



HSO Welcome Packet

“Protecting, promoting and advancing the health and safety of the Nation”

Dear Newly Commissioned Officer,

Congratulations on being called to active duty! The Health Services Professional Advisory Committee (HSPAC) thanks you for choosing to become an officer in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS). Getting acclimated may take some time; therefore we have provided you with the Health Services Officer (HSO) Welcome Packet. Our goal is to provide you with a quick snapshot of the many facets of officership in the USPHS Commissioned Corps. This packet contains a wealth of useful information that you may need in transitioning into your new assignment and may assist you throughout your career. We hope you find this information useful.

For more information, please visit the HSPAC webpage at <http://usphs-hso.org>. If you have specific questions, please feel free to request assistance from any HSPAC member.

Welcome to the United States Public Health Service!

The Health Services Professional Advisory Committee
Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee

Introduction to the USPHS

The origins of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) can be traced to the passage of a Federal Act in 1798 that provided for the care and relief of sick and injured merchant seamen. Reorganization in 1870 converted the loose network of locally controlled hospitals into a centrally controlled Marine Hospital Service, with its headquarters in Washington, D.C. The position of Supervising Surgeon (later renamed the Surgeon General) was created to administer the Service, and John Maynard Woodworth was appointed as the first incumbent in 1871. He moved quickly to reform the system and adopted a military model for his medical staff, instituting examinations for applicants and putting his physicians in uniform. By doing this, he created a cadre of mobile, career service physicians who could be assigned, as needed, to the various marine hospitals. The uniformed services component of the Marine Hospital Service was formalized as the Commissioned Corps by legislation enacted in 1889.

Originally, staff positions were only filled by physicians. During the twentieth century, the Corps expanded to include dentists, sanitary engineers, pharmacists, nurses, sanitarians, scientists, and other health professionals. The Health Services category was established in 1959 to meet the staffing requirements of a changing USPHS. Many new health disciplines have emerged since the category was formed. The Health Services category continues to grow and change to fulfill new health leadership roles. Today, HSOs perform a variety of functions including direct clinical practice, program development, health planning and administration, and research. The category has grown from a small nucleus of a few officers to its present level of more than 1200 active duty officers (as of April 2011). The HSO motto: "Strength through Diversity" attests to the wide range of skills and experience possessed by this multidisciplinary team of officers, and their pride and commitment to serving in the Commissioned Corps.

As we embark upon a new century, the USPHS continues to fulfill its mission of "Protecting, promoting, and advancing the health and safety of the Nation."

Health Services Professional Advisory Committee

The Health Services Professional Advisory Committee (HSPAC) is an advisory group to the Surgeon General through the Chief Professional Officer and represents the interests of Health Service Officers (HSOs) in the Commissioned Corps on issues such as promotion, appointment standards, awards, etc. You may volunteer for this group as a nonvoting member, or apply for voting membership. We encourage your participation on the various subcommittees: Awards; Communications; Career Development; Membership; Mentoring; Policy; Readiness; and Recruitment and Retention.

The HSPAC has open meetings the first Friday of every other month, and is a great source of current information regarding changes in the Commissioned Corps and the Health Services category. The HSPAC has formed ten Professional Advisory Groups (PAGs) which provide discipline-specific advice to the HSPAC and the Health Services Chief Professional Officer (CPO). The PAGs are represented by the following disciplines; Basic and Applied Sciences, Dental Hygiene, Healthcare Administration, Information Technology, Medical Laboratory Scientists, Optometry, Physician Assistant, Psychology, Public Health and Social Work. Additional information can be found on the HSPAC website at <http://usphs-hso.org/>.

References

USPHS Headquarters' Contact Information

Compensation Branch (CB) 301-594-2963 - Payroll, Service member Group Life Insurance (SGLI), Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) information

Medical Affairs Branch (MAB) 800-368-2777 - TRICARE issues, immunization status

Commissioned Corps Help Desk 301-594-0961 - General questions/information

For a complete listing of all phone numbers, visit the Commissioned Corps Management Information System Website at: <http://dcp.psc.gov/>. Click the top link "About Us" and select "Commissioned Corps Telephone Resource Directory."

Uniformed Services Identification (ID) Cards

ID cards may be obtained at most military installations, or for those assigned to, or stationed in the Washington DC area, at the Office of Commissioned Corps Operations at 1101 Wooten Parkway, Plaza Level, Suite 100, Rockville, MD 20852, by appointment only. You'll need to wait until you are enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) and have a copy of your orders to apply for an ID card.

Don't forget to register your dependents in the DEERS system. This will aid in a smooth transition for the provision of your dependent's health care needs. Dependents are also required to be registered in DEERS to obtain a dependent ID card and to gain access to military bases. For questions regarding ID cards, contact the Office of Commissioned Corps Operations at 1-877-INFO-DCP.

Uniforms

If you are new to the uniformed services, the rules and regulations of uniform wear can be daunting. However, there is guidance for uniforms and proper wear in Commissioned Corps Instruction 26.3.1 http://dcp.psc.gov/eccis/documents/CCPM26_3_1.pdf. Uniform guidance is determined by your local uniform authority (LUA). To find out what uniforms are authorized for different times of the year, contact your agency liaison. Agency liaison contact information is found at <http://dcp.psc.gov> under the section "About Us." Then, select "SG PAC and Commissioned Corps Liaison Listing."

Uniforms can be purchased via several routes: at your local installation's military clothing store, by calling the Navy Exchange at 800-368-4088, or online at: Navy Exchange: www.navy-nex.com, Lighthouse: <http://www.lighthouseuniform.com> and Marlow White: <http://www.marlowwhite.com/public-health-service-uniforms.html>

You can purchase uniform and replacement award devices, and other officer accessories online through the Public Health Service Officers Device Supply Center at: http://bphc.hrsa.gov/nhdp/PHS_Officers_Device_Supply_Center_Main_Page.htm

You must order your own name tags. You should purchase one that is "all purpose." In addition, you may be able to purchase one that is agency-specific (e.g., BOP, FDA, IHS, etc). You can order the name tags and other PHS devices and accessories online at the PHS Officer's Device Supply Center: http://bphc.hrsa.gov/nhdp/PHS_Officers_Device_Supply_Center_Main_Page.htm

You are authorized for a one time uniform allowance of \$250. For more information, please contact the Compensation Branch at 301-594-2963. You'll need to fill out and mail in the uniform allowance

memorandum, which can be downloaded at: http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF_docs/uniform_allowance.pdf

It is advised that you seek out a knowledgeable officer to accompany you to your local installation for the first time to purchase uniforms. This has proven to be helpful for many new officers.

Household Goods Shipments

For information concerning the shipment of household goods, please contact your agency liaison. You can download the application form PHS-40131-1 at: http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF_docs/4013_1.pdf

Be sure to check with your duty organization to determine how relocation expenses will be paid, an entitlement in accordance with Joint Federal Travel Regulations.

Compensation, Medical Benefits, and Insurance

There are various types of pay: Basic pay, Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS), and special pay. Contact the Compensation Branch at 301-594-2963 if you have any questions or concerns about your earnings statement. For a list of pay scales, visit: <http://www.dfas.mil>

TRICARE – The Military Health System is the primary source of health care for active-duty USPHS officers. The TRICARE system has various options for active-duty family members, retirees, and their eligible family members. Information can be found at: <http://www.tricare.osd.mil>

Medical care is one of the most important benefits that USPHS officers and their dependents will utilize during their careers. If you are stationed close to a Military Treatment Facility (MTF), you are required to use that facility. In addition, officers are required to present their ID card for services when visiting an MTF. The Medical Affairs Branch (MAB) may authorize payment for civilian medical services if an officer is not near an MTF or it doesn't provide the services needed. You may contact MAB directly for further information Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Eastern Time at (800) 368-2777, select option #2.

Service members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) is term life insurance available to active duty officers and their spouses. Contact the Compensation Branch at 301-694-2963 to sign up for SGLI. Note: Officers are automatically enrolled in the maximum SGLI benefit, unless lowered or declined by the officer, using the SGLI form. For more information, please visit: <http://www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/default.htm>

Navy Mutual Aid offers a competitive life insurance alternative to the default automatic SGLI and officers can keep their coverage after they resign or retire their commission. For more information, please visit: <http://www.navy mutual.org>

Retirement, Savings, and Investment Planning

Thrift Savings Plan - If you want to invest your money for future retirement; you may participate with the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). The TSP is a tax-deferred savings plan, meaning it is taken from your salary before it is taxed (which lowers your taxable income), therefore you don't pay taxes until you withdraw the money. For more information, please visit: <http://www.tsp.gov>

USAA - USAA is a financial institution created specifically to serve uniformed service members and their families. They have competitive rates for car, homeowner's and renter's insurance, and mortgage loans. Visit their Website at <http://www.usaa.com> for information on USAA services. These include: banking (investing, checking, savings); insurance; and mortgage services.

Readiness & Training Opportunities

The **Office of Force Readiness and Deployment (OFRD)** functions to improve the Department of Health and Human Services' ability to respond to public health emergencies. In order to be deployable and promoted, you must meet readiness standards within the first year of your call to active duty (CAD). Basic readiness standards normally take up to 6 months to complete. Please visit the OFRD website at <http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf> for information on required trainings, physical fitness requirements, immunizations, clinical service hours, and deployment roles. Also, be advised that OFRD conducts quarterly assessments of officers' readiness status.

Basic Readiness – All PHS officers are required to meet and maintain readiness standards. These standards include immunizations, physical fitness standards, and emergency response training. The Basic Readiness Requirements can be found in the following documents:

- Basic Level of Force Readiness Standards for the Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health Service, http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF_docs/Man_circ_377.pdf
- Commissioned Corps Policy Memorandum (PPM) 04-003 Clarifications and Supplemental Policies and Procedures for Manual Circular Public Health Service (PHS) No. 377, Basic Level of Force Readiness Standards for the Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health Service, http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF_docs/04-003_PPM.pdf
- The Basic Readiness Checklist outlines all requirements necessary to attain basic readiness and can be found at: http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf/Readiness/Basic_Readiness_Checklist.pdf

It is critical that you meet and maintain Basic Readiness requirements to be promoted and participate in deployment opportunities. It is recommended that you begin working to meet these requirements as soon as possible. Many officers support each other in achieving the physical fitness requirements by testing in pairs or groups, so we encourage you to seek fellow officers to support your efforts.

Note: New officers have one year upon their CAD to complete Basic Readiness standards; however, if you are up for promotion you'll need to become Basic Readiness qualified within an established deadline to be eligible. For more information, please review the Readiness FAQ document at: http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf/Readiness_FAQs.pdf. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact your agency liaison to obtain specific information on promotion requirements and deadlines.

- **OFRD Response Teams** – In 2006, OFRD created three tiered response teams to “organize, train, equip, and roster medical and public health professionals in pre-configured and deployable teams.” **Tier One** includes five Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) teams and ten Secretary's Emergency Response Teams (SERTs). Individuals assigned to Tier One are expected to report to a point of departure within 12 hours of notification. **Tier Two** includes five Applied Public Health Teams (APHTs), and five Mental Health Teams (MHTs). The memberships of these teams are geographically dispersed. Individuals assigned to Tier Two are expected to report to a point of departure within 36 hours of notification. Those not placed on Tier One or Tier Two response teams are placed in **Tier Three**, which includes every other active duty officer in the Commissioned Corps. Individuals assigned to Tier Three are expected to report to a point of departure within 72 hours of notification. Tier Three personnel can expect to be deployed on a regular basis, either to augment Tier 1 or Tier 2 teams, or to provide specific requested skills when required. All active duty officers in the Corps are placed in one of these three response tiers. All officers are assigned to a rotating schedule of months such that one fifth of the Corps will be on call every fifth month. For more information on these teams, please visit the OFRD Website at: <http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf/current%20teams.htm>

- **Field Medical Readiness Badge** – Officers who have met the criteria beyond basic force readiness standards and have met deployment requirements are awarded the Field Medical Readiness Badge (FMRB). For more information on eligibility criteria, please visit <http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf/> and select the links for Field Medical Readiness Badge Criteria and Field Medical Readiness Badge Training Requirements.

Direct Access – Officers are required to manage their contact information (e.g., home and mailing addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses) in the Direct Access database. It is designed so that every active duty officer can enter multiple emergency contacts, post a CV, and review personal awards, education, licenses and certifications, security clearance and readiness training in one system. Officers can search through multiple job postings in Direct Access and can specify when they wish to be considered for a new job. Agencies can search for officers with specific skills.

Officers are able to view their present and projected readiness status and enter Basic Life Support (BLS), Annual Physical Fitness Test (APFT), primary and secondary deployment roles, and supervisor information in Direct Access. If current or projected readiness status is not compliant, Direct Access shows the officer the specific reason for non-compliance to facilitate correction. Additionally, Direct Access shows OFRD Response Team membership and immunization status information.

To login into Direct Access, please visit the following Website: http://dcp.psc.gov/DA_resources.aspx

For more information on Direct Access, please review the Self Service guidance document at: <http://www.uscg.mil/ppc/phs/PHSSelfServiceProcedureGuide.pdf>

Officer Basic Course (OBC) - OBC is currently required for all new commissioned officers. The goal of this two week training course is to familiarize PHS officers with the USPHS Commissioned Corps history and mission, proper uniform wear, military customs and courtesies, benefits and deployment expectations. In order to attend this course, newly commissioned officers must first complete the four FEMA EMI courses that can be found at the following website: http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf/Training_Page_Roll_Out.htm

- [IS-100 Introduction to Incident Command System](#)
- [IS-200 ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents](#)
- [IS-700 National Incident Management System \(NIMS\), An Introduction](#)
- [IS-800 National Response Plan \(NRP\), An Introduction](#)

For current OBC information, visit the “Career Development Courses” section of the Commissioned Corps Management Information System (CCMIS) Website’s home page: <http://dcp.psc.gov/COTA/default.aspx>. Registration for the OBC is through your Agency Liaison.

Military Benefits

There are numerous military benefits available to USPHS Commissioned Corps officers. For more information, go to: <http://militarypay.defense.gov/Benefits/index.html> or http://usphs-hso.org/resources/resource_directory_2007.pdf

Educational benefits - Upon commissioning, you may elect to have \$100 a month withdrawn from your paycheck for one year (\$1200 total) to qualify for the Post 9/11 GI-Bill for educational benefits. For more information, please visit the Post 9/11 GI-Bill Website at: <http://www.gibill.va.gov/post-911/post-911-gi-bill-summary/>

Military Installations

Vehicle Registration - When you enter a military installation for the first time, you may need to register your car with the base (some installations, but not all, require that you obtain base stickers). If so, you will need your personnel orders, driver's license, vehicle registration, proof of insurance, and another form of ID. Contact your local military installation for more information.

The Base and Post Exchanges (BX/PX) –A valid identification card is required to purchase merchandise and may be required for entry. There are several types of stores, including main exchanges, which are similar to department stores, auto services, uniform shops and miscellaneous stores including tailor/laundry, optical, flower, and fast food restaurants. Please visit any of the online exchanges: www.navy-nex.com; www.aafes.com; and <http://www.cg-exchange.com/>

Commissary – Commissaries are the “supermarkets” at military installations and a valid ID card is required for entry. Both active duty and dependents may shop at the commissary. Typically, commissaries are crowded on military paydays, the 1st and 15th of every month, and weekends. Please be mindful that the baggers at the commissaries work for tips only. For more information, visit: <http://www.commissaries.com>

Travel-Related Benefits

Service Clubs – The most frequently used club is the Officers' Club at military bases. You are also eligible to visit United Service Organization (USO) locations. USO is a charitable corporation providing morale, welfare, and recreation services to uniformed military personnel. Many have “officer clubs” in airports that provide free services to officers on work related or personal travel. Please visit: <http://www.uso.org>

Space Available Flights - Space Available Flight, better known as Space-A or military hops, is a unique privilege provided to service members, retirees, and their families. Under the Space-A program, eligible passengers can fill unused seats on Department of Defense-owned or controlled aircraft once all the space-required passengers and cargo have been accommodated. If you have the time and flexibility, Space A travel is a great fare-saver, offering incredible discounts. For more information, visit: <http://spacea.info>; <http://www.militaryliving.com>; or http://www.afcrossroads.com/activities/travel_space.cfm

Armed Forces Vacation Club (AFVC) - AFVC is a "Space Available" program that offers excess condominium timeshares at resorts around the world for only \$249.00 per unit, per week. All Uniformed Services members and their adult dependants are eligible to use this program. For more information, visit their website at: <http://www.afvclub.com/>

Lodging Facilities – Most military installations have some form of temporary lodging on base, which is available as space allows and extremely inexpensive. Bachelor Officers' Quarters (BOQ) and Visiting Officers' Quarters (VOQ) vary widely, ranging from simple rooms with shared bath to multi-room suites. Temporary military lodging (TML) quarters are designed for the military family. Some useful numbers:

Air Force 1-888-AFLODGE (1-888-235-6343) <http://dodlodging.net/>

Army 1-800-GO-ARMY-1 (1-800-462-7691) <http://www.armymwr.com/>

Marine Corps <http://www.usmc-mccs.org/lodging/index.cfm?sid=rf>

Navy 1-800-NAVY-INN (628-9466) <https://www.navy-lodge.com/>

Coast Guard <http://www.uscg.mil/mwr/lodging/Lodging.asp>

Government Rates - Many hotels, car rental companies, and airlines offer discounted rates to members of the Uniformed Services and their families while traveling with or without orders and are often referred to as the current “Military” or “Government” rates.

Armed Forces Recreation Centers (AFRC) -AFRC resorts are affordable Joint Service facilities operated by the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center and located at ideal vacation destinations throughout the world. AFRCs offer a full range of resort and hotel opportunities for service members and their families. For more information, visit:
<http://old.armymwr.com/portal/travel/recreationcenters/>

Recreational Facilities – Most military installations have a variety of recreational facilities available. These include theaters, swimming pools, bowling lanes, sports equipment rentals, youth centers, and information/ticket offices. Several installations also have wilderness camps, waterfront sites, and other vacation-type sites. Contact your local installation for more information.

Local Attractions, Parks, etc. - Reduced-price tickets may be obtained at most military installations through the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) office for local attractions, movies and many well-known theme parks (i.e. Disney World, Universal Studios).

Legal Services and Benefits

Legal Benefits -USPHS officers are entitled to certain legal benefits like the creation of “Simple Wills” and “Powers of Attorney.” These services are provided by the legal staff of the Judge Advocate General’s (JAG) office.

Soldier’s and Sailor’s Civil Relief Act (SSCRA) -In 1940, Congress passed the SSCRA to provide protections for uniformed service members. The PHS was covered by the SSCRA in 1976. On 19 December 2003, the Service member’s Civil Relief Act (SCRA – an expansion and improvement of SSCRA) was signed into law.

- If you are on active duty, the SCRA guarantees that your state residency will not change just because of your military orders – even if you buy a house in the state of your new duty station, register your car there, or obtain a new state driver’s license. This means that you will continue to pay state taxes ONLY to your home state, UNLESS you change state residency voluntarily. The primary means of changing state residency voluntarily are by voting in a new state or changing tax withholding to a new state.
- Automobile ad valorem taxes - It is wonderful to be able to keep the benefits of home. Each year, when your tag is renewed on your car, you can use the SCRA to protect you from paying ad valorem taxes in your duty station state, but only if it is not your home of legal residence.
- 6% Interest rate protection -The SCRA allows you to request that the interest rate you pay on a debt incurred before you joined the military be reduced to 6% annually.

For more information on the SSCRA and SCRA, please visit the following Web links:

http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/Relief_Act_Revision/ or
<http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourcesContent/0,13964,31042,00.html>

If you have any questions and/or need further clarification concerning the SCRA, you can call or visit the legal assistance office of any military base.

Military Courtesy and Conduct

Commissioned USPHS officers are required to render proper military courtesy under USPHS Personnel Instruction 2, Subchapter CC26.1, "Uniformed Services Courtesies." These courtesies are an extension of common customs of courtesy in civilian life. When in uniform and serving with uniformed service personnel from other federal agencies, or when visiting a military installation, USPHS officers are required to conform to the rules of courtesy as practiced by that service. Except for saluting, the rules of military courtesy should also be observed when out of uniform.

Commissioned officers are vested with the legal office and are appointed by, or under the authority of, the President with confirmation by the U.S. Senate, and serve indefinitely at the pleasure of the President. Consequently, a commissioned officer is a direct representative of the President, and as such, can give verbal or written orders to subordinates which have the force of federal law. Given this status and responsibility, a commissioned officer must always be aware of his or her actions and comments when in public, and should act with proper decorum at all times.

Military courtesy is a required standard of behavior among all commissioned officers and uniformed military personnel. Service members should ensure that proper military courtesy is rendered to members of all U.S. uniformed services and to uniformed personnel of U.S. allied nations.

For detailed information on military courtesy and on-base etiquette, please go to: http://usphs-hso.org/resources/resource_directory_2007.pdf

Associations and Groups

The following are associations you may consider joining:

Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG) at <http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/JOAG/index.htm>

Minority Officer Liaison Council (MOLC) at <http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/molc/default.aspx>

Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT) at <http://oep.osophs.dhhs.gov/dmat/>

Commissioned Officers Association (COA) at www.coausphs.org or call 301-731-9080

Reserved Officers Association (ROA) at www.roa.org or call 1-800-809-9448

Association of American Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS) at www.amsus.org or call 1-800-761-9320

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) at www.moaa.org

American Public Health Association (APHA) at www.apha.org or call 1-202-777-APHA

American College of Health Care Executives at www.ache.org

American Academy of Medical Administrators at <https://www.aameda.org/>

Medical Group Management Association at <http://www.mgma.com/>