U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps Opportunities

Who Are We?

The U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps is an elite team of more than 6,500 full-time, well-trained, highly qualified public health professionals dedicated to delivering the Nation's public health promotion and disease prevention programs and advancing public health science. Driven by a passion for public service, these men and women serve on the front lines in the Nation's fight against disease and poor health conditions. As one of America's seven uniformed services, the Commissioned Corps fills essential public health leadership and service roles within the Nation's Federal Government agencies and programs.

"It has always been and continues to be an honor to wear the uniform of the U.S. Public Health Service. The opportunities for officers in the Commissioned Corps are varied, interesting, and above all rewarding. Officers in the Corps can play a role in making a positive difference in peoples' lives by working in rural health, research, with state health agencies, and by participating in emergency response situations like hurricanes, oil spills, flooding, and public health emergencies like the H1N1 pandemic. Working in a variety of settings has been most gratifying. Opportunities for personal and professional growth abound in the PHS. I can't imagine having had as great a career as I've had in this service, anywhere else."

Rear Admiral Epifanio (Epi) Elizondo
Chief Health Services Officer
U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps

What Do Health Services Officers Do?

Health services officers in the Corps serve in a wide range of professions within three primary subcategories:

- Clinical specialties (including clinical psychologists, dental hygienists, medical technologists, optometrists, physician assistants, podiatrists, and social workers
- Health education and administration specialties
- Basic and applied sciences.

Health Services Officers join the Commissioned Corps at many different levels. Some join as entry level public health practitioners while others are experienced experts trained in public health, clinical specialties, or research. The Health Services category is the second largest in the USPHS, representing 19 percent of all its officers! Our officers work all over the country, from San Juan, Puerto Rico to Barrow, Alaska. No matter if you are providing patient care to tribes in Tuba City, New Mexico or heading up clinical trials for cancer research at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, you will find an exciting and rewarding career awaits you!

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Did you know you can:

- Enjoy fantastic medical and dental benefits for you and your family
- Use military bases around the world
- Use the GI Bill to advance your education later on in life
- Contribute pre-tax income to the Thrift Savings Plan

Quality of Practice

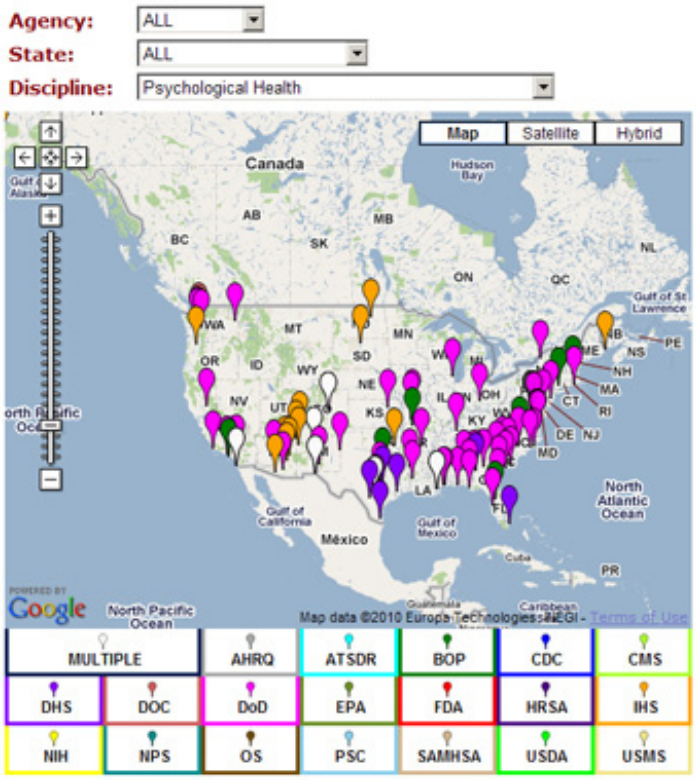
When you join the U.S Public Health Service Commissioned Corps you become part of a diverse group of individuals who have a unique sense of purpose. Many career choices tend to lock you in to one career path. USPHS Health Services Officers have many opportunities to work in a variety of agencies and to completely change career paths, if they choose. An early career psychologist or social work officer might choose to work in the Federal Bureau of Prisons or the Indian Health Service. Many officers work in those agencies for the full course of their USPHS career, advancing to higher levels of responsibility, becoming supervisors and managers with regional or national responsibilities. Other Health Services Officers choose to move to other agencies. Health Services Officers have worked in high level management positions in several federal agencies, including the Office of the Surgeon General, as emergency response coordinators for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response; in violence prevention research at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; in brain imaging research at the National Institutes of Health; and in many other positions at various agencies.

Why You Should be a Health Services Officer in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps

Where are We Located?

Almost anywhere and everywhere in the country. Whether you prefer rural or urban, east or west, north or south, we have a location for you. Health Services Officers can be employed as Commissioned Officers across the country in any of the following agencies:

- Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
- Indian Health Service (IHS)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)



- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Admini-stration (SAMHSA)
- Office of the Secretary (OS)
- Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)
- U.S. Coast Guard (CG)
- Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP)
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
- Department of Defense (DoD)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Department of State
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Opportunities for Growth

Who's Who in PHS: CDR Rendi Murphree, sampling/surveying surface waters following historic flooding near Nashville, TN in May 2010

Are you ready for an exceptional career and the experience of a lifetime? When you join the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, you become part of a diverse group of individuals who have a unique sense of purpose. Your commitment and willingness to take part in this incomparable opportunity will be rewarded with excellent pay and benefits and the chance for advancement and challenging work to benefit fellow Americans and other people throughout the world. Finding the USPHS career that is right for you is made easier because your skills and availability are marketed nationwide. In fact, there are a variety of opportunities available right now that will allow you to practice and advance your professional competencies. Whether you are a new graduate seeking a meaningful way to start your career, or an experienced health professional looking for a new opportunity, you'll be surrounded by dedicated, like-minded colleagues who have also chosen to serve others.

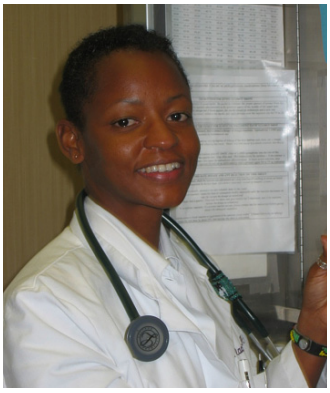
Quality of Life

Is your quality of life all that it could be? Is it important to you to have time to spend with your family and friends, doing the things you enjoy? As a Commissioned Officer in the U.S. Public Health Service, you receive 30 days of annual leave plus 10 Federal holidays. Many duty stations operate Monday-Friday during normal business hours. This organization allows you to pursue life in literally hundreds of locations from the largest cities to the smallest communities near the oceans, the mountains, the Grand Canyon, the Gulf Coast or national parks. Be prepared to enjoy a camaraderie and sense of common purpose unlike anything you have yet experienced.

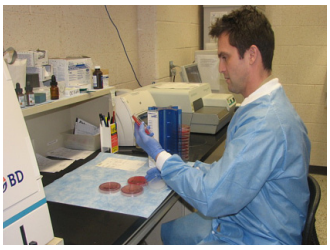
U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps Benefits

Commissioned Corps officers working for the U.S. Public Health Service enjoy the same benefits as their counterparts in the armed services. Here are a few of them:

- No cost, comprehensive medical and dental care for Corps officers; excellent health benefits for families
- Paid sick leave, maternity leave, and Federal holidays
- Clinical practice liability coverage
- Thirty days of paid vacation per year beginning the first year
- Tax-free housing and meal allowances
- Thrift Savings plan (retirement savings and investment plan similar to a 401 (k))
- Retirement plan with benefits eligibility beginning after 20 years of service
- Loan repayment potential—USPHS understands the financial burden of medical education. Assignments with certain Federal agencies, such as the Indian Health Service, offer loan repayment and/or other educational and family support programs.
- Veterans Affairs benefits, such as the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) which allows active duty members to enroll and pay $100 per month for 12 months; and are then entitled to receive a monthly education benefit once they have completed a minimum service obligation.



CAPT Frances Placide prepping a flu vaccination at Cherokee Indian Hospital, Cherokee, NC



LTJG Jason Truax, MT ASCP reading a culture plate, Red Lake Indian Hospital

Commissioning Rank and Pay Health Service Officers

Compensation varies depending on factors such as grade/rank, years of training and experience (T&E) in your profession, base-pay entry date, specialty training received, geographic location of the duty station, and whether or not the employee has a spouse and/or children. Please use the pay tables at http://www.dod.mil/militarypay/index.html along with the zip code of the duty station you are considering and the paycheck examples at the bottom of the webpage to estimate pay.

The minimum starting pay grade/rank for an HSO in the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps is O-1 or Ensign (COSTEPs only). Depending on the number of years of academic coursework and work experience in your qualifying area, you may be commissioned as an O-2 or an O-3. With 12 or more years of T&E, you are eligible for promotion to O-4, Lieutenant Commander, after 6 months of active duty. Unlike civil service, post-commissioning military promotions are based on time in service and performance.

Pay Grade	Rank	Total years Training + Experience
O-1	Ensign	Commissioned Officer Student Extern Program (COSTEP)
O-2	Lieutenant Junior Grade	4 - 8 Years
O-3	Lieutenant	8 - 17 Years
O-4	Lieutenant Commander	17 Years - or More
All supporting documents must accompany application for commissioning in order to determine entry pay grade.		

LCDR Angela Girgenti aboard the USNS Comfort while deployed to Haiti Earthquake Response, January 2010

CDR Robert Kesead, OD conducts an eye exam

Additional Uniformed Service Benefits

The Commissioned Corps offers you and your family many other exceptional benefits including:

- Paid moving expenses when you join the Corps, relocate with the Corps, and retire from the Corps.
- Access to military base lodging, recreational facilities and space-available flights on military aircraft.
- Shopping privileges at military base grocery and department stores.

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/USPHS **800-279-1605** **WWW.USPHS.GOV**

U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps Next Steps

USPHS Officer Qualifications

All Commissioned Corps officers must meet several basic qualifications: You must be a U.S. citizen, be less than 44 years of age, and pass a physical examination. To be considered for commissioning as a Health Services Officer, you also need the following:

- Qualifying degree from an accredited program, usually approved in American Universities and Colleges (published by the American Council on Education).
- If applicable, a current, unrestricted, and valid license in any of the 50 States; Washington, DC; the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; the U.S. Virgin Islands; or Guam. You may also need to meet additional accreditation criteria to qualify, depending on your profession.
- Note that all disciplines in the HSO category require Masters Degrees with the exception of medical laboratory scientists, dental hygienists, computer scientists, medical records administrators, and physician assistants.

Health Services Student Opportunities

The U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps offers two excellent opportunities for students to serve their country while completing their education. If you are interested in a public health career, we encourage you to apply to the Junior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (JRCOSTEP) and the Senior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (SRCOSTEP). Both programs offer excellent benefits and are highly competitive.

If you have questions about COSTEP, please visit our website at http://www.usphs.gov/student/COSTEP.aspx.

Join America's Public Health Team!

If you are a health services student interested in joining the fight for public health, or if you have questions about what we do and how you can make a difference with the Commissioned Corps, we would like to talk to you. For more information, call us at 800-279-1605 or visit our Web site at www.usphs.gov.

Contact Us

Please use the form on the USPHS website to contact the appropriate representative for your profession. Access the Contact page at: http://www.usphs.gov/main/contact.aspx

Commissioned Officer Pay Comparison - 2011 with Dependents

USPHS Health Services Officers					
Salary Base	O-2 w/ less than 2 yrs service	O-3 with over 2 yrs service	O-4 with over 4 yrs service	O-5 with over 10 yrs service	O-6 with over 20 yrs service
Monthly Base Pay (taxable)	$3,207	$4,208	$5,286	$6,659	$9,223
Subsistence (no tax)	224	224	224	224	224
Housing (no tax)*	$934	$1,094	$1,322	$1,500	$1,556
Retirement Annuity	Non-contributory	Non-contributory	Non-contributory	Non-contributory	Non-contributory
Gross Income-Monthly/Annually	$4,365 $52,380	$5,526 $66,312	$6,832 $81,984	$8,383 $100,596	$11,003 $132,036
Deductions					
Federal Income Tax	$424	$608	$874	$1,213	$1,845
Social Security	$196	$257	$323	$407	$552
Medicare	46	60	76	95	132
Healthcare Benefits	Non-contributory	Non-contributory	Non-contributory	Non-contributory	Non-contributory
Take Home Pay-Monthly/Annually	$3,699 $44,388	$4,601 $55,212	$5,559 $66,708	$6,668 $80,016	$8,474 $101,688
Monthly Pension after 20 years service	After 20 years of service, officers are eligible to retire. Officers are paid 50 to 75% of their monthly base salary for the rest of their life depending on their total years of service. Officers are also eligible for lifetime health insurance.				

* * For Commissioned Officers without Dependents there is a slight decrease in the basic allowance for housing. Visit the following site for more info: http://www.dfas.mil/militarypay/militarypaytables/2011MilitaryPayTable1-4.pdf