

NIH TRAVEL POLICY

1500-07-00 International Travel

This chapter provides information on purposes, policies, and procedures relating to international travel by NIH employees and Commissioned Officers (excluding change of duty station); defines international travel; and describes the requirements for approval and authorization of international travel.

1500-07-01 General Policy

A. Department (DHHS) Goals. Among the goals that international travel can and should serve are:

- 1) To gain knowledge of value to HHS domestic programs and to contribute to the advancement of knowledge internationally.
- 2) To fulfill regulatory or inspection obligations, such as inspection of foreign manufacturers of foods, drugs, and biological or medical devices; travel related to foreign epidemics that may impact on the health of U.S. citizens; and travel related to validation of social security payments to beneficiaries abroad.
- 3) To contribute, with the guidance of the Department of State, to U.S. foreign policy objectives.
- 4) To fulfill U.S. responsibilities as a Member Government of multilateral organizations.

B. Need for Special Procedures. To serve these goals, international travel is often of high priority. At the same time, it must be subject to specific procedures for justifying, approving, and monitoring beyond those regulations applied to domestic travel within the United States. International travel is often more expensive than domestic travel. Travel abroad by U.S. Government employees has an aspect of representing the United States and the American people to other people. Because international travel is especially “visible”, the presence and the contribution of travelers should be positive.

- 1) The appropriate official will authorize and approve all international travel to ensure that the proposed official travel serves the goals of the Department and the NIH, and is not approved when it does not adequately serve these goals (See NIH Manual Issuance 1130 - Delegations of Authority, Travel #9).

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2) The Director, Office of International Affairs (OIA), has established a system of controls for DHHS to ensure that proper and sufficient **prior notice** of all international travel to be performed will be submitted in time to secure clearance through the Office of the Secretary, the State Department, and the National Security Council, as necessary, and to provide assistance for other required activities (such as preparing embassy cables and obtaining passports and visas).

C. Definitions.

1) **International travel.** The term international travel, as used in this directive, is defined to mean all travel on official duty time (except change of official duty station) outside the United States, Guam, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and any other territory under U.S. jurisdiction.

2) **Sensitive countries.** Travel to certain countries designated as “sensitive” by the Department of State. Countries in this category are often those with which we have foreign policy disputes or which are involved in internal political and/or social turmoil (These sites are identified by the Department of State and transmitted to the FIC).

3) **High traffic countries.** Countries that receive a large volume of travelers from the U.S. placing potential burden on U.S. mission staff for services. Under certain conditions, travel clearance may be denied (See HHS Travel Manual Chapter 6-00-20).

D. Object Classification Codes for International Travel. NIH Manual Chapter 1935 (pending release).

1) **21.91 – International Contract/Grant Site Visit:** Travel to a particular site to perform operational or managerial activities (e.g., to oversee program activities, grant operations, or management activities for control proposes; carry out an audit; conduct negotiations; or provide technical assistance) or to discuss or negotiate development of new program activities.

2) **21.92 – International Regulatory/Inspectional Travel:** Travel fulfills statutory or regulatory obligations related to protecting the health and welfare of the American people (for example, obligations imposed by the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act and the Public Health Service Act) or to serve program beneficiaries abroad.

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3) 21.93 – International Bilateral Agreement Travel: Travel that occurs in fulfillment of the terms of a bilateral agreement between the United States and a foreign government. Examples of these agreements are the U.S./Japan Cooperative Medical Sciences Program, the Indo/U.S. Sub-commission on Science and Technology, the U.S./Mexico Mixed Commission on Science and Technology, and various Health Scientist Exchange Programs.

4) 21.94 – International Other Bilateral Travel: An informal understanding with respect to cooperative activities between the United States and another country. The activities may be funded by United States dollars or by foreign currencies. Special Foreign Currency Program (SFCP) projects are considered to be part of an informal bilateral agreement.

5) 21.95 – International Multilateral Organization Travel: A multilateral organization is one that has national governments as members, such as the United Nations and associated and regional organizations. Three health-related international multilateral organizations included under this category are:

- a) International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC),
- b) Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and
- c) World Health Organization (WHO).

NOTE: These organizations invite NIH employees in a “consultant/expert service” capacity, in many cases paying their travel costs (HHS-348 - Request for Approval to Accept Payment of Travel Expenses From a Non-Federal Source), or to participate in “expert committees, study or working groups, seminars and similar meetings convened to undertake international consideration of topics that are primarily professional or technical in nature.”

6) 21.96 – Special International Mission Travel: Disaster or emergency assistance related to the program mission of the DHHS or NIH. Examples include epidemiological assistance in the face of an overseas polio epidemic, travel to consult with other countries following a major disaster, consultations on a major overseas food contamination problem, etc.

7) 21.97 – International Scientific/Professional Meetings: To attend a conference, convention, seminar or symposium for the purpose of observation and education; or to make a speech or presentation or deliver a paper or otherwise participate in a formal program, *except* for government travel to a conference and/or meeting in Canada, Mexico, Central America, Bermuda, and Caribbean areas sponsored by a U.S. organization that

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normally holds its meetings in the U.S., which is considered as domestic travel and should be coded with domestic travel sub-object classification codes on travel orders and vouchers.

8) 21.99 – Unidentified International Travel. When the purpose of the travel cannot be properly identified at the time of the request, the amount may be recorded as unidentified. The amount must be moved to the proper classification once the identification is made.

1500-07-02 Notification of International Travel (NIT)

A. Requirements. A Notification of International Travel (NIT) must be prepared and forwarded to the Fogarty International Center (FIC) for all international travel by NIH personnel on official business regardless of the source of funding for the travel. Upon receipt of the NIT, the FIC obtains the necessary DHHS and Department of State clearances for the trip.

B. Submission Deadlines for NIT. The NIT must be received by the FIC, **no later than three weeks prior to departure.** If this deadline is not met, the FIC will not have time to obtain the required clearances. Exceptions to this deadline may be made in emergencies or other cases where the travel was not anticipated. Travelers are urged to fax their Notifications to the Visa/Passport Office, FIC, as soon as they begin to make travel plans rather than waiting until IC or OD approvals are obtained. If the travel is later disapproved or canceled, the Visa/Passport office can be notified by telephone or fax.

C. NIT for More Than One Traveler. When two or more travelers from the same IC plan to attend the same conference, meeting, or site visit, their NITs should be submitted as a group and may be submitted as one NIT, if convenient.

D. Group Justification. A justification for sending more than one employee to a single foreign event must accompany the multiple-addressed NIT memo, if all employees are from the same lab/section/branch, etc. within the IC.

E. Amended Notifications. Minor modifications in the itinerary of an approved trip need not be submitted to FIC. However, the NIT should be amended when a city is added, the purpose of the travel is substantially altered, or the length of the trip is significantly increased.

F. Preparing the NIT. All NIT memoranda must be prepared on NIH letterhead paper and submitted to FIC with the following information:

- 1) Date: Day the prepared NIT is forwarded to FIC.

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2) Traveler: Include the name, title, IC, and telephone number, and indicate whether the traveler is of SES or equivalent rank.

3) Itinerary: List the cities to be visited and dates. The itinerary should account for all days between departure and return and should specify time on official business and annual leave. Do not include information on the purpose of the travel in this section.

4) Amount and Source of Funding: Provide the estimated total cost of the trip. Identify source of funding such as host government or organization, private sector sponsor, the IC, or the traveler.

5) Purpose of Travel: Provide a concise description of the purpose of the official business to be conducted in each city. (This statement may be continued on a second page if necessary.) The description should contain sufficient information to be used in the cables sent by the FIC to U.S. Embassies to obtain clearance for the travel. Include the name of a contact person and phone number **or** the name of the traveler's hotel and phone number in each foreign city where business will be conducted.

6) Prepared by: Telephone:

7) Clearance Initials: IC (optional) _____, FIC _____, OPHS/OIHR, _____, OS _____, (SES only). (FIC Memorandum, October 24, 1996.)

G. Notification Format. The guidance and format for the NIT are available on FIC's home page (See this Chapter Part 07-03(5) and in the NIH Foreign Travel Course Handbook which is available to individuals who enroll in the Foreign Travel course offered by Division of Workforce Development (DWD)/OHRM.

1500-07-03 Passports and Visas

A. General. The Visa/Passport Office (V/PO) of the Fogarty International Center (FIC), has responsibility for providing visa and passport services to the NIH and other components of HHS. Copies of all forms referenced in the following sections are available at the Visa/Passport Office.

B. Definitions. A United States of America passport is a document of identity and nationality issued to U.S. citizens intending to travel or sojourn in foreign countries.

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1) **Official passport:** Issued to U.S. Government employees who are proceeding abroad on official government business travel.

2) **Regular (personal) passport:** Issued to U.S. citizens proceeding abroad for tourist and private business travel.

3) **Diplomatic passport:** Issued to Foreign Service Officers and to certain other officers and employees of the U.S. Government who are proceeding abroad on official business travel of a diplomatic nature.

4) **Visa:** An official stamp or certificate placed inside the passport by an embassy, legation, or consulate certifying that the bearer of the passport is authorized by the foreign government to travel within a designated area. The visa is valid only for the period specified by the embassy, legation, or consulate.

C. Policy. The V/PO, FIC will issue and process applications for official and diplomatic passports and visas for employees of the NIH and other HHS agencies. The V/PO, FIC will maintain control over the use of official and diplomatic passports issued to NIH and HHS employees. (For “Retention of Passport” policy, see Part 4(g) below.).

D. Procedures.

1) **Official Passports.** The V/PO, FIC, will obtain official passports for NIH and HHS employees who are on the rolls of a U.S. Government agency and have on file a Notification of Personnel Action (SF-50), and an (SF-61) “Appointment Affidavits”. Travelers must provide the following documents at least 30 days in advance of travel:

- a) Application for Passport (Form DSP-11) completed except for signature.
- b) Two photographs taken within the last six months, measuring 2x2 inches on a light background.
- c) Proof of citizenship, such as birth certificate with an embossed seal or original naturalization papers.
- d) Legal documentation of name change (i.e., marriage license) if name on application for passport is different from that on birth certificate or naturalization papers.
- e) Dates, destination, and purpose of travel or copy of travel order.
- f) Title and grade or Commissioned Officer level of traveler.

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Travelers must submit applications in person to the V/PO. If the traveler has been issued a passport (regular, official, or diplomatic) within the last 12 years, he/she may apply for a renewal of the passport on Form DSP-82 and it is not necessary to appear in person.

2) *Personal Passports.* Personal passports are held by the employee and cannot be obtained through the Government at Government expense. If a Visa is required for official business travel, the Fogarty International Center will send the personal passport to the embassy for this purpose. Applications for Visas must be submitted 2-3 weeks before departure.

3) *Visas.* The V/PO, FIC, will obtain visas for NIH and other HHS employees when required for official travel. **Travelers or those who prepare travel orders should ALWAYS contact the V/PO to determine whether a visa is required for the country to be visited and what other documents might be required by that country's embassy.** Most embassies need at least one to two weeks to process a visa.

4) *Additional visa pages:* If a valid passport needs additional visa pages to expand its capacity, they may be requested on Form DSP-19, "Passport Amendment/Validation Application".

5) *Lost or stolen passports.* The Department of State regards the loss of a passport as a serious matter. Lost or stolen passports can be, and are, used for fraudulent purposes. If a passport is lost or stolen abroad, the bearer should immediately notify the nearest American embassy or consulate. If the passport is stolen, the bearer should also report the theft to police authorities in the locale in which the theft occurred. Upon return to the United States (or if passport was lost or stolen in the United States), the bearer should notify the Visa/Passport Office, FIC. Bearer will be asked to complete Form DSP-64, "Statement Regarding Lost or Stolen Passport".

6) *Replacement of lost or stolen passports.* To replace a lost or stolen passport, apply in person to the V/PO, FIC, with a completed Form DSP-11, two photographs, and proof of citizenship.

7) *Retention of passports.* Official and diplomatic passports are the property of the U.S. Government, not the individual employee and will be kept on file with the V/PO, FIC, or other designated locations, and released to travelers only upon presentation of an approved Travel Order. Upon return to the United States, the traveler must return the passport to the

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V/PO, FIC, or other designated location. The V/PO, FIC, should be informed when employment has been terminated so that official and diplomatic passports can be turned in

to the Office of Passport Services, Department of State. (NIH Manual Issuance Chapter 1522)

E. John E. Fogarty International Center Web Site. For information regarding Notifications of International Travel, Passports, and Visas, refer to FIC's homepage:

<http://www.fic.nih.gov/services/visa.html>

F. Visa/Passport Requirements. For further information or guidance regarding Visas/Passports you should contact the V/PO, FIC at the following address:

Building 31, Room B2C35, MSC 2220

Telephone: 496-3441

Fax: 402-1135