve in non-career positions abroad. When returning to the United States, a family member with E.O. eligibility can be appointed to any Federal occupation and grade level for which he or she is qualified. Agencies may waive the requirement for a written test after determining that the duties and responsibilities of an applicant's position abroad were similar enough to make a written test unnecessary.

For the purposes of this Executive Order, an eligible family member (EFM) is defined as a U.S. citizen spouse or unmarried child under the age of 23.

Eligibility. To be eligible for appointment under E.O. 12721, EFM's must fulfill the following requirements:

- The EFM must have completed 52 weeks of service in an appropriated fund position(s) performed under a local hire appointment(s) abroad. Work must be performed during the time the family member was accompanying a sponsor officially assigned to an area outside the United States and the EFM must have received at least a fully successful (or equivalent) performance rating.
- The EFM must have been a family member at the time he or she met the service requirement for being abroad, but does not need to be a family member at the time of noncompetitive appointment in the United States.
- Any law, Executive Order, or regulation that disqualifies an applicant for appointment in the competitive service also disqualifies the applicant for appointment under E.O. 12721.

Creditable Service. Creditable service may have been under more than one appointment abroad and need not be continuous. If the EFM is separated and subsequently re-employed (e.g., terminated in June and re-hired in September), the time spent off the agency's rolls does not count toward the 52 weeks. Leave without pay (LWOP) taken during the time an individual is in the area outside the United States, that does not exceed six months in any calendar year, is credited on the same basis as time worked. Regularly scheduled part-time work is credited as full-time service. Intermittent employment is credited for each day actually worked. Work performed under contract is not credited under this order.

Periods of creditable service abroad and date of return to the United States must be documented by the EFM when applying for employment in the United States. Copies of personnel actions, travel orders, and performance ratings may be used for this purpose. If security considerations preclude the disclosure of specific information on a former employee's services abroad, the employing agency should issue a certification to this effect.

Service Waivers. Up to 26 weeks of the 52-week service requirement may be waived when the head of an agency (or designee) that employed the EFM abroad certifies that the family member's expected 52 weeks of employment were cut short because of a non-personal situation that required the relocation of the family member from the area outside the United States. EFM's are advised to request a *written waiver certification* from the employing agency. This certification must include the number of weeks waived. For this purpose, non-personal situations include disaster, conflict, terrorism or the threat of terrorism, military deployments, drawdowns, or other management-initiated actions. Situations such as ill

health or personal interest in relocating are not considered reasons for service waivers.

Time Limits. An EFM is eligible for temporary, term, or career-conditional appointment(s) under E.O. 12721 for a period of three years following the date of return to the United States.

The employing agency may extend an individual's appointment eligibility beyond three years for periods equivalent to the time the individual was accompanying a sponsor on official assignment to an area of the United States with no significant opportunities for Federal employment or the time an individual was incapacitated for employment. The applicant is responsible for convincing the potential employer that there were no appropriate Federal positions available at the U.S. site.

Using E.O. 12721 Eligibility. U.S. Government vacancy announcements state the *area of consideration* or who can apply. E.O. eligibles can apply for those positions which include status candidates and noncompetitive eligibles. Applicants must submit all paperwork requested on the announcement, attach a letter stating their eligibility, and include copies of appointment and termination personnel actions (SF-50's) and performance appraisals that document their experience abroad. When applying for positions outside the Department of State, a copy of the Department of State Notice Executive Order 12721 on Noncompetitive Eligibility, available from FLO, may be included in the application package to assist the hiring official who might not be familiar with E.O. Eligibility. EFM's on LWOP or INWS (intermittent no work schedule) from the Department of State are considered current employees of the Department of State for hiring purposes and may apply for vacancies limited to "Department of State Employees Only."

EFM's should be aware that there are other categories of eligibility that compete with E.O. 12721, including preference for displaced government workers, known as Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) eligibles.

Functional Training

The Department of State has authority to provide functional training to family members of U.S. Government direct-hire personnel paneled for an assignment abroad (Section 704 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980). The Family Liaison Office (M/DGHR/FLO) is responsible for coordinating this program with the appropriate regional bureau, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), and the employee's parent agency. All functional training is offered on a space-available basis and opportunities may be severely limited. Some priority may be given to individuals whose training is requested by post.

A family member is eligible for functional training only if his/her spouse has been paneled for an assignment abroad. For some courses a security clearance is also required.

Functional training requests cannot be made directly to FSI. To apply for functional training, the family member must submit a request indicating the course desired and preferred date(s), to the Family Liaison Office as soon as possible. If the family member is assigned abroad, the CLO or personnel officer should e-mail or cable the applicant's request for training to the FLO Employment Program Specialist. Then the Employment Program Specialist coordinates this program and can offer advice and suggestions regarding other employment and educational possibilities available to spouses at individual U.S. posts abroad. See www.state.gov/www/flo for the Employment Program Specialist's e-mail address.

The Employment Program Specialist interviews the applicant to determine eligibility and commitment and coordinates with the Post Management Officer for the post of assignment to determine if the applicant is likely to be able to work at post. The Employment Program Specialist then endeavors to arrange for space in the course.

The employee's agency must pay for the classes. This is done automatically for Department of State employees, but other agencies must agree to pay before the spouse can enroll. Course fees range from \$300 to \$17,240. No mechanism exists at FSI for a spouse to pay directly for a course.

Functional training courses available to spouses are in the consular, administrative, and office management areas. The training is the same as that given to Foreign Service employees and is the equivalent of graduate level courses. Most of these courses are technical. The basic course, including the final examination, must be passed to continue to the next level of training. Unless applicants are prepared to devote the necessary energy and study time to these courses, they should not request enrollment. If a family member starts a course, then he/she must complete it. If the spouse cannot attend the course after enrolling, he/she must notify the Employment Program Specialist immediately, failure to do so will result in the spouse being charged with the published tuition. **Completion of a functional training class does not guarantee a spouse a position at post, but may increase his/her employability.**

HR/CDA coordinates enrollment of family members in language training and area studies. The employee should contact his/her HR Assignments Officer. A few correspondence courses in the consular and administrative

areas can also be taken by family members abroad, however many require a Department of State employee/mentor and access to the FAM.

**FSI Courses
Available to
Family Members**

Basic Consular Course (PC-530), 26 days. Course offers intensive exposure to immigration and nationality law and to the three volumes of the Foreign Affairs Manual dealing with consular affairs. The objective is to provide participants with the capability to apply the law and regulations accurately and effectively. Training is in a setting simulating a consular office abroad and has four parts, all of which end with exams that must be passed to continue to the next session:

- immigrant law,
- nonimmigrant law and services,
- nationality law and citizenship documentation, and
- citizens' emergency services.

Rotating among different offices in "ConGen," students are introduced to the law and regulations through study guides and lectures. In addition to extensive written exercises that test the student's understanding of the material, there are role plays and simulations based on actual cases.

Note: Upon successful completion of this course, family members can be certified to adjudicate visas and are eligible to compete for Consular Associate positions. The post must request that the State Department designate a family member as a "consular associate."

Professional Associates Program

The Professional Associates Program was established to fill staffing deficits and to increase employment opportunities for family members. Candidates chosen for this program receive appropriate training and are paid during the training period. For more information about this program, see Chapter 7, **Employment Abroad**.

The following courses may also be available to family members on a very limited, space-available basis:

- Budget & Financial Management (PA-211), 27 days.
- General Services Operations (PA-221), 12 weeks.
- Personnel Management Training Course (PA-231), 7 weeks.

Computer Courses. Foreign Service family members are enrolled into the many computer courses offered by FSI. Because the courses are short and are offered frequently, the family member can sometimes be

accommodated. Application must be made with the FLO Employment Program Specialist and the family member must have an overseas assignment.

Courses available include the following:

- Introduction to Word for Windows
- Intermediate Word for Windows
- Advanced Word for Windows
- Introduction to Powerpoint
- Intermediate Powerpoint
- Introduction to Access
- Intermediate Access
- Introduction to Excel
- Intermediate Excel
- Microsoft Project
- PC Windows NT 4.0 Fundamentals
- Advanced Windows NT 4.0 for End Users
- Internet Concepts
- Microsoft Project 98
- Microsoft Outlook 97
- Internet for Power Users

Computer Training Center

The Computer Training Center (CTC) provides self-paced training covering everything from Computer Literacy to the latest personal computer applications. The CTC is located at Main State in Room 1410 and is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am until 4:00 pm. Family members can schedule a study time by calling 202-647-4672.

FSI Correspondence Courses available to Family Members

The Foreign Service Institute offers correspondence courses that, although tailored to the needs of Department of State personnel, can be taken by family members abroad.

Basic Consular Correspondence Course (PC-530). This course is broken down into three correspondence courses: **Immigration Law and Visa Operation (PC-102)**, **Nationality Law and Consular Procedures (PC-103)**, and **Overseas Citizens' Services (PC-104)**. The courses are designed to help FSN's understand the numerous and complex laws and regulations found in the Immigration and Nationality Act and the Foreign Affairs Manual. There are quizzes on each section and a final exam. Although designed for FSN's, these correspondence courses may be taken by Foreign Service family members who have a consular mentor/sponsor at

post and access to the manuals. Most family members who take the courses are employed in the Consular Section. A copy of the updated materials should be at post. If not, cable M/FSI/SPS/CON. Information on administration of the courses at post is found in 1992 State 061318.

Special Note

The Basic Consular Correspondence Course does not fulfill the requirements for a family member to be designated as “consular associate.” See the description of the “Basic Consular Course” above.

Administrative Correspondence Courses. Family members at post are also eligible to take the following administrative correspondence courses:

- **How To Write A Statement Of Work** (PA-134) provides guidelines for writing a statement of work for service contracts.
- **How To Be A Contracting Officer’s Representative** (PA-130) provides an overview of the responsibilities and duties of a Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR).
- **Training For Overseas Cashiers** (PA-293) is designed for Class B cashiers at U.S. missions abroad. Lessons deal with the legal requirements of the position, daily operation responsibilities, reporting, and security considerations. Readings and exercises are followed by an elaborate simulation of cashier activity. Cashier candidates must successfully complete this course before being appointed Class B cashiers.
- **Training For Overseas Cashier Supervisor** (PA-294) is for the U.S. or FSN supervisor of the cashier. The course deals with the legal responsibility of both the cashier and the supervisor, and the supervisor’s oversight responsibility. Readings and exercises precede a simulated cashier reconciliation.

Department of State family members can take these correspondence courses without charge. For spouses of employees of other agencies, the parent agency pays any fees or charges. Each course costs \$90. Family members at post interested in taking any of the correspondence courses should have the post cable M/FSI/SPS/AT. The following information should be included:

- Name and Social Security number of the spouse who wishes to take the course;
- Sponsor's name and agency; and
- Position held or about to be held by the spouse.

Family members may also contact the following address:

Office of the Registrar
Foreign Service Institute
4000 Arlington Boulevard
Arlington VA 22204-1500
Telephone: 703-302-7429

FSI offers no correspondence courses in systems management, communications, or electronics. Some computer tutorials or self-taught training materials may be at individual posts. See your post's Systems Manager or CPU head for information about these courses.