



JRCOSTEP testing a swimming pool



Benefits of Hiring a JRCOSTEP



JRCOSTEP conducting a survey at an aquaponics facility



JRCOSTEP in full PPE at a COVID-19 mass testing event

“I have participated in several internships, but my JRCOSTEP experience has, by far, been the most fulfilling and empowering.

Furthermore, my past experiences do not match the level of support, guidance, and encouragement that I have witnessed and received within the USPHS.”

– ENS Mark Glasgow, ATSDR, Atlanta, GA, Summer 2010

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ADVANCING AND PROMOTING THE NATIONS HEALTH

The Junior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (JRCOSTEP) allows qualifying undergraduate and graduate students to gain valuable professional experience with the USPHS and sponsoring agencies. JRCOSTEPs receive the basic pay and allowances of an O-1 Ensign and are encouraged to wear the uniform. Typical assignments vary from 31–90 days during official school breaks, usually in the summer. Any Department of Health & Human Services agency or an agency with a USPHS memo of understanding (MOU) can hire a JRCOSTEP.

TOP 5 REASONS

1. Complete Special Projects

JRCOSTEPs can help you complete special projects that are difficult to close out due to competing priorities. Examples of projects completed by JRCOSTEPs include:

- Analysis of job hazards
- Procuring and calibrating equipment
- Completing hospital incident reports
- Conducting food service surveys
- Maintaining chemical inventories
- Assisting with epidemic investigations
- Conducting literature reviews and updating documents

2. Recruit the Best and Brightest

JRCOSTEPs must have completed their sophomore year of undergraduate education from an accredited program, or be enrolled in a graduate degree program, and have attained at least a GPA of 2.8 or better. Letters of recommendation ensure faculty endorsement, and all candidates receive background and medical clearance. These qualification requirements ensure that your JRCOSTEP has a level of training and professionalism to help them succeed in their position.

3. Cost Effective

A three month JRCOSTEP assignment costs an agency approximately \$10,000 depending on the amount of travel that is required for the position, relocation costs, and housing allowance (based on home of record). This cost is more economical than the average personal services contract for the same amount of time. In addition, JRCOSTEPs are flexible and eager to complete additional training, travel to isolated locations, and accomplish difficult tasks to fulfill agency missions.

4. Opportunity to Evaluate Potential Applicants

Managers can observe firsthand a potential applicant's work ethic, interpersonal abilities, writing skills, and technical expertise. JRCOSTEPs that convert to full-time active duty officers already have agency, USPHS, and subject-matter knowledge and experience that they can apply immediately to their new positions.

- Approximately 30% of current EHOs participated in a JRCOSTEP
- 50% of EHOs recently called to active duty completed JRCOSTEPs

5. Opportunity for Mentorship

Preceptors have the opportunity to mentor JRCOSTEPs on the customs, courtesies, history, and traditions of the USPHS. Mentoring a JRCOSTEP is a truly rewarding experience. This experience will also help you achieve benchmarks for promotion, improve your CV, and improves your leadership skills.

A JRCOSTEP Sponsor from IHS had this to say:

“This program is extremely valuable because it gives an opportunity to evaluate students for our unique needs and it gives the student the opportunity to see if our agency meets their career goals. We are committed to providing a broad range of exposure to the required work and to making this a meaningful experience for each student this has been a valuable recruiting tool for us.”

What is an EHO?

Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) ensure public health and safety in a variety of roles. Their knowledge and training contribute to diverse and numerous work assignments.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Become Familiar with the Process

Hiring a JRCOSTEP is straight forward. For more information, visit:

www.usphs.gov

Find a Full Time Equivalent (FTE)

One FTE must be available and identified for each JRCOSTEP hired. If an FTE is available within your division, branch, or organization, you can use that FTE for a JRCOSTEP. For example, if an FTE is available from another division or branch within your agency, you can agree to share that FTE for a short period of time.

Secure Funding

Before the process to hire a JRCOSTEP begins, the hosting agency must have the necessary funds identified and secured for the number of JRCOSTEPs to be hired. There are a variety of funding sources available and it is recommended potential preceptors have internal discussions with their supervisors and hiring officials to determine the best funding source.



JRCOSTEP setting a mosquito trap