



**UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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The United States Mission to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions and Observer Offices to the United Nations and has the honor to refer to its circular diplomatic notes HC-125-09 dated October 15, 2009, HC-18-12 dated January 20, 2012, and HC-99-13 dated September 27, 2013, which set forth requirements regarding the employment of foreign domestic workers. The United States Mission wishes to remind Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers of these requirements and to request that all Mission and Observer Office staff again be apprised of the Department of State's requirements relating to the employment of domestic workers and the importance of all Mission and Observer Office personnel abiding by them.

The United States Mission would also like to take this opportunity to remind Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers that a provision of the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 requires the Secretary of State to "suspend for such period as the Secretary determines necessary, the issuance of A-3 visas or G-5 visas to applicants seeking

to work for officials of a diplomatic mission or an international organization, if the Secretary determines that there is serious evidence that one or more employees of such mission or international organization have abused or exploited one or more nonimmigrants holding an A-3 visa or a G-5 visa, and that the diplomatic mission or international organization tolerated such actions.” A review by the Secretary of evidence of abuse or exploitation, and Mission or Observer Office toleration of such abuse or exploitation, would take many factors into account, potentially including Mission and Observer Office policies and record-keeping regarding the employment of domestic workers. Mission and Observer Office members should be advised that, in the United States, withholding a person’s passport may be evidence of the crime of trafficking in persons or constitute a separate crime of unlawful conduct with respect to immigration documents. Under U.S. law, trafficking in persons includes the crime of subjecting someone to forced labor through restraint, force, threats of force, or legal coercion (such as a threat to send a person to jail or to be deported), in order to obtain that person’s labor.

In addition, the United States Mission wishes to remind Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers of its policy regarding serious crimes. If a prosecuting authority in the United States advises the Department of State and/or the United States Mission that, but for a Mission or Observer Office member’s immunity, it would prosecute the Mission or Observer Office member for a serious

crime relating to the abuse or exploitation of a domestic worker, United States Mission policy is to request a waiver of any applicable immunity and, in the absence of a waiver, to require the departure of the Mission or Observer Office member and his or her dependents.

Since 2009, the United States Mission has informed Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers of its efforts to develop a framework to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of domestic workers and provided Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers with information and guidance relating to the employment of such workers. The United States Mission has also advised Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to take any and all measures necessary to ensure that members of their Mission and Observer Offices employing domestic workers respect the laws that relate to the treatment of these workers. It is essential that all those who employ domestic workers comply with their contractual obligations and otherwise treat their workers in a fair and equitable manner. The United States Mission has made clear that it looks to Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to be responsible for the conduct of Mission and Observer Office members and to ensure that Mission and Observer Office members employing domestic workers respect all relevant requirements and U.S. laws. Accordingly, Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers are encouraged to implement internal Mission and Observer

Office policies to ensure adherence by Mission and Observer Office members to the requirements outlined below regarding method of payment and retention of contracts and payment records. The United States Mission also recommends that the Permanent Missions and Observer Offices maintain copies of signed contracts between its Mission or Observer Office members and their domestic workers, and that the Permanent Missions and Observer Offices be able to review such contracts as well records of payments made, and hours worked, in the event that the Department and/or the United States Mission receives serious allegations of a Mission or Observer Office member's mistreatment of a domestic worker and seeks the Permanent Mission's or Observer Office's assistance in gathering payment information.

The failure of the Permanent Representative or Permanent Observer to provide payment records to the Department of State and/or the United States Mission if requested in the event of abuse allegations would be brought to the Secretary's attention in any review he might undertake, pursuant to the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, regarding suspension of domestic worker visas for a particular Permanent Mission or Observer Office. Further, the failure to provide requested records regarding a Mission or Observer Office member's employment of a domestic worker could

result in a denial of a request by the Mission or Observer Office member to replace a former domestic worker or to increase his or her existing domestic staff.

Consistent with the general expectation that Mission and Observer Office members pay their just debts, Mission and Observer Office members are expected to pay any judgment awarding damages by a court with jurisdiction over a case brought against them by their former domestic workers. In 2010, a United States appellate court determined that former Mission and Observer Office members who enjoy immunity while accredited are not immune from jurisdiction for matters relating to their employment of domestic workers after Mission and Observer Office members are terminated because the acts comprising the employment of a domestic worker are not acts performed as a Mission or Observer Office member and, thus, are not within the scope of residual immunity under Article 39(2) of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

Domestic Worker Visa Eligibility Requirements

Pre-Notification

In the United States Mission's diplomatic circular HC-125-09 dated October 15, 2009, Permanent Missions and Observer Offices were informed of the requirement that any prospective domestic worker must be notified to the Department before the worker applies for a visa. This "pre-notification" requires Permanent Missions and Observer Offices to submit a "Pre-Notification of a

Domestic Worker” form (“Pre-notification form”) addressed to UNDomesticWorkers@state.gov. The Pre-notification form can be found on the United States Mission’s website under the Host Country, Accreditation and Registration section at www.state.gov/about/host_aff/c32163. The United States Mission must receive this notification prior to issuance of an A-3 or G-5 visa. Permanent Missions and Observer Offices should note that this pre-notification process does not guarantee the issuance of an A-3 or G-5 visa, nor does it change other nonimmigrant visa eligibility requirements relating to such visas. The United States Mission wishes to advise that it accepts pre-notification forms with the understanding that the Permanent Representative or Permanent Observer has reviewed and authorized any such proposed employment of a domestic worker by a Mission or Observer Office member.

Ability to Pay

In addition, the United States Mission requires that A-3 or G-5 visas not be issued unless the U.S. consular officer responsible for reviewing the visa application reasonably concludes that the Mission or Observer Office member will be able to provide the required wages and working conditions (addressed below). Consular officers will presume that a prospective domestic worker will not be provided the legally required wages and working conditions if the Mission or Observer Office employer does not carry the diplomatic rank of Minister or above,

or an equivalent position. To overcome this presumption, a prospective Mission or Observer Office member not having the rank of Minister or above must demonstrate to the consular officer that he or she has the financial ability to pay the salary and related travel expenses of the domestic worker as specified in the contract. Consideration is also given to the number of domestic workers a Mission or Observer Office member may reasonably be able to pay.

Consular officers will also presume that a prospective domestic worker is not eligible for an A-3 or G-5 visa if the Mission or Observer Office employer has had previous instances of noncompliance of contracts with A-3 or G-5 employees, has had a pattern of employee disappearance, or if the Department of State and/or the United States Mission has received reliable allegations of mistreatment or abuse by that employer. To overcome this presumption, a Mission or Observer Office member must demonstrate to the consular officer that such an outcome is not likely to reoccur.

Contract

The United States Mission's diplomatic circulars HC-125-09 dated October 15, 2009 and HC-18-12 dated January 20, 2012 further specified the terms of employment that must be included in a written employment contract between a Mission or Observer Office member and his or her domestic worker. The contract must be in English, and if the domestic worker does not understand English, the

contract must also be in a language understood by the domestic worker. Two copies of the contract must be signed by both parties, and a copy of the signed contract in English must be provided to the consular officer when a domestic worker applies for a visa. If the domestic worker does not understand English, a copy of the contract in English and in a language understood by the domestic worker must be provided to the consular officer.

All contracts must include the following provisions:

- **Description of duties.** The contract must describe the work to be performed, e.g., housekeeping (light or heavy), cooking, gardening, child care (how many children), and must also include a statement that the domestic worker shall work only for the employer who signed the contract and will not accept any other employment while working for the employer.
- **Hours of work.** The contract must state the time of the normal working hours and the number of hours per week. It is generally expected that domestic workers will be required to work 35 to 40 hours per week. It must also state that the domestic worker will be provided a minimum of one full day off each week. The contract must indicate the number of paid national holidays, sick days, and vacation days the domestic worker will be provided.

- **Wage rate.** The contract must state the hourly wage to be paid to the domestic worker. The rate must be the greater of the minimum wage under U.S. federal and state law or the prevailing wage for all working hours. Domestic workers in the New York City metro area must currently be paid a minimum of \$10.32 per hour and overtime for all hours worked above 40 hours per week, unless the domestic worker lives in the employer's residence. In such cases, the domestic worker must be paid an overtime wage for all hours worked above 44 hours per week. The contract must state that wages will be paid to the domestic employee either weekly or biweekly. No deductions may be taken from wages for lodging, medical care, medical insurance, travel, or food. Changes to the prevailing wage rate will be notified to the Permanent Missions and Observer Offices in the form of a circular diplomatic note. Upon receipt, all contracts must be amended to reflect the new prevailing wage rate.
- **Overtime work.** The contract must state that any hours worked in excess of the normal number of hours worked per week (35-40 hours, except as noted above) are considered overtime hours, and that hours in which the employee is "on call" count as work hours. It must also state that such overtime work must be paid as required by U.S. local laws.

- **Method of Payment.** The contract must state that after the first 90 days of employment, all wage payments must be made by check or by electronic fund transfer to a bank account in the domestic worker's name only. Neither Mission and Observer Office members nor their family members should have access to domestic worker bank accounts.
- **Transportation to and from the United States.** The contract must state that the employer will pay for all travel costs related to the employment of the domestic worker, which includes transportation to the United States to begin employment, transportation from the United States when employment has concluded, and travel expenses related to any trips where the domestic worker has been asked to accompany the employer's family.
- **Other required terms of employment.** The contract must state that the employer agrees to abide by all federal, state, and local laws in the United States. The contract must also include a statement that the domestic worker's passport, visa, and any I-94 card will be in the sole possession of the domestic worker and that a copy of the employment contract and other personal property of the domestic worker will not be withheld by the employer for any reason. Such personal property may include, but is not limited to bank cards or statements, computers, and cell phones. The contract should also include a statement that the domestic worker's presence

in the employer's residence will not be mandated except during working hours. Any modification to the contract must be in writing.

- **Other recommended terms of employment.** The contract may also include additional agreed-upon terms of employment, if any, provided they are fully consistent with all applicable U.S. federal, state, and local laws.

Domestic Worker Arrival to the United States

Once a domestic worker has arrived in the United States and begun their employment, the Permanent Mission or Observer Office must register the domestic worker by submitting form SG-5 to the United Nations Protocol and Liaison Service within 5 days of entry into the United States. A signed copy of the employment contract in English must also be submitted to the United Nations Protocol and Liaison Service.

Domestic Worker Wage Payments

In compliance with the contractual terms above, Mission and Observer Office members employing domestic workers are required to make wage payments to domestic workers via check or electronic fund transfer to the domestic worker's bank account within 90 days of commencement of employment (cash payments with a receipt are only permissible within the first 90 days of employment).

Mission and Observer Office members are also required to retain records of employment and proof of wage payments made, to include a copy of the signed

contract, weekly records of the number of hours worked, and proof of the payments made in connection to that work (e.g., cancelled checks or electronic fund transfers, or signed receipts of cash payments during the first 90 days of employment). To avoid possible misunderstanding, all employers must maintain these records for the duration of the domestic worker's employment plus three years after.

Updating Written Contracts

Mission and Observer Office members employing domestic workers are required to update contracts, in writing, to reflect any changes to previously agreed information between the employee and employer to ensure that the contract is fully consistent with U.S. government requirements and all current U.S. federal, state, and local laws.

Notification of Termination

Permanent Missions and Observer Offices must notify the United Nations Protocol and Liaison Service when a domestic worker has ended their term of employment, and upon their termination, whether they have departed the United States. Submission of a Notification of Final Departure (form SG-8) of domestic workers who have left the employment of Mission or Observer Office members will relieve employers of their responsibility for such workers.

The United States Mission to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Permanent Missions and Observer Offices to the United Nations the assurance of its highest consideration.