

HROM FACT SHEET

Separate Maintenance Allowance

Issued: July 2017

This Fact Sheet:

- Defines SMA and its purpose
- Provides highlights on SMA Eligibility and Approval Process
- Explains how and when to submit SMA requests

Background

Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA) is an allowance that may be granted to eligible employees who are required to maintain two residences for compelling reasons that include restrictions at the new duty location, family medical situations, or schooling requirements.

Highlights

- SMA must be approved by the employee's command and the head of Agency.
- There are three types of SMA:
 - **Involuntary SMA** may be granted because of dangerous, notably unhealthful, or excessively adverse living conditions at the employee's post of assignment in a foreign area, or for the convenience of the Government.
 - **Voluntary SMA** may be granted to an employee who personally requests such an allowance, based on special needs or hardship involving the employee or family member(s).
 - **Transitional SMA** may be granted to an employee whose family members temporarily occupy commercial quarters following termination of an evacuation in connection with an unaccompanied assignment.
- Several circumstances exist that do not warrant SMA as outlined in DSSR 263. These include when the family member would not normally reside with the employee, when the spouse is either a military member or a U.S. Government civilian employee subject to worldwide assignment availability, when a legal separation/divorce/dissolution occurs, child on educational travel, etc.
- Any changes that may affect SMA must be reported to the assigned Human Resources (HR) Specialist at the Human Resources Office in Arlington, VA. This includes arrival of family member at post when the stay is or will be in excess of thirty (30) consecutive days, or has exceeded or will exceed 90 days during one 12-month period.

Process & Required Documents

An employee is required to submit the following to his or her assigned HR Specialist or SMB_HQMC_HROM_OVERSEAS@USMC.MIL to initiate, modify, and terminate SMA payment.

- [Foreign Allowances Application, Grant and Report \(SF-1190\)](#)
- **Memorandum request for approval of SMA (detail behind the request)**

Payment of SMA

- Employee submits request through command. If the command endorses the request, it is forwarded to HR. SMA requests are reviewed and routed through approval process to head of Agency. This generally takes up to three pay periods to process and begin payment or when eligibility begins, whichever is later. Voluntary and Involuntary SMA rates are determined by the number of family members maintained elsewhere than at the post of assignment. Transitional SMA is to be paid at a daily rate, varying only by the number of family members maintained at a location other than the post of assignment. SMA is not taxable.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How is SMA Calculated?

A. Voluntary and Involuntary SMA is calculated and paid at annual rates, divided by the number of calendar days to obtain a daily rate; multiplying the daily rate by 14 to obtain a biweekly rate. Transitional SMA is calculated by multiplying the daily rate by 14 to obtain a biweekly rate; and multiplying the daily rate by the number of days involved to obtain the rate for any other period.

Q. At what age must voluntary SMA terminate for a dependent child?

A. Voluntary SMA must be terminated on the child's 18th birthday unless the child is attending secondary school (grades 9-12) or is determined to be incapable of self-support (due to physical or mental impairment).

Q. At what age must involuntary SMA terminate for a dependent child?

A. Involuntary SMA must be terminated on a child's 21st birthday, unless (1) the child is attending secondary school (grades 9-12); or (2) the child is determined to be incapable of self-support (due to physical or mental impairment). A child who is in post-secondary school/college and not currently working is not considered to be incapable of self-support.

Q. My family is currently on SMA and is scheduled to visit my post. Will my SMA payments terminate while they are visiting?

A. SMA payments may continue during the family members' visit to post when the visit is expected to be for thirty consecutive days or less AND the number of days each of your family members stayed at the post has not exceeded 90 days during one 12 month period. (Each family member on SMA is treated individually for the 90 day stay at post maximum.)

Q. My family member(s) stayed behind and I was not aware that I was eligible for SMA until after the fact. Can I still receive SMA?

A. There is no authority to retroactively pay a discretionary allowance. SMA is discretionary and is authorized prospectively ("may be granted") and therefore cannot be paid retroactively.

Additional Information

Human Resources Organizational Management, Headquarters United States Marine Corps

<http://www.hqmc.marines.mil/hrom/>

Department of State Standardized Regulations https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=231&menu_id=92

DoD Financial Management Regulation (FMR) 7000.14-R Volume 8, Chapter 3

http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/documents/fmr/Volume_08.pdf

Still need assistance?

For additional questions or assistance with the SMA or any Foreign Allowances, contact your servicing HR Specialist or smb_hqmc_hrom_overseas@usmc.mil