



FLO Direct News

A Newsletter Supporting Diplomatic Families from the Family Liaison Office

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Spring: A Time of Transition

Spring is a time of renewal. In this spirit FLO has, after a hiatus, re-launched our former publication, *FS Direct*, and renamed it *FLO Direct News*. Through *FLO Direct News*, FLO shares with the Foreign Service community (all direct-hire US Government employees serving under Chief of Mission authority and their family members) information that we feel might be useful. This may be related to Department policies or regulations, or it may be about FLO resources, programs and services. In this issue, we are reminding our readers about basic FLO services, as well as providing you with information that we believe is timely. The theme for this issue is “Transition”, and we have included articles and information related to transition back to the US (primarily to Washington DC). For example, you will find suggestions about how family members can prepare to search for a new job in Washington given the current economic climate. You may also be interested in reading about how to prepare your children for re-entry to the United States.

Don't forget that FLO is always available to listen to your concerns, advocate on your behalf, and explore new initiatives! Please feel free to contact us at any time: you can make an appointment to see us in person, or you can call or email us. Let us know what types of articles you would like to see in future issues, and what your questions are. Our contact information (staff list, address, phone, email, and website information) is found on the last page of this newsletter. In the meantime, we wish you all a happy Spring!

- Leslie Brant Teixeira, Director of FLO

What's New in FLO

Have it Your Way: You can access FLO services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We encourage you to log on to our website at www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo and learn more about our programs, services, and the other resources available to you.

You can find out what's new with FLO and our partners by reading the *FLO Weekly Update* in your post's newsletter, contacting a FLO subject matter expert, visiting FLO's Community Liaison Offices (CLOs) at posts worldwide, and even dropping by to see us at the Main State building in Washington in Room 1239.

If you have visited FLO online recently, you may have noticed that our website has received a makeover. Find out what's hot and what's new by selecting the "What's Hot" link in the left navigation bar on the main page, or the "Learn More" and "Just Released" pop-up columns on the right side of our web pages.

In addition to a different look, we also have a number of new programs and resources online, including the **2009 FLO Professional Development Fellowship Program for Eligible Family Members and Member of Household (MOH) Partners**. Fellowships of up to \$2,000 will be granted for enrichment activities like continuing education, distance learning, and professional development. For more information, log on to: [www://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c25927.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c25927.htm). If you or someone you know is interested, please don't wait, the deadline for this program is May 8, 2009.

FLO also has a **new online brochure** designed to help you manage your unaccompanied tour at www.state.gov/documents/organization/46592.pdf. Download your copy today.

It's bidding season! Many of you with children who are not yet school age may be wondering what **childcare options** are available at posts around the world. FLO has gathered information on childcare options and made them available on the Intranet site at: http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hrweb/flo/worklife/chilcare_report.cfm.

FLO listservs like *THE NETWORK* continue to offer support for family member employment, and you can find out what is available in the Employment section of this issue. Each week, CLOs and newsletter editors around the world include the latest FLO news and information in the *FLO Weekly Update* that is included in your post's newsletter. FLO is also excited to announce its plans to develop a SharePoint site to integrate the resources and information from our Internet and Intranet sites, our partners, and *you!* Stay tuned for details.

General questions or comments can be emailed to FLO@state.gov.

American Association of Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) Foreign-Born Spouses Group (FBS): AAFSW has been representing Foreign Service spouses, employees, and retirees since 1960. AAFSW is an independent advocate for its membership, giving members a stronger voice when working on common concerns and a chance to enjoy shared interests.

Membership is open to all adult family members of foreign affairs agencies who have served or are subject to service at a U.S. Diplomatic mission. If you'd like more information, email fbspouses@aafsw.org

FLO Can Help Foreign-Born Spouses Become U.S. Citizens

FLO assists all direct-hire Department of State Foreign Service Officers and their spouses who wish to become US citizens through expeditious naturalization. The Naturalization Specialist will discuss your options for naturalization, explain the regulations for 319(b) naturalization and facilitate the processing of your case through liaison with the USCIS. I encourage you to review the FLO Naturalization web pages at www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1966.htm for details about expeditious naturalization and the service FLO provides for qualified applicants. After checking out the web site information please contact the FLO Naturalization Specialist at FLOAskNaturalization@state.gov for direct assistance and guidance about how you can become a US citizen with FLO's help.

Family Member Employment

Interested in pursuing federal employment and have earned Executive Order Eligibility? Be sure to hand-carry copies of your SF-50s and your most recent Performance Appraisal Report (PAR), Form JF-57, marked fully successful or better, as these must be included in your application package. For more information on Executive Order 12721 please go to: www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21651.htm.

Returning to Washington Summer 2009

As I write this in March of 2009, the economic and employment news is bleak. When you return to Washington this summer you will need to work harder and smarter to find work. There are jobs opportunities out there; however, the competition for each position is fiercer than ever before.

How can you prepare yourself? Network, Network, Network. It is not too early to start reconnecting with former bosses and offices. Join professional societies and groups. Connect with your alumni group. Re-connect with friends from the old neighborhood and Foreign Service friends who are now back in Washington, D.C.

Make business cards. Even if it only has your name, profession and email address, you will have a card to hand out when you make a connection. Jobs have been gotten as a result of a chance meeting or conversation in the supermarket line or playground encounter.

Prepare the best resume ever. Your resume is your marketing tool. For assistance in resume preparation, contact the Career Development Resource Center. Email them now while you are still at post. If you would like to reach them by telephone, please call Tomara Moss at 202-663-3042 or email CDRC@state.gov. They are located at 2401 E Street, NW, SA-1, Columbia Plaza – L-321, Washington, DC 20520.

Sign-up for *THE NETWORK*, FLO's listserv for registered family members. Washington area job vacancy announcements and other employment related information including upcoming programs and FLO services are included in *THE NETWORK*. Please send your personal email account and the employee sponsor's agency affiliation to: FLOAskEmployment@state.gov.

Register for Transition Center courses at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). The Transition Center has courses for those returning to the Washington, DC area, including employment related workshops. For more information, go to www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc or email FSITCTraining@state.gov.

Join FLO's Job Seekers Network Group (JSNG). The Network Group will keep you informed of new job search information, keep you motivated, and put you in touch with colleagues who are also looking for work. *JSNG* meetings are planned for March 24, April 21, August 25 and October 27. Please send an email to FLOASKEmployment@state.gov to register to attend a *Job Seekers* meeting.

Take a look at FLO's website for a wealth of information on family member employment issues and returning to Washington www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21565.htm.

If you need more specific guidance, please contact our office on (202) 647-1076 to make an appointment with one of the Employment Section staff. We look forward to helping you make informed employment decisions.

Job Training for Foreign Service Family Members

If you have questions about the enrollment process, email FLO's Employment & Training Specialist at FLOAskTraining@state.gov.

Job training and other occupational skill development courses specific to the needs of the Foreign Service are available to family members. These educational opportunities better prepare EFMs to contribute to mission operations and performance through the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). FLO strongly encourages EFMs to take advantage of these opportunities, space and time permitting. The following is a brief explanation of the courses, requirements and enrollment procedures that are available to EFMs on a space available basis.

FUNCTIONAL TRAINING

The Department of State is authorized (but not required) to provide functional training to family members of U.S. Government direct-hire personnel paneled for an overseas assignment (section 704 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980). These are the same instructor-led courses that Foreign Service Officers and Specialists

take during their tradecraft training. Functional training for anticipated prospective overseas employment for EFMs is offered **on a space available basis only**. Each course has specific eligibility requirements and enrollment procedures. Please note that MOHs cannot take functional training classes.

The functional training courses include:

Basic Consular Course (PC530) -- 31 days

Financial Management Overseas (PA211) -- 18 days

General Services Operations (PA221) -- varies

Human Resource Management (PA231) -- 7 weeks

Applicants should be prepared to devote the energy and study time necessary to learn technical material in a full-time course. Examinations are required throughout the course. Attendance is mandatory for all classes. Passing, failing, or withdrawing from the course become part of the EFM's student transcript at FSI and may affect future training opportunities.

Successful completion of any of the training classes does not guarantee a spouse a position at post, but may increase his/her employability.

Enrollment Procedures for Functional Training

Department of State Family Members

There is no charge for functional training for a Department of State family member. Family members should contact the Family Liaison Office for information on enrollment procedures.

Non-Department of State Family Members

For spouses of employees of other agencies, the parent agency of the direct hire employee must agree to pay the course fee before the EFM can be considered for enrollment. There is no mechanism at FSI for the spouse to pay directly for a course, nor is it allowed. The tuition for the courses may be waived for non-Department of State spouses if post requests the tuition waiver and FSI approves.

Approval or denial of tuition waivers once submitted to FSI can take several weeks. FLO has no control over the timeframe in which tuition waivers are approved or denied. Non-Department of State family members should contact the Family Liaison Office for tuition waiver and enrollment procedures.

Due to the last minute nature of space availability, all EFMs should note that in general **FSI will not confirm their enrollment into functional training courses until a month or less before the start of a course**. FLO has no control over the timeframe in which seats are released to EFMs, assuming there is space available. FSI reserves the right to cancel EFM enrollment in functional training in order to accommodate unforeseen changes in the training or travel schedules of Officers, Specialists, and Locally Employed Staff (LES).

DISTANCE LEARNING

"Distance Learning" is defined as any coursework where the instructor and student are separated geographically or where there may not be an instructor at all; however, instructional tools are built into the course. FSI provides distance learning training via two distinct catalogs: *FasTrac* and FSI-custom produced training for the Foreign Affairs Agency needs and purposes.

FASTRAC

FasTrac is a government-wide distance learning program comprised of thousands of courses in business, information technology, leadership and management. Funded through the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), the program is available on the Internet via the FSI Learn Center, allowing access at anytime, anywhere -- from home, work or wherever is convenient. A single password provides access to the entire course library on an annual basis, and is renewable, provided the user completes a minimum of one course per year. No approvals are required, and certain minimum system requirements are necessary. The courses are self-paced and usually take between two and eight hours to complete. Please direct any questions to the Distance Learning Coordinator, FSI Office of the Registrar at FSIRegistrar@state.gov.

FSI– CUSTOM PRODUCED TRAINING

FSI offers a number of Foreign Affairs Agency-specific distance learning courses in the following topic areas:

- Management
- Orientation
- Public Diplomacy
- Economic & Commercial Affairs
- Consular
- Language
- English Language Grammar
- Transitions
- Security

Tuition & Enrollment Procedures

Department of State EFM's may request access to *Fastrac* or enroll in FSI-produced distance learning courses by completing a DS-0755 training request on FSI's intranet site. EFM's without intranet access should coordinate with their sponsoring direct-hire to submit training requests.

EFM's employed by the Department of State in overseas US missions may enroll in distance learning courses if the training requested is job-related and subject to the approval of the employee EFM's office supervisor and the Post training officer.

For questions, contact the FSI Distance Learning Coordinator at FSIRegistrar@state.gov.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING

FLO strongly encourages all family members to acquire language skills of the host country. FSI offers training in more than 70 languages to help EFMs and Members of Household (MOHs) develop language and cultural expertise. The full complement of language training is available to EFMs while MOHs can only enroll in the short term FAST language courses and *Rosetta Stone*.

Department of State family members may enroll in classroom language training on a space available basis only. Registration is through the direct hire's Career Development Officer (CDO). Non-State Department family members should check with their agency for information regarding language learning opportunities.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- If you do not have access to FSI's intranet site, please visit: <http://fsitraining.state.gov>
- For text or CD-ROM versions, contact the FSI Office of the Registrar at 703-302-7137/7144, or at FSIRegistrar@state.gov
- Family members may also wish to visit CLO offices at post or FSI's Overseas Briefing Center at <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/>, to view the course catalog.
- FLO's Employment & Training Advisor is available at FLOAskTraining@state.gov.

ONLINE TRAINING FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

Manpower Inc. provides career development services and online training opportunities for family members worldwide. State's no-cost partnership with Manpower offers excellent opportunities for family members interested in investing time in their career development while they are at overseas posts and U.S. locations. Eligible Family Members (EFMs) and Members of Household (MOHs) have full online access, at no cost, to a library of over 2000 career-related courses available via the internet. Online offerings include university-level business course modules, personal career development courses, an extensive range of technical IT and Telecom training, and comprehensive training in desktop/office software. Please see FLO Internet site: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/>.

Transition and Re-Entry for Children and Young Adults

Email FLO's Education and Youth Officer for support and referral during transition between posts and re-entry to the US at email FLOAskEducation@state.gov.

During a move, children will go through the same phases of culture shock that their parents do. In many ways it is worse because they have no control, and often not enough information. Nobody asks *them* if they want to move. Decisions about where and when and how to move are usually made by the parents. Grief for the life they are leaving, fear of the unknown future, social anxiety, and academic stress are an inevitable part of the moving process. Parents cannot eliminate these feelings, but they can lessen the intensity. Here are some guidelines to help your family manage:

Focus on maintaining regular family routines and traditions as much as possible. If a family tradition is uniquely tied to your old home, talk about its passing and let your children decide how to carry it on. For instance, if your family has spent the last three years eating Sunday dinner at the local taco stand, your children may decide that the new family tradition will be croissants on Saturday morning.

Understand what makes your children tick. Since questions of identity are a major hallmark of culture shock, parents (and older children) will gain insight into their children's challenges by reading about Third Culture Kids (TCK) on the Intranet at <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hrweb/flo/train/upload/tcksreturningtopassportcountry.pdf>. For many of us who grew up in one culture, we may not understand how Foreign Service life has shaped our children's identity and emotional responses.

Nurture your children. Author Ruth Van Reken has studied internationally-mobile children extensively and is a TCK herself. She notes that during a move parents tend to give too much encouragement and not enough nurture. She advises that transition times are a good time to avoid the "we know you can do it" talk and focus instead on being available, listening, and responding to children's worries with a hug and time together in a shared favorite activity. Make a batch of cookies, read a book together (even if your children have outgrown the read-aloud stage), watch a movie. More information on Reken's work is available online at www.crossculturalkid.org.

Developmental regressions are normal during a move, for children *and* adults. Do not worry too much about the re-appearance of outgrown behaviors unless they persist for more than six months or increase in frequency and/or intensity. These

might include things like young children reverting to sucking their thumbs or bedwetting, or older children acting out and testing your authority (more than usual).

Frequent, age-appropriate communication is important. A good workbook for getting your children to talk is FSI's article "*Where in the World Am I Going*" available at <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/default.asp?Sec=Overseas%20Briefing%20Center&Cat=Publications%20and%20Handouts>. Although it is aimed at younger children, the themes remain the same as children grow. Older children and teens may welcome the opportunity to discuss the topics raised, even as they make fun of the workbook's cartoon format.

Give children control and the chance to make decisions. Sometimes this is as simple as choosing the contents of one suitcase – no parental input allowed, except to ensure that contents do not violate FAA standards. Or get them involved in home leave planning, deciding how they want to spend one day of their time in the US.

Moving is a great time for cleaning house, but let your children decide if they are ready to let go of outgrown treasures. If they aren't, chances are they will be when it comes time to find room for them in their new bedroom.

If at all possible, give your children the opportunity to return to their old home 6-10 months after your move. In almost all cases, this provides closure and helps them realize that they love their old friends and school, but that their new life has already claimed them.

Guilt is counter-productive. Recognize that the Foreign Service lifestyle you have chosen has many advantages and some disadvantages, and that the disadvantages are most apparent and painful during a move.

Things will get better! Remind your children (and yourself) that the normal culture shock cycle is about six months.

EDUCATION AND TRANSITION

Make sure that you hand-carry your children's transcripts, birth certificates, social security cards, IEP, standardized test results, immunization records, health records, and teacher recommendations. Almost all schools require a physical examination form that can be completed during your pre-departure physical. Requirements vary by schools and/or school district. If you are transitioning to an overseas school, check the Overseas Briefing Center's *Post Info to Go* information on the Intranet at <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/epb/epb.asp> for school documents and entrance requirements. Check with the Office of Overseas Schools at <http://aopros.a.state.gov/> for questions on curriculum and special needs. Make sure that the school and the CLO are aware of your arrival and enrollment plans. For enrollment in Washington area schools, see FLO's Intranet reference information on Washington Area Schools at <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hrweb/flo/train/paper01washingtonareaschools.cfm> or email FLOAskEducation@state.gov for guidance.

The following tips may be helpful to keep in mind as your child changes schools:

Most children will experience some disruption in their academic performance during a move. Behaviors and symptoms can mimic learning and/or psychiatric disorders.

Unless your child has a previous history of problems, you should assume that any changes are a direct result of the transition.

Put yourself in your children's shoes: imagine what it would feel like to try and do your job, producing the same quality product if the following had changed: your bedroom; your wake up time; the clothes you wear; the food you eat for breakfast; your commute and work schedule; the physical layout and location of your office; your boss and co-workers; your work requirements, your leisure time activities; and your bed-time. Wouldn't your job performance be affected? All these things have changed in your child's school day, and his/her academic performance may be affected as well.

You are your child's strongest advocate during a move. A great resource is the Office of Overseas School's Intranet publication *Parent Advocacy in International Schools: Supporting Differentiated Instruction for Your Child* at http://aopros.a.state.gov/news_story.asp?news_id=78. Although geared to overseas schools, the guidelines are also helpful for interacting with U.S. schools also.

Every school is different. Be prepared for change and do not equate "different" with bad. Emphasize the positive, and wait six months before making a final judgment on the school.

Pay close attention to changes in school schedules and physical environment.

Educational and behavioral changes can frequently be traced to these factors. The disappearance of the mid-morning snack break in a new school has sent many a child into a low blood sugar-fueled behavioral spin. Schools with larger, noisier student bodies can be overwhelming for the easily distracted child. Moving from a moderate climate where students are outside between classes to an extreme climate where students spend the day indoors means less exercise, fresh air and sunlight, and more difficulty concentrating. Your goal is not to change these factors in the new school, simply to be aware of how they may impact your child, and make adjustments as needed.

What is true for all children is doubly-true for special needs children. Regardless of how well a child is doing in his/her current school, transitioning to a new school will frequently magnify existing learning difficulties. Make sure the school knows as much about your child as possible. In addition to the official records, tell them what has worked well in the past, and any areas of ongoing concern.

EDUCATION AND RE-ENTRY

Re-entry poses its own particular challenges. Children who always thought of themselves as American will discover that they may have little in common with their American peers. The culture shock adjustment cycle can be longer and more intense.

When seeking to enroll your children in Washington-area public schools, you *must* have an address in the school district. For information about re-entry resources and school enrollment in the Washington area, see *Washington Area Schools* at <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hrweb/flo/train/paper01washingtonareaschools.cfm>.

Teens may benefit from reading FLO's publication, [According to My Passport, I'm Coming Home](#). This publication is available on the Internet at: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/2065.pdf>. Some of the material is dated, but still resonates with teens. *Facebook* and similar social networking websites have changed the lives of TCKs, allowing them to maintain a world-wide network of friends from former posts.

The Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF) also offers a wonderful support system for children returning to the Washington area. Activities include a yearly family picnic held in late September, re-entry workshops, and age-specific group activities to help children connect with others who share their life experience. FSYF also sponsors Yahoo! groups for Foreign Service parents. You can access them online at: www.fsyf.org.

Finally, the Overseas Briefing Center, available on the Intranet at <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/default.asp?Sec=Overseas%20Briefing%20Center> provides resources on re-entry and Washington-area pre-schools and local daycare.

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FLO Online Resources

FLO on the Internetwww.state.gov/m/dghr/flo**FLO on the Intranet**<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hrweb/flo/index.cfm>

FLO strives to put as many of our resources materials on the Internet for your easy access. If you cannot find what you are looking for or experience technical difficulty, please email FLO at: FLO@state.gov. You may also contact us at (202) 647-1076 or (800) 440-0397.

FLO Websites provide information on:

Family Member Employment

Education and Youth

Crisis Management

Support Services

Unaccompanied Tours Support

Expeditious Naturalization

Transition

FLO Publications (including *FLO Direct News!*)

The Worldwide CLO Program

Questions?

For general questions: FLO@state.gov

For Education and Youth: FLOAskEducation@state.gov

For Employment: FLOAskEmployment@state.gov

For Evacuation Support: FLOAskEvacuations@state.gov

For Unaccompanied Tours: FLOAskUT@state.gov

For Expeditious Naturalization: FLOAskNaturalization@state.gov

For Family Member Training: FLOAskTraining@state.gov