



Bouncing Back

*Transition and re-entry
planning for the parents
of Foreign Service youth*



FLO
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Advocacy Programs Services

Family Liaison Office

United States Department of State
Harry S Truman Building, Room 1239
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

(202) 647-1076; (800) 440-0397

www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo

Email: FLOAskEducation@state.gov

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Introduction

Bouncing Back is the revised, abbreviated edition of *According to My Passport I'm Coming Home*. First published by the Family Liaison Office (FLO) in 1998, this was the first internal State Department publication that addressed, in detail, the challenges internationally mobile Foreign Service youth face when transitioning back to the U.S. The original publication identified many of the areas of concern for both parents and youth.

In creating *Bouncing Back*, FLO's Education and Youth team incorporated excerpts from the original publication, updated the content, and focused on how parents can help their Foreign Service child make a smooth and healthy transition "home." *Bouncing Back* identifies general issues relating to certain age groups. However, children may also exhibit behaviors that are not stereotypical of their age.

Bouncing Back, encourages parents to create an environment of support, trust, and understanding in their family. Building a strong family foundation can help a Third Culture Kid (TCK) transition "home" more comfortably. Open, positive family communication around the many issues that Foreign Service youth experience during transition is an important component to maintaining a healthy family life. In addition to identifying why this move, above all others, is potentially the most difficult for many Foreign Service youth, *Bouncing Back* shares information, resources, support mechanisms, and tools that will help you build a healthy, strong foundation for your TCK as he/she goes through this transition.

FLO would like to acknowledge Kay Branaman Eakin as the author of *According to My Passport I'm Coming Home*, the publication upon which much of *Bouncing Back* is based, and thank her for her commitment to the well-being of Foreign Service families.

Chapter 1: What it Means to Come “Home” to the U.S.

What Does a Foreign Service Family Look Like?

While every Foreign Service family is different, they all have one thing in common: an international lifestyle that creates Third Culture Kids (TCKs). TCKs are children who have spent a significant period of time in one or more culture(s) other than their own, thus integrating elements of those cultures and their own passport culture, into a third culture.

The family unit that is created through the Foreign Service lifestyle can be strong as well as diverse. There are multi-national families, bilingual families, inter-racial families, same-sex partner couples, tandem couples, and single parent families, to name a few. Each family will bring its own strengths and weaknesses to raising children in an internationally mobile environment. Through the different moves, families will begin to notice the particular challenges they face. Supporting one another and working with these issues can make each move and transition easier.

One of the benefits to Foreign Service life is the support of your embassy community. Whether your children are with you on a foreign assignment, you are experiencing an Unaccompanied Tour, or your children are attending boarding school away from post, the State Department has resources and is available to support your family.

How do TCKs adjust to change? Ruth Useem, in conjunction with colleagues John Useem, Anne Baker Cottrell, and Kathleen A. Finn Jordan, surveyed more than 700 TCKs currently living in the United States, ages 25–84. Useem and others have subsequently researched and written on the phenomenon and found that TCKs cope rather than adjust, becoming both “a part of” and “apart from” whatever situation they are in. Brought up in another culture or several cultures, they feel ownership in many. American TCKs may find more in common with an Italian or Indian TCK than they do with a mono-cultural U.S. youth.

In the article, *Identities Blur*, Darcia Harris Bowman states that “third-culture kids typically feel comfortable as outsiders and see themselves as global citizens. They are often fluent in several languages, have an insider’s knowledge of different cultures, adapt quickly to new environments, and move with ease from one country to another.” These are some of the strong characteristics children raised in the Foreign Service might develop. However, there are also unique challenges that may surface for this population.

Useem and her colleagues found that TCKs remain somewhat out of sync throughout their lifetimes, and that being different from their peers is sometimes painful, particularly in their teens and twenties. The respondents characterized their difficulty with re-entry to their home culture as mild to severe. In replying to how long it took for them to become adjusted to American life, most indicated that they never adjusted. Useem states, “They adapt, find niches, take risks, fall and pick themselves up again. Many indicated they feel at home everywhere and nowhere.” As a parent, it is important to remember that a mobile lifestyle is something you chose, while your children have been born into it.

From their first home leave after an overseas sojourn, TCKs are often cultural outsiders in their own passport country. An astounding 88 percent reported they can relate to anyone, regardless of differences in race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality. They generally credit their third culture background with positively influencing their adult lives. These and many other TCK qualities can make the transition back to the U.S. especially unique for our Foreign Service youth.

What Impact Does Returning “Home” Have on a TCK?

You may have moved your TCKs from foreign country to foreign country, but moving them back to the U.S. is a different kind of move than all of their previous experiences. – Education & Youth Team, Family Liaison Office

Bowman discusses how even though “adapting to a foreign culture can be tough, many TCKs, as well as sociologists who track their experiences, say re-entering the countries of their birth can be more difficult than living abroad as a foreigner. After years of living on another culture’s terms, many returned ‘home’ to find they were strangers in their own land.” Research shows that additional support is necessary when transitioning a TCK back to the U.S.

U.S. culture is just as rich - it’s just different. – Anonymous TCK

For youth who have returned to the U.S., either for extended periods of time or for abbreviated home leave, often the U.S. is not the same country that they remember. As the late David Pollock, an author, consultant and re-entry workshop leader for internationally mobile youth said, “parents come home; usually their kids are leaving home.” Adults also have the advantage of seeing beyond the move to six months or a year down the road, when everyone will have re-established themselves in the U.S. and local culture. But for children, today is what is important and today can feel very overwhelming with a new neighborhood, school, family, and different curricula, customs, styles, and set of norms to follow.

The greatest culture shock I ever experienced came when I reentered my own culture. – Anonymous TCK

If your children have lived in the States and are looking forward to returning home to their friends, neighborhood, and school, that does not necessarily mean that the transition will be as easy as you and your children anticipate. Many things may have changed since your children were last in their neighborhood and school. However, they may have the expectation that the relationships with their friends will be as positive or as strong as they were before they left. The connection may make your children’s transition home easier and happier. But it is important to recognize that transitioning back “home” may be far more difficult than expected.

TCKs have a number of strengths that will help in their transition. According to Julie K. Kidd and Linda L. Lankenau, authors of *Third Culture Kids: Returning to their Passport Country*:

“TCKs report having a high level of interest in travel and learning languages, and they rated themselves as being culturally accepting and having developed a high level of

acceptance of diversity. TCKs were more self-confident, had more flexible minds, were more active and curious, and had a higher bilingual ability. These students can “swim in two cultural oceans.” Because of their varied experiences, the students can see life in terms greater than one cultural boundary and can explain and express themselves in more than one culture.”

Even given all of the strengths we know TCKs have, understanding the potential challenges that these youth may face is the first step towards supporting them during their transition “home.” Among their strengths, TCKs typically develop healthy coping skills that will allow for a smooth transition. Their unique TCK qualities, coupled with the strength of your family unit, will empower your children to assimilate appropriately into the local culture and lifestyle.

Chapter 2: Organizing the Transition Home – The Foundation for Success

Begin the Conversation

Communication in the family is important. Family members need to share how they feel about the moves. – Anonymous TCK

According to Paula M. Caligiuri, co-author of *Families on Global Assignments*, “a healthy level of family communication is evidenced by the following characteristics: a family’s ability to address and resolve the concerns within the family, a family’s ability to resolve conflicts by mutual recognition of each other’s opinions, and a family’s ability to negotiate issues of contention.” Transition and change are challenges that your family will face continuously throughout your Foreign Service experience. Build a foundation of positive, healthy family communication early in your Foreign Service life.

As soon as families know when they’ll be returning home, they should sit down together to discuss their approaching return. It is important for parents to remember that their children may not be excited about the upcoming move; many of them are, in fact, leaving “home.” Families should discuss the disadvantages as well as the advantages of the forthcoming move, with all members of the family expressing their feelings and opinions. It is important to allow the expression of divergent views.

If you are separated from your spouse or partner while parenting your children, include your spouse or partner in the conversations as often as you can, even if they are away on an Unaccompanied Tour. Consider speaking with your partner before you gather your children, so that the two of you can be united in your approach on any major decisions. Set up a Skype call with your children and spouse and work together on a shared goal.

As a family, discuss strategies for life back in the United States – how to go about making new friends, renewing old acquaintances, and becoming involved in new groups. As a family and as individuals, try to set some positive goals for the first month, the first six months, and the length of time you expect to be home.

As a family we were very much a unit. It’s important to keep that. – Anonymous TCK

This is a good time to speak with your kids about some of the required decisions surrounding your move. If you know you’re coming back to the U.S. during the summer, talk with your kids about their options. Spending time in their new home before the school year begins is important, and so is finding time to say goodbye to friends and/or participate in planned activities. This may also be an opportunity for them to participate in a once-in-a-lifetime service activity in Africa with their friends at post, or for you all to travel somewhere as a family. Providing them with something to look forward to during, before, and/or after the big move “home” can help keep them feeling positive.

When initiating conversations about moving “home,” parents should discuss realistic education options with their children. If you are only being posted in the U.S. for one year of training before moving to another post abroad, and it’s your daughter’s junior year, it may be worthwhile to think about a school option that will allow her to finish 11th and 12th grade at the same school. Talk to your child about her educational options. Maybe boarding school is a possibility or maybe your daughter would prefer to stay behind and finish her senior year in a public school while living with relatives or family friends. In the Foreign Service, it is important to keep an open mind regarding how to provide your children with the best educational opportunities. When bidding and moving a family, parents should consider educational continuity. Although providing it can be challenging, it is important.

Help your children develop resiliency by allowing them to exert a degree of control over things in their lives. Discussing possible assignments as a family and eliciting feelings about these options may assist TCKs in feeling they have some control.

In *The Art of Coming Home*, Craig Storti states that “...re-entry has the potential of turning a child’s world upside down, depriving him or her of the familiar people, places, and things that are the main source of a child’s sense of security and well-being.” That’s why it’s important to have discussions before the big move so all family members are on the same page. TCKs talk about not having any input, and that they feel powerless to influence decisions about moving. Realistically, families are not going to ask their children to choose one assignment over another. However, having a discussion about the parent’s decision, as well as the pros and cons, allows children to feel they are a part of the process. Most TCKs like to feel that, at a minimum, they were able to express their opinions.

Family discussions are helpful in some ways. Knowing what school you’ll be going to is important. If you have a choice of where you go, whether or not you’ll live in a house or apartment, all of this adds a little bit of control. – Anonymous TCK

Remember to talk to your children about packing out. Involve them in some of the decisions about what household items go home in air freight versus sea freight. The more buy-in you can offer them, the more you will help them feel a part of the process. Maybe they have something important to them that they will want to have right away upon their return. Discuss these possibilities, even with very young children, before you pack out.

For TCKs returning to the U.S. to enter college, leaving the security of their family may be difficult. For many who have been abroad through high school, this may be the first time they’ve been away from family. Frequently, this entry to college coincides with their parent(s) going to another overseas assignment. This may create some ambiguity about who is leaving whom. While students may feel anxious, often they are uncomfortable raising the topic with their parents, particularly if their parents are excited about going off to a new post.

Gathering Information

Adapting to a new place is easier for families when they have done their research. Gathering information about a new overseas assignment is standard practice for most Foreign Service families. Remember to do this with your family when returning to the U.S., too. Treat your assignment to the U.S. with the same attitude you would a new post abroad!

In fact, for all of us, home may have changed in our absence. There may be new buildings, new metro stops, new stores, changed traffic patterns, etc. youth who haven't been home for several years may not have any strong memories.

Families need to acclimatize their children to home in the same way they accustom themselves to an overseas posting. We sometimes forget that children often don't know their home country. Viewing the return as a cultural experience and preparing to be a tourist in one's own country can be as simple as scheduling a weekend exploration of a park or a new museum, or taking a hike along a canal, river, or lake. For teenagers, it may be making a foray to the nearest mall, to discover the best stores. Establishing themselves in their new environment is often the most difficult problem many returnees face. The more you can do as a family to help your children establish themselves in their new "home," the more comfortable they will be.

Foreign Service teenagers in Lankenau's focus groups felt that when they came back to friends from an earlier time, it was easier to understand and assimilate into the local scene. It was easier for them to ask questions and talk about fears relating to the new school with their old friends than with new-found classmates. These old friends, while they may not remain best friends over the long run, gave them a base from which to branch out.

If you have high school students, it is important to conduct a proper college search. Expose your child to a variety of resources and research tools to help them make informed decisions about where they would like to apply. Explore all areas of college life including: academic programs, extracurricular activities, diversity, residential life, class size, social life, and location. Consider how the culture of the campus will impact your child's experience.

Attending a summer school program on a college campus during high school could potentially trigger an interest in a particular type of college. It will also introduce a young TCK to important aspects of college-level independence, including dorm life, and time-management.

A dissertation written by Sara J. Thurston-Gonzalez: *A Qualitative Investigation of the College Choice Experiences and Re-entry Expectations of U.S. American Third Culture Kids*, found four major conclusions:

- (1) An international location influences numerous aspects of the college search process;
- (2) Strong student ties to the "familiar" play an important role in their college choice process;
- (3) Adjusting to U.S. culture is an expected challenge; and
- (4) College orientations are perceived as extremely important to third culture kids.

I just had no idea how hard coming back and adjusting to my own country was going to be. I wished that I had paid more attention to what was going on here before I returned. I think if you come back to college after not having been here, it just takes a lot longer to adjust. – Anonymous TCK

Saying Goodbye

Increasingly, we are becoming aware that having closure on the overseas experience is the first step in making a comfortable transition home; closure gives the family the psychological space to separate one chapter of life from the next. Parents can help their children by encouraging them to think about and plan how they want to say goodbye, which may take different forms at different ages such as a sleepover, a party, or a dinner out. Catherine Kehrig, former Chair of Global Nomads International, says, “you have to say a good goodbye before you can say hello.”

As children grow older, it becomes more difficult to make friends and more painful to leave them. According to *Identities Blur*, many TCKs “feel their greatest sense of belonging when they are among others like themselves.” This can make leaving their friends behind even more challenging, as they may already be aware that their peers in the States are not TCKs like them. To protect themselves from the painful grieving process, some may simply invest a little less in friendships with each move. Parents can provide support for their children by helping them find peers with whom they have things in common.

Giving up friendships is hard for kids like me, but it helped develop interpersonal skills. – Anonymous TCK

Helping teenagers plan appropriate opportunities to say goodbye to close friends and encouraging them to make plans to stay in touch and plan future visits, is a good way to assist with their transition home. These friendships may be much more important to your child than you imagine. Remember, the expression of sadness or grief is healthy. Allow your children to share their emotions openly with you, and acknowledge them.

It's important to keep in touch with as many friends as you can. – Anonymous TCK

Returning teens often hope they will be able to pick up where they left off with old friends, but very often the different lives they have led preclude this. What TCKs don't realize is that, because of their overseas experiences, they may have less in common with old friends than they anticipated. This could also disappoint them when they discover that old friends from overseas, who are also back “home,” have changed and are not the same people they remember.

One thing you have to realize is that being a teenager and having to move anywhere in the world whether it's the States, Korea, Brazil, South Africa, wherever, you are going to have a tough time.... The first six months here were the most horrible months of my life. Now that I've been in _____ for a year and a half, I've made some really good friends here as well, as I'm sure you will in the U.S. if you give it some time. – Anonymous TCK

Dr. Robert Beck, former Director of Counseling of The American Embassy School, New Delhi, identifies that the fears that families express before their return to the U.S. are very real. He notes that it is important for families to discuss these issues as a unit before and after the move. Parents must continue to communicate about controversial topics. This will encourage their children to bring questions and concerns about what they see in their school(s), and among their friends, to the family for discussion and guidance.

Re-entry causes high stress for all members of a family. Make an effort to minimize conflict within the family during this period and the adjustment is more likely to be successful and probably shorter.

Quick Tips

Communication, communication, communication – FLO cannot emphasize this enough! Talking with your kids and having them express their feelings, either positive or negative, can promote a healthy transition home. It may be difficult to understand their point of view, but providing support is fundamental.

Familiarize children with the United States – Technology (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) can help children get back into the “American lifestyle.” Researching the city and neighborhood events and activities before heading Stateside can help your family acclimate. Returning to the same neighborhood, or relative’s house each summer, can help create continuity for your children.

Give your kids some control – Sometimes this is as simple as encouraging them to choose 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 and deciding how they want to spend their summer before moving to the U.S.

Saying goodbye – Help your kids plan their goodbyes to friends. Encourage them to stay in touch (remember this may include paying for some future visits). Remind them that email and social media such as Facebook, blogs, Flickr, Tumblr, Twitter and other online communication such as Skype, can allow them to stay connected to their friends in real time. Saying goodbye may be hard for them; as parents, now’s the time to offer support.

Stay positive – Remind your children (and yourself) that the normal culture shock cycle is about six months. This experience is new and fresh for everyone, so just take it one day at a time. Remember, your children will take their cue from you; if you are handling the transition well, they will be more likely to do the same.

Listen – Never forget to listen. We tend to “tell” our kids things rather than listen to what they are saying. Remember to ask their opinion and acknowledge their feelings during this process.

Chapter 3: Helping to Ease the Transition Process

Providing Consistency

Occasionally, international moves may interrupt a school year. Whenever possible, a mid-year move should be avoided. Sometimes employees are able to negotiate a more suitable end of assignment, or family members can remain in an overseas location longer to allow children to finish out the school year. When that's not possible, delaying the move until the end of the soccer season or after the school play helps children put some closure on their experiences.

If children are in boarding schools, the same efforts should be made to allow them to finish the school year. And, if appropriate, let them return to the boarding school to complete their academic career. If the away from post education allowance is no longer available to your family, ask your child's school if they offer financial aid or payment programs. Some schools are willing to provide assistance if a family is in a difficult situation, particularly if the student has a good academic, extracurricular, and behavioral record. Contact the school directly to see if it is able to make any accommodations for you.

In the 1990s, the Ackerman Institute for Family Therapy, under contract with the U.S. Department of State's Medical Services Office, concluded that the best predictor of a child's social ability to adjust was the parent's view of the family and their psychological and social adjustment. Support from parents helped children develop a sense of mastery over their environment after a move. Just as a family prepares for moving to an overseas culture, it is important to prepare for re-entry into the home culture. Many of the same strategies used in overseas adaptation will work upon return.

My family is very important to me since we constantly move and my friends keep changing. My parents and sister are my best friends and, unlike other families, we always enjoy doing things together. – Anonymous TCK

There are certain inherent "givens" in a mobile lifestyle. While parents usually make the choice to follow this lifestyle, at least in the short term, their children are not given a choice. TCKs are not able to make the decisions regarding where they live or when they leave home and this may be difficult for them. Many TCKs are resilient enough to adopt the Foreign Service lifestyle as their own and truly enjoy it; however, keep in mind that it may not be their preferred lifestyle. By encouraging them to stay in touch with friends left behind, whether in Accra, Arizona, or Asunción, you will show your appreciation for the challenges they experience. TCKs need to feel free to communicate with friends and family even when they are continents apart. There will be certain expenses that are necessary to help young people make the transition from one culture to another. This may include Skyping with old friends abroad, visits with friends who have already returned, finishing out a school year, and, perhaps, even a return visit to the country left behind.

Writing emails and letters, making telephone calls, and even visiting friends are important for children of all ages, especially teenagers. Keeping in touch helps them to maintain a sense of continuity following a move. Skype, Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, blogs, email and text messaging have all made communication from one country to another much easier and less expensive.

Teens often hope to return to their last overseas “home” the first summer after they move. It is good to encourage this possibility within the confines of well-made plans – a job for the teen that will help pay for the journey – and with the understanding that they can change this commitment if the urge is no longer strong when summer comes.

While many adults delight in the opportunities for overseas trips during school vacations, some children are not equally excited about that prospect. Dr. Rigamer, former Director of the U.S. Department of State Office of Medical Services, recommends bringing children back to the U.S. each summer, if possible, so that they can keep in touch with their home country, friends, and extended family members.

Many families have found that allowing their children to spend summers in the United States, even when their parents cannot join them, is a good idea if there is a regular program in place. Ideally, they would vacation in a part of the country where they will eventually be returning to school. Help them use this as an opportunity to interact with their peers to smooth the eventual transition back home. Summer camps, or programs on a college campus, are both examples of beneficial activities. If they enjoy a particular camp or program, consider encouraging them to enroll again the following summer and keep in touch with the friends they made.

When returning on home leave travel to your passport country, it can be helpful to have some continuity of location. If you stay with family during your home leave, consider staying at the same home each time. Alternatively, find a comfortable place and invite family and friends to join you there while your children participate in neighborhood activities with the same friends each year.

My family always came back to the same place each summer. I highly recommend that. We always knew where we'd go and who would be there. We did have continuity in our friendships that way. – Anonymous TCK

Often local communities will have re-entry, new student, or international orientation programs at school. Contact the school district before your return to the area to see if such a program has been established and enroll your TCK. If there isn't one set up already, make the suggestion to the school. You can also speak with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) president and other Foreign Service families in that community to advocate for such a program. Most locations have a teacher, counselor, or community member who is knowledgeable about transitions and can help lead an orientation.

If parents are not going to be around during a college student's first few years, they should consider setting up a support system to substitute for their presence before a problem arises. Parents and the student should agree on someone whom they can ask to act as an informal guardian, someone with whom the student trusts and feels comfortable.

Developing Portable Skills

Those growing up overseas need to be encouraged to learn new skills and try a variety of hobbies, sports, and activities. The more they are involved in organized activities, the more likely

children will be able to assimilate and make an easy transition when they move, especially as they return home. Over and over again, children mention the importance of getting involved with something about which they are passionate.

Joining the track team helped me overcome my social and emotional shock. Interacting with the other athletes and becoming involved with teamwork really boosted my self confidence...their willingness to accept me made me feel finally welcome. – Anonymous TCK

Of course, it isn't always easy to join the school's sports team, particularly at a large secondary school where the students have been competing with each other for years. Students need to be resourceful and find a team that needs them. Help your child find an intramural, local district, or traveling club team. Don't rely on your child's school to provide programs of interest. If you cannot provide transportation for your child to and from their activity, speak with the coach or instructor and see if they can help you come up with a solution.

Since my dad is a single parent, he couldn't leave work every Wednesday to drive me to soccer practice, but we both agreed when we moved to the U.S. it was important for me to continue playing. At the beginning of the season, I took a taxi to practice and he picked me up. By the third week, a friend's dad offered to bring me to practice, so we organized a carpool. – Anonymous TCK

Students indicate that they feel best about themselves during re-entry when they can be with others who have had the same experience. Whether through an organization such as the Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF), a re-entry workshop, a get-together of families from a previous "home," or a phone call with someone else who has returned from abroad, making contact with those who have shared the overseas lifestyle, and survived re-entry, can be very beneficial during this period. Using social media sites may help children stay in touch with their friends at home and abroad.

My re-entry was a success because I joined the softball team where a lot of girls from my school were and made a lot of friends that way. – Anonymous TCK

Finding real friends requires an investment of time and patience that is sometimes difficult for TCKs to make. Parents should recognize when their children may need assistance. Younger children especially may need you, and/or their teachers, to provide guidance and support. Equally important is teaching children to become their own advocates. The willingness and ability to ask both parents and teachers for support is essential for children who must reintegrate multiple times during their childhood.

It was harder to make friends in the U.S. than in Europe because everyone knew each other from either school or other activities they had done together. I was also very shy and did not like having to introduce myself. – Anonymous TCK

Tracking Your Child's Education

Returning from fairly small overseas schools to a large environment where many students have known each other for years, can be overwhelming for TCKs. In many cases, your TCKs may have been stars in their schools overseas – academically, athletically, and in leadership and extracurricular activities. Now in their passport country, it may be more difficult for them to fit in and feel comfortable.

It helped a lot and made a big difference when my parents allied with me on the difficulty of transition. – Anonymous TCK

Parents also need to be aware of the academic program used in their children's school abroad. The more that education parallels education options in the home country, the easier the transition home will be. Some families choose to educate their children in a different school system, either to learn a foreign language or to provide the option of higher education in another country. If you plan to move back to the U.S., the ability for your child to transition back into their home system should be a major consideration. Parents may wish to consult with FLO's Education and Youth staff to discuss what factors they should consider.

My parents tried to sign me up for a lot of different activities to help me adjust. They also were very involved in the school. – Anonymous TCK

Besides being involved in activities at the overseas school, parents need to keep abreast of educational developments in their home country by doing web research, reading newspapers and magazines, and remaining in touch with families in their passport country. This is especially important when it comes time to look at colleges, take the SATs, and prepare for the junior and senior years.

The Ackerman Study of Foreign Service families looked at the effects of international mobility on returned Foreign Service families. One of the conclusions indicated that while older children have more difficulty adjusting socially following a move, younger children have more difficulty adjusting academically. Whether you have a younger or older child, support them as you begin to identify areas where they experience difficulty. To ensure that your middle or high schooler is able to progress, as appropriate within his/her grade, additional academic planning may be necessary. The problems most teens discuss involve relating to their peers and fitting in. Returning home to school is a scary proposition for these young people. They face what most consider the most difficult school adjustment they'll ever make.

When you move home, make an effort to meet the teachers and administration at your child's school. Teachers generally like to meet their student's parents. If a teacher is unfamiliar with a child's background there can be misunderstandings. For example, a teacher might not understand why a student doesn't know measurements in feet or inches and is only familiar with the metric system. Conflicts or misunderstandings such as this might be avoided if you share your child's background with the teacher. (See Talking with School Personnel link in Appendix II).

Families should be aware that each school jurisdiction may have its own requirements for graduation from high school. Your student may need to make-up some classes that were not offered in overseas schools.

Sometimes teachers find having internationally mobile teens in their classroom is exciting; they bring a different perspective – adaptability, independence, and cosmopolitan viewpoints – from that of mono-cultural students. Some teachers will make a concentrated effort to reward these students’ knowledge by referring to their overseas experiences. On occasion, this will place the student in a difficult situation with his peers. In some schools, a student may be disliked by his peers for the knowledge that makes him valued by his teachers. Be aware of this possibility and check in with your child to find out how things are going in the classroom.

Establishing Independence

When a family goes “home,” family members may become even closer, providing needed support for children who have yet to develop new friendships.

...my parents tend to be more of an influence to me than a friend or boyfriend....our relationships with our parents are a lot stronger than that of the average American kid. – Anonymous TCK

Forming social relationships and developing a network of friends beyond the immediate family, however, is a very important developmental step for teenagers. To do this, they need to establish independence from their parents and reach outside the family circle for a life of their own.

When a teen does try to assert independence, an appropriate developmental response, parents sometimes become even more anxious and may try to re-establish an inappropriate level of control. Be aware that this might squelch the teen’s developmental need for independence.

A balance between healthy family relationships and independence is very important and comes with its challenges. Your TCKs may be of age, but not have a driver’s license or a car. Often TCKs grow up in a place where both are unnecessary. Your children may have experienced a heightened level of independence abroad, which may make their return home more difficult. Be prepared for the frustration your children might feel if they have to ask you and their friends for rides everywhere. Be conscious of the environment and level of independence to which your children have grown accustomed. Think about how their new environment is different. If they had a heightened level of independence abroad, they may expect that to continue. Ask them how you can help them balance their new environment with their desired level of independence. Understand and support them in the effort to maintain or increase their level of independence, as age appropriate. If you aren’t sure how to draw boundaries, speak with other parents whose opinions you trust, and become familiar with the community’s norms.

As we moved around the world, my family was really there for me. I don’t know what I’d do without them. Even though I have my friends, and I want to spend more time with them now, I still wouldn’t want to not have my close family. – Anonymous TCK

Families return to their home countries from a variety of overseas locations, some small, some large, some in industrialized nations, some in the developing world. There are certain commonalities for expatriates, regardless of location, that may be quite different from the situation in the home country. The bottom line is that while it is important for teens to start becoming independent from their parents, families usually need to be there for each other as they come and go from country to country.

Quick Tips

Make trips back to the United States every summer whenever possible – Have your children spend their summers in the U.S. This mini vacation can be geared towards summer camp with friends, sports camp with past teammates, or academic programs at their dream college. Familiarity with the U.S. has the potential to create a smoother transition home. Try to bring your children to the same place or neighborhood, or enroll them in an annual camp or activity; consistency is good.

Research the academic programs available in the U.S. – To provide the best education possible for your children, take some time to research the different programs available in your district prior to the big move. There are many wonderful U.S. public schools in the Washington metropolitan area and it is important to do your homework regarding what's available. Go online with your children and begin your research early! It helps a great deal to know in advance that your children's education overseas will align appropriately with his/her future education in the States.

Promote independence – While your family is probably very close, it's important to allow your children to grow independently. Let them develop networks of friends from school, sports, and the neighborhood; continue to support your child's need for independence.

Encourage and support a variety of skills – The more activities your children are involved in overseas, the easier it is will be for them to assimilate into the U.S. Trying out for the school's sports team, or joining a community service group, can engage your children with peers who have similar interests or experiences. They can use these new skills in the classroom, on the field, in the community, and in the future. Help your children utilize their diverse skills by finding appropriate programs in and outside of school.

Chapter 4: We're Home

Living the Experience

Moving back to the United States definitely forces you to start over.... (it's) extremely difficult to leave your friends and the lifestyle you grew used to, but change is good. – Anonymous TCK

Chapter 1 highlighted how returning to the U.S. for parents usually is a positive “coming home” experience and why TCKs don't necessarily share this feeling. In fact, your kids might prefer staying abroad in a multicultural/international community. Or maybe they are enthusiastic about returning to the U.S. because they have created unrealistic expectations about what the U.S. is like. They might be imagining it to be the only place where they will finally feel at home, only to find that they feel more out of place here than they did at their last post. This is important to keep in mind when considering how your children will feel upon moving to the U.S., and how to communicate with them during this transition.

Often adults realize that six months down the road things will be better; but it may be difficult for an adolescent to accept that idea. Sometimes a gentle reminder about how difficult it was the first few weeks or months in Ouagadougou or Bucharest or Singapore, whichever place they are now missing with such fervor, will remind your child that this adjustment period does not last forever.

One piece of advice that I would give them (other TCKs) is to try to refrain from being shy. If you are shy, it will make it harder for you to make friends. Just try to go out there and say hi and smile and introduce yourself. It may feel weird, but you will make friends a lot faster. – Anonymous TCK

Adapting to the U.S. after life overseas is often the greatest challenge in an international life cycle. Some children naturally fit back into the routine they left behind; they pick up their friendships from the last time they were home. However, that doesn't always happen. We are changed by our experiences, while friends left behind have gone on with their lives, and this may be difficult for your child to understand. Often they are accustomed to closely integrated schools and communities abroad, enabling friendships to be more intertwined than the friendships they find in the States.

Breaking into previously established friendship groups is difficult, especially when a new student enters a school where the students have been together since they were in kindergarten. U.S. high schools, in particular, are frequently made up of groups of students who have been together since elementary school. Counselors and teachers from private and public schools alike, report that exclusivity and cliquishness are part of today's American high school scene. This has the potential to make the transition home difficult. Returning TCKs often say that feeling different from their classmates is the worst part of moving back to the U.S.

I expected it to be very easy. I figured that America would not be much different than Europe except that my extended family was here. – Anonymous TCK

Students returning to their home country for college have many of the same adjustment challenges as their younger siblings. Some global nomad college students experience a similar “culture shock.” They feel different, they can’t fit in, and they don’t feel that many of their peers share their interest in international issues. But, unlike their siblings, they are facing the situation without the family support that has usually played a large role in their lives. It becomes clear very quickly that this time they are really on their own.

In addition to the benefits mentioned earlier, attending a summer recreational or specialty camp early on as a camper, and perhaps later as a junior counselor, provides a good opportunity for teens to see what their home-based peers are doing. There are athletic, language, computer, self-esteem, religious, special needs, volunteer, and outdoor programs that can fit the interests and schedules of nearly all youth, and can give them new skills or hone current skills to make the transition home easier. Possible alternatives to camp are working, traveling around the United States, or taking a course in summer school in a subject that may not have been available at an overseas school. This may also be a good opportunity for older teens to take driver’s education. Obtaining a driver’s license is a rite of passage in the United States, and by the time most teens are 16, they are driving, or at least learning how.

It is normal to remember your last country more favorably after you’ve left. With time, we forget the bad and highlight the good experiences. Don’t be shocked if your children talk about how wonderful it used to be in _____ and become mocking or belittling about what they see as faults in their home culture. This seems to be the first necessary stage of their cultural adjustment, followed by a tolerance, hopefully an appreciation, and, with luck, some level of acceptance.

The contrast between the U.S. racial divide and the open multicultural environment I was accustomed to could not have been more stark. – Anonymous TCK

The culture shock of the move “home” for teenagers has been compared to a roller-coaster ride. Initial excitement about the new things in the environment followed by down times when they think they’ll never fit in. Even though they may be mature enough to realize that moving from one country to another is the reality of their lives, they may still be angry and blame the parent whose job brought them back home. This anger is often suppressed, coming out unexpectedly at inappropriate times that seemingly have nothing to do with the move.

The initial period of moving is characterized by stress and chaos for everyone; it is normal and should be expected. Everyone has conflicting feelings that they need to express; otherwise they will direct their frustration not at the real reason for the stress, the move, but at anyone who just happens to be around, usually other members of the family. If a teen is suddenly exhibiting difficult behavior, or seems to be having a difficult time, it is important to recognize what is really causing the problem. Talking together as a family about each other’s problems and feelings can serve as a release so that problems don’t build up and become overwhelming; it is also reassuring to know that others are having a similar experience – they are not alone in their angst. It is up to the parents to give the children a sense of roots and stability and to provide an environment that is safe and supportive.

Parents also must understand that a particular set of behaviors may be, in fact, a cry for help. Keeping the channels of communication open is important, if not the most important thing. Children may not share much, but if they feel they can have a non-judgmental conversation, they may be willing to talk about their concerns.

If my parents had encouraged us to express our negative feelings and were more involved in helping us adjust, re-entry would have been far easier. – Anonymous TCK

The adolescents in the Ackerman study stated that the following strategies were most helpful in adapting to a move:

- socializing with friends of the opposite sex;
- developing oneself as a person;
- keeping in shape and well-groomed;
- getting involved in social activities with friends;
- making plans for the future.

The good news is that most mobile teenagers returning to their passport countries do make the transition from “there” to “here,” and most even begin to think of their parent’s home as home.

Research indicates that the parent-child relationship is the single most important factor determining how TCKs ultimately fare. Co-authors Pollock & van Reken give helpful suggestions on how parents can develop a sense of belonging, security, competence, and self-esteem in their TCKs by establishing a caring parent-child relationship, including children in their work, and providing positive spiritual values.

Celebrating the Family’s Arrival

People re-establish their homes in different ways after a move. Some tear into the packing boxes, putting everything away on shelves and hanging the pictures on the wall, rarely coming up for air until they have exhausted themselves in the process. Others procrastinate and seem to have difficulty moving out of the ennui caused by the move, and some end up moving unopened boxes the next time around! Whatever your family’s style, take time out to have fun together as well. Don’t make the move home all about unpacking boxes.

While we find many ways to say goodbye to a community, we don’t seem to have the same kind of rituals for saying hello. Celebrate your arrival home by doing something special as a family. If your TCKs have American friends from spending their summers in the U.S. or living there, invite them out to dinner or host a welcome back party for your kids. Make a point to look up old friends from your neighborhood or from previous overseas postings.

Most families have activities that they enjoying doing together. It is important to make time for these activities early on, whether it’s lazing on a beach, hiking in the mountains, or touring the local sights. Many cities have wonderful ethnic neighborhoods or farmer’s markets or something akin to the souk your family used to wander through in Cairo. Whatever your family enjoys doing together, you should explore, not after you get settled, but soon after you arrive, even if all

the boxes aren't yet unpacked. If you are lucky and home is in a metropolitan area with lots of diversity, you may find an ethnic festival that will help family members retain their memories of the language, music, and other rhythms of their life together overseas.

Parents can play another useful role by providing as many constants in their children's lives as possible: displaying "sacred objects," sharing family activities, hanging certain pictures, and re-establishing the family rituals that existed before the move. Encourage your children to decorate their rooms. Let them paint their rooms and put up the posters they like. If your family budget allows, bring them shopping to buy furniture and other decorations for their new home.

For fun, we usually just go to someone else's house and watch movies or hang out. – Anonymous TCK

Encourage your child to bring friends to the house. Make your home their home and be positive about having their friends around. Be present when they have their friends at your house, but don't let your TCK feel you are interfering in his/her social life. Lankenau's focus groups with Foreign Service teenagers mentioned that they have to work out their transition on their own, that parents can't do it for them. Having your son or daughter bring friends home gives you a chance to see who your teen is spending time with and helps you assess the appropriateness of new acquaintances. Be sure to keep in mind that appearances can sometimes be deceiving; the boy with the long hair or beard, or the girl dressed in black from head to toe, may also be the class honor student. It's important to remember that kids move at their own pace and have their own ways of making friends.

Maintaining Traditions, Consistency & Support

It is very important to re-establish the routines that existed in your last home. If you always had Saturday brunch or Sunday night pizza together, try to continue that tradition after your return. Maintaining these family events allows a sense of continuity to flow through your moves. It also makes it easier to let your children participate in activities with their friends while maintaining a strong sense of family.

It is important to be consistent. There may be long unsupervised afternoons between school dismissal and the time a commuting parent gets home. Nevertheless, it is important that your children understand that the general rules of the house need to be maintained. Despite complaints from teens, underneath it all, they usually value the safety net that parents' rules give them when they are tempted by new acquaintances or situations.

If a teenager is having school problems, establishing a relationship with the student's school counselor may be helpful. In fact, it's wise to develop that relationship before problems occur. A word to the counselor about the recent re-entry may be enough to alert him/her to watch for warning signs that could otherwise be missed because of an overwhelming student load.

Parents need to be attuned to any irregular behaviors that could serve as warning signs that their child needs extra support. As the parent, you are able to identify what the red flags are for your

child. Trust your instincts and talk to your child if you notice things aren't normal, and remember to approach your child with respect and openness. If you notice his/her behaviors are not improving even after you have tried to speak with your child, it may be time to speak with a professional. Some of these behaviors may be warning signs that your child is trying to cope with the pain that was brought on by this transition. If you are not sure if a behavior is a red flag, consult with a professional.

There are a variety of places where you can seek help for your child including: support groups, private counselors, school counselors, and State Department mental health professionals and social workers. Talk to your child about going to see someone for help, and try to decide together who the right person is, or what the right environment is, to address everyone's concerns.

Teenagers need some encouragement as well as some understanding when things get a little rocky. Sometimes no more than a counseling session or two is required to clarify some small thing that has assumed large proportions. Families should investigate resources after they return home, preferably before a situation occurs. In many cities around the world there are counselors who have expertise in working with the internationally mobile community.

It has been hard and it has been fun, and I wouldn't trade my life for anything. Growing up internationally mobile is something only those of who have done it can understand. It is like a secret and special club with an initiation that you can't explain. It is a way of life that never leaves you, no matter where you live. – Anonymous TCK

Remember, only you will know whether the transitions that are part of the Foreign Service are negatively impacting your child's development. If, after appropriate assessment, you determine that your child is not healthy or happy with this lifestyle, consider how to put your child's needs first.

Quick Tips

It's a stressful time – Moving back to the U.S. can take a toll on all family members and that's perfectly normal. The chaos of unpacking and getting your new home in order can be trying, and there are a lot of adjustments to be made. Remember that it will probably take at least six months, and that is normal.

Remember to listen – Approach your children with respect and an open mind; begin the process of communication by asking how you can help.

Keep the traditions and family routines – 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.

Reach out to a counselor – Taking the time to meet with the school counselor when classes begin can be valuable in the long run. Sometimes children feel more comfortable speaking with a non-family member adult, who can give advice from an outside perspective. It is good to know

there is someone at the school who cares about your child's re-entry adjustment. There are also many other professionals, both in and outside the State Department, who can help.

You are your child's strongest advocate – Even though your children are growing more independent right in front of your eyes, they still need you as their support system. There are going to be some tough days, but encourage them to communicate and don't be afraid to confront behaviors. You are the one responsible for setting and maintaining the rules. Give priority to your child's needs; remember that the Foreign Service lifestyle is not for everyone.

APPENDIX I

Department of State Offices and External Resources Supporting Foreign Service Youth

FLO

Family Liaison Office

Education and Youth Team

Department of State, Room 1248

Washington, DC 20520-7512

Tel: (202) 647-1076

Fax: (202) 647-1670

Email: FLOAskEducation@state.gov

Intranet: <http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/offices/flo/Pages/default.aspx>

Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/>

CLO

Community Liaison Office

Available at over 200 Posts

Intranet:

<http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/Workforce/CommunityLiaisonOffice/Pages/CommunityLiaisonOverseas.aspx>

Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1964.htm>

Transition Center, Foreign Service Institute

Overseas Briefing Center | Transition Center Training

Foreign Service Institute, E Building, Second Floor

4000 Arlington Boulevard

Arlington, VA 22204

Tel: (703) 302-7277

OBC: FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov | Training: FSITCTraining@state.gov

Intranet: <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc>

Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/index.htm>

A/OS

Office of Overseas Schools

A/OS, Room H328, SA -1

Department of State

Washington, DC 20522-0132

Tel: (202) 261-8200

Fax: (202) 261-8224

Email: OverseasSchools@state.gov

Intranet: <http://aopros.a.state.gov/>

Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/>

ECS

Employee Consultation Service

Columbia Plaza, Room H-246

Washington, DC 20520-2256

Tel: 202-663-1815

Fax: 202-663-1456

Email: MEDECS@state.gov

Intranet: <http://med.m.state.sbu/mhs/ecs/default.aspx>

Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21952.htm>

ADAP

Alcohol & Drug Awareness Program

Columbia Plaza, Room H-246

Washington, DC 20520-2256

Tele: (202) 663-1904

FAX: (202) 663-1456/1454

Intranet: <http://med.m.state.sbu/mhs/adap/default.aspx>

AAFSW

Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide

4001 N. Ninth St

Suite 14

Arlington, VA 22203

Tel: (703) 820-5420

Fax: (703) 820-5421

Email: office@aafsw.org

Internet: <http://www.aafsw.org/>

Foreign Service Livelines

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/livelines/>

Yahoo Group hosted by AAFSW featuring information of interest to Foreign Service families

AFSA

American Foreign Service Association

2101 E. Street NW

Washington, DC 20037

Tel: (202)338-4045

Fax: (202-338-6820

Email: member@afsa.org

Internet: <http://www.afsa.org/>

FSYF**Foreign Service Youth Foundation**

P.O. Box 39185

Washington, DC 20016

Tel: 703-731-2960

Fax: 703-636-2611

Email: fsyf@fsyf.org

Internet: <http://www.fsyf.org/>

David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies

Brigham Young University Publications

237 HRCB

Provo, UT 84602

Tel: (801) 422-3377

Fax: (801) 422-0382

Email: kennedy@byu.edu

Internet: <http://kennedy.byu.edu/>

Global Nomads Group

Provides education programs and media about global issues for youth

381 Broadway, 4th floor

New York, NY 10013

Tel: (212)529.0377

Fax: (917)591.6232

Internet: <http://www.gng.org/>

Interaction International

Serving TCKs & Internationally Mobile Families

P.O. Box 863

Wheaton, IL 60189

Phone: (630) 653-8780

Fax: (815) 846-1778

E-mail: office@interactionintl.org

Internet: <http://www.interactionintl.org/home.asp>

National Military Family Association

2500 North Van Dorn Street, Suite 102

Alexandria, VA 22302-1601

Tel: 703.931.6632

Fax: 703.931.4600

Email: Info@MilitaryFamily.org

Internet: <http://www.militaryfamily.org/>

Additional Publications

Expatriate Life Slice by Slice

Apple Gidley

Summertime Publishing, Great Britain

2012

Footsteps Around the World

Beverly Roman

BR Anchor Publishing, Canada

2003

The Global Nomad's Guide to University Transition

Tina L. Quick

Summertime Publishing, Great Britain

2010

Growing Happy Kids: How to Foster Inner Confidence, Success, and Happiness

Maureen Healy

Health Communications, Inc., Deerfield Beach, Florida

2012

Home Keeps Moving

Heidi Sand-Hart

McDougal Publishing, Hagerstown, Maryland

2010

Living the College Life

Ken Paulsen

Wiley Publishing Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

2005

Raising Your Child in Washington

Roberta Gottesman – Editor

Piccolo Pres, Alexandria, Virginia

1995

Third Culture Kids

Dr. Ettie Zilber

John Catt Educational Ltd., Melton, UK

2011

Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds, Revised Edition

David Pollack and Ruth Van Reken

Nicholas Brealey Publishing, Boston, Massachusetts

Revised 2009

Bouncing Back, a publication of the Family Liaison Office

APPENDIX II

FLO Education & Youth Online Resources

<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm>

Adult Education: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21945.htm>

Assignment Washington: U.S. Public and Private Schools:
<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21942.htm>

Boarding School Options: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21940.htm>

Child Care: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21989.htm>

College and Beyond: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21958.htm>

Education Allowances: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21944.htm>

Education Options for Foreign Service Children (K-12):
<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21938.htm>

Education Options for Foreign Service Family Members:
<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c23954.htm>

Gifted Education: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21956.htm>

Special Educational Needs: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c22458.htm>

Talking with School Personnel: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c22000.htm>

Teaching Overseas: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21946.htm>

Training and Programs for Foreign Service Youth: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21997.htm>

Transition Issues: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21967.htm>

Contact the FLO Education & Youth Team: FLOAskEducation@state.gov

APPENDIX III

Courses at the Foreign Service Institute that Support Parents and Internationally Mobile Youth

<http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/fslstraining/c48068.htm>

Foreign Service Life Skills Training, a division of the Transition Center at the Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, VA, offers four courses that address the challenges faced by children who live an internationally-mobile lifestyle. They include:

Encouraging Resilience in the Foreign Service Child (MQ500)

This evening course is a valued added resource for all parents in the foreign affairs community. Participants hear from both parents of children who were raised overseas and Foreign Service children. Discussions address the characteristics of an internationally mobile childhood; influences on cultural identity; characteristics of families living overseas; and strategies for raising resilient children.

Raising Bilingual Children (MQ851)

Parents in foreign affairs agencies have a unique opportunity to encourage bilingualism in their children. This evening course explores strategies to take advantage of the multicultural experiences that a mobile lifestyle affords. Participants also learn about available resources and the challenges and rewards of raising bilingual children.

Young Diplomats Day (MQ250)

This youth workshop is designed to introduce children and teens (grades 2-12) to the world of diplomacy and diplomatic life overseas. Youth educators help children (divided by age) better understand the structure and function of a U.S. mission, the role of values in cultural differences, and basic overseas protocol.

Youth Security Overseas Seminar (MQ914)

This youth workshop is designed to introduce children in grades 2-12 to pertinent safety and security issues that arise overseas. Youth educators help children (divided by age) identify safety and security issues, learn prevention techniques, and prepare for unique overseas risks.

Special Education Needs Overseas Seminar (MQ118)

This seminar was created to specifically meet the needs of FS families that need to understand and navigate Department of State services available overseas to children with special needs. Participants hear from DOS offices that provide special needs support and services to families and have the opportunity to speak privately with these specialists about schooling, allowances, medical clearances, and more. The course is videotaped each year and available on the Transition Center Internet website: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c1958.htm>.

For more information about these and other courses, email the Transition Center at FSITCTraining@state.gov.

APPENDIX IV

School Enrollment Checklist

Foreign Service families must comply with the standard registration requirements when applying to public schools in the U.S. You will need the following documentation to enroll your children in Washington area public schools. Please make sure that you hand carry documents from post:

- Proof of residence in the school district (temporary quarters contract, lease, mortgage) In some cases, you may also need to show a current utility bill to prove physical presence
- Original or certified copy of birth certificates (please check with your school district to see if a passport will be accepted in lieu of this)
- Social security number
- Photo ID
- Official transcripts
- Standardized test results
- Psycho-educational test results, if applicable
- Current I.E.P., if applicable (Individualized Education Plan, for children with special needs)
- Physical exam forms – Forms can be downloaded from the school district website
- Immunization records form – also found on school district website
- Proof of recent TB tests (within 3 months of enrollment)
- Letters of recommendation – not required, but helpful, especially for high school students in preparation for college admissions

To ensure that your child has a smooth transition into school in the Washington area, please be sure to check the registration website of the district in which your child will be enrolled. For further questions, email FLOAskEducation@state.gov

APPENDIX V

Talking with School Personnel

For Parents of Returning Students

As with any new student, the first day of school, and the student's first impression, can have a significant impact on the student's attitude towards his/her new circumstances. Below are questions and suggestions that can make a positive difference in the readjustment of an internationally mobile child.

- **Ask** the teacher if it is possible to give your child preferential seating toward the front of the room. Psychologically this helps students feel more a part of the group instead of marginalized towards the back of the room when they are new.
- **Ask** if the teacher can find a "buddy" for your child to help him/her learn the ropes. It doesn't matter if the child is six or 16; no one wants to feel alone, especially during a transition.
- If your child is returning to an area where he/she has previously attended a school, **ask** at the school if your child may be placed in a class with a friend from his/her previous class as it may be helpful to your child's adjustment.
- **Ask** the teacher to inform you if your child is exhibiting any signs of stress (i.e., inability to focus in class, sadness).
- **Share** information about your child with the teacher. Provide the teacher with information about your child's background and prior experiences. Teachers should note that Foreign Service children and the experiences they have to tell serve to enrich classroom instruction. One student wrote that she was watching "Lawrence of Arabia" as part of her World Geography class, and saw the scene where the army raced its camels across the desert for a prolonged period of time. Having lived and camped in the remote deserts of Arabia, this student knew a thing or two about camels and wanted to interject that if they didn't slow down, both the army and the camels would die! This presented an opportunity for the teacher to draw out such information and allow the student to validate her experience.
- **Share** any concerns you may have, in a timely way, and carefully watch for signs of stress or failing school performance. You don't need to wait for a normally scheduled school conference. While most Foreign Service children adjust well, the Family Liaison Office knows of students of all ages who experience challenges upon their return to the United States.
- **Share** with the teacher that your child has come from a school overseas (identify the type of school) and may be accustomed to different testing strategies, classroom behavior, and/or grade assessments.
- **Establish** a rapport with the teacher so that you have frequent and productive communication to support the child's transition.

APPENDIX VI

Healthy Coping Strategies		
Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation • Write things down • Make small, daily decisions • See the decisions you are already making • Give yourself permission to ask for help • Plan for the future • Get the most information you can to help make decisions • Anticipate needs • Remember you have options • Review previous successes • Problem solve • Have a plan “B” • Break large tasks into smaller ones • Practice, practice, practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation • Allow yourself to experience what you feel • Label what you are experiencing • Give yourself permission to ask for help • Be assertive when necessary • Keep communication open with others • Remember you have options • Use your sense of humor • Have a buddy with whom you can vent • Use “positive” words and language • Practice, practice, practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation • Spend time by yourself • Spend time with others • Limit demands on time and energy • Help others with tasks • Give yourself permission to ask for help • Do activities that you previously enjoyed • Take different routes to work or on trips • Remember you have options • Find new activities that are enjoyable and (mildly) challenging • Set goals, have a plan • Relax • Practice, practice, practice
Spiritual	Interpersonal	Physical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation • Discuss changed beliefs with spiritual leader • Meditation • Give yourself permission to ask for help • Practice rituals of your faith/beliefs • Spiritual retreats/workshops • Prayer • Remember you have options • Mindfulness • Find spiritual support • Read spiritual literature • Practice, practice, practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation • Give yourself permission to ask for help • Take time to enjoy time with trusted friend/partner • Hugs • Healthy boundaries • Remember to use “I” statements • Use humor to diffuse tense conversations • Talk with trusted friend/partner • Apologize when stress causes irritable behavior or outbursts • State needs and wants as clearly as possible • Practice, practice, practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation • Aerobic exercise • See a doctor and dentist • Routine sleep patterns • Minimize caffeine, alcohol, and sugar • Give yourself permission to ask for help • Eat well-balance regular meals • Drink water • Wear comfortable clothes • Engage in physical luxuries: spa, massage, bath, exercise trainer • Remember to breathe-deeply • Take mini-breaks • Practice, practice, practice

APPENDIX VII

TIPS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS AND PARENTS WHO ARE OVERSEAS

MONEY MATTERS

Arrange for parents to deposit monthly amounts to cover costs for books, school supplies, meals, and incidentals. Consider a college meal plan, but make provisions for other meals on special weekends or school breaks (when many other students will be going home). Don't forget the costs of joining organizations and expenses arising from that membership.

Allow your child some time to adjust. Discourage him/her from taking a job until at least second semester. Usually part-time work that doesn't interfere with classes, study or sleep time, (preferably located on or near campus) is best.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

- Arrange to have your child spend Thanksgiving weekend with a college friend, family member, or friend of the family.
- Decide on plans for winter break early so that travel arrangements will work around reading period, exams, and dorm closings. If the student is not traveling overseas, make advance alternative plans for staying with a friend, family member or family friend. These holidays are often as long as a month; consider travel excursions, inviting a friend to visit overseas with your child, or part-time work.
- Make similar arrangements for spring break (usually a week or 10 days). Even if not traveling, you and your child will need to make alternative housing arrangements.
- If the student is going to post for the summer, consider allowing a week at the beach or with friends to put some closure on the school year. If the student is not going to post, organize a structure – summer school, work, internship, visiting family and/or friends.
- Plan a break before college starts to allow time to transition back.

SHIPMENTS AND STORAGE

- According to the DSSR, students may store their belongings at school during school breaks rather than bringing all UAB back to post each year. Reimbursement for storage will be made on a cost construct basis, meaning that the storage cost cannot exceed the cost of shipping authorized UAB to post (DSSR section 285.1).
- Regarding educational travel and shipment, a UAB shipment is an allowable expense under the “away from post” education allowance rate established for the post. DSSR 285.1 authorizes expenses for transportation of unaccompanied air baggage, but does not specify the amount. Employees of the foreign affairs agencies may currently transport up to 250 pounds of their children's belongings as UAB (14 FAM 613.3-1). Employees of non-foreign affairs agencies should contact their agency's personnel office for information regarding UAB.

STAYING IN TOUCH

- Parents should remember to email, text, and call frequently. Checking in, even when there's little response, is an important reminder that you are thinking of them.
- Students need to do the same to acknowledge that parents care and want to hear from them!
- Parents can give their kids a real boost by sending a "care package" for Parents' Weekend, birthdays, Valentine's Day, etc.
- Best of all, visit or have extended family or friends take your child out to dinner.

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Excerpts of conversations that were held between Kay Branaman Eakin, author of *According to My Passport I'm Coming Home*, and

Dr. Robert Beck, former Director of Counseling of The American Embassy School, New Delhi and former Area Director of Student Services in the Fairfax County Public Schools,

Dr. Elmore Rigamer, former Director of the U.S. Department of State Office of Medical Services, and

Catherine Kehrig, former Chair of Global Nomads International, are included in *Bouncing Back*.