



Deployment Narrative Form

Required Fields

Date (MM/DD/YYYY): 02/17/2022

Name (Rank, First, Last, Credentials): LT Erin Heap, RDH, BSDH, PHDHP

Deployment Team or Tier (e.g. Tier 3): Kima:w_Supp

Title/Position at Duty Station (e.g. Epidemiologist): Clinical Dental Hygienist II

OPDIV: Federal Bureau of Prisons

Email Address: eheap@bop.gov

Narrative Questions [respond to as many as applicable]

1. What is your current assignment in USPHS?

I am a clinical dental hygienist at FCI Allenwood, an all male federal prison in Central PA.

2. What was the mission of your deployment? (e.g. dates, location, and other pertinent details)

I was sent under the COVID-19 Mission to Hoopa, CA to the K'ima:w Dental clinic to serve the Hoopa Valley Tribe as a dental hygienist for 30 days, filling a vacancy within the clinic. I deployed on 14 Dec 2021 and demobilized 15 Jan 2022.

3. What was your role during this deployment? What skills (scientific, personal, etc.) did you use?

I was able to utilize my clinical hygiene skills to treat 95 patients in diagnostic and preventive treatment as well as providing patient education and distributed hundreds of homecare items for a population with an access to care gap. I was able to see a wide variety of patients from 3 year olds to geriatrics, pregnant to orthodontic patients! I was also the Officer in Charge (OIC) and sent daily reports to the command cell at headquarters. For this role I had to be organized, forward thinking and keep open communication while being an advocate for myself and follow officers. I had the responsibility of keeping my team safe as the area experienced an earthquake and a week later a major winter storm that displaced us from our billeting due to downed trees taking down electric lines, leaving us without electric/ heat/ gas and making the roads unpassable.

4. Was this your first deployment? Either way, how did you prepare for the deployment, personally or work-wise?

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This was my first long-term deployment. I did do a weekend RAM event in 2019. This mission definitely felt more like a deployment, I was on the other side of the country, away from my family, over the holidays, and for half the time was by myself in a national forest.

My work and supervisor was very supportive, she checked in on me via text every few days with encouragement. Although family was sad to see me gone over Christmas, they were also encouraging and we were able to work through the 3 hour time difference and did a lot of Facetiming.

As I was preparing for travel and the deployment itself, I am very thankful for mentors and fellow PHS officers that quickly responded to my cries for help in helping me decipher what I needed to pack and how the process would/should go which allowed me feel more at ease.

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Deployment Subcommittee
Deployment Narratives

5. Do you have any advice or “pearls of wisdom” for fellow officers who are being deployed or are interested in deploying?

Have a list of items you need so when you get the call and have only a day or so to prepare you can quickly go through your check off list and not worry about forgetting anything.

6. What was the most important thing you learned during this deployment?

When you see something, say something! Headquarters will not know what problems you are having and you won't get the support you need if you/your OIC doesn't make them aware of what is happening on site.

7. What were some of the key challenges that you experienced?

Wifi, cell phone service and electric issues in remote areas plus a winter storm. Restaurants shut down and gas stations ran out of gas until roads were cleared from fallen trees and trucks and service crews could get to the area to restore power, some areas took over a week to get electric back! This wasn't even the mission just a natural disaster that happened while in the field. Be prepared for anything!

8. What did you enjoy the most (e.g., favorite memory) about this deployment?

I most enjoyed learning about the Native American cultural. I have never experienced IHS or been around natives for an extended period of time. Learning of their rituals and way of life was intriguing. They are a group of great pride and I learned a lot from them, it was truly an honor to serve.

9. What would you consider to be your major accomplishment stemming from this deployment?

I was able to fill a vacancy and provide 95 dental care appointments. I hope I taught each one something about their oral or overall health that they can build on which will lead to a healthier life and lifestyles.

10. Were there any classes or trainings that helped you in your deployment?

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11. How was your post deployment/reintegration experience? Was it a smooth transition back to your daily activities?

Being home was wonderful, jet lag did hit me but after a few naps I was back at it. I have a toddler and was expecting her to be a bit stand offish after I was gone for an extended period of time. However, I was greeted the next morning with the longest hug I have ever received, it was the best! I tried my best to enjoy my family upon returning and not get overwhelmed with all the things that needed to be done at home with being gone for a month.

12. Please feel free to share anything else regarding your deployment to highlight your experiences or to increase the readiness of fellow officers.

Be the officer you would want others to be for you and help those that reach out. Check in on officers you know are deployed, a text from a familiar name while away may just be what they need that day.

13. Do you consent to your narrative being posted on Twitter? (y/n)

14. Do you consent to your narrative being posted on Facebook? (y/n)

Thank you for your service!

Please send your completed form, along with a personal portrait and any other optional approved media for posting (e.g. photos from your deployment) to photos from your deployment) to LCDR Kari Schlessinger (kschlessinger@bop.gov) and LT Benjamin Patrick (benjamin.o.patrick.mil@mail.mil)