



JOAG Billets Transformation Transcript

Q&A Session with CAPT Byron Bailey

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LCDR Mody: Hi everyone, thanks for joining us today for this call on the overview of the billet transformation. My name is LCDR Rajal Mody of the Professional Development Committee. And I'm going to introduce CAPT Byron Bailey. This call will be structured as follows. First, CAPT Bailey will give a presentation of the billet transformation process. Then we'll go through several questions that have been already submitted through email. Then, in the last half of the call, we will field questions from officers on this call. Just a reminder that this call is being recorded, and when we get to the section of the call where we take questions, please keep your phones muted. If you don't have a mute button, you can press *6. For this time, I'll turn it over to CAPT Bailey.

CAPT Bailey: Thank you, folks. I appreciate this opportunity to address JOAG because, in reality, JOAG is what transformation of the Corps is really all about. Those of us who have been around for a little while (myself 27+ years), we really won't see the long-term positive effects this transformation will bring to the Corps. So, I really appreciate being able to discuss BT with you and share some information with you, and get some feedback, and answer some questions. I'm gonna give a very brief update on BT and where we are. I'm not gonna go too deep into it because I know that quite a few folks have probably heard some of this, if not all of it, before, so I want to really allow most of the time for questions. But the reason that we're doing BT, is that contrary to the other Uniformed Services, our billets really don't reflect position responsibilities; they tend to reflect officer capabilities. And that is very much a detriment to the Corps; because of that we cannot monitor vacancies, we cannot monitor skill shortages, we can't effectively recruit the people

we need to meet the mission of the agencies for which Corps officers perform. So, a transformed billet system will benefit officers, and it will benefit the agencies.

For officers, there will be a lot better clarity and specificity for your job responsibilities. You'll have billets that are objectively graded as opposed to the current system where it's kind of a hodge-podge of grading. And, ultimately, you'll have enhanced career development because there will be much greater transparency for the officers within the Corps.

Agencies will benefit because they'll be able to have a real-time identification of officers for positions. That is, if an officer has indicated, through our electronic system, that he or she is interested in moving to a different position, agencies will be able to do an electronic query and find officers that meet the skills attributes that they need for positions that they want to fill.

All of BT, everything we have been working on over the last few years—it's been a long-term project—comes from a classification of positions workgroup (a report from that workgroup—that was a secretarial appointed workgroup). In October 2006, the Secretary approved the workgroup recommendations for a transformation of the CC, and, specifically, in this circumstance, for transformation of the billet system. Everything that we've done on BT to get to the point where we are now comes from this secretarial-approved recommendation.

The main developmental principles of these new billets—the biggest departure from the current system—is that billets will reflect positions, and not officer capabilities. We will have a unique billet for every position covered by a CC officer. We will be able to link these billets to the electronic officer profile system, through the Direct Access system that I hope the majority of you, if not all of you, have heard the words "Direct Access" to this point. The new billets will have standard components, which have been developed by the category PACs (those standard components and standard billets have already been created). And they will have position-specific components which will be developed initially by officer who will help to describe those position-specific components for the billets they currently encumber. That's the phase that we're getting ready to get into, where we describe these position-specific components using the standard billets that the PACs created as templates. Billets will describe requirements for positions, as well as just desired, but not necessarily required, qualifications. And billets will have a designated expected length of tour—by no means will it be cast in stone; it will not require an officer to actually stay a number of

years in that position; it will not require an agency to keep an officer—but just as a guideline, there will be an expected length of tour for each billet.

As I mentioned, we've been working for the past several years with each professional category to develop standard billets. We currently have a total of 390 category-specific billets that have been developed. For example, the nurse category has created 21 standard billets, and 21 standard billet titles associated with them. Therefore, any CC officer who works as a nurse, regardless of the agency you work for, you will have, in the future when we develop this new system, you will have one of those 21 standard billet titles if you are a nurse. And other categories have done likewise to describe billets in their professional category.

We are very close to launching the system where officers will be describing the position-specific attributes for the billets they currently encumber. We had originally said that we were looking at January 2010 to start the process. It's probably going to be more like February now because we had some last-minute ironing-out issues, but we have a launch schedule which will include five waves of billet development. Each wave will encompass two to three professional categories representing 1,000 to roughly 1,700 officers, and those waves will be launched every 30 days. They will be running concurrently because there's no way that we're going to start one wave of 1,000 officers, and then in 30 days those billets will be developed—there's no way that's going to happen. But we're going to launch them every 30 days and run them concurrently until we complete the process sometimes in the early summer (is what we've been anticipating—early to mid summer).

If you have not seen the emails that have gone out Corps-wide so far, if you have not had the opportunity to view the online tutorials, I would strongly, strongly recommend that you do so. The online tutorials of the CC, the CCMIS website, that's where you'll find the link for those tutorials. For video and text tutorials both. Tutorials for officers, tutorials for supervisors, and tutorials for reviewing officials. The officer tutorial is only 15 minutes in length, and it gives you an excellent orientation to how the billet creation process will work. In this tutorial, you'll see the actual forms you'll be receiving by email, and how you'll fill out those forms, and how the process works. So, like I mentioned, if you have not had the opportunity to view those tutorials, I highly, highly recommend it. It will make the process much easier when you receive the email that requests your participation in the process. Additionally, there is a very comprehensive list of FAQs that are on usphs.gov, on the transformation webpage. As this process has progressed, there have been quite a few folks that

have emailed me questions, and I copy and paste their questions and my responses into that list very frequently, so that's a very good resource.

As I mentioned, when we begin this process in early February sometime (*editorial update—this will now occur in early March*), we'll be doing category-specific billets first. The first two categories will be nurses and therapists. Now, those will be nurses and therapists who are in nurse and therapist billets, not nurses or therapists who are in multidisciplinary billets. The multidisciplinary billets will occur last in the process and probably won't be initiated until May or June of 2010. Each of these waves will take approximately 120 days from the time when the officer initiates the billets to the time when supervisors concur with those billets.

As I also mentioned, once we collect all of the billet information—it won't be until early-mid summer sometime)—at that point, they will be thoroughly reviewed to ensure that we have a quality product, and only then will these new billets become official and formal. So, the current legacy billet system that we're using right now will be running—we'll have a dual system until late summer or fall of next year when the new billets become official. Once they become official, the information will be loaded into Direct Access (the new human resources system—the system that we are cooperatively running with the US Coast Guard), and within that Direct Access system, the electronic components will become available, where you'll be able to match officers to positions, for example.

One of the things I will address up front, because the issue always comes up, are grades, and what will happen with grades in these new billets. We have run several tests on this system up to this point. We ran a beta-test a couple of years ago to test the process that we were considering using. Roughly 100 officers participated in that beta-test, and of those officers, roughly 85% (of the officers who completed that billet process)—the new billet grade that was derived from this new billet process was the same as their current, or legacy system, billet grade. So, 85% of the time, the billet grade didn't change. The other 15% of the time, the billet grade changed, but they didn't always go down. In roughly half of those, the billet grade went up, and in roughly half of those, the billet grade went down. So, with this as a backdrop, it will occur; there will be some billet grade changes with this new system, but a relatively small percentage, and there's a lot of anxiety with folks who are concerned about their billet grade potentially going down. Now, if your billet grade goes up, of course, most folks will have no problem with that. They can appreciate the fact that

they're going to be in a higher grade of billet. But for the small percentage of folks who will see their billet grade decrease, there will be a 2-year grandfathering, essentially, for folks who had billets whose grade decreased. So, for two years after your billet becomes effective, and, like I said, that won't be until the latter part of 2010 when these all become formal and effective—from that point, for two years, you will not be able to be harmed for promotion purposes, for assimilation purposes, for whatever purpose that a lower billet grade would potentially harm you, you will be held harmless for two years from that point when the new billets become official. I know that's an issue about which there are a lot of strong feelings, so I wanted to bring that up. With that, without going into a whole lot more detail, I would prefer to go into questions, because it seems like during the questions section we hit a lot of more important topics that folks want to hear about.

LCDR Mody: Great, thanks CAPT Bailey. So, I'll go through the pre-submitted questions we had earlier. We have eight. And just to answer your question you had earlier about how many callers were on the call, just before you started talking, there were 39 callers. Probably quite a few more have called in since then. Alright, so the first question is:

Q&A

Operator: Thank you Sir. We will now begin the question and answer session. If you would like to ask a question please press *1. Please unmute your phone and record your name clearly when prompted. Your name is required to introduce your question. To withdraw your question, please press *2. One moment please for the first question to queue up.

Q1. “How will new billets be created for positions that are not currently held by PHS officers? For example, if a PHS officer is interested in moving to a new job within his or her agency, but is not replacing an outgoing officer, how will they create a new billet? Likewise, if an OPDIV wants to hire a PHS officer for a new position, how will they go about doing that?”

A1. There are two phases to this process. There is the phase of the process which will start in February where we are going to describe all currently encumbered billets. For that phase, we are going to be utilizing this Microsoft Office-based billet collection system to develop billets for these encumbered positions. So, I'm not sure if this question is in regards to in the long term, after we've created these billets, or in the short term, because in the short

term, we'll use the billet collection system to create that. But I have a feeling that maybe this question is thinking more long term, like after we've done this and a year or so from now we have this new system in place, and how will new billets be created. Direct Access, the HR system that I described previously, will then be the new way that we create billets. It's yet to be worked out exactly how that works within Direct Access, but a supervisor will work with the folks here at OCCO to develop billets for new positions. Now, if the billet was currently encumbered by an officer prior to that, then the officer would simply move into it. But, for new hire, new positions that have been created, or positions that were formerly held by a civilian (not a CO), within the Direct Access program, there will be a way to create billets.

Q2. “How will similar jobs in different OPDIVs be cross-reference to ensure that billets sound similar and are rated accordingly? It seems possible that a very similar job could be written differently, leading to different results.”

A2. That's an excellent question, and that is something that we have taken very seriously and is a major component of billet transformation. In the billet collection system that starts in February, when an officer selects a standard billet that fits his position and then describes the position-specific attributes for that standard billet, the officer will start that process, and just like the COER, the supervisor will review that. Then after the supervisor, it will go to the reviewing official, just like the COER once again, then after it's gone through those two levels of review, then we will create a summary report, which the agencies and the PACs will have full access to, and in these summary reports, it will do exactly that—it will list all the positions titles. Use the nursing category as an example, say there's Junior Clinical Nurses, and there's Junior Clinical Nurse billets that have been created in the Indian Health Service, and in Bureau of Prisons, and in FDA, and who knows where else—many different positions across OPDIVS—agencies and the nursing PAC will be able to look at the summary report of all these positions, and compare the attributes that have been described for those positions and the grades that have resulted from those positions (the formula calculated grades) and they will be able to weigh in and, especially, pick up on outliers. Let's say that the majority of all these Junior Clinical Nurses end up grading out at an O-3 or an O-4, but all of a sudden, in a given agency, here's one that pops up in a grade of O-6. Well, that would be a red flag right away. That would be the type of thing that we want the agency and the PACs

to pick up on, and when they identify these types of situations, we'll be going back to the OPDIV and asking questions. And it's not to say that, maybe, there's some justification for that. If there is good justification, it may stand as is, but there will be that type of overview from PACs and the agencies.

- Q3.** After the transformation process is complete, will various agencies follow the same equivalent table, or will differences still exist?

CAPT Bailey: Equivalent table?

LCDR Mody: The equivalent table between various GS levels and CC billets. You know, like a GS-7 is equivalent to approximately an O-2, a GS 9-11 is equivalent to approximately an O-3. I think on the tutorial reviewed, on the excel spreadsheet, in the FAQs, there was a little table that shows how billets line up with GS equivalents.

CAPT Bailey: Exactly.

LCDR Mody: So this officer thought that there were some differences in how this GS equivalency table was designed across agencies, and was just wondering if differences will continue to exist or if they'll be more consistent.

- A3.** Well, one of the things that you mentioned in your description was very telling in that this table is only an approximation. Now, with that being said, when we created the formula-driven rating system for new billets, we were very careful to ensure that the attributes that drove this rating system were the same attributes that drive the grades for civilian positions. And, we also looked at the weighting given to those, and ensured that the weighting for attributes given in our CC billets were roughly the same weighting given for those attributes in the civilian position descriptions. Therefore, in the new system, if the attributes are accurately reflected in the new billet, the grade that is derived should be very, very close to the civil service equivalent for that grade because we have taken such pains to ensure that our formula matches the attributes and weighting for the civilian system. Does that answer that question?

LCDR Mody: During the last portion of the call, people might be able to ask for additional clarification of any of these questions we're going through. So, the next question is:

Q4. If a category put together beta-tested standard billets for positions that are multidisciplinary, for example an epidemiologist or psychologist, how will your standard billets be used? Will they be reconciled with other categories' standard billets for similar positions into one core billet for those sent out in May with the multidisciplinary group? Or will that category billet for multidisciplinary positions be used? If the latter, will this be sent to an officer during the month that category billets are released, or during May for the multidisciplinary billets?

A4. I'm reading back over this and trying to get at the heart of what's being asked here. "If a category put together beta-tested standard billets for positions that are multidisciplinary..." A category didn't do that; that's why I'm a little perplexed at this question. Categories only put together standard billets for category specific positions—they didn't do multidisciplinary. CAPT Eugene Freund, who is a transformation officer here in our office, he's working currently to develop the multidisciplinary billet titles and descriptions that'll be used for the roughly 1,800 multidisciplinary billets that are encumbered by Corps officers to date. Maybe this individual is asking about if they are in a category-specific billet right now and it's really a multidisciplinary billet, what will happen, or vice-versa, if they're in a multidisciplinary billet right now, and really it's not truly multidisciplinary—the reality is that the agency really doesn't want to hire anyone except a pharmacist for that position. So there's two types of situations that could occur. Let's start with the first situation. If that individual is currently in a pharmacist billet, and it should be a multidisciplinary billet because they could hire officers from several different categories to fill that position, then that will become evident during this process. That officer will look at the standard billets that have been developed, and then he or she will say, "none of these fit me—really it turns out my job is multidisciplinary." If that's the case, we will defer that officer to the end of the process when we get into multidisciplinary billets, and he or she will describe a billet at that time. On the other end of the system, if we get into May or June and we start doing multidisciplinary billets, and the individual is in a multidisciplinary billet, but it is determined that really it should be a category-specific billet (for example, if they only really want a pharmacist to fill that position), then we will have that person go back, and we'll give

them the choice of selecting one of the pharmacist standard billets. Now, this entire process is very flexible and fluid. Even though we've taken great pains to describe potentially all the standard billets that could occur in the Corps—all the titles and duties—we know that there, inevitably, will be a few that haven't been described. For example, when a pharmacist goes to look at the roughly 22 pharmacist standard billets, and he realizes that none of those describe the position that I'm currently in. In those cases, we'll have to go back to the pharmacist category, and we'll share that information, and they, potentially, would have to develop another standard billet. So, I'm a little confused at this question regarding beta-testing for multidisciplinary, because that has not occurred. So, I hope I've sort of answered it, and, as you suggested, as we get into the open questions here, if someone wants to elaborate a little bit on that and get a different point, then I can respond to it, and I'll be glad to do it.

LCDR Mody: Great, thanks. I think my sense of the officer's question was, for example, I'm a medical officer, but in an epidemiology position, which could be filled by a health sciences officer or a veterinary medicine officer, so, perhaps, what they're getting at is would the current billet that I'm in go with the medical officer process or would it be left open for the multidisciplinary process later. Hopefully we can get some resolution on that question. You already alluded to the next question, that is:

- Q5.** Are the multidisciplinary billets OCCO is creating going to be beta-tested? Will they in the future?
- A5.** One point with the multidisciplinary billets. There are two tests that are going to be happening within the next week or so. We're going to do a final kind of dry run of the billet question system process that our contractors developed for us. And when we do the dry run, (I believe I mentioned this) there are 12 multidisciplinary billet titles that CAPT Freund has come up with in working with several agencies. With the holiday season, there's no way in the field we're going to get that many officers being around, so we're going to test these 12 titles right here in OCCO and OCCFM, literally in our offices, because we can walk around and see people who are actually around during the holidays here and have them work with us to test them. So, there is not going to be a widespread beta-test for these multidisciplinary billets. However, we still have at least five months to go, so there's some things that CAPT Freund will learn within the next few weeks as we test those internally

here, and I know he's going to be working with the agencies to iron out those things in the future before we go to May or June and actually are creating the multidisciplinary billets. So, there's plenty of time available that CAPT Freund will be working with the agencies to iron these out, but at this point, we don't anticipate a widespread beta-test for these multidisciplinary billets.

- Q6.** Some of the standard billets sound similar to one another, and an officer might be able to identify his or her position as belonging to more than one type. How will they decide the best type? For instance, a position could be considered appropriate for a research psychologist, or an applied public health psychologist, or an epidemiologist focused on mental health outcomes.
- A6.** Hopefully going on beyond the titles of these standard billets but reading the descriptions that go with these standard billets will help iron out some of those possibilities, but that's also why we have multiple levels of review; not just the officer reviewing that standard billet, but also the supervisor reviewing it and ensuring that that's the best one for that position, and the reviewing official, and on up the line. So, the multi-level review will be the quality control, I guess you could call it, for the selection of the appropriate standard billet title. I think that's probably the best way to answer that.
- Q7.** How will you control point inflation, where people slightly exaggerate the kinds of things that give points to a billet based on the characteristics used to determine the billet grade? I can see supervisors going along with this, or even encouraging it, so that they can get senior officers for the positions in the future, and current officers get bonus points for promotion.
- A7.** I think I've sort of addressed this where I've talked about the bias correction that we've sort of built into the system. Sure, you've got the supervisor, but beyond the supervisor, you've got the reviewing official, then you have the agencies and the PACs who are going to be seeing all these billets and the grades that have been associated with them also, and will be able to pick out outliers that are obvious that have been blown up to be a much higher grade than what they should be. But, sure, there are supervisors (and I've been around long enough to know that scenarios that are described here happen—there are supervisors that may do that), but there are agencies who see it just the opposite, especially the agencies

who are looking at the bottom line of their bill, and if they can fill a position with a lower grade of officer and save money, they're also interested in doing that, so there's another force working in the opposite direction elsewhere, further up the line. But, as I described initially, the bias control will be built into the system on multiple levels, especially when you look at the agency and the PAC level—they will pick up on that. Any system can be gamed. And we're not so naïve to think, "Wow, this is a perfect system and all these grades will be perfect." That is why we've built in multiple levels of review, and the final approval of all these billets will lie within OCCO. We are in the early stages of hiring a billets program manager, one individual—sort of a 'billets-meister', if you would—who will have final approval over all billets that have been created. So, this individual, he or she, will be looking at the same summary reports that the PACs have already reviewed, and there will be a final determination even made there. So, there's a lot of levels, a lot of areas, where gaming of the system can be picked up and pushed back.

LCDR Mody: Thanks. The final submitted question here is kind of a slight variation on a similar question you've answered previously:

- Q8.** How will the GS level of a billet's civilian counterpart affect the level of a transformed billet? For example, some job descriptions have O-4 as GS-11 positions. Other agencies advertise GS-12 or GS-13 positions as O-4 positions. I'm currently in an O-4 billet with peers that are GS-13. Will my transformed billet be different than someone else who is currently an O-4 billet whose peers are GS-11?
- A8.** The GS level does not, in any way, directly affect the level our transformed billets. Our billet grade will not be manipulated to fit a GS level. I think, as you've alluded to, my previous discussion of this topic, was that we've been very careful in developing our billets grading system to ensure that we're looking at the same attributes and the same weights as the civilian grading system. The CC-GS equivalency chart, I can't stress this enough, is only a guideline. There is nothing hard and fast to say that a GS-13 is an O-5, or a GS-14/15 is an O-6. Those are rough guidelines, and there's always gonna be a little bit of play. In some cases, a GS-12 could be one of our O-5 billets, or an O-5 billet could be a position that's a GS-14. So, please keep that in mind. There's a lot of people who really hate these CC-GS equivalency charts because they raise a lot of the issues, such as the one that came up in this

question, and that's why we want to reemphasize that it's only a guideline, and there's nothing hard and fast about those equivalencies.

LCDR Mody: Great. Thank you very much for addressing those submitted questions. So, at this point in the call, we are going to open it up to questions of officers on the call. I actually will turn over moderation of the call to LCDR Harvey Ball.

LCDR Ball: This is LCDR Ball.

LCDR Mody: Great! Hi Harvey. So, I am going to activate it so people can actually talk, but if you're not asking a question, please keep your phone on mute, and if you don't have a mute button, you can press *6. Do we have any people who have questions on the line?

Q9. CDR Odia: Yes, I do. This is CDR G. Odia. Earlier, you made a statement to the effect that you would determine whether your billet is multidisciplinary. Who makes that determination? Shouldn't that be the agency?

A9. Initially, the way we will be looking at that is if you're currently in a multidisciplinary billet, when we go through this billet collection system, you will be included in the wave of the process where you will be choosing from a multidisciplinary billet. So, it's sort of driven by, if you're in a multidisciplinary billet now, you will be choosing your new multidisciplinary billet title. But, as I previously mentioned, we know that there are some situations where people are in category-specific billets now where it really should be multidisciplinary, and vice-versa. So, when those situations come up, it will be the officer and his or her supervisor who will be making that determination. Like, "whoops it's wrong, this should be multidisciplinary," or vice-versa. We won't be making the call; that call will start with the officers. That determination

Q10. CDR Odia: OK, what are the guidelines to ensure that a multidisciplinary billet is not changed to a category-specific billet, because that needs to be taken into account [background noise makes it hard to hear...] so how do you ensure that a multidisciplinary billet remains multidisciplinary? You said that a particular billet should, or shouldn't. I'm just interested in who makes that decision.

A10. In the scenario you described, if the billet's currently multidisciplinary, then it will stay multidisciplinary, unless someone decides otherwise.

Q11. CDR Odia: That's really my question. Who decides otherwise? You can't really decide otherwise, because that billet is multidisciplinary.

A11. The agency decides otherwise. If the agency (the local OPDIV) decides that yes, this has been multidisciplinary in the past, but the reality is that we only want a PA for this job, for example, they can tell us...

CDR Odia: But I'm trying to say that nobody can make that decision, because a multidisciplinary billet should remain a multidisciplinary billet. I worked in a billet in DoD which was program management officer, which was multidisciplinary, and it should remain multidisciplinary. I just want to make sure that there's no changing of billets because I want this to be a medical record [...]

CAPT Bailey: I understand what you're saying. So, for example, if a current multidisciplinary billet is encumbered by a pharmacist officer, and that pharmacist officer says, "this should just be a pharmacy billet, not multidisciplinary." I understand what you're saying. Well, if that officer would do that, try to make that determination, and if his or her supervisor would agree to it, and the reviewing official would agree with it, there's nothing that we at OCCO are going to be able to say, "no you can't do it," because the local agency has made that decision.

CDR Odia: See, that is a flaw, and that is a flaw that should not be allowed to happen. And if that is allowed to happen unchecked, then the whole thing is not gonna work. In five years' time, we'll be back doing billet transformation again. These types of things need to be checked, and they need to be checked at the office. We should not allow that to happen. I've gone through several agencies and multidisciplinary billets, and I can tell you what one officer can do. We should not allow [...] that is going to be a bad influence.

CAPT Bailey: I totally agree with you, in theory, that should not happen. The reality is...

CDR Odia: Let us not permit our reality. We need to check that reality, because if we don't check that reality which has occurred, which is bad, then the whole thing will not work.

CAPT Bailey: This reality, is, however, unlike the other uniformed services, we, meaning OCCO, we don't own any billets. Agencies own the billets. Agencies pay the salaries associated with those billets. Therefore, we cannot tell the agencies, "no you can't do that." So, if an agency decides that an individual officer, like you described in that situation, somehow convinces everyone up the line that it shouldn't be a multidisciplinary billet, that only a pharmacist should be there, we at OCCO, because we don't own the billet, have no power to tell them, "no you can't do that."

CDR Odia: That's fine, but let me make one suggestion. Anyone who is in a current multidisciplinary billet when it is being changed, it will be sent out for review to all the CPOs, so we can have comments, and that way it can be caught. So, we will not allow one officer to make a change.

LCDR Ball: Great. I agree. We'll take note of that suggestion. Are there others that have questions?

Q12. LCDR Nguyen: Yes, I do have a question. This is LCDR Ben Nguyen. On the pharmacy benchmark in 09, [...] certification...investigator is classified under O-6 billet. On the 2010 benchmark, that has been removed. I was just wondering, what is your comment in terms of the levels of certification for the billet?

LCDR Ball: Sir, is that more of a specific category question, or can you handle that?

A12. CAPT Bailey: Yes, that's exactly what I was going to say. Category benchmarks are something very specific to categories that really is kind of out of my purview to be honest with you.

Q13. LCDR Baker: This is LCDR Baker. I just wanted to comment on the fact of the GS-CC equivalents. You said that the chart should be used as a guideline, but when you look at the

FAQ tab, it doesn't really read that way. So, you'd have a civilian supervisor look at that chart, and they'd say, "OK, this billet level equals that GS grade." They don't really say that this can vary from agency to agency.

LCDR Ball: So, there's not much of a disclaimer on it.

LCDR Baker: Right.

LCDR Ball: Sir, can we address putting a stronger disclaimer on that?

A13. Absolutely, that's an excellent point, and I will do exactly that. Thank you for that.

LCDR Ball: OK, great. Thank you. Are there others who have a question?

LT Robinson: Yes, this is LT Robinson.

LCDR Ball: Who are you with?

Q14. LT Robinson: I'm with ATSDR. How much influence does our current billet have on the determination of the new standard billet that we will be fitted into?

CAPT Bailey: It depends how accurately your current billet really does describe your position.

LT Robinson: OK. So has this been independent of that?

CAPT Bailey: What independent? What do you mean?

LT Robinson: I just mean that the new standards... So, we'll just be fit into the new standard billet, really, without consideration of what our current billet is?

A14. If your current billet does not very well (this is the case in a lot of places) describe what you're doing at all, then it'll be very independent. Your new billet could have a title that is

nowhere close to your current one. And it's all over the board across the CC. There are some folks in some agencies and some billets that are in an excellently written billet, and there are some that are very poorly written. So, it really depends upon the circumstance, how independent the new billet will be from your current.

Q15. Officer: Sir, I have a question about the multidisciplinary billets. As far as the categories are concerned and the promotion boards are concerned, is there a downside to being in a multidisciplinary billet? There seems to be a lot of concern about moving to or away from those.

A15. There should not be because the grading system that the multidisciplinary billets will be graded under and the category-specific billets will be graded under is the same grading system. So, grade-wise, there should be no difference. Now, if there are some—every time a promotion board meets, you don't know what biases some of those folks may have, whether they have biases against folks in multidisciplinary billets. So, from that point of view, I can't answer that question. But from a strictly grades point of view, there's no difference from the way we're gonna calculate grades any of those category-specific or multidisciplinary, so that should definitely not influence the promotion process.

Officer: So, the career progression is category-specific, again, based on whether you are in multidisciplinary billets or not.

CAPT Bailey: Correct.

Q16. Officer: Okay, a specific question I've asked earlier that wasn't clear and I'm now on the line (I wasn't on it earlier) so now I'm clarifying my question. It's about the multidisciplinary billets. I'm in the Scientist category, and my category put together some beta test billets and I think they were (inaudible) but they were written by the scientist and beta tested with scientists, but they are multidisciplinary positions, such as an epidemiologist. And so we were wondering if those were going to be used (because we created them) and if so, with the medical category and the vet category also creating an epidemiologist billet, or are those all just going to be thrown out and a new core epidemiologist one is going to be used. We didn't know how our multidisciplinary billets were going to be used.

CAPT Bailey: Okay, I'm glad you could get on the line and clarify that question. Right now I'm looking ... there are fourteen category specific billets for the scientist category that have been created. And there is a...

Officer: We...I have twenty-two.

CAPT Bailey: No there's apparently fourteen, and I'll just (very quickly) read them off: Clinical Scientist, Clinical Practice Officer, Clinical Psychologist, Environmental Scientist, Epidemiology and Public Health Scientist, General Psychologist, Health Education Scientist, Regulatory Scientist, Research Scientist, Scientist Fellows, Scientist Management Officer, Scientist...Officer Short Tour, and Supervisory Psychologist. And also there are two CO-STEPS: CO-STEP Extramural and CO-STEP Intramural. Those are the fourteen scientist categories I currently have.

Officer: Okay so that's exactly my question. So I'm glad you brought that up. We have a scientist-specific billet for an epidemiologist, but in fact the position (I'm an epidemiologist right now) I assume could easily be taken on by a medical doctor, or a veterinarian, or a dentist, but has an epidemiology background. And so what we (and psychologist in both the scientist category and HSO category) are not clear on is if we should be making our positions a category specific billet if in fact it really can be assumed by anyone that has the background in epidemiology that would be needed for the position. So we created those knowing that a lot of our officers fell into those but in fact they're multidisciplinary positions. And we didn't know how that would work.

A16. CAPT Bailey: Understood. There's a little bit of controversy (I don't even know if I want to go into the whole controversy). But we're working through some of this right now... If you want to be strict about it, a multidisciplinary billet is any billet that can be filled by more than one category, however there are those situations where maybe there's an epidemiologist where really there's only 2-3 categories of officers that really could fill that. And in those situations where it may be like 2-3 categories and it's all 12 categories that apply, yet only 2-3 that could really fill that position? In those situations it may be that the agency has to have the billets for any one position and utilize whichever billet fits the

category of officer applies for it. For example, an epidemiologist and you get a scientist and you hire the billet, then they occupy that scientist/epidemiologist billet. If it's a physician who ends up filling it, then they fill the physician/epidemiologist billet. That's being worked through right now but that's the thinking of this. There are only 2-3 categories that are very specific like that that they would have the multiple billets available or dependent on which category of officer was hired to fill that position.

Officer: Okay and so as an officer myself, when I go to fill mine out in March when the scientist billet comes through, am I just writing the one for the scientist, and then someone down the line will have to re-write one for medical?

CAPT Bailey: Very likely so.

Q17. CAPT Bailey, this is LCDR Diem-Kieu Ngo. I was on the call two weeks ago with the FDA session when you were on the line, and I know you mentioned that the two -year grandfather stage for the two officers who were downgraded with the transformation. (Inaudible) So is there any consideration of the two year grace period to all officers (no matter if the billets have upgraded or downgraded) so that everyone in that two-year period, everyone has similar language in their PIR in terms of the billets?

A17. CAPT Bailey: I don't think we're going to give it two years for everyone. I think what we're going to have to do is reflect the new billet in PIR but show the old billet grade so that...so that you're right...I do recall that question very clearly. And at that time point I said yes, that's something we want to look into because we don't want it to stick out like a sore thumb for a promotion board. So my guess is what we'll have to do is find a way for the new billet title to be in the PIR but the old grade to be associated with that. So it's a dated issue we're going to have to work out somehow.

Q17 This is CDR Pitts. The Retail Specialist...did you make a decision if those were going to be downgraded or just the same?

A17. CAPT Bailey: That's not an across the board decision. It'll depend upon how they grade out in the system when the attributes are collected for the billets. It's not an across the board decision...you're talking about the FDA, right?

CDR Pitts: Correct.

CAPT Bailey: Yea and I know that we talked about FDA potentially identifying what the attributes should be in advance of this billet creation system so that they ensure that all the officers...the same attributes so that they serve as a guide where those fall out as far as grades, but that's all the further...there won't be an across the board upgrade or downgrade.

CDR Pitts: So each individual billet will be based on its on merits?

CAPT Bailey: True, but one of the things discussed on the FDA call was that there will be some direction come out from the FDA, like "hey you're getting ready to fill out these billets. If you are in a current level billet right now, these are the attributes you should be selecting when you create your billet for your position.

CDR Pitts: So now will individual officers have to do it or the agency will do that?

CAPT Bailey: Individual officers are initiating all the billets. But...they will be working their way up through the chain and will be reviewed at the agency level. So at that point in time, if they see any anomalies that they pick up on those, and say "hey you're selecting the wrong attributes and it's resulting in the wrong grade for the billet you initiated.

CDR Pitts: So you're saying I'm going to have to build my own billet?

CAPT Bailey: That's correct.

CDR Pitts: How do I get some more guidance on how to do that?

CAPT Bailey: Well the actual process is in the tutorial. The actual process of how this is going to happen is in the tutorial.

Q17. This is CDR Doug Hall, an engineer officer for the FDA. We're talking about these waves that are pretty much very specific, and would be considered...if you select or initially create it, would it be the engineering way or.... multidisciplinary?

A17. Is your current billet an engineer category-specific engineer billet right now or is it multidisciplinary?

CDR Doug Hall:I'm a senior regulatory officer so I believe that's multidisciplinary.

CAPT Bailey: If that's the case, if you're currently in a multidisciplinary billet then you will be in the multidisciplinary wave that will occur at the end of the process, probably in June.

Q18. What if...how do you know if you're in a category-specific or multidisciplinary billet currently?

CAPT Bailey: Do you know your current billet number?

Officer: I frankly don't, no.

A18. Well, go to your supervisor, and get your current billet number, and you can actually go on the CCMIS website, and on the CCMIS website there is a... click under the services tab at the top of the CCMIS website, there is a drop down list of services and one of those is billet information, and if you click on that and then type (you'll get another screen comes up and it actually says billet ID and then in parenthesis BDN) and type in your billet right there, and that'll bring up your billet. It'll show you what it is.

Q19. Does the billet number (show) on our orders?

A19. Yes.

Officer: (Inaudible) Because most supervisors may not even know what it is.

CAPT Bailey: That's true. That's a better idea. Look at your orders.

Q20. This is CDR Shirley Thompson. I have a question and need something clarified. You're saying the agency owns the billet, and say there's a civilian in the position or job that we would take, why would there be any difference for us or them, for us writing the billet out like we're doing and getting it to whoever it's going to manage the billet

CAPT Bailey: What do you mean by why should there be a difference?

CDR Thompson: Are we going to have a different description of our job versus what a civilian would. You're saying that the agency controls the billet, I would think that whatever the agency has for whatever position (if a civilian takes it or a PHS officer takes it) I would think it would be the same thing.

A20. CAPT Bailey: As far as attributes and what is required for the position, you're right it should be close to the same. If a position description accurately describes the position, and then the billet accurately describes the position, those attributes should be very close. But the only difference is we have billets for commissioned officers and they have position descriptions for civilian positions, but the actual content should be very similar.

Q21. CDR Thompson: So how does this benefit the transformation as far as...I'm still confused as to why we at PHS need to control these billets? You're saying that the agency controls the billets and you're saying it's your responsibilities, not your capabilities, so it could be civilian vs. PHS, like we have something different going on and...but they're in it for the grade. That sounds like it could be a confusing situation.

A21 CAPT Bailey: Well, when I say that agencies own the billets, what I mean by that is that they pay for them, and that's what I mean by agencies own their billets. They're not centrally controlled, like in the other uniformed services, like the Navy or the Army, they centrally control their billets. We don't control them because we don't have the money to pay for those positions. So that's what I mean by the agencies control their billets. That's the best definition of that.

Q22. Officer: Hi sir this is LCDR Ball. I understand that we used to be the way it was. We were

owned by PHS and then worked for agencies, but our billets were largely with PHS rather than with an agency. Is that going to change at any time soon with transformation?

A22. CAPT Bailey: Actually the Commissioned Corps has never centrally owned billets, and looking into the future I don't see that happening either.

Q23. I have another question. This is CDR (inaudible)... again. If we wanted to transfer this billets over, let's say, like my (inaudible) and I looked it up... So if I'm in the 06 Billet now, do I still have the possibility of going down in billet status?

A23. CAPT Bailey: That possibility does exist. As I mentioned earlier during our testing, 85% of the time that didn't happen but that possibility does exist.

Q24. Yes, it's LCDR Park. I'm a dental officer with the IHS. I came in on the tail end of the discussion about the (inaudible) rule about the billets...

A24. CAPT Bailey: In the new billet process, if your new billet breaks out at a lower grade than your current billet, that new billet becomes official, which won't be until sometime the latter part of 2010. You would have two years which time you will be held harmless with any negative effects of a downgraded billet. Promotions/assimilations would not be held against you for two years.

LCDR Park: That refers to, like promotions?

CAPT Bailey: Yes, let's say you're at an O-5 billet right now. Let's say that when we go through this new process your new billet comes out and you're an O-4. So you go to the promotion board and you're up for your O-5 and now all of a sudden I'm in an O-4 billet and the promotion board would potentially look at that in a negative way. So what we're saying that (if that's the case) that your billet is downgraded from an O-5 to an O-4, promotion boards will not know that it's been downgraded for two years, and therefore cannot use that against you.

Q25. Hi, this is CDR Young. Can you explain again how do we determine what billet we're in? I'm trying to determine if it's a pharmacy or multidisciplinary. I'm a pharmacist.

A25. CAPT Bailey: Probably a pharmacist billet then, I would imagine. Right now the pharmacy category developed twenty standard billet titles, and I'll give you an example of a few of them. There's the chief pharmacist, health center director, staff pharmacist I, staff pharmacist II. Those are some of the billet titles they come up with, along with descriptions to go with them. When you view the tutorial, it will show you how this is going to work, that you will receive an email as a pharmacist (when we get to the wave of pharmacists), and in that email there will be attached an excel document, within which will be listed the twenty pharmacist titles and the descriptions to go with them. You will look at those twenty titles and review the descriptions, and choose the one that most accurately describes (as close as possible) your current position. When you choose that, you will select that and will send it back and from there that billet that you selected, you then will receive a second email, and the standard billet will be included with all the standard features that the pharmacist category has associated with that billet title. At that point, you will then add on all drop-down menus (there's only one pretext box that we actually type in pretext information about what your position is to give you unique characteristics of your position). Let's say you chose staff pharmacist II position, and that's the one where the position is most accurate. In the staff pharmacist II position, the pharmacy category has a list of standard duties associated with that. If you determine that on top of those standard duties there's something very unique about your specific staff pharmacy II position you'll have a place where you can add that in a pretext format. Then there are other attributes where you can add those in that are all driven by drop-down menus. Click on the box, and there will be a drop-down list of things. For example, if there are additional licensures that are preferred for your position you will be able to select from a list of licenses for that attribute. That's how you will make that billet unique. You will take the standard template for staff pharmacist II in this example and you will add on specific attributes that make it unique for your specific position. If you go through the tutorial it really lays it out, so I highly encourage that.

Q26. Officer: Yes sir, I have a question. I would like to refer back to the comment that was made

that the billets should be pretty comparable with the current civil service GS system as far as attributes. That's correct?

CAPT Bailey: That is correct.

Officer: I sort of have a unique situation as well whereas I was civil service up until this year in a GS-13 position, and I converted to the commissioned corps. Being that I was in GS-13 position, my current billet is an O-5, which at this time is two ranks higher than my current rank. I would like to know (I'm in the same position that was converted from a GS-13 to an O-5 billet) would I be at risk of being downgraded?

A26. CAPT Bailey: When you go through this process of creating a billet for your position, and you identify the attributes, and those attributes will drive points within the formula base system, which will then in turn drive grade, when you select those attributes and if those attributes are very similar to the what's in the position description, without seeing it, it should still come out to an O-5 because as I mentioned the attributes and the weight given to those, what we're doing in the billets is very similar to the attributes of civil service. So theoretically, based upon what you're telling me, it would still come out to an O-5. So long as they have in their position descriptions accurately identified the attributes.

Q27. Officer: CAPT Bailey, this is just as a follow-up to that question. So I guess officers should not be concerned if they're at a lower rank but in a higher billet? So rank should not determine the billet?

A27. CAPT Bailey: The way our system is, the officer rank is independent of our billets. Most officers like to be in the position where they can say "hey I'm an O-3 officer in an O-5 billet" because it's the belief that it will look good in front of the promotion board. Ideally in the Corps, officers shouldn't be in a billet more than one grade below or one grade above the actual officer grade. We realize that there situations (like in hardship areas) there may be an O-5 billet but all they can do is get an O-3 officer to come in and fill that position, so that's the reality.

Officer: I think in my situation I had no choice but to come in as an O-3 officer because I didn't have enough years to come in at a permanent or higher rank. Definitely the work that I do is that of an O-5, so they justly put me at a billet that coincided with the work that I do.

CAPT Bailey: It should grade out that way as long as the position description is accurate, your billet should most likely grade out as an O-5. No guarantee there, but from what you're telling me it should most likely work out.

Q28. Officer: I have a question. I know other people waiting. Why would an OPDIV necessary use Direct Access to see jobs? What would make them use that?

A28. CAPT Bailey: When the system is fully in place, it will be a very robust system. It will be a very easy way to identify officers if you're trying to fill a position. To use the pharmacist example again, you may be looking for a staff pharmacist and in that billet there are certain attributes you are looking to fill. You will be able to very quickly and easily look out at the pool of pharmacist officers that have self-identified that they are looking for positions and very quickly identify a list of officers that meet the attributes of the position that you are trying to fill. So it can be a very quick, efficient way to fill a position.

Q29. Officer: Okay and to follow-up on that, what if you have somebody that has multiple skills that would cross different positions and they couch themselves in one certain way? How would that person show up? Maybe they have skills to fill a bunch of different jobs. How would someone searching for that be able to locate them?

A29. CAPT Bailey: They'll be able to search the same way. It won't have to be category-specific. They'll just do a search on officers (I'm just trying to think of an attribute) officers who have clinical wide support certification, etc, independent of category.

Q30. LCDR Laura Longstaff with the FDA. I have a question. I've been looking through the tutorials and I haven't seen a mechanism for billets, if they didn't calculate and you and your supervisor are not satisfied with the results? The mechanism to recalculate?

A30. CAPT Bailey: Let's say that the officer fills out the billet, and the supervisor gets the billet.

When the officer completes the attribute the officer will not know the grade. So when the supervisor gets to review it, the supervisor will see the grade that has been derived from that. Now if the supervisor says (say its graded out of an O-3) and the supervisor says “wow I definitely thought this would definitely be an O-4 position”, the supervisor could sit down with the officer and go looking through the attributes that the officer selected as far as level of responsibility, level of independence, and judgment level and those type of things. They may decide that (the officer’s) judgment requirement for your position is much higher than what was selected, and they can make that change. Now when they make that change, the supervisor isn’t going to be able to immediately see the grade that results from that. Only when it goes to the reviewing official will the reviewing official see what the new grade is. I understand what you’re saying (for example in the above situation), but the point of this is that we’re not striving to build billets to meet grades, we’re striving to meet billets that accurately describe the minimum responsibilities for positions, so you’re going to get an accurate grade representation for that billet. And that’s so that we don’t have billets that are inflated just to meet personal objectives as opposed to corps mission objectives.

Q31. This is CDR Becky Grissle and I have a couple of clarification questions. My understanding with the transformation is that it’s for minimum qualifications, not necessarily what we as officers are performing in our duties today. Is this correct?

A31. CAPT Bailey: That is correct. The way the billet should be created is that (independent of officer capabilities) if you as an officer left the position tomorrow, what minimum requirements (job duties) would the agency be looking for from the officer who came in and backfilled that position.

CDR Becky Grissle: So, second to that then is what billet grade we are actually developing billets to target? And the reason why I’m asking it that way is when I originally came into the position, I came in as a particular grade, and have since been promoted up. The billet has been created based on additional assigned duties by my supervisor.

CAPT Bailey: That’s exactly what we’re battling. And that’s why our billet system doesn’t work for us, because what we’re doing is we’re building billets based upon officer capability, and not building billets based upon what is required to meet the mission of the agency that

employ commissioned the officers. Or how do we go out and recruit because we can't tell or answer congress "these are the positions that we need in the commissioned corps to meet the mission of the agencies that we serve. We can't answer that question because all of our billets have been gerrymandered to fit officer capabilities. Therefore, in my years I have seen this happen many, many times I've been a part of this so I know what you're talking about. If an officer is an O-4 officer, for example, and they're up for promotion for O-5, you don't rewrite the billet for that position. You find another billet with that organization (a different job, if you want to keep them there and get them in a higher billet, you find a different billet), unless you can truly say that the billet for that position has changed. That's the big culture change.

CDR Becky Grissle: So (inaudible) there's a basic requirement that at entry level, the Officers (O-2, O-3, O-4) should meet the minimum requirements of the job duties that we originally (inaudible) commanded their positions, that doesn't necessarily reflect everything else that we're doing through our years of service.

CAPT Bailey: It should not reflect the officer capability, that is correct. But like I said, the main thing to say is that if I left tomorrow, what would the agency be looking for in the officer that replaced me? That's what they need to reflect.

Q32. This is Latoya Stewart, with the National Institutes of Health (NIH). So by targeting the minimum qualifications, that seems almost...That seems to take away from the (not the capabilities)...we've excelled so much to get to this point, and to sort of downgrade our positions based on the minimum qualifications were before we came and put in all the work is just a bit discouraging.

A32. CAPT Bailey: Well you're making the assumption that the minimum qualifications are very low. The minimum qualifications may be very high for a position.

LT Stewart: Well, in my particular case there have been a lot of things that I have voluntarily taken on because I see that it's made significant contributions to my practice here. They weren't things I necessarily had to do, but I thought they would be useful. And they have made significant differences in my practice, and I have been recognized for that.

But no, they're not required for the minimum entry level position here. But by downgrading my current billet to a position that does not reflect what it is that I've volunteered but what that's necessary...it's just discouraging.

Q33. Officer: CAPT Bailey, how do we go about defining the minimum requirements for the job, but yet still receiving recognition for promotions of all the extra things we do? What's the mechanism to do that?

A33. CAPT Bailey: Collateral duties will be reflected on your CV (the officer profile on your CV), that's where the collateral duties will be reflected that the promotion board will be looking at. I mean I've been there. When I was with Indian Health Service in California, I was in the area office for nine years, and you can well imagine that what I was hired to do when I first got there versus what I was doing nine years later was vastly different. I had three to four other collateral duties so I know exactly what you're talking about. If you're in a situation where the duties have expanded (and the key word here is that something has become necessary), then perhaps the role needs to be upgraded to show that is now necessary, and that anyone that would come after you would really have to do this also. They can evolve, but the key thing to remember is don't make them evolve to the point where you're trying to hire someone else in and you're requiring a lot more than what is necessary for the job.

Q34. Officer: So the billet description isn't necessarily going to describe what we do today. It's going to describe requirements, and then those things that go above and beyond are collateral duties?

A34. CAPT Bailey: That is true.

Q35. Officer: I have a clarification question. You were speaking previously that the officer and our supervisor are going to review the minimum requirements, and the supervisor is going to be the one that has the say and determination...this is related to our supervisors who are going to be reviewing our billet requirements are civil servants rather than commissioned officers. Is there any consideration of the education requirements of our civil service supervisors?

A35. CAPT Bailey: That is exactly why there are several levels of tutorials. There's an officer tutorial, there's a supervisor tutorial, there's a reviewing official tutorial, and the supervisor and reviewing official tutorials were developed with exactly that in mind (with the understanding that roughly half of our supervisors are civilian). And so therefore there is mention within those tutorials and a little extra explanation in to those tutorials for those supervisors who are not commissioned corps officers.

LCDR Ball: Hey sir, I think that we are running out of time. We appreciate your time today. If there are further questions please refer them back to CAPT Bailey or myself that will be great. We will make sure those get answered. Appreciate your time today, and we will look forward to doing another one of these soon.

CAPT Bailey: You're welcome. Get the tutorial folks.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]