Welcome Packet for U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps

SOCIAL WORK OFFICERS

Leadership, Service, Integrity, Excellence

6 November 2015
Welcome!

Dear Newly Commissioned Social Work Officer,

Congratulations on being called to active duty! As fellow Social Workers, we welcome you to our ranks within the Health Services Officer (HSO) category, and hope that you will consider becoming a member of the Social Work Professional Advisory Group (SWPAG). The SWPAG is one of the ten Professional Advisory Groups (PAGs) that address discipline specific professional issues within the larger Health Services Policy Advisory Committee (HS PAC). The SWPAG reports to the Chief Professional Officer of the HS PAC.

The SWPAG advises and assists in the development, coordination, training and evaluation of activities related to the social work professional discipline in the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps. The SWPAG’s objectives include:

- Identifying issues of interest and facilitating the resolution of concerns as they relate to uniformed social workers;
- Assessing personnel needs of USPHS Corps as related to social work and assisting in meeting the needs relative to recruitment, retention, training, utilization and professional development;
- Developing position papers, statistical reports, and/or guidelines where appropriate, to advise and comment on matters relating to personnel issues, the social work profession and social work officer professional practice;
- Promoting cooperation and communication among and between other professional disciplines and health professionals;
- Promoting all aspects of social work throughout the agencies and programs of the USPHS Corps; and
- Assessing the professional development needs of social work officers and developing strategies and opportunities to meet them.

Ninety-six out of 125 USPHS social work officers participate on the SWPAG (all are eligible). The SWPAG meets by telephone each month and those in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area can attend the meeting in-person. This provides an opportunity to network with other social workers and to make a contribution through participation on subcommittees and various projects.

For more information on the SWPAG, its subcommittees, and/or to apply for membership, please visit: http://usphs-hso.org/?q=pags/swpag/bylaws. Also, please select the “application” button on the left then select the “list serve” button and add your name. The list serve allows you to receive information from the SWPAG chair.

We hope the welcome packet helps orient you to the USPHS Corps and to the social work profession, specifically. You may also reference the Welcome Packet on the HSO website at: http://usphs-hso.org/. We welcome your involvement and look forward to working with you.

Very respectfully,

Social Work Professional Advisory Group
Table of Contents

1. Historical Overview

2. Health Services Officer Category

3. Social Work Commissioned Corps Officers

4. USPHS and Other Uniformed Services
   USPHS Commissioned Corps Structure
   Seven Uniformed Services
   Ranks and Introduction to Department of Defense (DoD)
   Military Courtesy and Protocols

5. Personnel Issues
   ID Cards
   Home of Record vs. Legal Residence
   Uniforms
   Pay & Allowances (to include move, bonuses and special pay)
   Household Goods

6. Promotions and Evaluations

7. Training and Readiness

8. Military Benefits

9. Other Benefits and Military-Friendly Organizations

10. Helpful Information for USPHS Social Workers
1. Historical Overview

Introduction to the USPHS

The origins of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) can be traced to the passage of an act in 1798 that provided for the care and relief of sick and injured merchant seamen.

1798 – John Adams, second president of the U.S. signed into law the Act for the Relief of Sick and Disabled Seaman. A year later, Congress extended the Act to cover every officer and sailor in the U.S. Navy. The Act led to the gradual creation of a loose network of locally controlled marine hospitals along coastal and inland waterways.

1870 – Hospital administration was centralized in the Marine Hospital Service, with its headquarters in Washington, DC, under the position of supervising surgeon (later named the Surgeon General)

1871 – John Maynard Woodworth, the first supervising surgeon, adopted a military model for his medical staff as part of system reform. Woodworth instituted examinations for applicants, put physicians in uniforms, and created a cadre of mobile, career-service physicians who could be assigned to various marine hospitals.

1878 – The prevalence of major epidemic diseases such as smallpox, yellow fever, and cholera spurred Congress to enact the National Quarantine Act to prevent the introduction of contagious and infectious diseases into the U.S. Congress later extended the Act to prevent the spread of disease among the States. The task of controlling epidemic diseases through quarantine and disinfection measures, as well as immunization programs, fell to the Marine Hospital Service.

1889 – Legislation formalized the Commissioned Corps as the uniformed services component of the Marine Hospital Service. Congress organized Corps officers along military lines, with titles and pay corresponding to Army and Navy grades.

1902 – Name of the Marine Hospital Service expanded to Public Health and Marine Hospital Service to reflect growing responsibilities. The Service now carried out the medical inspection of arriving immigrants, such as those landing at Ellis Island in New York, as well as former State quarantine responsibilities. Commissioned Corps officers played a major role in fulfilling the Service’s commitment to preventing disease from entering the country.

1912 – Name of the Public Health and Marine Hospital Service shortened to the Public Health Service (PHS). Legislation enacted by Congress broadened the powers of the PHS by authorizing investigations into human diseases *such as tuberculosis, hookworm, malaria, and leprosy), sanitation, water supplies, and sewage disposal.
1921 - First Social Worker employed by PHS, Elizabeth G. Gardiner, entered on duty July 1, 1921, at the US Marine Hospital, Ellis Island, New York, where immigrant patients and merchant seaman were treated.

1923 – Second Social Worker assigned to the Hudson Street Station in New York to provide outpatient social services.

1930 and 1944 – Corps officers expanded to include engineers, dentists, research scientists, nurses and other health care specialists, as well as physicians.

1940s - During the World War II, Social Workers employed by the War Shipping Administration were deployed to provide service to patients in Marine Hospitals and Clinics.

1944 - Re-organization of the Hospital Division included addition of special hospitals for the treatment of tuberculosis and narcotic addiction. Medical social work was incorporated.

1945 - Social Worker was assigned as medical social consultant to the Division of Tuberculosis.

By 1950- The headquarter staff at National Institute of Mental Health had added three psychiatric social workers in community services, training and planning.

1951 - PHS employed 36 civil service and 9 commissioned social workers. Most were assigned to the Division of Hospitals and Clinics, the Division of Chronic Diseases and TB and National Institute of Mental Health.

1959 – Health Services category was established to meet the staffing requirements of a changing USPHS.

1967 - St. Elizabeth Hospital was transferred to National Institute on Mental Health, which added approximately 50 social workers to PHS roles.

1970s - PHS social workers grew in numbers from about 350 to approximately 500. While 70% were engaged in direct clinical practice, the remainder had assumed leadership roles in administration, policy development, program coordination, health planning and consultation.

1979 – PHS employed about 400 civil service and 128 Commissioned social workers.

2010 – More than 6,000 active duty officers and approximately 125 Commissioned Social Workers.

2015 – More than 6,800 active duty officers and approximately 167 USPHS Commissioned Corps Social Workers involved with the Social Work Professional Advisory Group (SWPAG).

2. Health Services Officer Category

Health Services Officers (HSOs)

HSOs in the USPHS Commissioned Corps (or Corps) serve in a wide range of professions within the following three primary subcategories:

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

HSOs perform a variety of functions including direct clinical practice, program development, health planning and administration, and research. The category has grown from a small nucleus of a few officers to its present level of more than 800 active duty officers. The HSO motto, “Strength through Diversity,” attests to the wide range of skills and experience possessed by this multidisciplinary team of officers, and their pride and commitment to serving in the USPHS Commissioned Corps.

Health Services Professional Advisory Committee (HSPAC)

http://usphs-hso.org/

The HSPAC is an advisory group to the Surgeon General through the Chief Professional Officer (CPO) and represents the interests of HSOs in the USPHS Corps on issues such as promotion, appointment standards, awards, etc.

You may volunteer for this group as a nonvoting member, or apply for voting membership. We encourage your participation on the various subcommittees: Awards, Communications, Career Development, Membership, Mentoring, Policy, Readiness, and Recruitment and Retention.

The HSPAC has open meetings the first Friday of every other month, and is a great source of current information regarding changes in the Corps and the Health Services Category. The HSPAC also has associated Professional Advisory Groups (PAGs) which provide discipline-specific advice to the HSPAC and the Health Services CPO.

Information on PAGs representing the following disciplines, basic and applied sciences, dental hygiene, health administration, information technology, medical technology, optometry, physician assistant, psychology, and social work can be found on the HSPAC website above.
3. Social Work Commissioned Corps Officers

Types of Positions

USPHS Commissioned Corps social work officers have the opportunity to serve in many capacities that include, but are not limited to:

- Prevention and Education
- Direct Clinical Services
- Policy
- Program Evaluation
- Program Development and Coordination
- Research and Technical Assistance

Agencies

Social workers fill positions within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Defense (DoD), and with other federal government agencies.

HHS

Some of the HHS primary agencies that employ social workers include:

- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- Indian Health Service (IHS)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- National Institutes of Health (NIH)

For job opportunities within HHS, visit: [http://www.hhs.gov/careers/](http://www.hhs.gov/careers/)

Department of Defense (DoD)

Since 2008, PHS Corps officers, including social workers, have been detailed to DoD to installations and to leadership positions to support service members and their families.


Other Federal Agencies

Social work officers are employed in many other federal agencies. Some of these include, but are not limited to:

- Bureau of Prisons (BOP)
- US Marshals Service (USMS)
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
- Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP)
- Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- NOAA
- Department of the Interior (DOI)
4. USPHS and Other Uniformed Services

**USPHS Commissioned Corps**

**What is the USPHS Corps?**
The USPHS Corps is an elite team of more than 6,000 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. As one of America's seven uniformed services, the USPHS Corps fills essential public health leadership and service roles within the Nation's federal government agencies and programs. USPHS Corps professions are listed at: [http://www.usphs.gov/profession/](http://www.usphs.gov/profession/).

**Core Values:**

**Leadership** - Provides vision and purpose in public health through inspiration, dedication, and loyalty.

**Service** - Demonstrates a commitment to public health through compassionate actions and stewardship of time, resources, and talents.

**Integrity** - Exemplifies uncompromising ethical conduct and maintains the highest standards or responsibility and accountability.

**Excellence** - Exhibits superior performance and continues improvement in knowledge and expertise.

**Leadership:**

*Karen B. DeSalvo, MD, MPH, MSc*

_**Acting Assistant Secretary for Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**_

Dr. Karen DeSalvo, the Acting Assistant Secretary for Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is a physician who has focused her career toward improving access to affordable, high quality care for all people, especially vulnerable populations, and promoting overall health. She has done this through direct patient care, medical education, policy and administrative roles, research, and public service.
Seven Uniformed Services
The United States has seven uniformed services as defined by Title 10 of the United States Code. Five of these comprise the armed forces, four of which are within the DoD and include:

*United States Army
*United States Marine Corps
*United States Air Force
*United States Navy

The Coast Guard has both military and law enforcement duties, and is now under DHS; however, Title 14 of the U.S. Code states that the Coast Guard is part of the military at all times. It is, therefore, the only branch of the military not under the control of the DoD. The Commandant of the Coast Guard reports directly to the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Other Uniformed Services
The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps (NOAA Corps) is a uniformed branch of NOAA, which is under the Department of Commerce and the USPHS Corps is a uniformed branch of the PHS, which is positioned under HHS. The USPHS Corps and NOAA Corps operate under military rules with the exception of the applicability of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Members of the NOAA Corps and USPHS Corps wear uniforms derived from the U.S. Navy wardrobe, except that the commissioning devices, buttons, and insignia are unique. They are paid on the same scale as members of the military and wear similar insignia of rank. Both of these services consist only of commissioned officers and have no enlisted ranks. The distinction between a commissioned officer of a non-military uniformed service and a civilian is important under the laws of war. Members of the USPHS Corps and the NOAA Corps are considered non-combatants in accordance with the Geneva Convention, in Category V.

DoD Military Ranks and Introduction to DoD
Officer Ranks: http://www.defense.gov/About-DoD/Insignias/Officers
Military Courtesy and Protocols

USPHS Corps officers are required to render proper military courtesy under USPHS Personnel Instruction 2, Subchapter CC26.1, "Uniformed Services Courtesies," http://ccmis.usphs.gov/eccis/documents/CCPM26_1_2.pdf. Military courtesy is a required standard of behavior among all U.S. commissioned officers and uniformed military personnel. Service members should ensure that proper military courtesy is rendered to all members of all U.S. uniformed services, and to uniformed military personnel of U.S. allied nations.

When in uniform, and serving with uniformed service personnel of other federal agencies, or when visiting a military installation, USPHS Corps officers are required to conform to the rules of courtesy as practiced by that service. Except for saluting, the rules of military courtesy should also be observed when out of uniform.
5. Personnel

**Identification (ID) Cards for USPHS Officers**

**Uniformed Service ID Cards**

You will need to wait until you are enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) and have a copy of your orders to be able to get an ID card. You will need to complete DD Form 1172, Application for Uniformed Services ID Card.


ID cards may be obtained at military installations. In the Washington, D.C. area, ID Cards may be obtained at Division of Commissioned Corps Personnel (DCCPR) headquarters at 1101 Wooten Parkway, Plaza Level, Suite 100, Rockville, MD 20852, by appointment only. Appointments can be made at: [https://rapids-appointments.dmdc.osd.mil/](https://rapids-appointments.dmdc.osd.mil/).

You must also register your dependents in the DEERS system. Once they are enrolled in DEERS, they can get their ID card, receive health care, and access military bases and flights. You will also then receive pay at the “with dependents” rate. More information is at: [ccmis.usphs.gov/ccmis/PDF_docs/DEERS_cover_memo.pdf](http://ccmis.usphs.gov/ccmis/PDF_docs/DEERS_cover_memo.pdf).

For questions regarding ID cards for you or your dependents, contact DCCPR at 1-877-INFO-DCP.

**Home of Record vs. Legal Residence**

In the United States Military, there is a difference between the terms, "Home of Record" and "Legal Residence." Home of Record and Legal Residence may or may not be the same address. One's Home of Record is the place an officer was living when they entered the armed forces. Home of Record is used to determine travel entitlements when one separates from the military. It has nothing to do with voting or paying taxes, registering vehicles, nor any of the other privileges of state residency.

Home of Record can only be changed if there is a break in service of more than one day, or to correct an error. Legal Residency, or "domicile," on the other hand, refers to the place where a military member intends to return to and live after discharge or retirement, and which they consider their permanent home. Legal residency determines what local (state) tax laws a military member is subject to, and in which local (city, county, state) elections they may vote in.

Because military members may have legal residence in one state, but be stationed in a different state, the Service Members Civil Relief Act (SCRA) allows military members to pay taxes, register vehicles, vote, etc., in their "state of legal residence," rather than the state they are stationed in. This can sometimes result in a tax advantage because some states exempt military pay from state taxes (please be aware that some states may exempt military pay, but not USPHS Corps pay, from state taxes, e.g., Michigan), and some states do not have a state income tax (Florida and Tennessee, for example). That does not
mean a military member may select their legal residence based on whether the state has income taxes and therefore avoid paying state taxes. You may need to file an affidavit in your new state to avoid state tax or yearly personal property tax. The SCRA does not protect you against paying local real estate taxes or state income taxes on non-military income (e.g., a second job). It also does not protect your spouse who will be subject to all the normal state residency and tax rules.

The military is required by regulation to ensure that military members are not selecting their legal residence for the sole purpose of obtaining a tax advantage. Therefore, when selecting a legal residence, officials at the DCCPR Compensation Branch may require some degree of proof that the officer considers the selected state to be their permanent home. This proof can come in the form of being registered to vote in the state, by having cars titled and registered in the state, by having a valid driver's license in the state, or by preparing a new last will and testament (indicating the state as your legal residence).

**USPHS Uniforms**

$250 Uniform Allowance - You are authorized for a one time uniform allowance of $250. To register to receive the money, you need to fill out and mail in the uniform allowance memorandum, which can be found at: [dep.psc.gov/ccmis/forms/FORMS_U...m.aspx](http://dep.psc.gov/ccmis/forms/FORMS_U...m.aspx). You will see a uniform credit on your pay stub once the memo has been processed.

**Uniform Regulations**

As a recognized uniform service of the U.S., visibility of the USPHS Corps is easily obtained by officers properly and appropriately adhering to the uniform policy. Several policy changes have been made available and implemented as USPHS Corps policy:

**CC46.3.1 Uniform Regulations 29 September 2009** - [http://dep.psc.gov/eccis/documents/CCPM46_3_1.pdf](http://dep.psc.gov/eccis/documents/CCPM46_3_1.pdf)

**Uniforms and Appearance - CC412.01 – 21 June 2013**

[https://dep.psc.gov/eccis/documents/CC412.01.pdf](https://dep.psc.gov/eccis/documents/CC412.01.pdf)

The Instruction prescribes the official policy governing uniform regulations for officers of the PHS Corps. This Instruction provides information of a general or miscellaneous nature, while other uniform related Instructions deal with certain specific uniform topics.

**Sources to Obtain Uniforms and Components**

Navy and Marine Corps Uniform Support Center
Mail Order Program, Suite 200, 1240 Gator Blvd, 2nd Floor, Bldg 3126
Norfolk, VA 23521-2315
Customer Service - 1-800-368-4088  Fax - 1-757 502-7532 (CONUS)

**Instructions to order Operational Dress Uniform**


Navy Exchange Online Store - [https://www.mynavyexchange.com/nex/uniforms](https://www.mynavyexchange.com/nex/uniforms)
Pay & Allowances (to include move, bonuses and special pay)

Compensation varies depending on factors such as
grade/rank, years of training and experience (T&E) in your
profession, base pay entry date (BPED), specialty training,
geographic location of your duty station, and dependency
status.

Basic Pay

Rates of and Creditable Service for Basic Pay - Instruction 611.01 (Old CCPM22.1.1)
This INSTRUCTION sets forth the rates of basic pay payable to USPHS Corps officers
on active duty and provides information about service which is creditable for increases in
basic pay.

Military Basic Pay Table:

Board Certified Pay - Social Work - see pages 19 & 22
Under direction of the Commissioned Corps Personnel Manual, CC22.2 pg. 19 (non-
physician special pay), clinical social workers with an unrestricted license and board
certification may receive special pay. Both the American Board of Examiners in Clinical
Social Work and the National Association of Social Workers recognize the advanced
clinical social worker, observant of the highest professional standards, with Board
Certification. Non-physician board certified rates, $2000.00 to $5000.00 annually, are
based on years of creditable service. Once you obtain credentials, forward info. to:

Division of Commissioned Corps Personnel – Compensation Branch
1101 Wotton Parkway, Plaza Level, Suite 100
Rockville, MD, 20852
compensationbranch@psc.gov
Main telephone: 240-276-8799
Fax: 240-276-8817

More resources:
*American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work (www.abecsw.org)
*National Association of Social Workers Credentials
(https://www.socialworkers.org/credentials)

The USPHS Commissioned Corps clinical social workers represent the best, brightest and
most competent leaders in our profession. Board certification makes a strong statement
regarding the clinician’s commitment to advanced practice. The SWPAG encourages
social work officers with an unrestricted clinical license to explore this recognition and
opportunity.
Allowances

Quarters and Subsistence Allowance - CC22.4

Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS) is a monthly allowance payable to all officers at the same rate regardless of rank/BPED unless meals are provided by the Service. BAS is non-taxable.

Basic Allowances for Housing (BAH) is a monthly allowance payable to all officers stationed within the Continental United States (CONUS), including Alaska and Hawaii. It provides compensation for housing rental, renters insurance, and utilities. The rate is determined by the officer's permanent duty station zip code, grade, and dependency status. If an officer is assigned to government housing (does not live on the economy), he/she will not be entitled to this allowance. BAH is non-taxable. Current BAH Rates are at: https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/bah.cfm.

Other Allowances:
Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) - Current Rates for US and Overseas (www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/colaCalc.cfm)

Initial Assignment and Permanent Change of Station Reimbursements
Mileage Rates and Per Diem Rates (www.gsa.gov)

SSCRA of 2003
This link will outline benefits to you upon call to active duty. This includes information on maximum interest rates, residential and motor vehicle purchases and leases, foreclosure and eviction, and life insurance. A copy of the full law can be found at: http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ189.108.pdf

Here is some information on the interest rate reduction:

Maximum Rate of Interest on Loans, Including Mortgages – 6%
Upon receiving a written request for relief and a copy of the servicemember’s military orders, creditors must, for the duration of the servicemember’s military service, reduce the interest rate on debts incurred by the servicemember, or a servicemember and spouse jointly, prior to entry into military service to no more than 6% per year. (This applies to the individual servicemember’s debt or joint debt with a spouse.)

Creditors must maintain the interest rate reduction for the period of military service, except in the case of a mortgage, trust deed, or other security in the nature of a mortgage, where the interest rate reduction extends for one year after the end of the servicemember’s military service.

Creditors who reduce the interest rate on the obligations of a servicemember must forgive interest in excess of 6%.
The reduced interest rate provision applies unless a court finds the ability of the servicemember to pay interest on the debt at a higher interest rate is not materially affected by his or her military service. In such cases, the court may grant a creditor relief from the interest rate limitations of the Act.

It is up to the service member to request the 6% cap; there is a sample letter to use in writing your creditor below. You should include a copy of your military orders and may be asked to include financial information in your request. If a creditor refuses to lower the interest rate on a qualified pre-service debt, you should see a Naval Legal Service Office Legal Assistance Attorney (on base and at www.jag.navy.mil/legal_service/). This protection does not apply to government-backed college loans or to any debt acquired after joining the military.

Sample 6% Request Letter
Date __________
(Your name & address)
(Company's name & address)

Dear __________,
This is a letter requesting a reduction of the interest rate on my (account name & number), under the Service Members Civil Relief Act of 2003 (50 U.S.C. app. 527). As an active duty member of the uniformed services, I am entitled to maximum interest rate protection of 6% per annum on pre-service debt obligation. This interest rate protection applies during peacetime as well as time of war. There is no requirement of overseas service and the difference between the old rate and the 6% maximum is forgiven. Attached you will find a copy of my enlistment contract and/or orders to active duty.

Thank you for your cooperation.
Sincerely, LTJG John Doe

Automobile ad valorem taxes:
It is wonderful to be able to keep the benefits of home. Each year, when your tag is renewed on your car, you can use the Service Member’s Relief Act of 2003 to protect you from paying ad valorem taxes in your duty station state, only if it is not your home of legal residence.

Reference: 50 USC app. 571, Sec 511. Residence for Tax Purposes (c) (1) RELIEF FROM PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES
For information concerning the shipment of household goods, contact your agency liaison. You may also download form PHS-40131-1 at:
http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF_docs/4013_1.pdf
Be sure to check with your duty organization to determine if relocation expenses will be paid.

Some non-government groups that can assist with relocation issues:
PCS America is a relocation network guide of military installations all over the world for the active as well as the reserve community. The website address is http://www.pcsamerica.net, and is a great resource guide for transitioning to a new area with such helpful tips as lodging, schools and even weather.

In addition, USAA members (which are discussed below) are authorized relocation assistance to ease the stress of transferring to a new duty station. If you are moving to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, the main housing assistance office is 1-800-210-0139, and their website is http://www.ndw.navy.mil.
6. Promotions

Officers preparing for promotion need to be familiar with the five promotion precepts described in the electronic Commissioned Corps Issuance System (eCCIS) Instructions: Permanent Grade Promotions CCPM23.4.1 and Temporary Promotions CCPM23.4.2. To assist officers in better understanding the promotion precepts, the precepts are described in terms of factors that may be considered in scoring that precept. Each factor has a benchmark, which is a level of achievement for the officer given the category and grade. The purpose of this guidance is to inform officers and promotion boards of the levels of achievement per promotion precept generally considered to describe the “best qualified” officer for a specific category at a specific grade.

The CPO and PAC Chairs, in consultation with their constituent category members, revise the benchmarks annually to reflect the ever changing missions and policies of the Corps. All five promotion precepts are identical for all categories, as are the benchmarks for promotion precepts 1, 4, and 5. The benchmarks for promotion precepts 2 and 3 are category-specific. Except for the promotion precept 5, “Readiness,” which has criteria developed by the Readiness and Deployment Operations Group (RedDOG), the benchmarks for the other precepts are not criteria required for promotion. They serve as a basis by which officers can be measured within each category. The members of the Promotion Boards review the service records of each officer under consideration for promotion and each assigns a score for the specific promotion precept. Promotion Board members exercise their professional judgment and discretion in the review and rating of each record. No officer is expected to meet all of the benchmarks. The benchmarks are not to be considered a checklist of activities that must be completed in order to be promoted. Quality of service is more important than quantity.

The individual factors within each precept are not listed in priority order. The importance of each factor is left to the discretion of the Promotion Boards. There is no time period that limits which of the officer’s activities and accomplishments are eligible for consideration. However, activities and accomplishments subsequent to an officer’s last promotion should receive priority consideration.

The promotion precepts are weighted as follows:
1. Performance Rating and Reviewing Official Statement (Performance) 40%
2. Education, training, and professional development 20%
3. Career progression and potential 25%
4. Professional contributions and services to the PHS Commissioned Corps (Officership) 15%
5. Response Readiness 0%

Promotion Board members examine many documents in the officer’s electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF) during the promotion review. Examples of these documents include, but are not limited to: Commissioned Officers’ Effectiveness Report (COER), Promotion Information Report (PIR), curriculum vitae (CV), the Officers Statement,
award narratives, and letters of appreciation. The most recent COERs (e.g., the last 3-5 years) are generally given the most consideration by Promotion Board members, although earlier COERs may also be reviewed. Promotion Board members evaluate both the letter values of the COER and the accompanying narrative.

Career development resources (e.g., CV) reviews, mentoring, internet training tools, career development seminars, fellow officers) provided by the PACs, agency liaisons, DCCPR, and the CPOs should be explored and fully utilized by all officers.

The benchmarks will continue to evolve as the USPHS Corps continues to evolve. Any comments or suggestions that you have on the benchmarks may be submitted to your PAC Chair, and will be carefully considered for incorporation into the next annual revision.
7. Training and Readiness

Commissioned Officer Training Academy (COTA)
All newly commissioned officers should actively seek supervisory approval to attend the Officer Basic Course (OBC) within the first 6 months of active duty. The OBC is a two week official Temporary Duty Assignment (TDY) that provides comprehensive orientation to the Corps officer that includes but is not limited to: basic Corps information, career development, leave and compensation, readiness, response requirements, promotion process, customs and courtesies, awards and other essential information.

RedDOG
Note: There are a number of excellent resources on this site at:
http://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/DCCPR_readiness_and_deployment_m.aspx.

Readiness
To meet new challenges in protecting the health of the public as a commissioned officer, you are required to meet and maintain readiness standards. These standards include immunizations, physical fitness standards, and emergency response training. The Basic Readiness Requirements can be found on the RedDOG site or here: Readiness Assistance Form - https://dcp.psc.gov/cclogin/ccmislogin.aspx and Readiness Checklist - http://dcp.psc.gov/CCMIS/RedDOG/Forms/Basic_Readiness_Checklist.pdf (Guide + Checklist, 967 kb). There are also training resources at:
http://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/MENU_training_academy_m.aspx.
8. Military Benefits

There are many military benefits available to USPHS Corps officers. A brief listing of some of the more common benefits are listed below. For more details of the benefits available, go to: Military.com Benefits.

**Health/Medical Care** – Medical care is one of the most important PHS benefits. When using a Uniformed Services Military Treatment Facility (USMTF), it is expected that the officer be in uniform. If you are stationed close to a military hospital/clinic, you are required to use that facility. The Medical Affairs Branch (MAB) may authorize to pay for civilian medical services if an officer is not near a USMTF or if the USMTF does not provide the services needed. You may contact MAB directly at 240-276-8780; Fax: 240-453-6134 (DO NOT FAX MEDICAL DOCUMENTS). The MAB site is: http://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/DCCPR_medical_affairs_m.aspx

**TRICARE** - The Military Health System is the primary source of health care for active-duty PHS officers. The TRICARE system has other options for active-duty family members, retirees, and their eligible family members. (www.tricare.mil)

**The Base and Post Exchanges (BX/PX)** – A valid identification card is required to purchase merchandise and may be required for entry when not in uniform. There are several types of stores in this system including main exchanges, which are similar to department stores, auto services, uniform shops and miscellaneous stores including tailor/laundry, optical, flower, and fast food. (Search at: www.military.com)

*Navy (NEX)     *Army-AF (AAFES)     *Marine Corps (MCX)

**Commissaries** - Commissaries are the supermarkets at military installations. At many commissaries, a valid ID card is required for entry. At commissaries, baggers work for tips only. (Search at: www.military.com)

**Service Clubs** – The most frequently used club is the Officers’ Club at military bases. You are also eligible to visit United Service Organization (USO) locations. However, some locations may restrict access to only the armed forces. The USO is a charitable corporation providing morale, welfare, and recreation services to uniformed military personnel. Many have “officer clubs” in airports that provide free services to officers on work related or personal travel. (Search at: www.military.com)

**Air Mobility Command (AMC) Flights** – This is the ability to travel on military flights on
Space A (space-available) basis. These flights are typically extremely inexpensive, and usually fly in and out of military bases. Officers must be on official leave to be eligible for a space on the flight. (See info at: https://dep.psc.gov/osg/apaoc/documents/space_a.pdf)

**Military Lodging Facilities** - Almost all military installations have some form of temporary lodging on base, which is available as space allows and extremely inexpensive. Bachelor Officers’ Quarters (BOQ) and Visiting Officers’ Quarters (VOQ) vary widely ranging from simple rooms with shared bath to multi-room suites. Temporary military lodging (TML) quarters are designed for the military family. A list of all DoD Lodging Resources can be found at www.dodlodging.net, but some useful numbers to identify include:

- Air Force 1-888-AFLODGE (1-888-235-6343)
- Army 1-800-GO-ARMY-1 (1-800-462-7691)
- Marine Corps Lodging - [http://marines.dodlodging.net/](http://marines.dodlodging.net/)
- Navy 1-800-NAVY-INN (628-9466) – [www.navy-lodge.com](http://www.navy-lodge.com)
- Coast Guard Lodging - [http://www.uscg.mil/mwr/lodging/Lodging.asp](http://www.uscg.mil/mwr/lodging/Lodging.asp)

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

**Armed Forces Vacation Club** - The Armed Forces Vacation Club® (AFVC) is a "space available" program that offers military and other Department of Defense-affiliated personnel the opportunity to enjoy vacations at popular destinations around the world – for reduced prices. Armed Forces Personnel and their family and friends have access to spacious accommodations at more than 3,500 resorts, apartments, condominiums and homes in more than 80 countries. More about program requirements can be found at [www.afvclub.com](http://www.afvclub.com).

**Armed Forces Recreation Center (AFRC)** - AFRC resorts are affordable Joint Service facilities operated by the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center and located at ideal vacation destinations throughout the world. AFRCs offer a full range of resort hotel opportunities for service members and their families.

*Edelweiss Lodge and Resort - Garmisch, Germany  * Hale Koa - Honolulu, HI
*Shades of Green – Orlando, FL  * Dragon Hill Lodge - Seoul, Korea

**Recreational Facilities** – Most military installations have a variety of recreational facilities available. These include theaters, swimming pools, bowling lanes, sports equipment rentals, youth centers, and information/ticket offices. Several installations also have wilderness camps, waterfront sites, and other vacation-type sites. Check your closest base’s website for details.

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

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

**Service member’s Group Life Insurance (SGLI)**

This is a program of low cost group life insurance for servicemembers on active duty, ready reservists, members of the NOAA and USPHS Corps, cadets and midshipmen of the four service academies, and members of the Reserve Officer Training Corps. Servicemembers with SGLI coverage have two options available to them upon release from service. They can convert their full-time SGLI coverage to term insurance under the Veteran’s Group Life Insurance Program or convert to a permanent plan of insurance with one of the participating commercial insurance companies.

**The Navy Mutual Aid Association’s (NMAA’s) Career Assistance Loan and Insurance Program** - New officers coming into the uniformed services may be eligible for the first 6 months of their commission to receive a one-time “career assistance loan.” The loan is intended to help new officers with getting settled in their new job by providing money for personal expenses that may arise shortly after commissioning. It is
directly withdrawn out of your paycheck. To get the loan, you must also purchase life insurance through Navy Mutual Aid Association.

**Post - 9/11 GI Bill and other programs** - The Department of Veterans Affairs administers a variety of education benefit programs. Many Veterans and active duty personnel can qualify for more than one education benefits program, including the:
- The Post-9/11 GI Bill
- Montgomery GI Bill - Active Duty (MGIB-AD)
- Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)
- Educational Assistance Test Program (Section 901)
- Survivors’ and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (DEA)

Current rates for all Education benefit programs are available. This information can be useful in helping you select a benefit program.

*Find a School  * Apply for Benefits * Benefits Calculator * Compare the Programs

**USAA** - USAA is a financial institution created specifically to serve uniformed service members and their families. They have competitive rates for car insurance, homeowner’s and renter’s insurance, and mortgage loans. You may also invest through USAA and open ‘no-cost’ checking and savings accounts through them. One loan option is the VA loan, which is a type of mortgage option through USAA (exclusive to uniformed service officers and their families). Phone: 1-800-365-USAA (8722); hours: Monday - Friday 0700-1800, Central Time.

**Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)** - The thrift savings plan is a tax-deferred savings plan, meaning it is taken from your salary before it is taxed (which lowers your taxable income), and you pay taxes when you eventually withdraw the money. It is a plan you can start, stop or change at any time.

There is a TSP for civilian as well as uniformed officers, but the plans are much different. The civilian account is more like a 401K, where a percentage of contributions are matched by the employing agency. In the uniformed services account the contributions are not matched, but they are tax deferred. This is not the sole retirement for officers, because they have the military retirement plan, but it provides a method of adding to the ‘nest egg’ a person builds over their career. Also, you can borrow from your TSP account under certain conditions.

**Tax benefits: Service Members Civil Relief Act of 2003**

**Other Important Links:**

**The HSPAC** represents the interests of HSOs as it creates HSO policies on promotions and benchmarks, and advises upper leadership about issues that matter to us. You may volunteer for this group as a nonvoting member, or apply for voting membership. As stated previously, the group has meetings the first Friday of every other month and is a
great source of current information regarding changes in the USPHS Corps and the HSO Category.

New officers have the option of requesting a mentor to help them acclimate at: http://usphs-hso.org/?q=pac/sub/mentoring/program.

**Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG):** As an officer ranking O-4 or below, you are considered a junior officer. The JOAG is another advisory group to the Surgeon General that is cross-categorical and cross-agency. The JOAG represents the interests of junior officers and advises the Surgeon General on issues that are likely to impact them.

**Minority Officers Liaison Council (MOLC):** The MOLC and its subgroups, the American Indian Alaskan Native Commissioned Officer Advisory Committee (AIANCOAC), Asian Pacific American Office Committee (APAOC), Black Commissioned Officers Advisory Group (BCOAG), and Hispanic Officer’s Advisory Committee (HOAC), independently and collectively provide advice and consultation to the Office of the Surgeon General on issues and activities related to minority officers and citizens in their respective groups.

**USPHS Professional Organizations:**

**Commissioned Officers Association (COA) of the USPHS**
The mission of the COA of the USPHS is to improve and protect the public health of the United States by advocating for the PHS Corps and its officers. In meeting its commitment, the organization will provide comprehensive member services, conduct representation and advocacy, conduct education and training for health professionals, conduct studies and research, collaborate with related organizations, and disseminate public and professional information. Phone: 301-731-9080

**Reserve Officers Association (ROA)**
ROA represents the interests of all uniformed service members, much the same as COA represents the interests of USPHS Commissioned Corps officers. Phone: 1-800-809-9448

**Association of American Military Surgeons of the US (AMSUS)**
AMSUS is a resource for members and others with an interest in Federal Healthcare. The organization offers scholarship programs, Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Defense and updates in Military Medicine.
Phone: 1-800-761-9320
10. Helpful Information for USPHS Social Workers

Awards

Social Worker of the Year Award - The Social Work Professional Advisory Group's Social Worker of the Year Award is presented to a Social Work Health Services Officer in the Commissioned Corps of the USPHS who has demonstrated outstanding accomplishments, exhibits exceptional leadership ability and exemplary service, while substantially advancing the health of the Nation through innovative and strategic solutions as well as significantly impacting the mission of the Corps. The social work officer must present a positive professional image in the USPHS; demonstrate outstanding leadership; and meet one of the following criteria:

- A specific notable accomplishment that impacts the public or the field of public health and/or social work;
- High quality and initiative in leadership;
- Sustained high quality work performance demonstrated by significant accomplishments throughout one's career;
- The application of unique skill or creative imagination to the approach or solution of a problem(s);
- Technical and/or professional contributions that are significant to an Office, Center, Bureau, Agency or PHS Mission; and/or
- Exhibition of great courage in hazardous work or in an emergency.

JOAG Awards – See list of awards at:
http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/JOAG/awards.aspx

Joseph Garcia Jr. Award – The Joseph Garcia Jr. Award for Outstanding Junior Health Services Officer of the Year. This award has been developed to promote the future leadership of the PHS by honoring a junior (O-2 through O-4) member of the Health Services Category or equivalent civil service professional who has made a significant contribution to the advancement of the nation’s health. Nominations may come from a supervisor, professional colleague, or anyone who, through a professional working relationship, can attest to the impact of the nominee’s contributions to the advancement of public health. Self-nominations will not be accepted.

Associations

National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

NASW Membership - NASW membership offers a wide variety of benefits and special offers that range from business services that save you time and money to publications and programs that can help advance your career. Membership benefits include insurance protection, professional development, advancing the profession, National and state chapter membership, leading edge information, legislative advocacy and Political Action for Candidate Election, financial marketplace and rental car discounts. Please visit
http://www.socialworkers.org/join.asp and click on the link for one of these topic areas for more information.

**NASW Specialty Areas** – NASW also provides specialty practice sections to allow members the opportunity for professional development through live practice specific teleconferences, free CEUs, social work chats, E-alerts and much more. You can customize your NASW membership by joining a special practices section such as aging; alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; child welfare; children, adolescents, and young adults; health; mental health; private practice; school social work; and/or social and economic justice and peace.