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OFFICER
ADVISORY
GROUP

JO VOICE: Commissioned Officers' Effectiveness Reports (COERs) October 2017

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The information below, developed by DCCPR in collaboration with the Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG), is designed to serve as an unofficial guide. Please refer to USPHS websites for changes or updates to any of the below information.

Questions/Responses

1. I have been up for promotion to O-5 for the last two years but have not made the cutoff. I'm wondering if the narrative below is a contributing issue:

In 2013, my then-supervisor gave me excellent scores --- all 7's and one 6. The next year, in 2014, the same supervisor dropped my scores significantly to all 6's, with one 7 and one 5. When I asked him if there were problems that caused my scores to drop, he assured me that I was an excellent officer, an ideal employee, and I had not done anything wrong.

I think perhaps it looks really bad to have amazing scores one year, and then good-but-not-as-good scores the next year. It looks like something bad happened.

If I understand correctly, the Promotion Boards can see the past 5 years of COERs. Do I basically have to wait until these scores drop out of view? Could this be a large contribution to why I am being held back?

Scores and Rater/Reviewer comments are looked at in relation to each other. All 7's do not guarantee success for promotion if the rest of the promotion package does not validate the scores. Many agencies and raters score differently and Board members are very sensitive to that. The scores, in my experience, are not the sole guiding elements on the COER for promotion.

2. a. I want to ask if there could possibly be a more simplified, efficient, uncomplicated uniform Curriculum Vitae (CV) for all USPHS instead of every category having different CVs? The different CVs make it difficult for officers in different categories to assist or mentor officers they work directly with. This causes many people to seek help from people in other states, decreasing the ability to truly help an officer completely when you

are not face to face for meeting and reviewing documents. Also, some categories change the CV constantly, and the formats for the CVs for some categories are very confusing. When there must be training, PowerPoint instructions, and web education to teach officers how to complete the CV, it is a red flag that the CV is too complicated! The CV should be simple, concise, and chronological. The CE Summary Sheet should also be simple and chronological without separating CE courses into categories. The CE should simply be listed chronologically.

DCCPR does not guide the CV format process, it is based solely on the different categories. This is a common question but one that I cannot answer. I would recommend all officers to get involved in the CV decision process with their individual category PACs and voice your concerns and requests to those advisory groups and CPOs.

b. My other issue is if our awards, COERS, CVs etc. should contain "fluff" words at all. Superlatives waste time for the people having to read the documents and exaggerates when all duties, tasks, and accomplishments could be simplified into precise items, bullet-pointed, and cut back on length. Brevity would improve efficiency for the Officer writing their CV (COER, AWARD) and the board reading it. Should our documents list what was done with no inflating the wonderfulness of the task?

Again, the Board members have been in the service and exposed to all of these types of reviews. Senior officers can detect what is substantive in an award narrative as well as in an OS, ROS and CV.

3. It has been said that the narrative matters more than the scores given. How valid is this? Are the scores taken and multiplied by a predetermined factor to contribute to the 40% of performance?

The narratives need to validate the scores. All 7's without appropriate comments do not give an officer an advantage over an officer with 5's, 6's, and/or 7's with supporting comments. The scores are not averaged or calculated in any fashion to get to the 40% overall score for performance. Each precept is given a score of 0-100 and the weights of the precepts are calculated after the board members score all officers. Board members are not aware of what the overall score is during the review process.

4. I know the benchmarks vary among category, but I'm sure that the COER is included across the board for Performance. How heavily weighted is the COER compared to awards and one's ROS?

This is subjective to each of the Board members. All, in my opinion and experience, are reviewed with a critical eye and looked at for the overall picture of the officer. Each should reflect the officer's performance and back the other document up.