

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL

**Commissioned Corps Women's Issues Advisory Board  
(CCWIAB)**

**CHARTER**

**I. MISSION**

The Commissioned Corps Women's Issues Advisory Board (CCWIAB), chartered under the Office of the United States Surgeon General (OSG), employs the voluntary service of United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps Officers to advise OSG on women's issues specifically those in relation to female officers who serve in the PHS.

The mission of the CCWIAB is to identify and analyze key issues that impact women in the PHS and develop an action plan to address such issues (e.g. update existing and/or develop new policies).

**II. RELATIONSHIP OF THE CCWIAB TO THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE**

Women's issues are public health topics regularly addressed and funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Over half of the USPHS Commissioned Corps (PHS) is comprised of female officers; however, the PHS has not systematically reviewed or addressed issues of concern to female officers. Therefore, PHS leadership lacks baseline data necessary to address possible issues and to develop responsive initiatives.

One of the major focuses of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is strengthening the health workforce available to provide services to underserved populations. The PHS needs input from stakeholders and evidence on which to base policy decisions related to the PHS as a health workforce entity and, specifically to address the concerns of women and minorities.

The armed forces and most civilian agencies address women's issues through specific internal programs or committees. In 2011, under then Surgeon General (SG) VADM Regina Benjamin, CCWIAB was founded to support objectives of the White House Council on Women and Girls established by a 2009 Executive Order. Objectives of the Council included reviewing and recommending changes to policies that have a distinct

impact on women in the Federal workforce. At CCWIAB's establishment, identified issues impacting female PHS officers included leadership positions (Flag/SES), distribution of women in certain professions/occupations, harassment and/or discrimination in the workplace, interpersonal violence, and work-life issues (e.g. breastfeeding).

Based on the current environment, it is important to research and address women's issues specifically in relation to officers who serve in the PHS.

In carrying out its responsibilities, the CCWIAB operates as a resource in an advisory capacity and provides subject matter expertise to the OSG (SG and Deputy Surgeon General (DSG)). It does not substitute for line management or in any way exercise the prerogatives of the respective operating programs. While CCWIAB members are chosen from the respective HHS Operating Divisions (OPDIVs), Staff Divisions (StaffDIVs), and Non-HHS organizations, they neither represent their organization's management, nor speak for the organization. CCWIAB membership is reserved to Active Duty PHS officers only.

### **III. OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of the CCWIAB is to serve in a resource and advisory capacity to assist in the development, coordination, and evaluation of activities related to female officers in the PHS with specific objectives to:

1. Identify and analyze key workforce-related issues impacting female PHS officers and provide recommended actions to the OSG;
2. Identify and analyze other issues that affect female officers and provide recommended actions;
3. Keep OSG and stakeholders informed about the activities of other uniformed services, the White House, and veterans' organizations related to issues of women in uniform;
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of special emphasis activities conducted in support of women's issues.
5. Support fellow female officers to lead well balanced lives upholding the PHS core values of leadership, service, integrity, and excellence;

#### IV. FUNCTIONS

In carrying out its mission and objectives, the functions of the CCWIAB shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Identify key workforce-related and other issues that impact female officers and recommend appropriate actions by:
  - a. Participating on official and ad hoc committees of the OSG and providing advice, comments, and recommendations on identified issues;
  - b. Communicating regularly with the OSG and ensure dissemination of pertinent information to the PHS;
  - c. Serving as force multipliers to promote SG priorities directed by the OSG; and
  - d. Promoting and coordinating information, reports, and position papers related to female PHS officers to the broader HHS community through the OSG.
2. Keep the OSG and stakeholders informed about the activities of other uniformed services, the White House, and veterans' organizations related to issues of women in uniform by:
  - a. Regularly conducting environmental scans via Internet resources (i.e. pertinent Web sites, online news articles, etc.);
  - b. Attending pertinent conferences, meetings and other venues sponsored by other uniformed services, the White House and organizations; and
  - c. Disseminating information via White Papers or other communication as appropriate.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of special emphasis activities by:
  - a. Developing survey instruments to assess the effectiveness of special emphasis activities related to women's issues in the PHS.
  - b. Analyzing survey results, preparing reports of findings and providing pertinent recommendations.

4. Support fellow female officers by:
  - a. Providing a forum for female officers from all categories to come together in a supportive environment to share ideas and experiences in support of the overall development and wellbeing of female PHS officers via the Women's Leadership Support Group (WLSG).

## **V. VOTING MEMBERSHIP**

Initial membership of the CCWIAB shall consist of a chairperson at the Flag grade, a co-chairperson, an executive assistant and twelve voting members representative of the PHS from Operating Divisions, categories, and non-HHS entities.

The voting members shall be appointed by Chairperson and will include, at a minimum, members from the PHS categories with underrepresented women, including Medical, Engineer, Environmental Health and Dental categories, and four from Agency/Operating Divisions with underrepresented women.

The interests of all stakeholders shall be addressed, either through special consultation, briefings or other means, as determined by the chairperson. Board members are expected to attend meetings (in person or via conference call), chair/co-chair/lead at least one committee or initiative, review/provide feedback on identified issues, and participate in the drafting of reports and recommendations.

CCWIAB relies heavily on non-voting member volunteers to assist with CCWIAB committees and initiatives. Non-voting member volunteers can be involved in various CCWIAB initiatives/committees to meet the needs of those initiatives/committees. Certain non-voting members that have contributed significantly to CCWIAB initiatives/committees may be eligible to serve as a chair/co-chair/lead of CCWIAB initiatives/committees at the discretion of the chairperson.

Special consultants shall be appointed to provide expert information on identified legal matters. Consultants shall have an open invitation to attend meetings and may be invited to provide presentations on special topics.

## **VI. VOTING MEMBERSHIP NOMINATION PROCESS**

1. Four to six months before current voting members are expected to roll off, the CCWIAB will solicit nominations (self-nominations are accepted) for vacancies from all eligible individuals. CCWIAB will review all nominees to identify highly qualified candidates to fill the anticipated vacancies. CCWIAB will transmit the names to the

nominee's respective Agency USPHS liaison for endorsement. The CCWIAB chair will finalize the list of new VMs and submit the voting membership nomination package to the OSG for consideration no less than 60 calendar days prior to the expiration of the seats.

## **VII. TERM OF APPOINTMENT**

1. Voting Members will serve a 3-year term.
2. Attendance: Meetings shall be conducted bi-monthly or as needed by the chairperson or co-chairperson. Any voting member of the CCWIAB who frequently misses meetings without just cause, does not vote on CCIWAB business items, does not participate in required activities, or does not complete assigned tasks at the discretion of the CCWIAB chair, will be asked to voluntarily resign from the CCWIAB, or the CCWIAB chair can initiate a request to OSG to terminate the officer's voting membership.
3. Removal: A voting member may be removed from the CCIWAB at the request of the Chair for just cause (non-attendance, disciplinary action, etc.). In such case, the chair will request the voting member to step down. If needed, the chair can also make a recommendation to the SG for removal of the voting member. In that case, the SG will make the final determination of removal of the CCWIAB member.

## **VIII. CHAIRPERSON**

1. Selection: The Chairperson shall be appointed by the SG for a term of 3 years.

## **IX. OPERATIONS AND PROCEDURES**

1. The CCWIAB shall develop its own internal operations and procedures (e.g., Bylaws, Standard Operating Procedures).
2. The chairperson or representative shall present at any combined leadership meetings, SG PAC and/or CPO/PAC Chairs meeting.
3. The CCWIAB shall submit regular progress reports to the OSG. Reports should include:
  - a. A review of new or ongoing issues with recommendations on how best to address the concerns.
  - b. Annual report and other reports, as indicated.
  - c. New and/or revised policy drafting, as identified.

- d. Position papers with recommendations, as identified.
- 4. Quorum: A quorum consists of at least 50 percent of the CCWIAB voting membership.
- 5. Voting: Where voting is required or as appropriate, action will be determined by the simple majority of those voting members present.
- 6. Committees: Where CCWIAB elects to establish standing or ad hoc committees, said membership may include CCWIAB non-voting members (e.g. non-voting volunteers).

## **X. COMMITTEES**

The CCWIAB has the following committees currently:

### **1. Reproductive Health Committee:**

Mission: To strive to identify and analyze key issues surrounding reproductive health, family planning, pregnancy and the postpartum period that impact women in the PHS. The group strives to promote the awareness of reproductive health, family planning, pregnancy and postpartum-related resources and guidance, as well as PHS policies and procedures that are applicable to women officers.

### **2. Anti-Harassment Committee:**

Mission: To identify and address concerns of harassment and discrimination among PHS officers while stationed at their OPDIVs and while deployed. In addition, this committee will assess existing anti-harassment policies and trainings, as well as develop action plans to address officer concerns relating to experiences of harassment and discrimination at duty stations and while responding to public health emergencies.

### **3. Health and Wellness Committee:**

Mission: To address emerging issues affecting the health and wellness of female officers in the PHS. In addition, this committee collaborates with the Women's Leadership Support Group (WLSG) and supports WLSG programs such as the Women's Executive Leadership Webinar Seminars featuring female leaders in their field.

### **4. Outreach and Membership Committee:**

Mission: To coordinate and participate in outreach activities to increase awareness of CCWIAB as well as to coordinate administrative responsibilities for CCWIAB (e.g., appointment letters, awards).

### **5. Women's Leadership Support Group (WLSG):**

Mission: To provide a forum for female officers from all categories to come together in a supportive environment to share ideas and experiences in support of the overall development and wellbeing of female PHS officers. Although WLSG was initiated

separately from CCWIAB, due to the shared interests of CCWIAB and WLSG, WLSG is a committee under CCWIAB. More details are available in Appendix A.

Other committees may be created as needed.

Where the CCWIAB elects to establish standing or ad hoc committees, said membership may include non-voting members provided that at least the chair, co-chair, or lead of the committee is a voting member of CCWIAB.

**XI. DURATION**

This Board shall, upon signature, remain in force until such time when it is closed or reconstituted based on the status of deliverables or at the discretion of PHS senior leadership.

**DECISION**

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ x \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproved \_\_\_\_\_ Date 5/9/2022

*Vineet Murthy*  
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