

SPECIAL NOTICE PERTAINING TO PAYMENT OF “AT POST”, “AWAY FROM POST” AND “HOME STUDY/PRIVATE INSTRUCTION” EDUCATION ALLOWANCES FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

Per 20 STATE 66818 dated July 14, 2020, the Under Secretary for Management approved payment of the education allowance for the 2020-2021 school year to employees on behalf of EFM children who are on Authorized/Ordered Departure (AD/OD), Global Authorized Departure (G/AD) or Transitional Separate Maintenance Allowance (TSMA) in the United States, when the following conditions are met:

- the employee is at the foreign post of assignment and EFMs cannot travel to post because of COVID-19-related complications;
- the EFMs intend to return to or proceed to post as soon as they are authorized to do so;
- the EFM child is enrolled at either the school at post, a school away from post or in a home study/private instruction course of study; and
- the school at post or school away from post will provide online schooling as of the start of the school year (home study/private instruction may already include an online component).

NOTE 1: Payment of the At Post, Away from Post and Home Study/Private Instruction (in lieu of the At Post Education Allowance) pertain to rates for the post of assignment in Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR) Section 920 as well as rates under DSSR 274.12b (Home Study/Private Instruction) and DSSR 274.12c [At Post, Away from Post, and Home Study/Private Instruction Special Needs Education Allowances for children with special needs (DSSR 271m)].

NOTE 2: Per DSSR 261.2, employees at post whose EFM children are officially on VSMA or ISMA in the U.S. may not request an Education Allowance on behalf of these EFM children and may not accrue education allowance expenses for future reimbursement on behalf of these children for the time they are on VSMA or ISMA.

Q.1. What amount will be paid to the school at post in advance?

A.1. The Office of Overseas Schools is working with post-utilized (assisted) schools around the world to request assistance as to when they would accept tuition payments. The majority of schools are supportive and have agreed to wait for tuition payments until the child arrives at post or will accept partial payment. This means that for most employees, the education allowance on behalf of the EFM child would initially be a partial payment. Once the EFM children arrive at post, the rest of the education allowance up to the maximum allowed will be paid as already negotiated by the school.

Q.2. What if an EFM parent or one of a tandem couple (both USG employees) assigned to a foreign post is in the United States with the EFM child(ren)?

A.2. Payment of the education allowance is allowed even in cases where an EFM parent or one of a tandem couple is in the United States, so long as the employee parent (one of the tandem) is

at a foreign post of assignment and the EFM parent or the other of the tandem returns to a foreign post after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. Under normal circumstances, Department or other USG agency personnel do not qualify for the education allowance on behalf of their EFM children while in the United States if one parent is also in the United States.

Q.3. Since this education allowance will be paid in advance of educational costs being incurred, will the employee be required to sign a repayment agreement?

A.3. Yes, prior to payment of this education allowance, the employee will be required to sign an agreement acknowledging that if their EFM child does not join them at post prior to the end of the 2020-2021 school year the employee will be responsible to repay the education allowance. In the case of children attending away from post schools, the employee will be responsible to repay the education allowance if the EFM child does not ultimately attend the away from post school during the academic year.

Q.4. What if EFMs make a personal decision not to return to post once the US government and host nation restrictions are lifted? Will the employee be required to repay the education allowance?

A.4. For EFMs who make a personal decision not to return to post once the US government and host nation restrictions are lifted, the employee will be required to repay the education allowance.

Q.5. What if EFMs are not making a personal decision not to return to post. Is there a repayment waiver provision available?

A.5. The Under Secretary for Management has approved a repayment waiver for those employees whose EFMs are ultimately not permitted to travel to post due solely to COVID-19-related restrictions set by the U.S. government or host nation government. Examples of restrictions that may be considered in support of waiving repayment are: (1) An Office of Medical Services' (MED) decision regarding the EFM child (e.g. a change in medical clearance); (2) U.S. government restriction regarding EFMs at post (e.g. post becomes unaccompanied); or (3) host nation requirements leading to U.S. government restrictions for EFMs (e.g. unacceptable institutional quarantine requirements).

Q.6. Can the education allowance be paid for scenario #1?

- The employee and EFMs were residing at the current foreign post.
- Children were attending the at post school or under home study/private instruction.
- The employee and EFMs went on G/AD or post-specific AD/OD to the U.S.
- Employee returns to his/her foreign post of assignment.
- EFMs stay in the United States on AD, OD, G/AD, or TSMA

A.6. The employee is eligible for either the "at post" or "home study/private instruction" education allowance for the 2020-2021 school year to allow the children to attend the "at post"

school virtually or commence the 2020-2021 school year under “home study/private instruction” from the United States until they can return to the foreign post.

Q.7. Can the Education Allowance be paid for scenario #2?

- Employee and EFMs were residing at current foreign post.
- Children were attending boarding school on an “away from post” education allowance
- Employee and EFMs went on G/AD or post specific AD/OD to the U.S.
- Employee returns to foreign post of assignment.
- EFMs stay in the United States on AD, OD, G/AD, or TSMA

A.7. The employee is eligible for the “away from post” education allowance for his/her EFM children. The children can attend boarding school in the United States or a foreign area. The EFM parent in the United States must proceed to the foreign post when allowed to travel.

Q.8. Can the education allowance be paid for scenario #3?

- Employee and EFMs were at a foreign post and were planning to PCS to another foreign post soon.
- Employee and EFMs went on G/AD or post specific AD/OD to the U.S. from their losing post.
- Employee departs from the United States to PCS to the gaining post.
- EFMs stay in the United States on TSMA

A.8. The employee is eligible for the “at post”, “away from post” or “home study/private instruction” education allowance on behalf of his/her EFM children at the gaining post to allow the children to attend the “at post” school virtually or commence the 2020-2021 school year in “home study/private instruction” until they can travel to the gaining post. The children can attend boarding school under the “school away from post” education allowance in the United States or a foreign area. The EFM parent in the United States must proceed to the foreign post when allowed to travel.

Q.9. Can the “at post”, “away from post” or “home study/private instruction” education allowance be paid for scenario #4?

- Employee is at his/her foreign post of assignment
- EFM children are on AD/OD, G/AD or TSMA at an approved alternate foreign safehaven
- EFM children will start “at post”, “away from post” or “home study/private instruction” virtually from safehaven location

A.9. The employee is eligible for the “at post” or “home study/private instruction” education allowance for the 2020-2021 school year to allow the children to attend the “at post” school virtually or commence the 2020-2021 school year under “home study/private instruction” from the approved alternate foreign safehaven until they can return to the foreign post. The children can attend boarding school under the “school away from post” education allowance in the United States or a foreign area. If the school is in the United States and if the EFM parent in the United States s/he must proceed to the foreign post when allowed to travel.

Q.10. Can the “at post”, “away from post” or “home study/private instruction” education allowance be paid for scenario #5?

-Employee and EFMs were planning to PCS to a foreign post, either from another foreign post, from a domestic assignment, or from G/AD or post specific departure status from their losing post.

-Employee departs from the United States to PCS to the gaining post.

-EFMs stay in the United States on TSMA.

A.10. The employee is eligible for the “at post”, “away from post” or “home study/private instruction” education allowance on behalf of his/her EFM children at the gaining post to allow the children to attend the “at post” school virtually or commence the 2020-2021 school year in “home study/private instruction” until they can travel to the gaining post. The children can attend boarding school under the “school away from post” education allowance in the United States or a foreign area. The EFM parent in the United States must proceed to the foreign post when allowed to travel.

Q.11. Can the “at post” education allowance be paid for scenario #6?

-Employee is at current foreign post “A”

-Employee is on direct post-to-post transfer to post “B”

-EFMs are on AD/OD and cannot proceed to post “B”, however will start the “at post” school at post “B” virtually from the U.S. or alternate approved foreign safehaven

A.11. Because the employee is at a post in a foreign area the education allowance can be paid by post “B” with the employee signing a repayment agreement. Children must arrive at post “B” prior to the end of the 2020-2021 school year.

Q.12. Does the Under Secretary’s approval for payment of the education allowance extend to circumstances when the employee and EFMs are in the United States?

A.12. U.S. government agencies are prohibited by statute from paying education allowances when the employee is not “in a foreign area.” The Department is actively seeking to support employees and families in this situation, and will report separately on the outcomes of this effort.