

Moving to the United States

Preliminary remarks

The following paragraphs describe my experiences/Todos for my relocation from Germany to Connecticut (United States). I started working at the University of New Haven. If you are moving to a different organization, offices might have slightly different names (e.g., 'International Services Office' might be called 'Office for International Affairs'). However, the following should give you a brief overview of the important points.

Structure of this document

1. **Overview:** I will name the main things I had to do without any additional explanation / description. I like to keep this section as short as possible.
2. **Information:** In this section I will explain / describe why I had to do the steps in **Overview**. Thus, if you cannot find the correct 'office', you might ask someone where you can do this.

Note, since both section are numbered, it is easy to correlate them, i.e., you find additional information to point 2 from 'overview' in point 2 from 'information'.

Overview

Before leaving

1. Check the benefits package of your company.
2. Ask for moving expense reimbursement.
3. Terminate all contracts.
4. Sell your personal belongings.
5. Try to find a place to stay.
6. Identify a way to transfer your money to the US.
7. Pack boxes for shipping.
8. Consider renting a car.

After Arrival

- **Since I already had an SSN, I don't know how that works. But I am sure Human Resources HR will help you.**
- 1. Get a cell-phone.
- 2. Make an appointment with the International Services Office (ISO).
- 3. Make an appointment with Human Resources (HR).
- 4. Get a State ID (e.g., Connecticut driving licenses).
- 5. Meet the secretary of your department.
- 6. Open a bank-account.
 - a. Try to get a Credit-card.
- 7. Ship your belongings.

Optional after arrival

1. Buying a car.
2. Parking permit.

Information

Before leaving

1. You should check the benefits package of your new company. In other words, do they provide health insurance, vision care and dentist? Do they have a retirement plan? Are you eligible to participate in this program? If not you need to inform yourself about possibilities from your home country.
2. Ask your company for moving expenses reimbursement. Probably they provided you some money to move. If so, remember to keep all bills/invoices.
3. Read your bank statements carefully (I recommend at least the last year) and terminate all contracts e.g., apartment, cell phone, internet, car/health insurance, gym, ...
4. You should start early with selling your stuff that you won't take with you (e.g., clothes, furniture, motorbike, ...).
5. I always use craigslist to find a nice place to stay. There might be further opportunities. In addition, you can also ask your employer for help.

6. You should identify a cheap way to transfer your money to the US. One possibility might be a debit/credit card that allows to withdraw money at an ATM without charges.
7. Put all your personal belongs in boxes and prepare them for shipping (keep in mind the shipping limits like size and weight). I recommend to place them at your families/friends house and ship them once you arrived in your new apartment.
8. You might want to rent a car for the first few weeks. This makes it easier to get all your stuff together.

After Arrival

1. A cell-phone is very important nowadays. I don't think I need to explain this. Get it at the very first since you often need to provide a number.
2. They need to update the SEVIS system that you officially arrived and started. It should be able to do this although your visa hasn't started yet. This is important to obtain an US ID, which is one of the most important things.
3. They will setup all payment and tax-payment stuff. This is important to get paid at the end of every pay period. Depending on your home country, there might be a tax-treaty. Please read online and discuss this with HR.
4. Before going to the DMV, verify that you are in the SEVIS system. Therefore, contact ISO (see point 2). After they confirm you are in the system wait 1-2 days and go to the DMV. Inform yourself on the website what you need, e.g.
 - a. Foreign driving license, passport, printed version of I-94 (you find it online), 2 proof of address (I showed the lease and a faked letter), R-229 form (online), 72+40 Dollar.
 - b. I recommend to visit the DMV website, things might change.
5. Try to figure out what else you need before you can start. This includes things like: keys, parking permit, office supplies.
6. You will definitely need a bank account (e.g., to use direct deposit). Most banks will ask you for your social security number (SSN) and 'proof of address'. You are allowed to open an account without an SSN (this is what the Google says).
 Proof of address: I had to show my lease that I really live there. This somehow depends on the bank, e.g., I heard that Bank of America does not require a proof of address.
 After having a bank account, go back to HR to update your records so that they can do direct deposit (I think this is more convenient than checks).
 - a. If you do not have any credit history in the US, you should start to build one. Therefore, I recommend to get a credit card. The easiest way (and the only one I found) is to obtain a secured credit card, which I got from Bank of America.
7. Once you are in your apartment, ship your belongings. You might want to use your office address.

Optional after arrival

1. Depending on where you live you might want to buy a car. Either you go on craigslist again or you visit dealers. A go place to look at might be rental-car sellers and car-max.
2. Some areas in New Haven require a parking permit. In order to get a parking permit, visit the City Hall on 165 Church Street. Bring a COPY of your Vehicle Identification Card (you got this from the DMV) with you and \$20. Go to room 167 on the first level.

Last update June 4, 2015