



Overseas Briefing Center client Matt Jennings, left, meets with client Krista Fay.

One-Stop Shop

Transition Center offers range of services /// By Susan Browning

For everyone from new hires to retirees, the Transition Center at the Foreign Service Institute has courses, seminars and resources for all phases of life in the Foreign Service.

Responding to Diplomacy 3.0's increase in hiring, the Transition Center has increased its offerings of orientation courses. In response to the growing number of tours at unaccompanied posts, the center also sponsors and conducts the mandatory High Stress Assignment Outbrief program.

For those new to the Foreign Service and needing post and country information, shipping a pet or returning to Washington, D.C., the Transition Center's Overseas Briefing Center is a one-stop source for unique and comprehensive information on U.S. posts overseas and the foreign affairs lifestyle.

For instance, the OBC has country briefing boxes with post-specific information. Information is also online on the Post Info To Go page at <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/epb/epb.asp>. The center also has information on reentry to Washington, D.C., and publications such as the *Foreign Service Assignment Notebook: What Do I Do Now?* and *Protocol for the Modern Diplomat*.

A drop-in facility, the OBC is open Monday through Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on select Saturdays and Wednesday evenings.

Training Division

The Transition Center's Training Division offers programs and special events for the diverse needs of employees and family mem-

bers preparing for an overseas assignment or returning to the United States. The security awareness programs include the mandatory two-day Security Overseas Seminar, the online Advanced Security Overseas Seminar and the Youth Security Overseas Seminar, which consists of age-appropriate, one-day workshops for children in grades 2 through 12 and is offered during the summer months.

The Transition Center also hosts special versions of the SOS programs for the private sector, such as for executives from Microsoft, Intel and other companies. That security-oriented training serves more than 3,400 people annually from more than 20 foreign affairs agencies.

The High Stress Assignment Outbrief program is mandatory for anyone returning from

Transition Center trainer Kathe Conrad teaches the Security Overseas Seminar.



Iraq, Afghanistan or other high-stress posts and helps with understanding the challenges of returning from such an environment.

New Training

One of the Transition Center's new offerings is a one-day course for parents who are or will be assigned to a U.S. mission abroad and have children with special educational needs. The Family Liaison Office, Office of Medical Services, Office of Overseas Schools and Office of Allowances participate, presenting a comprehensive picture of the Department's support system and helping these families navigate the system and plan for their children's needs.

All five of the presentations in this Special Education Needs Overseas Seminar 2009 are available on BNet and the Transition Center's internet Web site at <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/fslstraining/135386.htm>.

Last year, the Transition Center hosted the first training and information session for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community in foreign affairs agencies. The event highlighted the unique situations

affecting such employees and their families overseas and helped them understand U.S. government policies concerning same-sex partners. The organization Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies was closely involved with the event, where experts from the Family Liaison Office and the bureaus of Diplomatic Security and Human Resources made presentations and answered questions. New policies affecting federal employees will be covered in the 2010 session, to be held early this month.

Another aspect of the Transition Center is the Career Transition Center, which provides training, counseling, job leads and other assistance to Civil Service and Foreign Service employees of any federal foreign affairs agency as they prepare to leave government service. The center's three programs are the Job Search Program, the four-day Retirement Planning Workshop and two-day Mid-Career Retirement Planning Course, which can be taken by anyone who is within 10 to 15 years of retirement. Two parts of the four-part Retirement Planning Workshop can

be taken separately: the one-day Financial Management and Estate Planning Workshop and the one-day Annuities, Benefits and Social Security Workshop.

Foreign affairs community members from throughout the government rely on the Transition Center for the personal and professional assistance that helps them better enjoy their lives and work on the front lines of overseas service.

The center's users seem to agree. Facility Manager Michael McMahon recently wrote the center to say, "A few years ago I gathered all the information I could from you about transferring with pets, and it has been invaluable. Safely shipping my dog Koko is more stressful and more important to me and my family than my 7,000 pounds of household effects."

More information on the Transition Center is on its Web site, <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc>, which has links to several Department resources for Foreign Service families. ■

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