

With this in mind, take a good hard look at your situation and discuss it very carefully with your family. There are really no "good missions" or "bad missions." People make a posting good or bad for themselves by their ability, or lack thereof, to adapt to different circumstances. The extent to which you and your family are willing and able to adapt will have a considerable bearing on your career satisfaction in the foreign service. A positive attitude helps a lot.

Above all, know what you are getting into before starting a new assignment because the costs of an aborted posting can have far-reaching implications for your career, health, welfare and family relationships.

Purpose of the Handbook

This Handbook is a tool to help prepare employees and their families for a posting or, in some cases, a cross-posting. It attempts to generate awareness about the conditions and implications of rotational employment in the foreign service and about certain aspects of life outside Canada. It aims to do this by discussing and illustrating the Foreign Service Directives — the FSDs — and relating them to key events that will take place during the posting cycle.

Certain charts and tabulated data found in the Foreign Service Directives have been reproduced herein to provide continuity. Other illustrations have been created to consolidate information, provide examples and facilitate understanding of complicated issues. Employees should note that the dollar amounts used will change periodically. The *Schedule to Foreign Service Directives and Meal Rates*, published monthly, should be consulted for up-to-date information.

The Posting Cycle

The "Posting Cycle" illustrated in Figure 1 is a useful way of looking at some of the main events that occur repeatedly in the career of a foreign service employee. Rather than discuss the FSDs in the order that they appear in the Personnel Manual, this Handbook follows the natural sequence of the posting cycle and relates each Directive to a real situation you might find yourself in at any given time.

In Ottawa, it is suggested that you and your spouse read this Handbook before going to the Administrative Briefing and on Pre-Posting Rounds. Later, the easiest way to use the Handbook is to recognize where you are in your posting cycle and find the information you require in the corresponding chapter. If you are looking for a brief explanation of a specific Directive, you will find it in Appendix A — Condensed Foreign Service Directives.

The Assignment Streams

The assignment area of the Human Resources Development Bureau (SPD), working closely with The Services Centre (SERV), forms a pivotal point in the posting process. The assignment divisions not only make your assignment, but act as a source of advice and counselling on professional issues such as training and career development, and as a point of reference in directing you to other areas of the Department that are engaged in the posting process.

The steps leading up to your Posting Confirmation take from six to nine months. Every August/September, the Personnel divisions make a preliminary determination of the expected movements and vacancies for the next year. In September, letters are written to all staff inviting them to express their preferences regarding anticipated vacancies. Heads of Mission are invited to comment on their expected staff changes — who will move, who will extend, and what qualities are required in a successor. In October/November, consultations take place with branches in Ottawa to review the outlook for projected vacancies abroad and at headquarters. At this time, posting extensions are also confirmed.

In December/January, short lists of candidates for positions abroad are drawn up. Discussions with geographic division managers, functional division managers, if appropriate, and Heads of Mission take place. From January to March, short lists are negotiated and confirmed with managers and Heads of Mission and discussed with candidates. Candidates are referred to The Services Centre (SERV) for