

* Medical Report



Cleared for Departure?

Medical Clearances Are Part of Transfer Season Checklist III By Ty Flewelling

The summer transfer season can stimulate a number of strong emotions. There is the thrill of embarking on a new adventure in some far-flung corner of the globe and the dread of all the details associated with relocating from one post to another. While dealing with the Medical Clearances office may not be the most thrilling part of the move, the clearance renewal process can be a positive opportunity for employees to review their health and obtain routine follow-up care for chronic medical conditions.

For many, the medical clearance physical examination or update is a straightforward process. But confusion often arises over the questions “When do I need to renew a medical clearance?” and “What does my clearance mean once I have it?”

Some believe that anything other than a worldwide-available (Class 1) clearance is a heavy burden that slows them down or prevents them from going to places on which they want to bid. Others believe their non-worldwide-available clearance status shields them from assignments to remote or austere locations where they do not want to serve.

In reality, a medical clearance is nothing more than a tool to identify specific health or educational needs and medical conditions that may require specialty management, follow-up or monitoring. There is no list of Class 2 posts, nor is any post flat-out off limits to individuals with a specific medical condition. Each case is evaluated individually.

But let’s first answer the key questions:

When do I need to renew a medical clearance?

According to 16 FAM 214.b, “A medical clearance is valid for the length of the tour or upon eligibility for home leave, whichever is shorter, unless there is a change in the individual’s medical condition that could affect his or her medical clearance.”

To clarify,

1. Officers on one-year or multiyear postings must renew their clearance at the end of their tour and before moving on to their next assignment.
2. Officers who plan to extend at post past their regularly scheduled tour length and take their home leave must renew their clearance before they return to post.
3. Officers planning a post-to-post direct transfer must renew their clearance before transferring to their new assignment.

Typically, individuals will complete their clearance work before they leave their current assignment. This is especially true for individuals with a Class 2 condition that required post approval for their onward assignment.

What does my clearance really mean?

The 16 FAM 211.2 Clearance Classifications are:

a. Worldwide Available (Class 1): Issued to applicants, employees and eligible family members who have no identifiable medical conditions that would limit assignment abroad.

b. Post-Specific (Class 2): Issued to an individual with a medical condition that would pose a significant risk to the health or safety of the individual or others if the individual were assigned to work at one or more posts abroad, or would create an undue burden for a post. The Office of Medical Services determines approval for assignment to a specific post based on these considerations. Individuals with a Class 2 clearance must be approved to reside at the post of assignment. Individuals who are not cleared for a specific posting but choose to accompany their family to post will not be on orders, will not have medical unit access, will not have medevac coverage and will not

be considered as eligible family members for housing, employment or education at post.

c. Domestic Only (Class 5): Issued to all who have a medical condition which is incapacitating or for which specialized medical care is best obtained in the United States. Employees or eligible family members with a Class 5 medical clearance may not be assigned outside the United States.

d. Temporary Travel (Class 6): Issued only to an eligible family member who is not medically cleared to reside at the employee’s assigned post but is authorized to travel to or visit that post for a limited period of time.

Class 6 clearances are issued to family members who are living in the United States due to medical or educational restrictions but are cleared to visit the post where the employee is assigned. While they are not cleared to live at post, there are no all-encompassing time limits for the length of each visit. Typically, a visit is considered to be less than 90 days, but their stay would be determined by the educational and/or specific medical needs of the family member.

Individuals with a Class 6 clearance may do a Permanent Change of Station transfer from post to post. They are listed as permanent members of the family stationed abroad but may stay at post only temporarily.

When a Class 6 clearance is issued, the post where the employee is assigned must be indicated. While this is not a post approval per se, the temporary clearance is tied to an overseas assignment where resources needed by the family member are not available.

Additional information on medical clearances can be found at on the Web at <http://med.m.state.sbu/clinicalservices/medicalclearances/Pages/WhatDoesMyMedicalClearanceMean.aspx>. ■

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