



U.S. Citizenship Conference Report

Embassy staff discuss consular services available for Americans

AARO and AAWE held a joint meeting with representatives of the consular services from the Paris embassy via Zoom on March 18, 2021. Although many participants were in France and the speakers were from the American Embassy in Paris, most of the information is pertinent to services provided by Citizen Services desks at American embassies around the world.

This report is a summary of a 90-minute video presentation and should not be considered legal advice. Also note that all material was current as of 18 March, 2021. Circumstances may well have changed, so make sure you search for the most current information. You may view the presentation at <https://youtu.be/90ESB4IATY>

Beth Austin, President of AAWE welcomed all the participants to the meeting and stressed the importance of letting Americans know that these services are continuing, with some modifications, during the covid restrictions.

William Jordan, President of AARO, welcomed his former colleagues from the diplomatic corps, starting with Brian Aggeler, Chargé d'Affaires, U.S. Embassy. Mr. Aggeler has served around the world and has been in Paris since 2017. He will be the Chargé d'Affaires until a new ambassador is confirmed and in place in Paris. He

affirmed the Embassy's strong interest in the American community here. He recognized the support of AAWE, AARO and similar organizations. He extended his congratulations on the upcoming 60th anniversary of the founding of AAWE and thanked the associations for the services to the community.

Beth then introduced Robert F. (Bob) Hannan, Consul General at the American Embassy in Paris. Bob has served in Paris before and remembered working with Phyllis Michaux, founder of both AAWE and AARO on our citizenship issues.

Mr. Hannan stated that the purpose of any American embassy is to protect its citizens, to provide services and support. These include, of course, emergency support. His major points are:

1. All Americans can return to the United States. There was some confusion at the beginning of the pandemic.
2. Remember that the Paris Embassy is always open. They have continued to issue emergency passports and other emergency services, even during the strictest lockdown restrictions.
3. Check your passport and those of your children. Be aware of the renewal dates and renew them in plenty of time. Keep the embassy's emergency service for unforeseen circumstances such as lost or stolen passports. Paris holds the record for the quickest turnaround time for passport renewal and emergency passports.
4. Share the information from this meeting with all your friends abroad.
5. Feel free to address your questions to PARISVISAINQUIRY@state.gov

Bob then introduced Jay Epping, American Citizen Services Chief, and Eugene Garmize, Passport Chief before addressing some questions on visas.

Visas and Covid

Is the Embassy issuing visas for non-Americans to visit the U.S.?

The only visas currently being issued for travel to the United States from countries in the Schengen zone, the U.K. and Ireland are those that meet the criteria of "national interest exceptions" (NIE), including those related to critical infrastructure in the

United States (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/national-interest-exceptions-from-certain-travelers-from-the-schengen-area-uk-and-ireland.html>).

Delivery of other visitor and immigration visas has been suspended since the proclamation of March 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Status of vaccination, negative PCR test, or having had Covid is not a factor.

Non-U.S. citizen spouses of U.S. citizens or parents of minor U.S. citizens are exempt from the March 2020 proclamation. The procedure for obtaining a visa is to apply online. The proposed date will be far in the future. Accept that date and then request expedited rescheduling. This exemption is only good for spouses and parents, not other partners, such as civil union or PACs partners.

Citizen Services

Jay Epping answered questions that had been submitted beforehand and in the chat.

There was a question about the repatriation to the United States after death abroad. There is no special procedure for this due to Covid.

Departure to the United States:

There were several questions pertaining to U.S. citizens, resident in France, about going to the U.S. and returning to France during the Covid-related restrictions. This is out of the scope of U.S. Citizen Service competence as it depends on the French administration. However, there is anecdotal evidence of current French policy. More specific information on travel to the U.S. from France and returning to France is at the end of the report.

- All Americans can return to the United States.
- A negative PCR test, (72 hours or less) is required to enter France and another after a full week of voluntary isolation (*sur l'honneur*).
- There is no system allowing special travel rights to passengers who have received vaccinations.
- France requires that travelers leaving or entering France must have a negative PCR-test and a compelling reason for travel.

- Traveling to the U.S. in order to be vaccinated is not considered a compelling reason.
- “Family reasons” is vague and up to the immigration officer..
- Having a contract for an internship is up to the immigration officer to consider.
- Returning to the country of citizenship is a valid compelling reason.
- There are a few very recent reports of Americans going to the United States being asked to relinquish their resident card (*titre de séjour*) to the immigration officer upon departure, suggesting that the imperative reason to return to the country of citizenship makes it a permanent decision. There was a suggestion to contact the French Embassy in Washington for a new immigration visa in order to return. This has affected only a few passengers and Jay did not have sufficient information, yet, to give a definitive answer. William recommended, “Anyone planning to challenge the rules needs to be prepared to argue with immigration at CDG. Anecdotal information is that it is critical to call a supervisor into the discussion and STAY COOL.”

Traveling on two passports, for example French and U.S. A U.S. citizen must enter the U.S. with a U.S. passport. A French citizen must enter France with a French passport or I.D. Then the question is: can the dual citizen leave France showing only the U.S. passport? Probably not. The U.S. passport would not show any justification for being in France.

Restrictions on Travel to the United States during Covid-19:

- A Schengen resident who travels to a country not under the same travel restrictions as France in order to enter the United States will have to be in that country for 14 days or more before entering the U.S. The U. S. restrictions are not based on nationality but on origin of travel.
- Negative PCR tests are required.
- Quarantine upon arrival depends on the destination in the U.S. Each state has set its own requirements, or absence of them.
- Airlines are making it difficult to travel with pets.

U.S. Selective Service Registration: Yes, this is still required for men between 18 and 25 under the Selective Service Act, even if residing outside the United States. This can be done online. Failure to register is a felony, although it is not enforced. Failure to register can lead to ineligibility for certain jobs and security clearance.

Banking problems: Transferring funds from U.S. banks is out of the scope of Citizen Services competence. Even Embassy staff have similar problems.

Citizenship of Children

Eugene answered the many questions about the citizenship of children born abroad.

Automatic, Upon Birth

If the American parent of the child fulfills the residency requirements for transmission of citizenship (residence in the U.S. for 5 years before the birth of the child, 2 of which after the age of 14) the child born abroad is a U.S. citizen, whether the parent reports the birth to the embassy, or not. (<https://fr.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/citizenship-services/report-birth-abroad/>). There is now an online application for the report of the birth of a citizen abroad.

How this 5-year residency is determined raised many questions, especially for an American parent who was born abroad. It comes down to the consular officer determining that there is “clear and convincing evidence” of the time actually spent in the U.S. For example, during a 4-year college career, it can be calculated as 4 years or 4 times 9 months, only 3 years. Bob brought up the suggestion of keeping a shoebox of souvenirs for each child: boarding passes, pictures from trips to the U.S., souvenirs from camp, report cards, anything that documents presence in the U.S. The consular officers try to confirm the days, counting even the hours, in order to reach the 5 years, 2 of which after age 14.

Once the parent has provided the proof in order to transmit citizenship for one child, it should not be necessary to provide further proof for the next. However, keep the file handy.

If the child is born in one country but the family lives in another, it is not necessary to return to the consulate in the country of birth to record it but the record will be in the country of birth. The example given was a child born in Switzerland but the family

resides in Italy. The Citizen Services desk in Rome can transfer all the documents to the consulate in Bern.

If a parent does not register the birth of the child born abroad and then the family wants to move to the United States, the child will be registered at that time. If the parent starts an immigration visa process for the child, it will turn up, in the investigation, that the child is already an American. However, a hefty immigration visa fee will have already been paid, needlessly.

Even during the Covid-19 related restrictions, the child (under age 16) and both parents must be physically present in order to issue a U.S. passport. In France, that means going to Paris or Marseille.

Expedited, upon immigration to the United States

If the American parent of the child does not fulfill the requirements for transmission of citizenship, there are two ways to obtain citizenship for the child via the Immigration and Nationality Act, section 320 or 322.

Section 320 covers expedited naturalization which grants citizenship to the child of a U.S. citizen who was unable to transmit it automatically at birth upon arrival of the child in the United States as an immigrant.

- The child arrives on an immigrant visa.
- There is an intent to reside in the United States. This is not for temporary stays in the country.
- The child is in the custody of an American parent
- The child is under age 18

The question of how much time is required to qualify as residence came up. There is no defined term. The understanding is that the “intent to reside” means moving to live in the country.

Children adopted abroad become U.S. citizens via the expedited immigration route.

Via an American Grandparent

Under the Child Citizenship Act of 2000, section 322, the child can be granted citizenship if a U.S. citizen grandparent can satisfy the 5-year residency requirement.

The grandparent has to provide the proof of residence, again. Having provided the proof when reporting the birth of his or her child, originally, is not sufficient. However, the same documents can be used again. The certificate of nationality is given after the naturalization ceremony in the United States.

There was a question asking if a consular officer could refuse to renew the passport of a child who obtained citizenship by any of these three methods. The answer is no, if the file establishing the citizenship was not erroneous. If, however, the consular officer has new information that indicates the file was fraudulent, the passport renewal may be refused.

Further questions

Social Security is handled by the Federal Benefits Unit, which is not part of the Citizen Services desk (<https://fr.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/social-security-administration/>). The Paris FBU at the Embassy covers France and many other French language countries. They are currently only available via email, not phone.

IRS assistance: There are no longer any IRS offices overseas.

Renunciation of U.S. citizenship: The service is currently suspended, due to the Covid-19 crisis.

If you have other questions about citizen services, check the embassy website (<https://fr.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/>) or send an email to citizeninfo@state.gov. For further visa information, check the website (<https://fr.usembassy.gov/visas/>) or the call center (+33 1 82 88 29 57, in France).

Useful Links and Email

Here are a set of useful links and email addresses provided by the embassy consular staff. Please note that some email addresses are for the Paris embassy only.

Register with the Embassy: <https://step.state.gov/>

State Department Website for travelers: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>

Passports:

- PassportsParis@state.gov
- CRBAParis@state.gov

Birth of U.S. Citizens Abroad and Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBAs) and Acquisition of U.S. Citizenship at Birth:

- <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/travel-legal-considerations/us-citizenship/Acquisition-US-Citizenship-Child-Born-Abroad.html>
- CRBA Applications and Appointments at Embassy Paris:
<https://fr.usembassy.gov/consular-report-of-birth-abroad-crba/>
- Contact info for the Passport and Citizenship Unit at Embassy Paris:
CRBAParis@state.gov or PassportsParis@state.gov

Expeditious Naturalization under the Childhood Citizenship Act - INA Section 320:

- https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/Intercountry-Adoption/adopt_ref/adoption-FAQs/child-citizenship-act-of-2000.html
- USCIS Policy Guidance: <https://www.uscis.gov/policy-manual/volume-12-part-h-chapter-4>
- Starting the application process for an Immigrant Visa: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-130>

Expeditious Naturalization "through the grandparents" - INA Section 322: USCIS Policy Guidance: <https://www.uscis.gov/policy>

PARISVISAINQUIRY@State.gov

COVID information: <https://fr.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/>

- French COVID requirements: <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Actualites/L-actu-du-Ministere/Attestation-de-deplacement-et-de-voyage>
- <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/coronavirus-advice-for-foreign-nationals-in-france/>
- www.diplomatie.gouv.fr

COVID Stimulus Payment: <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/get-my-payment>

Voting Information and Assistance: <https://www.fvap.gov/>

U.S. Income Tax Information:

- <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p54.pdf> (Tax Guide for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad)
- <https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/choosing-a-tax-professional> (Choosing a Tax Professional)

Selective Service Information:

- <https://www.usa.gov/selective-service> (This does not always work from overseas. You may need a VPN. If you can't get through, contact the Consular Section.)
- <https://www.sss.gov/>

Social Security:

- <https://www.ssa.gov/>
- <https://fr.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/social-security-administration/federal-benefits-faqs/>

- <https://fr.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/social-security-administration/social-security-contact-us/>
- FBU.Paris@ssa.gov

Additional Information on Travel to the United States and Return to France

COVID-19 documents needed to travel from France to the United States and return to France as of March 19th, 2021. These lists concern travel to and from France, specifically, as most of the participants from AAWE and AARO are French residents. Please check the requirements for your country of residence. Changes are frequent so check the websites regularly before departure.

Departure to the United States from France:

- Present a negative COVID-19 PCR test within 72 hours of departure. In France, make an appointment with a laboratory or doctor through doctolib.fr
- Download the “Passenger Disclosure and Attestation to the United States of America”. <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/pdf/attachment-a-global-passenger-disclosure-and-attestation-2021-01-12-p.pdf>
- Check <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-international-air-travelers.html>
- Check quarantine information depending on your state destination: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-planner/index.html>
- To leave France, download the *Attestation de déplacement international*: <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Actualites/L-actu-du-Ministere/Attestation-de->

[deplacement-et-de-voyage](#)

English version: <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Actualites/L-actu-du-Ministere/Certificate-of-international-travel>

- To leave France, carry proof of *Motif impérieux*” (compelling reason for travel) health, family and professional

Return to France from the United States:

- Present a negative COVID-19 PCR test within 72 hours of departure.
- Check with France in the U.S.:
<https://franceintheus.org/spip.php?article10064>
- Check the American Embassy in France: <https://fr.usembassy.gov/>
- Download the *Attestation de déplacement international*:
<https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Actualites/L-actu-du-Ministere/Attestation-de-deplacement-et-de-voyage>
English version: <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Actualites/L-actu-du-Ministere/Certificate-of-international-travel>
- Prepare a statement “*engagement sur l honneur à se soumettre aux règles relatives à l entrée sur le territoire national métropolitain(voyageur plus de onze ans)*” <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr>
- Proof of “*Motif impérieux*” : health, family and professional

This report was prepared by Ellen Lebel with additional content from Chilla Heuser-Rousselle and editing by Kathleen de Carbuccia

The Association of Americans Resident Overseas (AARO) researches issues that significantly affect the lives of overseas Americans and keeps its members informed on these issues. Founded in 1973 and headquartered in Paris, AARO is an international, non-partisan association with members in 46 countries. For more information please email us at aaronews@aaro.org.

AAWE, the Association of American Women in Europe, celebrates 60 years of advocacy, outreach, friendships, and a dynamic American support and information network, for women living bicultural lives in France. Headquartered in Paris since 1961, we welcome new faces. www.aaweparis.org.

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