

SUBJECT: 2006 Annual Commissioned Officers' Effectiveness Report (COER)

The 2006 Annual COER is a Web-based electronic workflow process which can be accessed from the Commissioned Corps Management Information System (MIS) Web site at: <http://dcp.psc.gov>. In addition to this Manual Circular, help instructions are also available.

1. Summary of Important Points

- Rating Period is **1 October 2005 through 30 September 2006**
- COER due to Rater by **16 October 2006**
- COER due to Reviewing Official by **6 November 2006**
- COER due to the Office of Commissioned Corps Operations (OCCO) by **20 November 2006**
- Officers should keep track of their own COER by frequently logging into their ONLINE COER and checking their electronic Official Personnel File (eOPF) for the completed COER.
- If transferring assignments on or after **1 July 2006**, officers may complete an Annual COER prior to the release of the electronic COER. Officers should contact their Commissioned Corps Liaison or phscoers@hhs.gov.
- Officers must complete **Attachment 1** and should address the duties, accomplishments, and goals as related to their billet description AND activities and accomplishments evidencing officership, leadership, and force readiness in the context of a transformed Corps.

2. Definitions Used in this Manual Circular

Rater. The Rater is usually the immediate or first-line supervisor of one or more officers. The Rater has responsibilities for establishing performance expectations; planning and setting priorities; assigning work; administering personnel matters; and dealing effectively with officers about officer/management concerns.

Reviewing Official. In most cases, the Reviewing Official is the immediate supervisor of the officer's Rater. There may be exceptions in the case of officers detailed to non-Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) organizations.

Commissioned Corps Liaison. The Commissioned Corps Liaison is the person designated by the HHS Operating Division (OPDIV)/Staff Division (STAFFDIV) or non-HHS organization to which the officer is assigned to monitor the progress of completion of the COER. For the list of Liaisons, go to <http://dcp.psc.gov> and select "About Us", then select "SGPAC and Commissioned Corps Liaison Listing."

Rating Period. The annual COER should reflect the officer's performance between 1 October 2005 and 30 September 2006.

EXPIRATION DATE: Until Further Notice
DISTRIBUTION: Commissioned Corps Management Information System Web Site
<http://dcp.psc.gov> - 'Publications'
Office of the Surgeon General

3. Purpose

The purpose of this Manual Circular is to transmit to all Public Health Service (PHS) Commissioned Corps officers and their supervisors guidelines for completing the annual COER.

An annual COER, for the rating period (1 October 2005 to 30 September 2006), is required for all officers on active duty with the exception of the following:

- officers called to extended active duty on or after 1 July 2006;
- officers who have separated or retired prior to 1 July 2006;
- officers on short tours and intermittent tours as provided in INSTRUCTION 9, Subchapter CC23.5, "Short Tours of Active Duty – Inactive Reserve Corps," of the Commissioned Corps Personnel Manual (CCPM);
- participants in the Junior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (JRCOSTEP);
- participants in the Senior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (SRCOSTEP);
- medical students enrolled at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences;
- the Assistant Secretary for Health (if he/she is a commissioned officer);
- the Surgeon General; and
- non-career and career political appointees.

Annual COERs are required irrespective of the fact that a COER was recently submitted for some other purpose. A Transfer COER submitted by an officer who transfers on or after 1 July 2006 will be processed as the Annual COER. This can be completed prior to the release of the electronic COER. The generic paper COER can be accessed from the Commissioned Corps MIS Web site at <http://dcp.psc.gov>. Select 'Services', then select 'Official Forms', and then 'Performance'. A complete COER consists of form **PHS-838, Attachment 1** (completed by the officer), and **Attachment 2** (completed by the Rater).

It is the duty and responsibility of all officers being rated, Raters, and Reviewing Officials to promptly complete and transmit a COER when due. Failure to transmit a properly completed COER in a timely manner is disadvantageous to the officer being evaluated. Officers who are required to complete an Annual 2006 COER will not be promoted or assimilated and cannot receive awards, details, or special pays if the COER is not completed. (**NOTE:** OCCO is prohibited from issuing retroactive personnel orders that affect pay.)

When it is determined that an officer, a Rater, or a Reviewing Official has not transmitted a COER by the due dates established, follow-up action will be initiated by the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization Commissioned Corps Liaison. The Commissioned Corps Liaison shall also review any instances of a continued missing COER to determine whether disciplinary action against the officer, Rater, or Reviewing Official is appropriate.

The guidelines provided in this Manual Circular supplement INSTRUCTION 1, Subchapter CC25.1, "Commissioned Officers' Effectiveness Report," of the CCPM. Descriptive examples of each question found on the COER are provided in an attachment to this Manual Circular. PLEASE READ AND FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES CAREFULLY.

The officer will go to the Commissioned Corps MIS Web site at: <http://dcp.psc.gov>, then click the 'Access 2006 Annual COER System' link, then enter his/her logon ID and password normally used to access the Commissioned Corps MIS Web site's secure area. If you do not know your logon ID and password, contact the CCHelpDesk at (301) 594-0961 or you may e-mail the CCHelpDesk at cchelpdesk@psc.gov. If you do not have Internet access, contact your Commissioned Corps Liaison for guidance.

4. Rights of Officers

Officers should have an opportunity to correct conduct and performance weaknesses with the cooperation of the Rater and/or Reviewing Official(s), as appropriate. When discussing an officer's performance weaknesses, the officer, Rater and/or Reviewing Official(s) should agree on what corrective action steps the officer needs to take. Such a plan should establish specific performance objectives and evaluation criteria, as well as a reasonable time frame over which performance can be assessed. The officer, Rater, and/or Reviewing Official(s) should, whenever possible, agree to any additional training that may be necessary or helpful.

An officer may disagree with a performance rating. It is recognized that management styles can influence ratings. Individuals who review the COER (e.g., boards, reviewing officials, etc.) pay attention to comments provided by officers. These comments should detail accomplishments or assessments of strengths or weaknesses not given proper attention by the Rater.

Rebuttal

It is PHS Commissioned Corps policy that an officer's evaluation be discussed with him/her in a formal manner. If an officer disagrees with the COER ratings, the officer may provide rebuttal information. If a COER is rebutted by an officer, both the officer and the Rater may submit all necessary documentation and comments (i.e., more than one page is authorized in this situation) to OCCO via the Commissioned Corps Liaison within 60 days of the COER completion date. The Rebuttal needs to be signed by both the officer and the Liaison. The Liaison's signature is required for processing purposes only. The Liaison will provide a copy to the Rater and Reviewing official, and then forward the original to OCCO for inclusion in the officer's eOPF. If the Rater provides documentation or comments, the Liaison will sign the original and provide the officer with a copy, then forward to OCCO for inclusion in the officer's eOPF. *The officer's name, PHS serial number, and date of the COER must appear at the top of each document. The Rebuttal needs to identify the number or numbers of the questions being disputed with a clear, objective response detailing the officer's position.* NOTE: OCCO takes no further action on rebuttals. The rebuttal is NOT a substitute for a grievance.

In addition to submitting a rebuttal, the officer may grieve the COER under procedures provided in INSTRUCTION 5, Subchapter CC26.1, "Grievances," of the CCPM. The officer may also file an equal opportunity (EO) complaint in accordance with INSTRUCTION 6, Subchapter CC26.1, "Equal Opportunity: Discrimination Complaints Processing." If the officer is not satisfied with the outcome of the grievance or EO process, he/she may apply for relief to the Board for Correction of PHS Commissioned Corps Records as provided in INSTRUCTION 5, Subchapter CC29.9, "General Administration Manual Policies and Procedures for Board for Correction of PHS Commissioned Corps Records," of the CCPM.

NOTE: The Board for Correction of PHS Commissioned Corps Records may not consider an application until the officer has exhausted other available administrative remedies, including the grievance and EO processes.

The Privacy Act of 1974 gives individuals the right, subject to certain conditions, to gain access to records (including COERs) maintained on them.

5. Specific Instructions for Officers

a. Before the COER is electronically forwarded to the Rater:

The officer will review and update his/her phone number and e-mail address.

The officer must complete Attachment 1 to the COER. Officers should address:

1. The duties, accomplishments, and goals as related to his/her billet description.
2. Activities and accomplishments evidencing officership, leadership, and force readiness in the context of a transformed Corps.

In addition to the previous two requirements, officers must also answer whether they were under a 2006 Performance Management Plan in Attachment 1 during the 2006 rating period (See Section 9).

The officer will identify his/her Rater. It is critical that you provide an accurate e-mail address for the Rater.

Officers will initiate the COER, and transmit it electronically to the Rater **NO LATER THAN 16 OCTOBER 2006.**

The COER is to reflect the performance of the officer initiating the report as of the close of business on 30 September 2006.

b. After the COER is Completed by the Rater:

The officer will receive an e-mail notification that the COER is available for review. The officer must logon to review the evaluation and after discussion, if there are no changes needed, the officer may concur/disagree with the COER. If changes are needed, both the Rater and officer may modify the COER. The Rater must review any changes to Attachment 1 before the officer is able to concur/disagree.

If the officer disagrees with the evaluation, the officer may provide a rebuttal. Written rebuttal to the rating will be submitted after the COER has been electronically transmitted to OCCO.

The Reviewing Official will not have access to an officer's COER until the officer concurs or disagrees with the COER evaluation. The officer may wish to discuss his/her reason for the rebuttal with the Reviewing Official immediately before the Reviewing Official concurs/disagrees with the COER.

- c. After the COER is completed by the Reviewing Official:

The officer will receive an e-mail indicating the COER is complete. The COER will be archived in the officer's eOPF on the Commissioned Corps MIS Web site within one (1) week of the Reviewing Official's concurrence/non-concurrence. To obtain a copy of the COER, the officer may access the eOPF at: <http://dcp.psc.gov>, select 'Secure Area' and then select 'Officer & Liaison Activities', then enter his/her logon ID and password. If the COER is not in the eOPF within one (1) week of receipt of the e-mail notification that the COER is complete, contact phscoers@hhs.gov. (NOTE: the officer should first verify that the COER is indeed complete by checking the COER status in the COER application.)

6. Specific Instructions for Raters (Immediate Supervisors)

- a. General Instructions

The Rater will receive an e-mail notification when an officer has submitted a COER for them to rate.

The first responsibility of the Rater is to ensure that all officers under their supervision electronically transmit the COER to them **NO LATER THAN 16 OCTOBER 2006**, with Attachment 1 completed. If an officer being rated delays submitting the COER after being reminded by the Rater, the Rater will initiate a hardcopy COER after consultation with the Commissioned Corps Liaison. The Liaison will provide the Rater with the appropriate hardcopy document. The Rater should provide a statement with the COER explaining that the COER is being initiated by the Rater and the reason for this action. The Rater may consider the officer's failure to submit the COER in a timely manner in the officer's evaluation. If the officer refuses to sign the COER initiated by the Rater, this will be noted on the COER, and the COER, without the officer's signature, will be sent through the review process to OCCO.

The Rater completes the following:

The Rater must review Attachment 1 from the officer. If necessary, the Rater can ask the officer to modify Attachment 1. The Rater must enter the time he/she has supervised the officer.

If the Rater has supervised the officer less than 6 months, either a detailed COER or a narrative COER may be completed. A narrative COER consists of a satisfactory or unsatisfactory rating for the officer's overall performance. A detailed COER consists of 18 questions covering abilities, motivation, interests, and other characteristics considered most pertinent to the officer's performance in the Service.

Detailed COER

For a detailed COER, the Rater indicates the level that most nearly describes the officer by selecting the appropriate rating for all questions, with "A" being the lowest rating and "E" being the highest rating (see attachment to this Manual Circular for each of the 18 questions). The Rater should rate each item independently without reference to any other one. It is imperative both to the officer and to the PHS Commissioned Corps that the COER rating be candid and objective. Each "A" rating must have a comment specifying the reason for the low rating.

The Rater must complete Attachment 2 to provide comments on the ratings and/or an overall description of the officer's performance during the rating period. The Rater should also address whether a Performance Contract was used to evaluate the officer by answering the Performance Contract question on Attachment 2. Comments addressing the officer's performance should be consistent with the rating given and not repeat the wording of the questions. Comments should reflect accomplishments as well as level of responsibility. Please provide examples of quantitative results.

Ratings should be responsive to any information provided by an officer regarding his/her accomplishments. It is recommended that preliminary ratings be developed by Raters in preparation for the performance discussion with the officer, and finalized during the performance discussion after the officer has had the opportunity to provide any additional information for the Rater to consider.

If Rating periods include extended periods of sick leave or intermittent episodes of sick leave, the officer should be evaluated on his/her performance when present.

For those officers being rated who are in supervisory or managerial positions, the Rater will include in the performance appraisal those supervisory and administrative actions which ensure equal treatment of all staff by completing Item 17. The comments for this rating should include information about the scope of the officer's efforts to support, facilitate, and enhance the OPDIV/STAFFDIV/ non-HHS organization's career development and advancement opportunities of minorities, women, and persons with disabilities under the officer's supervision.

Many officers are assigned to positions where a results-oriented (i.e., work plan) process is used by the program. Where such an appraisal is completed on a commissioned officer, it will likely contain helpful information. Consequently, it should be used to support the Rater's decision for several elements on the COER. However, the completed appraisal form may not be transmitted with the COER to OCCO. Rather, it should be used by Raters in preparing the narrative comments of the COER to supplement or support the quantitative ratings of the COER.

The Rater must select a Reviewing Official to review the COER. Typically, this is the immediate supervisor of the Rater, unless an OPDIV/STAFFDIV/non-HHS organization has specified otherwise.

Raters and officers must complete their COER activities so that the completed COER and attachments are electronically transmitted to the Reviewing Official **NO LATER THAN 6 NOVEMBER 2006.**

b. Special Circumstances

- (1) Officer in Current Position or Supervised Less Than 6 Months (excludes officers called to extended active duty on or after 1 July 2006).

A narrative COER may be prepared when the Rater believes that a complete performance rating is premature or inappropriate. It is appropriate for the Rater to seek input in completing the COER from the officer's previous supervisor. The narrative statement should summarize the officer's performance to date. The Rater may select a narrative COER, then select either "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory" as the overall rating. The Rater must still provide a general summary statement of the officer's performance in Attachment 2.

- (2) Officer in Training Outside of the Service.

A narrative COER may be prepared for officers in training outside the Service when the Rater believes that a complete performance rating is inappropriate. It is appropriate for the Rater to seek input in completing the COER from the officer's educational advisor. The Rater may select a narrative COER, then select either "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory" as the overall rating. The Rater must still provide a general summary statement of the officer's performance in Attachment 2.

- (3) Officers Assigned or Detailed to Non-HHS Organizations.

Some officers are assigned or detailed to State, county, and local health organizations, other Federal Agencies, or international organizations. The COER is used for the evaluation of all Corps officers whether assigned to HHS OPDIVs/STAFFDIVs or assigned or detailed to non-HHS organizations. If a COER Rater is not designated in the detail agreement, the official named in the detail agreement as the Federal Supervisor shall be the Rater for the COER. The HHS official designated in the personnel agreement covering the detail will function as the Reviewing Official. If no HHS official has been so designated, the next higher level supervisor over the Rater will serve as the Reviewing Official. The performance criteria applied in rating the officer will be specified in the assignment or detail agreement, or, if not specified, applicable Federal standards will be used. For officers detailed under "blanket" or "no-host" details (e.g., Environmental Protection Agency, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Marshals Service, National Park Service, Federal Bureau of Prisons, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, etc.), the immediate supervisor in the organization to which the officer is assigned or detailed shall be the Rater for the COER.

- (4) Officers Who Have Transferred During the Period of the COER.

If a Rater has supervised an officer for a short period of time (less than 6 months), it is appropriate for the Rater to seek input in completing the COER from the officer's previous supervisor. If there is no former supervisor, a note to that effect should be included on the attachment to the COER.

(5) Officers With Duty Station Separated from Rater.

If an officer's duty station is geographically separated from the duty station of the Rater or if an officer is temporarily working in another program, diligence is to be exercised by the Rater to objectively assess performance. For example, site visits or discussions with on-site supervisors may be helpful to assess performance.

7. Specific Instructions for Reviewing Officials

The Reviewing Official will receive an e-mail notifying him/her to review an officer's COER.

Reviewing Officials must remember that the COER is an important management tool. An officer is to be objectively rated by the Rater, and an appropriate balance is to be provided between an officer's performance strengths and weaknesses. Reviewing Officials are also reminded that it is expected that problems and/or difficulties with an officer's performance shall be documented. The first responsibility of Reviewing Officials is to ensure that all COERs under their jurisdiction are electronically transmitted to them **NO LATER THAN 6 NOVEMBER 2006** for all officers under their purview.

Reviewing Officials should review an officer's Attachment 1 as well as the Rater's scores and Attachment 2.

Reviewing Officials will indicate concurrence or disagreement with the COER. They will not be permitted to make any changes in the letter designations or comments made by the Rater or officer.

Reviewing Officials may state any specific agreements or disagreements with the COER. Any comments made by a Reviewing Official which might in any way be considered negative by the officer shall be discussed with the officer.

It is recommended that the Reviewing Official discuss the COER with the officer and the Rater if the officer has indicated he/she will be rebutting the Rater's evaluation.

The Reviewing Official must indicate concurrence or non-concurrence, so that the electronically transmitted COER is submitted to OCCO **NO LATER THAN 20 NOVEMBER 2006**.

8. Specific Instructions for Commissioned Corps Liaisons

Commissioned Corps Liaisons are responsible for identifying the appropriate Rater and Reviewing Official if there is any uncertainty as to who should fulfill these roles.

Commissioned Corps Liaisons are responsible for tracking COER status and making follow-up inquiries on those that are not transmitted in a timely fashion.

Commissioned Corps Liaisons will have status reports and missing COER reports available to them to help monitor the progress of COERs of officers assigned to them.

9. Performance Management Plans

- a. Based on the President's Management Agenda, the Government Performance and Results Act, and other Federal initiatives, HHS has developed and is using the new Performance Management Appraisal Program (PMAP) throughout the Department's OPDIVs/STAFFDIVs. The OPDIVs/STAFFDIVs are using the PMAP to signal implementation of the concepts delineated in those initiatives. PMAP is one aspect of a new, corporate approach to performance management for civilian employees which emphasizes the cascading of broad HHS organizational objectives throughout its OPDIVs/STAFFDIVs.
- b. Officers were alerted in PPM 05-010 that HHS had introduced the concept of annual performance plans into its system for evaluating the performances of senior departmental officials including officers in flag grade billets. While officers are exempt from the PMAP, officers may be required to have a performance plan to facilitate the use of the PMAP through the Department. Although the initial notice targeted officers in flag grade billets, officers are advised that lower grade officers may be required to have a performance plan. The PMAP process is a departmental initiative, not a Corps initiative. Therefore, officers should contact their rater and/or reviewing official for additional information on the PMAP process and to determine whether there are process requirements that are currently applicable to them.

Privacy Act Provisions

Personnel records are subject to the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974. The applicable system of record is 09-40-0001, "PHS Commissioned Corps General Personnel Records," HHS/PSC/HRS.


Assistant Secretary for Health

