



COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Ready Reserve Corps > Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



RECRUITMENT

Recruitment & Service Obligations

Q. What are the benefits of joining the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps?

A. Refer to <https://www.usphs.gov/ready-reserve>.

Q. How can I join the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps?

A. Refer to <https://www.usphs.gov/ready-reserve>.

Q. What is the service obligation for members of the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps?

A. Upon an individual's initial appointment to the SELRES (Selected Reserve component of the Ready Reserve Corps), they must agree to remain in the SELRES for a minimum of six years. Refer to Commissioned Corps Instruction (CCI) 322.06, "Ready Reserve Management."

Q. If an applicant completes two years of service and decides the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps is not a good fit for them, can they separate?

A. Reserve officers must complete the full six-year service obligation committed to at the time of appointment.

Q. Does the USPHS offer international opportunities?

A. Yes, international opportunities are available with specific agencies. Commissioned Corps Headquarters also deploys officers for international responses.

Q. Is time in service to the USPHS considered government service for civil employment?

A. Refer to www.opm.gov – Creditable Service

Q. What are the main components of the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps?

A. There are three main components: Selected Ready Reserve (SELRES), Individual Ready Reserve (IRR), and Retired Reserve.



COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

The SELRES consists of officers who are required to train for a minimum of at least 15 days active duty per fiscal year and 4 drill periods per month or equivalent. Such officers also must be prepared for active duty mobilization within 24 hours to respond to an urgent or emergency public health care need, which may be voluntary or involuntary calls to active duty.

The IRR consists of officers who have had military and/or USPHS Commissioned Corps training. Such officers are not required to participate in training or other USPHS Commissioned Corps activities. However, they are subject to involuntary recall to active duty under certain circumstances. There are two subsets of the IRR: Active and Standby.

- a. Active IRR. Members of the IRR who have been assigned to an Individual Augmentation Duty (IAD) position.
- b. Standby IRR. Members of the IRR who are an additional mobilization resource for the USPHS Commissioned Corps if there are not enough qualified members of the SELRES and Active IRR available to meet the USPHS Commissioned Corps' requirements.

Members who accumulate 20 or more years of qualifying service are eligible for reserve retirement, also known as non-regular retirement, when they reach age 60.

Q. Where can I obtain information on transferring into the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps' Individual Ready Reserve (IRR)?

A. Refer to CCI 322.06, "Ready Reserve Corps Management."

Q. How can a current USPHS Regular Corps officer on active duty join the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps?

A. You must first resign your active duty appointment and then apply for an appointment to the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps.

Position Assignment

Q. How will I be assigned to a position?

A. Reserve assignments will be determined by the geographic region of the applicant, training affiliation, and specialty priorities.

Military Inquiries

Q. Are USPHS officers considered veterans?

A. For purposes of the laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), yes USPHS officers are deemed to be Veterans. However, in reference to certain other Veterans laws **not** administered by the VA, no we are not considered Veterans (e.g. USPHS officers are not eligible for Veterans Preference from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)).



COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

- Q. How does the USPHS differ from the military (armed forces)?
- A. The mission of the USPHS Commissioned Corps is distinctly different from that of the armed forces. The mission of the USPHS Commissioned Corps is to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of the nation (refer to usphs.gov for facts and further information on the USPHS). Per 10 U.S. Code § 101, “The term ‘armed forces’ means the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard,” and their missions are primarily related to combat types of environments and maritime/space safety.
- Q. Can USPHS officers be buried at Arlington National Cemetery?
- A. Commissioned Corps officers can be buried at Arlington National Cemetery if they meet the Cemetery’s criteria.) Pursuant to the Arlington National Cemetery’s Website, “eligibility for in-ground burial at Arlington National Cemetery is the most stringent of all U.S. national cemeteries. However, most veterans who have at least one day of active service (other than for training) and an honorable discharge are eligible for above-ground inurnment. Eligibility is determined at the time of need.”
- Q. Will an officer in the National Guard have to resign their commission to join the USPHS Reserves?
- A. No, if they are completing an inter-service transfer to the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps. However, if the applicant was applying to the Regular Corps, yes they would have to sever all ties to other uniformed service, including terminating any pays that are being received, prior to accepting a commissioned with the USPHS Regular Corps.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Age

- Q. What is the age requirement to commission into the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps?
- A. Applicants must not exceed 40 years of age at time of commissioning (unless a waiver is granted) to allow enough time for the Reservist to complete 20 years of credible service towards retirement by 60 years of age, which is the minimum age a Reservist may apply for retirement. Please refer to 10 U.S. Code Chapter 1223 and CCI 322.06, “Ready Reserve Management.”
- Q. Is there an age waiver for USPHS Reservists?
- A. Age waivers are at the discretion of the Surgeon General and are based on the needs of the service and whether the applicant possesses exceptional qualifications.

Professional Credentials & Licensing

- Q. Can applicants apply with a provisional license?
- A. No, applicants must have an unrestricted license.



COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Medical/Behavioral Factors

- Q. What are disqualifying chronic illnesses?
- A. Refer to CCI 221.01, “Medical Accession Standards,” under the ‘Apply Now’ tab on www.USPHS.gov.
- Q. Who determines which chronic illnesses are disqualifying?
- A. The Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH). Refer to CCI 221.01, “Medical Accession Standards.”
- Q. If an applicant has a disability rating from the Veteran Affairs (VA), can they apply to the USPHS Commissioned Corps?
- A. Yes, but they will have to meet Medical Accession Standards. Additionally, in order to accept a commission in the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps they will have to forfeit any disability pay that they are receiving from the VA.

Legal Considerations

- Q. If I have a felony charge, will that make me ineligible?
- A. All applicants are required to undergo a Security Clearance during the application process and must receive a favorable adjudication.

HIRING POLICIES & PROTOCOLS

Policies & Protocols

- Q. Are USPHS officers sworn in like other services?
- A. All officers commissioned with the USPHS are required to take an oath upon entry.
- Q. Does the USPHS require drug testing? If so, how often?
- A. Yes, drug testing is performed at the initial medical examination for all applicants and there is random drug testing of officers throughout their career. In addition, officers are also subject to drug testing by their hiring agency.

Dress & Uniform

- Q. Is religious headdress acceptable?
- A. Yes if the officer applies for a religious accommodation from the Surgeon General **and** the wearing of the religious headdress does not interfere with the wear of the prescribed uniform cover. Refer to Commissioned Corps Directive (CCD) 121.03, “Accommodation of Religious Practices.”



COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Grooming

Q. What are your policies on makeup?

A. Please refer to CCI 412.01, “Uniform and Appearance,” for a full description of makeup wear in uniform.

Q. What are your policies on hairstyles?

A. Please refer to CCI 412.01, “Uniform and Appearance,” for a full description of acceptable hairstyles in uniform.

Q. Are locs accepted?

A. Yes; however, please refer to CCI 412.01, “Uniform and Appearance,” for a full description of acceptable hairstyles in uniform.

RANK, BENEFITS & PROMOTION

Rank

Q. How is rank calculated?

A. Rank is calculated based on Training and Experience after obtaining your qualifying degree. For specifics, please refer to CCI 231.01, “General Appointment Standards,” and Personnel Operations Memorandum (POM) 821.29, “Entry Grade Upon Appointment to the Corps.”

Q. Can I get a higher rank than what is calculated? If so, how?

A. No, refer to the CCI 231.01, “General Appointment Standards,” and POM 821.29, “Entry Grade Upon Appointment to the Corps.”

Pay

Q. When are USPHS Reserve officers paid?

A. USPHS Reserve officers are paid at the completion of a unit training assembly (UTA).

Bonuses

Q. Is there a sign-on bonus for USPHS Reserve officers?

A. Pursuant to the recently revised CCD 151.05, “Health Professions Special Pays,” SELRES officers are eligible for an Accession Bonus (AB) and a Critical Wartime Skills Accession Bonus (CWSAB). Also refer to CCI 633.01, “Special Pays.”

Q. Is there a retention bonus for nurse practitioners?

A. Yes, refer to CCI 633.01, “Special Pays.”



COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Insurance

- Q. How can I learn more on healthcare costs for my family?
A. Refer to the www.Tricare.gov website.
- Q. What does TRICARE insurance cover for USPHS Ready Reserve Corps officers and their families?
A. Refer to the www.Tricare.gov website.

Promotion

- Q. What are the eligibility requirements for consideration for promotion in the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps?
A. The USPHS will consider members of the SELRES for promotion in accordance with CCI 331.01, "Permanent Grade Promotions."

Loan Repayment

- Q. Are USPHS Ready Reserve Corps officers eligible for loan repayment?
A. No, only USPHS Regular Corps officers are eligible for loan repayment opportunities.

Continuing Education

- Q. Do officers have to maintain continuing education units?
A. Yes, if required by your professional credentialing body. However, pursuant to CCD 111.03, "Conditions of Service," all officers must maintain professional competence and progression in the profession that served as his/her qualifying degree on appointment to the USPHS.
- Q. Does the USPHS provide continuing education units?
A. No.

TRAINING

- Q. Where is Officer Basic Course (OBC) held?
A. Courses are held in Potomac, MD. However, due to COVID-19, OBC courses are currently being held virtually.
- Q. How often is OBC conducted?
A. OBC courses are conducted monthly.



COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Q. Does the OBC training require you to remain on-site for training, or can you go back and forth from home if you live in the area?

A. USPHS Ready Reserve Corps officers must remain on-site for the entire OBC course.

Q. How often am I required to train after completing OBC?

A. Members of the SELRES are required to perform 48 paid Inactive Duty Training (IDT) drills (typically 12 weekends) and 15 paid Active Duty Training (ADT) days per fiscal year. Drill schedules are published for the entire year annually. Refer to CCI 322.06, "Ready Reserve Management."

DEPLOYMENT

Q. How will the notification process for deployment of a USPHS Ready Reserve Corps officer be communicated?

A. USPHS Ready Reserve Corps officers will be officially notified/alerted for a deployment via a notification/deployment order (system generated).

Q. What is the penalty for a deployment refusal during a disaster response?

A. The review of circumstances is on a case-by-case basis and determined by the Director of CCHQ.

Q. When called to a natural disaster/emergency, will my civilian job be secured?

A. Yes, the Uniformed Service Employment Re-Employment Rights Act –38 U.S.C. §§4301-4335 was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Bill Clinton on Oct. 13, 1994, to protect civilian employment of active and reserve military personnel in the United States called to active duty. The law applies to all United States Uniformed Services and their respective reserve components.

TRANSFERS

Q. Can one serve both as a USPHS Ready Reserve Corps officer and a USPHS Regular Corps officer?

A. No

Q. What is the process for current Reservist in another uniformed service to transfer into the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps?

A. In order to not have a break in service the reservist will need to complete an Inter-service Transfer (IST) into the USPHS Ready Reserve Corps. Refer to CCI 231.01, "General Appointment Standards," and CCI 374.01, "Inter-service Transfer."



COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

RETIREMENT

Q. How does the retirement system work and who will address benefits?

A. Officers in the Ready Reserve Corps are placed in a retired status upon completing 20 years of qualifying service for retirement (i.e., a year in which an officer of the Ready Reserve Corps has earned a minimum of 50 points); however, such individuals are not eligible for retired pay until they reach 60 years of age.

A brief overview of retirement benefits will be provided during Officer Basic Course (OBC). Refer to the following policies for more detailed information:

CCI 322.06, "Ready Reserve Corps Management"

CCI 384.01, "Creditable Service for Retirement"

CCI 661.01, "Computation of Retired Pay"

Q. Does the USPHS Commissioned Corps have a sanctuary like the other services?

A. Yes. If a member of the Ready Reserve Corps who has 18 or more years of active duty service and is called to active duty for other than training, the USPHS Commissioned Corps cannot separate them from active duty (other than for physical disability, cause, or with the member's consents) until the member reaches 20 years of active duty service.

Q. Is there a mandatory retirement age or mandatory years of service?

A. The USPHS Commissioned Corps does not have a mandatory retirement age, but will retire a member of the Ready Reserve Corps once the member attains 20 years of service that qualifies for retirement.

Q. What service qualifies for a retirement from the Ready Reserve Corps?

A. Refer to CCI 384.01, "Creditable Service for Retirement," for a complete list of what service qualifies for a retirement.

Q. When does a retired Ready Reserve Corps officer begin receiving retired pay?

A. A retired Ready Reserve Corps officer can apply for retired pay once the member reaches 60 years of age (the USPHS Commissioned Corps does not automatically begin these payments).

A. How far can a Ready Reserve Corps officer work past the age of 60 years old?

A Ready Reserve Corps officer may continue to serve past age 60 if they have not reached the 20 years of service that qualifies for retirement. Reservists can be involuntarily separated after 20 years.