



**“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. Getting acclimated may take some time, but we have provided you with the Health Services Officer (HSO) Welcoming Packet to assist you. Our goal is to provide you with a quick snapshot of the many facets of officership in the Commissioned Corps. This welcoming packet contains a wealth of useful information that you may need in preparing for your new assignment and may assist you throughout your career. We hope you find this information packet useful.

For more information, please visit the HSPAC webpage at <http://usphs-hso.org>. If you have specific questions about this information, please ask any HSPAC member to assist you. We are happy to help you.

Welcome to the United States Public Health Service!

The Health Services Professional Advisory Committee
Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee
<http://usphs-hso.org>

Introduction to the USPHS

The origins of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) can be traced to the passage of an 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 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 uniforms. Woodworth 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.

At first open only to physicians, over the course of 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, Health Services Officers (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 800 active duty officers. 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 "protecting, promoting, and advancing the health and safety of the Nation". It has grown from a small collection of marine hospitals to the largest and most diverse public health program in the world.

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 also has associated Professional Advisory Groups (PAGs) which provide discipline-specific advice to the HSPAC and the Health Services Chief Professional Officer (CPO). Information on PAGs representing the following disciplines: basic and applied sciences, dental hygiene, health administration, information technology, medical technology, optometry, physician assistant, psychology, and social work can be found on the HSPAC website at <http://usphs-hso.org/>.

Quick Start References

Useful Office of Commissioned Corps Operations (OCCO) Phone Numbers & Websites

- *Compensation Branch (CB)* 301-594-2963 - payroll, SGLI, TSP (retirement information)
- *Medical Affairs Branch (MAB)* 800-368-2777 - TRICARE, immunization status
- *Commissioned Corps Help Desk* 301-594-0961
- For a complete listing of all phone numbers, visit the Commissioned Corps Resource Directory online: <http://dcp.psc.gov/>. On the homepage, click on the top link “About Us” and select “Commissioned Corps Telephone Resource Directory.”

Uniformed Services Identification (ID) Cards

- ID cards may be obtained at military installations or for those in or visiting 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 will need to wait until you are enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) and have a copy of your orders to be able to get an ID card.
- Be sure to also register your dependents in the DEERS system. This will aid in a smooth transition for the provision of your dependents’ health care needs. Dependents are also required to be registered in DEERS to obtain a dependent ID card, and access military bases and flights.
- For questions regarding ID cards for you or your dependents, contact the Office of Commissioned Corps Operations at 1-877-INFO-DCP. You will need to complete DD Form 1172, Application for Uniformed Services Identification Card DEERS Enrollment, which may be downloaded at http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF_docs/dd1172.pdf.

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 the Electronic Commissioned Corps Issuance System (eCCIS) (http://dcp.psc.gov/eccis/documents/CCPM26_3_1.pdf). The appropriate uniform(s) to be worn for your area is decided by your local uniform authority (LUA). To find out what uniforms are authorized for different times of the year, contact your agency liaison. Your agency liaison provided at <http://dcp.psc.gov> under the section “About US”, 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: <http://www.navy-nex.com/> Lighthouse: <http://www.lighthouseuniform.com> Marlow White: <http://www.marlowwhite.com/public-health-service-uniforms.html>
- You can purchase uniform devices, replacement award devices, and other officer accessories through the Public Health Service Officers Device Supply Center’s online: http://bphc.hrsa.gov/nhdp/PHS_Officers_Device_Supply_Center_Main_Page.htm.
- You must order your own name tags. You can purchase one for your agency (i.e. BOP, FDA, IHS, etc) and one that is the all-purpose USPHS. 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, please contact the Compensation Branch at 301.594-2963. You 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 been proven to be very helpful for many new officers.

Household Goods Shipments

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

- Be sure to check with your duty organization to determine if relocation expenses will be paid.

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 to discuss your earnings statement. For a detailed list of pay scales, visit: <http://www.dod.mil/militarypay>.
- **TRICARE** – (<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/>) The Military Health System is the primary source of health care for active-duty USPHS officers. The TRICARE system has other options for active-duty family members, retirees, and their eligible family members.

Medical care is one of the most important benefits that USPHS officers and their dependents will utilize during their careers. When using a Uniformed Services Military Treatment Facility (USMTF), it is expected that the officer be in uniform. If you are stationed close to a military hospital/clinic, you are required to use that facility. The Medical Affairs Branch (MAB) may authorize payment for civilian medical services if an officer is not near a USMTF or if the USMTF does not 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.

- Servicemembers 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. For more information, visit: www.insurance.va.gov.
- 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, visit: 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 Thrift Savings Plan is a tax-deferred savings plan, meaning it is taken from your salary before it is taxed (which lowers your taxable income), and you pay taxes when you eventually draw the money. For more information, visit on-line: <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 insurance, homeowner's and renter's insurance, and mortgage loans. Visit the website at www.usaa.com for information for one of USAA's many services includes: Banking services (investing, checking, savings); Insurance; and Mortgage Services.

Readiness & Training Opportunities

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 call to active duty. 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/Checklist_050707.pdf.

Again, it is critical that you meet and maintain the above stated requirements to be promoted and participate in deployment opportunities for emergency or humanitarian responses. It is recommended that you begin working to meet these requirements as soon as you 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 1 year to complete basic readiness standards; **however**, if you are up for promotion you will need to complete basic readiness standards within a certain established deadline to be eligible. If you need assistance, consult with a fellow officer (or recently promoted officer).]

- **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 the 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.

Officers 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 “Training” section of the Commissioned Corps Management Information System (CCMIS) web site’s home page: <http://dcp.psc.gov/COTA/default.aspx> . Registration for the OBC is through your Agency Liaison.

GI Bill/Educational benefits -Upon commissioning, you may select a one year \$100 a month withdrawal from your paycheck to qualify for the GI Bill for education benefits. Depending on whether you sign up for a 2 year or 3 year commitment before using your benefits, you can receive up to \$1,000 a month for educational benefits. To see the benefits rates for a three-year or more commitment versus a two-year commitment, go to http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/rates.htm . You can only opt for the GI Bill once - when you are filling out your initial paperwork.

Military Benefits

There are many military benefits available to USPHS Commissioned Corps officers. A brief listing of some of the more common benefits are listed below. For more details of the benefits available, go to http://usphs-hso.org/resources/resource_directory_2007.pdf or http://usphs-hso.org/links/favorite_links.shtml (under personnel support).

At Military Installations

- **Vehicle Registration** - When you enter a military installation for the first time, you will need to register your car with the base. You will need your personnel orders, driver's license, vehicle registration, proof of insurance, and another form of ID. You will receive a vehicle registration sticker for your vehicle(s).
- **The Base and Post Exchanges (BX/PX)** –A valid identification card is required to purchase merchandise and may be required for entry when not in uniform. There are several types of stores in this system including main exchanges, which are similar to department stores, auto services, uniform shops and miscellaneous stores including tailor/laundry, optical, flower, and fast food. Please visit any of the online exchanges: www.navy-nex.com; www.aafes.com; www.cg-exchange.com; and <http://www.cg-exchange.com/>.
- **Commissary** – Commissaries are the “supermarkets” at military installations and a valid ID card is required to make a purchase and sometimes gain entry when not in uniform. 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 (<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.military.com/Travel/Content1/0,,SAF_overview,00.html; <http://www.militaryliving.com>;

http://www.afcrossroads.com/activities/travel_space.cfm;

<http://www.pepperd.com/scgi-bin/discus/discus.cgi?pg=topics>;

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://afvclub.com/search.asp>.

- **Lodging Facilities** – Almost all 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 to identify these facilities are:

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 hotel opportunities for service members and their families. For more information, visit <http://www.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. Check your closest base’s website for details.
- **Local Attractions, Parks, etc. - Reduced-price tickets** may be obtained at most military installations through the Moral, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) office for local attractions, movies and many well-known theme parks (i.e. Disney World, Universal Studios).

Legal Services Benefits and Other Protection

- **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 has been covered by the SSCRA since 22 April 1976. The Servicemember’s Civil Relief Act (SCRA) signed into law by President Bush on 19 December 2003 expanded and improved the SSCRA.
 - 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.

Read more about the SSCRA and the SCRA at: <http://www.jag.navy.mil/documents/SSCRA.htm>;
http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/Relief_Act_Revision/
<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.

Other Important Information

Military Courtesy and Conduct

Commissioned Officers of the United States Public Health Service are required to render proper military courtesy under USPHS Personnel Instruction 2, Subchapter CC26.1, "Uniformed Services Courtesies."

Uniformed services courtesies are an extension of common customs of courtesy in civilian life. When in uniform, and serving with uniformed service personnel of 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 a legal office and carry that office with them. Commissioned officers 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, especially in uniform, must be always aware of his/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 U.S. 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 military 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 should consider joining:

- Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG) at www.JOAG.org
- Minority Officer Liaison Group (MOLC) at www.molcusphs.org
- 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