

## Foreign-Born Military Spouses

*“Foreign-born military spouses face challenges beyond what most spouses face as they adjust to the military lifestyle. Your support is critical to the building a stronger fleet though supporting family readiness.”* **RADM Christopher “Scotty” Gray**

### Cultural Awareness & Competency

- **Cultural Awareness** - understanding cultural differences and being aware of different cultural values, beliefs and perceptions. Understanding is the foundation of communication. Reminders:
  - ✓ **What is appropriate in one culture is not always appropriate in another**
  - ✓ **Awareness is the first step towards gaining intercultural competence**
- **Culture Shock** - disorientation stress caused by leaving the home culture and adapting to a new one. It is very real and can result in the following responses: Flight, Fight or Filter.
- **Cultural Competency** - the ability to understand, communicate with and interact with people across cultures. Be conscious, have knowledge of different practices and worldviews, have the capacity for cultural assessment and value diversity.
- **Iceberg Model of Culture:**



### Challenges for Bi-Cultural Families

Challenges for bi-cultural families include Premarital, Marital and Change Factors, and can manifest as:

- Feelings of Isolation & Homesickness
- Education Barriers & Challenges
- Employment Barriers & Challenges
- Adjustment Issues

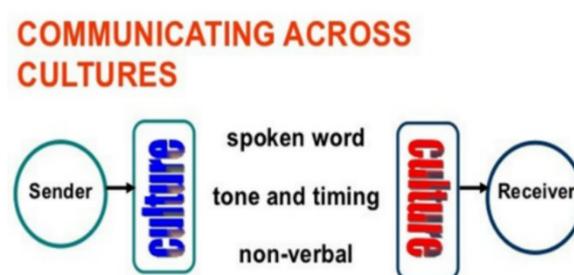
When a family needs assistance, the Ombudsman is often the first line of defense. It is important that the Ombudsman exhibit cultural sensitivity when dealing with the spouse. Do not forget to remind the foreign-born spouse that not all communication will be able to remain confidential. **Reportable situations include:**

- All suspected or known child abuse/neglect.

- Alleged domestic abuse.
- Suspected or potential homicides, violence or life-endangering situations.
- All suspected or potential suicidal risks.
- Alleged sexual assault.
- Other issues identified by the CO as reportable.

*(Please read pages 38 and 132 of your Ombudsman Program Manual for more information)*

## Communication



## Immigration Process

### K1 Fiancé Visa

A common way of an U.S. Citizen to bring their significant other is a *K-1 Visa*, also known as the Fiancé Visa. The couple must have met within the last two years prior to applying for the visa. This is a nonimmigrant visa allowing the future spouse to enter the United States for up to 90 days, during which they may get married and file for an Adjustment of Status (Green Card). *K-1* visa is a one-time entry, meaning they cannot travel outside the US and re-enter on the same visa. It also requires an additional Employment authorization if the fiancé intends to work. This process is estimated at nine and a half months wait for the visa, seventeen and a half months for Legal Residency with an estimated cost of up to \$1650.00. Once married, the couple should begin the Permanent Resident Application.

### Spousal Visas

These visas are based on marriage of a U.S. citizen to a non-U.S. citizen. The *K-3 Visa* allows a non U.S. Citizen Spouse entry to USA and is valid for two years. It allows the spouse to reside in the USA while adjusting their status to becoming a Legal Permanent Resident. The spouse may apply for a social security card and employment authorization; however, the wait time for employment authorization is lengthy. The approximate wait time is 16 months for the visa and four and a half months for Permanent Resident and will add up to costs of approximately \$1700.

The *IR-1/CR-1* is a nonimmigrant visa and must be completed outside the USA. Once granted it allows entry to the USA and immediately becoming a Legal Resident. The advantage of this process is that no employment authorization needed after entry in the USA. The Green Card will arrive a few weeks later in the mail. However, with this type of process the separation from the spouse is long. The approximate wait time 13 months for visa and 13 months for Permanent Resident and will costs around \$900.00.

Please check the *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services* webpage for further information and the latest forms and prices. [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

## Available Assistance & Resources

- **The Fleet & Family Support Center (FFSC)**- FFSC has many services and programs that can be helpful to Foreign Born Spouses. This includes New Spouse 101, Spouse. Employment Empowerment and Development through the FERP , Winning Interview Techniques, Love Long Distance, Navigating Childcare, New Parent Support Home Visitation Program Individual and/or Couples Counseling, Ombudsman Program, Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) Social Media includes:
  - ✓ Navy Family Portal: <https://zeiders.refineddata.com/>
  - ✓ Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NavyFFSP/>
  - ✓ Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NavyGoldStar/>
  - ✓ Twitter:[https://twitter.com/Fleet\\_Family](https://twitter.com/Fleet_Family)
  - ✓ Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/navyffsp/>
  - ✓ YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/NavyFFR/playlists>
- **Navy Region Legal Services Office**- Region Legal offers attorney services such as immigration, naturalization, and foreign adoption. It also offers services for special powers of attorney and notary documents.
- **Military Treatment Facilities** - The Medical Center or Naval Hospital should offer a wide variety of foreign language interpreting services and document translation for beneficiaries.
- **Navy Chaplain** - The navy chaplains can offer confidential support and spiritual guidance.
- **Navy MWR Digital Library** - Online services include interactive language lessons, international reports on daily life and cultural customs, and child-friendly publications for elementary-aged children. [www.navymwrdigitallibrary.org](http://www.navymwrdigitallibrary.org)
- **Military One Source** - Military One Source provides assistance with translation of documents such as immigration and tax paperwork. [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil)
- **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services** - USCIS offers immigration information and links to resources related to naturalization and expedited application processing for members of the military and their families. 877-247-4645, [www.uscis.gov/military](http://www.uscis.gov/military)
- **Federal Trade Commission** - The FTC offers resources and referral for lawyers and accredited representatives for those seeking immigration assistance. [www.ftc.gov/immigration](http://www.ftc.gov/immigration)

- **Community Colleges** - Community Colleges often offer provides free English as a Second Language (ESL) classes as well as Computer Labs, Transition to College, Vocational ESL, and Citizenship classes.
- **Local Libraries** - Some Library locations may provide free citizenship classes and ESL classes to prepare for the application and interview required for naturalization.
- **Foreign Military Spouse Association** - The Association was founded in 2018 by a foreign military spouse who realized that there was a strong need for a platform supporting foreign-born spouses and their families. Its website offers information and resources through relevant article links on topics such as Immigration, education and career, etc. The Facebook Group, which currently has almost 900 members allows Foreign-Born Military Souses to connect, share and gather experiences. Some areas now have a local chapter where spouses organize coffee meet ups allowing them to connect in person and build friendships. [www.foreignmilitaryspouse.com](http://www.foreignmilitaryspouse.com)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/groups/286323385184802](https://www.facebook.com/groups/286323385184802)