**TSMA ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19-RELATED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS**

**The following is the content of telegram 20 STATE 58606 dated 6/23/2020 sent to All Diplomatic and Consular Posts**

**BEGIN BODY OF TELEGRAM**

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| 1. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Assistant Secretary for Administration has determined that unusual circumstances exist and, based on DSSR 013, has approved the use of special Transitional Separate Maintenance Allowances (TSMA).  2. These special TSMAs are available to all USG Agencies.  Unless eligibility is terminated pursuant to one of the additional restrictions outlined below (e.g., post’s Diplomacy Strong status changes), these special TSMAs will remain an option for up to one year from the date of this authorizing ALDAC.  In order to be eligible, Eligible Family Members (EFMs) must be affected by travel restrictions triggered by COVID-19 and fall into one of the three situations below.  The approval under DSSR 013 grants such allowances to Department employees and permits other agencies to pay such allowances to their own employees on a discretionary basis.  3.  Per the DSSR, SMA is available to assist an employee, who is compelled or authorized, because of dangerous, notably unhealthy, or excessively adverse living conditions at the employee’s post of assignment in a foreign area, or for the convenience of the Government, or who requests such an allowance because of special needs or hardship involving the employee’s dependents, to meet the additional expenses of maintaining, elsewhere than at the post, the employee’s dependents.  The TSMA (DSSR 262.3) is ordinarily authorized to assist an employee with additional costs incurred when family members temporarily occupy commercial housing while establishing permanent housing following an evacuation or in connection with unaccompanied assignments, but can now also be used in the scenarios below where EFMs cannot travel with the employee due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions.    4.  Applicants for this special TSMA must provide written documentation of COVID-19-related travel restrictions.  These special TSMAs may be approved by Regional Bureau EX Directors for the Department of State and the head of agency or their delegee for other agencies.    5.  In each of the scenarios below where TSMA is approved, TSMA will be terminated within 10 days of the Undersecretary for Management’s approval that a post has successfully completed its transition to Phase 3 of Diplomacy Strong.  The final approval to complete the successful transition to Phase 3 would be no less than 14 days after post initiates its transition to Phase 3.  6.  First Situation: EFMs are on G/AD or post-specific AD/OD residing in commercial quarters while the USDH is at post. The 180-day limit of Subsistence Expense Allowance (SEA) has been reached and the relevant COVID-19-related AD/OD has been terminated but post is not yet at Phase 3 of the Diplomacy Strong framework and EFMs are unable to travel to post due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions.  TSMA may be approved for these situations up to 30 days.  7.  Second Situation: USDH and EFMs are on COVID-19-related departure orders and residing in commercial quarters. USDH commences PCS travel to foreign post of assignment, which terminates departure orders. The gaining post is not yet at Phase 3 of the Diplomacy Strong framework and in cases where EFMs may not yet travel to post, TSMA may be approved for these situations up to 30 days.  8.  Third Situation: USDH is on TDY orders and residing in commercial quarters with EFMs. USDH commences PCS travel to foreign post of assignment, which terminates the TDY orders.  The gaining post is not yet at Phase 3 of the Diplomacy Strong framework and in cases where EFMs may not yet travel to post, TSMA may be approved for these situations up to 30 days.  **END BODY OF TELEGRAM** |

**15. Q: Referencing 20 STATE 58606, paragraph 6, First Situation, following TSMA if they do not want to go back to post citing quarantine/testing restrictions they feel are unacceptable for their families, as well as limited flight options can then choose Involuntary SMA (ISMA)?**

**15. A:** If post is accompanied status and the EFMs/dependents are allowed to go back to post but choose not to, this is a personal choice and would not be ISMA.  It would be Voluntary SMA (VSMA) using the exception at DSSR 264.2b. The provision at DSSR 264.2b states that if they have return transportation to post following the evacuation the employee could apply for this VSMA as long as it’s not within the employee’s last 90 days at post.  This would not count as the one change of option in a tour of duty.  Employees need to make sure that the return transportation authorization has not expired.

**16. Q: What if after First Situation TSMA the EFMs/dependents decide they will not return to post for the duration of the employee’s tour of duty (TOD)? Would they activate the one change of option in the TOD? What if it’s within the employee’s last 90 days at post?**

**16. A:** If the EFMs/dependents decide they will not return to post for the duration of the employee’s tour of duty then this request for VSMA would be the one change of option in a TOD **if that has not already been used** and if it’s not within the employee’s last 90 days at post.  It will be rare, but if the EFMs/dependents had already used their one change of option in a TOD they do not have the choice of VSMA for the duration of the TOD.  If there are more than 90 days left in the employee’s TOD then in this situation they would need to return to post or would be left without VSMA.  If they are within the employee’s last 90 days at post then this could possibly be early return of EFMs/dependents and commence the subsistence expense portion of the Home Service Transfer Allowance (HSTA) if the employee’s next post of assignment is in the U.S.

**17. Q: Referencing 20 STATE 58606, paragraph 7, Second Situation, after having been on this TSMA and the EFMs/dependents are finally allowed to go to post, does this TSMA count as their one change of option in the tour of duty (TOD) as it would under Voluntary SMA? Are the EFMs/dependents now ineligible to opt to depart post during the tour and take up normal VSMA away from post?**

**17. A:** Under the Second Situation the EFMs/dependents would travel to post under the employee’s PCS orders. TSMA does not include the one change of option provision as does VSMA. Once the EFMs/dependents arrive at the foreign post they cannot make a change to VSMA in the first or last 90 days at post.

**18. Q: Referencing 20 STATE 58606, paragraph 8, Third Situation, after having been on this TSMA and the EFMs/dependents are finally allowed to go to post, does this TSMA count as their one change of option in the tour of duty (TOD) as it would under Voluntary SMA? Are the EFMs/dependents now ineligible to opt to depart post during the tour and take up normal VSMA away from post?**

**18. A:** Under the Third Situation the EFMs/dependents would travel to post under the employee’s PCS orders. TSMA does not include the one change of option provision as does VSMA. Once the family members arrive at the foreign post they cannot make a change to VSMA in the first or last 90 days at post.

**19. Q: What is allowed for the following situation: An evacuated US Direct Hire (USDH) is currently on temporary duty (TDY) orders and will be extended on TDY after their evacuation status has been terminated. The USDH’s EFMs/dependents are not co-located with the USDH, but are choosing to delay return to post, following termination of the evacuation order, until USDH TDY orders are terminated and family can travel together.**

**19. A:**  The USDH will remain on TDY. The EFMs/dependents will not be eligible for TSMA, due to the fact they are choosing to delay return to post. The EFMs/dependents may be eligible for VSMA per DSSR 264.2b EXCEPTION described in FAQ #15 above.

**20. Q: What is allowed for the following situation: An evacuated USDH is currently on TDY orders and will be extended on TDY after their evacuation statushas been terminated. The USDH EFMs/dependents are co-located with the USDH, and are choosing to delay returnto post, following termination of the evacuation order, until USDH TDY orders are terminated and familycan travel together.**

**20. A:** The USDH will remain on TDY. The EFMs/dependents will not be eligible for TSMA, due to the fact they are choosing to delay return to post. The EFMs/dependents will not be eligible for VSMA, as they are co-located with the USDH and lodging is being provided via the USDH TDY orders.

**21. Q: What is allowed for the following situation: An evacuated USDH is currently on TDY orders and will be extended on TDY after their evacuation status has been terminated. The USDH EFMs/dependents are not co-located with the USDH, but are not allowed to return to post, following termination of the evacuation order.**

**21. A:** The USDH will remain on TDY. EFMs/dependents will be eligible for TSMA per the 20 STATE 58606, as they are not co-located and are prevented from returning to post.

**22. Q:** **What is allowed for the following situation: An evacuated USDH is currently on TDY orders and will be extended on TDY after their evacuation status has been terminated. The USDH EFMs/dependents are co-located with the USDH, but are not allowed to return to post, following termination of the evacuation order.**

**22. A:** The USDH will remain on TDY. EFMs/dependents will not be eligible for TSMA or VSMA, as they are co-located with the USDH and lodging is being provided via the USDH TDY orders.