

If you took the time to do some financial planning before leaving your last assignment, you should be able to operate within your budget and have something left over for savings and emergencies. Remember that it is far better to anticipate difficulties and try to resolve them before you become overburdened with indebtedness.

Chemical Dependency

It is hoped that problems associated with culture shock and indebtedness don't lead you into the throes of chemical dependency. Chemical dependency is defined as the addiction to alcohol and/or other drugs whether legal, such as prescription medication like tranquilizers, sleeping pills, etc., or illegal, like hashish, marijuana, cocaine etc.

Alcohol is so readily and cheaply available in the foreign service that it becomes a major problem for some employees and their dependants. On the one hand, warmer climates and social pressures cause many people to consume more alcohol than they should. On the other hand, the stress of a new assignment, culture shock and many personal difficulties lead some people to drink as a means of coping.

Although there are several definitions of chemical dependency, the most useful one is the following: you have a problem with alcohol (or any other drug) if alcohol (or any other drug) affects your health, your marital/family relationship, your relationships with friends/acquaintances, your work performance and/or behaviour on the job, your legal and/or financial situation. If you find yourself using alcohol (or any other drug) to help you cope on a regular basis with daily, routine activities then you are developing a problem with alcohol (or any other drug).

So whether the problem is starting to develop or is already fully developed, it is best to seek professional advice without delay. Many people avoid seeking help because they feel ashamed and believe their weakness will cause them embarrassment in their social relationships and careers. Paradoxically, they would think otherwise were they able to watch themselves behave in public while under the influence and appreciate the agony they might be causing their spouses and children.

Chemical dependency is an illness that can be treated successfully. Ignoring the problem will not make it disappear. Many people in this situation have overcome their illness after seeking help.

5.7 Divorce and Custody

Another serious personal matter that might come up while you are abroad is divorce. If a decision to divorce is made while you are on posting, a difficult situation is complicated by the fact that you and your spouse are not on home ground. It is all the more essential to have good legal counsel, and understand what steps are necessary to take. If divorce is foreseen as a possible eventuality before you go on posting, it is wise to take whatever steps are possible before you go abroad.

Residence Requirements

It is assumed that most couples will apply for divorce and custody of the children in Canada, rather than abroad. Most of the suggestions provided here will apply to both members of the couple; some will be more relevant to the dependant spouse, as it will usually be she/he who returns to Canada to file for divorce.

In Canada, divorce is a federal concern, but is administered provincially. Before a petition for divorce can be filed, one spouse must have been resident in the province of choice for at least one year in order to establish jurisdiction vis-à-vis the court. At this point, either spouse can file for divorce. It need not be the one who is resident in that province.

Should you decide to divorce abroad, make sure that a divorce decree received in the country you are in will be recognized in Canada.