

# **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER**

## **WELCOME PACKET**



**August 2019**

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER  
PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
*Mentoring & Orientation Subcommittee*



**“Protecting, promoting, and advancing the health and safety of the Nation”**

Dear Environmental Health Officer,

Congratulations on your call to active duty!

The Environmental Health Officer Professional Advisory Committee (EHOPAC) welcomes you to the Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS). The EHOPAC Mentoring & Orientation Subcommittee is here to serve you and assist in making your transition to the Commissioned Corps a successful one. This document provides an overview of information to help guide you as you start your new assignment and information that is useful throughout your career.

Your fellow Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and all Officers want you to be successful and are here to help you navigate the incredible amount of information you will receive in your first few months of active duty. We all remember the steep learning curve that is involved! This welcome packet provides a quick snapshot of the many facets of Officership in the Commissioned Corps, and places to find critical information online. Likely, you may have covered some of this information in Officer Basic Course and some of the material may be new. We hope you will find the material presented here useful to you now and throughout your career – including participating in the mentor program as a protégé and in the future as a leader and mentor.

Environmental Health Officers proudly serve in the USPHS to protect and advance the nation’s health. Our strict appointment standards are designed to only select “the best for USPHS.” Your commission is evidence that you have met those high standards. The USPHS has a distinguished history of serving the public health needs of all Americans and we look forward to working with you as you become one of tomorrow’s public health leaders.

***Welcome to the United States Public Health Service!***

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## **INTRODUCTION TO THE USPHS**

The Commissioned Corps of the USPHS is one of the seven uniformed services of the United States (US). The USPHS enjoys a rich history dating back to 1798 when John Adams signed into law an Act for the Relief of Sick and Disabled Seamen. Over time, this legislation created the marine hospital network among the U.S. coastal and inland waterways. The first Supervising Surgeon (later Surgeon General), John Maynard Woodworth, in 1871 moved quickly to reform the system and adopted a military model for his medical staff, instituting examinations for applicants and putting his physicians in uniforms. Woodworth created a cadre of mobile, career service physicians who could be assigned as needed to marine hospitals.

Legislation enacted by Congress in 1889 established the USPHS Commissioned Corps as a formal uniformed service. The Act organized the USPHS along military lines with titles and pay commensurate with U.S. Army and Navy officer pay grades. The original mission of the USPHS was to support the U.S. Marine Hospital Service in protecting the nation from the introduction or spread of diseases from foreign ports, immigrants or naval seamen. Today, the quarantine service still exists and the Commissioned Corps' mission has expanded to include healthcare delivery to underserved communities, disease research, food protection, mental health and drug abuse services, and response efforts for natural and man-made disasters as an essential component of the largest public health program in the world.

The EHO category originated in the early 1940s during the reshaping of the USPHS and initially named the category officers as Sanitarians. The first sanitarians were called to active duty through legislation that took place over a two-year period (1943–1944) in which two acts of Congress extended the Surgeon General's ability to include additional disciplines into the Commissioned Corps. The Sanitarian category stood for approximately 50 years until the EHOPAC voted to change its name from Sanitarian to EHO to represent the growing and diverse nature of the category.<sup>1</sup>

## **CREATING THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER CATEGORY**

Since 1943, EHOs have played a significant role in improving health, safety and quality of life in both domestic and international settings. In the early years, sanitarians worked in malaria control, water purification, sewage disposal, food sanitation, insect and rodent control, etc. As laws, regulations, and national public health programs evolved, so did the category. When the Sanitarian category was established, it was a catch-all for many non-sanitarian specialties who did not fit into any other category. In the 1950s, non-sanitarians were moved to other categories. In 1968 the Sanitarian Career Development Committee became the Sanitarian Professional Advisory Committee, which became the Environmental Health Professional Advisory Committee or EHOPAC in 1999.

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<sup>1</sup> Content for this section was adapted from [The Environmental Health Officer Survival Guide](#)

The Sanitarian/EHO qualifications have evolved over the years. In 1943, the category required a Master of Public Health (MPH) for commissioning as a Sanitarian, but this is no longer a requirement for an EHO. In 1968, a residency program developed for Sanitarians to train as an Institutional Control Officer and in 1969 a scholarship program with pay back obligation to the USPHS was established.

In 1997, the Sanitarian category divided into four career tracks: general Environmental Health (EH), Industrial Hygiene (IH), Occupational Health and Safety and Health Physicist. Each track had specific appointment standards that better reflected the types of specialties held by commissioned Sanitarians. Two years later, in 1999, the name of the Category changed officially from Sanitarians to "Environmental Health Officers."

To organize the new EHO category and purpose, the appointment standards were consolidated into a combination of degrees types/levels from schools and academic programs accredited by one of three accreditation bodies.<sup>2</sup> Depending on the accreditation body, a Bachelor of Science (BS) or a Masters/Doctoral degree was considered a qualifying degree for appointment as an EHO. Adding to the consolidation, two credentials were included with an acceptable BS or higher degree: the Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) and the Certified Health Physicist (CHP).<sup>3</sup>

### **SUB-SPECIALITIES WITHIN THE CATEGORY!**

The breadth of federal agencies and opportunities expanded for Sanitarians in 1970 when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stood up and later with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) in 1988. Currently, EHOs serve in over 11 federal agencies across more than 40 states, Washington DC, in US territories, and internationally. The size of the category fluctuates, with approximately 350 active duty EHOs at any given time. For a current domestic duty station map see: [EHO DUTY STATIONS](#).<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned, EHOs are highly skilled professionals with qualifying degrees in EH, IH, Occupational Safety and Health or Health Physics. EHOs are always encouraged to seek additional competencies to demonstrate professional excellence through certifications and continuing education. As such, many EHOs hold professional credentials and certifications. A credential is an advanced type of certification with a separate governing board to set strict educational, experience, testing and continuing education requirements around a specific topic. Examples of EHO credentials include RS, REHS/RS, CIH, CPH, CHP, Certified Foodborne

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<sup>2</sup> NEHSPAC (National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council), CEPH (Council on Education for Public Health), ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology)

<sup>3</sup> Content for this section was adapted from:

[Environmental Health Officer Professional Advisory Committee: About the EHOPAC](#); accessed 07/24/19  
[Environmental Health Officer Professional Advisory Committee: History of the Environmental Health Officer Category](#); accessed 07/24/19

<sup>4</sup> [USPHS Active Duty Station Map](#); accessed 07/24/19

Outbreak Investigator (CFOI) and Certified Emergency Managers (CEM) to name a few. An EHO's job duties or professional interests may require specialized training such as:

1. 40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER),
2. Agency-specific training like the Food and Drug (FDA) certification in Medical Devices, Blood Banks, or Drug inspections, and/or
3. National Incident Management System (NDMS) trainings developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to include the Safety Officer qualification as a Type 1 or Type 2 Safety Officer (which require ICS board qualification) or Type 3 Safety Officer (based on emergency response experience).

These types of credentials and certifications enable professional growth for EHOs and are vitally important in obtaining highly competitive positions and promotions. Newly commissioned EHOs are always encouraged to seek guidance from mentors and peers on career paths.

Seeking mentoring and career guidance is always advisable. EHOs have the flexibility and freedom to pursue diverse and fulfilling careers in a variety of subject areas to include:

- Providing leadership and support to public health programs designed to protect the public from exposure to hazardous substances
- Providing services in disease prevention, environmental health, injury prevention, health promotion and education, and occupational safety
- Undertaking highly specialized services in areas such as counterterrorism, industrial hygiene, health physics, and hazardous waste
- Conducting a wide variety of activities, including surveys, investigations, research, teaching and training, consumer education, technical assistance, regulatory compliance, and codes and standards development
- Reviewing and regulating medical products and devices
- Conducting biomedical and epidemiological research
- Developing and monitoring national health policies

Many EHOs self-identify as generalists who move easily between traditional roles and non-traditional roles. Some non-traditional roles can include managing contracts and grants with FDA; overseeing USPHS officers/personnel during emergency response operations with FEMA; training/educating partners within state and local governments to develop programs with U.S. sister-service military organizations; or working with agency leadership, partners, and stakeholders on public health policy. The limits to job opportunities for an EHO are endless.

As you can see, EHO work areas are diverse and numerous. EHOs can go from generalists to specialists in epidemiological surveillance, disease prevention, radiological health, food safety, injury prevention/education and emergency health preparedness and emergency response. This is evident by the titles of the many roles EHOs fill in federal agencies:

- Environmental Health
- Environmental Protection
- Public Health Program Specialist
- Consumer Safety Inspection
- Industrial Hygienist
- Food Inspector
- Public Health Educator
- Health Physicist
- Sanitarian
- Safety & Occupational Health Manager
- Consumer Safety

## **WHO IS THE CPO?**

### **The Chief Professional Officer**

The Surgeon General of the United States appoints the Chief Professional Officers (CPOs) to advise and provide guidance to the Surgeon General and the USPHS. Each CPO provides leadership and coordination to their officers within one of each of the 11 professional USPHS categories. CPOs are influential on matters such as recruitment, retention, readiness, deployment, professional practice, and the career development of officers. These leaders facilitate professional and community relationships to promote engagement with the Corps and increase awareness of Surgeon General and Corps initiatives to protect the health and wellness of all Americans. The CPO for each category is a member of the CPO Board. This Board represents the full complement of USPHS category leadership, multi-discipline expertise, and cross agency perspectives from across the Corps. The CPO Board consults and advises offices within the Commissioned Corps Headquarters and builds relationships with a variety of partners to advance the mission and awareness of the USPHS.

Titles for the CPOs have evolved with the EHO Category. In 1963, Darold W. Taylor was designated the first Public Health Service Liaison Officer for the Sanitarian Category, which the title later changed to Chief Sanitarian Officer. Now the title of Chief Environmental Health Officer is designated for the category's CPO. Visit the CPO webpage to see the [current CPO's biography](#).

## **WHAT IS THE EHOPAC?**

### **The Environmental Health Officer Professional Advisory Committee**

The EHOPAC also provides advice and consultation to the Surgeon General of the United States through the CPO. The EHOPAC assists in the development, coordination, and evaluation of activities related to the EH discipline, specifically addressing issues related to the professional practice and activities of EHOs and Civil Service employees who are practicing an EH or IH discipline. Working with the CPO, the EHOPAC may also provide advisory assistance, upon request, to the Operating Divisions (OPDIVs) or other organizations to which EHOs officers may be assigned.

The EHOPAC is the official professional organization for the USPHS to represent all EHOs. Its voting members are EHOs selected from the OPDIVs and agencies where EHOs are assigned. Voting members serve a term of three years with membership based on percentages of EHOs

staffing the agencies. EHOs may serve up to two terms on the EHOPAC with concurrent terms approved by the EHOPAC Chair and CPO. Currently there are 19 voting members on the EHOPAC. The EHOPAC has 10 Subcommittees: Awards and Recognition, Career Development, Communication, History, Information Technology, Information Technology, Marketing and Recruitment, Mentoring and Orientation, Policies and Standards, Readiness and Training and Events. At the beginning of each calendar year the EHOPAC Executive Committee solicits for volunteers to participate in these 10 Subcommittees to help advance the goals of the category and the PAC. Subcommittee volunteers also participate for three year terms and rotate between Subcommittees. Further details on the EHOPAC, its charter, bylaws, and subcommittees can be found in the [EHOPAC Resources webpage](#).

### **EHO reference materials**

The EHOPAC also created the [Environmental Health Officer Survival Guide](#) as a resource for EHOs to use as an additional resource.

### **EHO MENTORING**

The EHO Mentoring & Orientation (M&O) Program facilitates the transition of recently appointed EHOs into the USPHS and promotes long-term career development for all EHOs. The program is open to all qualified USPHS Officers appointed into the EHO Category and to all Civil Servants actively performing work in the field of EH (relative to the current appointment standards) seeking mentorship opportunities or potentially interested in joining the USPHS. The Marketing and Recruitment Subcommittee (M&R) is responsible for assisting and aiding the EHO applicants interested in commissioning into the USPHS.

The M&O Mentoring Program is intended to match junior officer protégés (O-4 and below) with senior officer mentors (O-5 and above). The official program is one-year in length and participating officers are asked to meet at least monthly. The mentoring program provides an opportunity for senior officers to share their wisdom by providing support, guidance, and career-based assistance. Junior officers benefit by being able to discuss professional challenges, experiences, and questions in a supportive environment. The overall intent of the program is to provide opportunities to learn from one another.

This mentoring partnership is an active networking relationship to foster professional growth and career development. The mentor's knowledge and insights gained over years of experience serve as a valuable tool to facilitate the effective and efficient growth of the protégé. However, to make the most out of each partnership, we ask for mentors and protégés to partner for 1 year to allow for EHOs to rotate between pairings for effective networking.

The M&O subcommittee recommends unofficial mentoring with past mentors, but official mentor-protégé pairs organized within the M&O Subcommittee Mentoring Program should be for only 1 year. For more information regarding the EHOPAC Mentoring Program and additional information on the EHO category, please visit the [EHOPAC webpage](#).



## HOW THE USPHS COMMISSIONED CORPS IS MANAGED?

There are currently two major Divisions that make up the Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ). Each has a very different role and can be accessed and information obtained from [The Commissioned Corps homepage](#).

### **Division of Commissioned Corps Personnel and Readiness**

By delegation of the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH) has the responsibility and accountability for the overall force management of the USPHS. The Division of Commissioned Corps Personnel and Readiness (DCCPR) was established and reorganized within the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) in February 2019, 2012 [[Federal Register Volume 77, Number 98, Page 30005 \(PDF, 199kb\)](#) and [Volume 77, Number 194, Page 60996 \(PDF, 176kb\)](#)]. The Director of DCCPR reports directly to the Deputy Surgeon General (DSG); and on the Surgeon General's behalf, develops policies and proposes regulations in order to maintain optimum performance and readiness of the Corps' uniformed officers. DCCPR establishes timelines, performance standards, and measurements for the evaluation of the operations and management of the Corps, and works closely with the Office of the Surgeon General to facilitate operations and implementation of policies and programs.

DCCPR conducts recruitment; calls to active duty; USPHS boards; issues personnel orders; maintains Officer payroll and records; management of medical actions and evaluations; oversees the performance, discipline and conduct of commissioned officers; develops and implements policies and regulations. DCCPR is also responsible for all readiness and response operations for a Commissioned Corps of over 6,700 officers. Additional information can be found in the section "Readiness and Deployment. For further detail, go to the [CCHQ Overview webpage](#) and read about DCCPR and its Teams.

Medical Affairs is an important section of DCCPR:

- Manages all aspects of medical and dental services for Active Duty members of the USPHS Commissioned Corps.
- Provides administrative support and healthcare management services for USPHS officers.
- Authorizes medical and dental care and assists with access issues.
- Evaluates immunization records, medical histories, retirement, separations, routine medical reviews, medical examinations and related medical data for 5-year physicals.
- Evaluates and issues medical waivers.
- Provides mental health and substance abuse case management services.
- Issues Line of Duty determinations.
- Offers Medical Review Board fitness for duty and disability recommendations.

- Conducts Appeal Boards and Full and Fair Hearings.
- Assists disabled Corps veterans with applications for benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
- Reviews and awards Combat Related Special Pay applications and Traumatic Serviceman's Group Life Insurance claims.
- Updates and maintains officer health and immunization information for basic readiness status.
- Audits and processes Federal Bill Reimbursement requests for medical services rendered to Corps officers and dependents.
- Serves as the program manager for the USPHS Commissioned Corps Active Duty Dental Program.
- Maintains paper and electronic medical records for active duty USPHS officers.

### **Division of Systems Integration**

The Division of Systems Integration (DSI) is responsible for all USPHS-specific information technology systems and activity. This includes certifying and transmitting the monthly officer payroll processed by Compensation. The Director of DSI reports to the Deputy Surgeon General of the Office of the Surgeon General and works directly with the Immediate Office of the Director of DCCPR.

The USPHS Helpdesk is a part of DSI; it is also known as CCHelpdesk. The CCHelpdesk provides Information Technology support to the USPHS with computer systems support for its automated personnel, payroll and management information systems. The Helpdesk Number is 1-888-225-3302 and email: [cchelpdesk@hhs.gov](mailto:cchelpdesk@hhs.gov). For more information, go to the [CCHQ Overview webpage](#) and read about DSI and its Teams.

### **Commissioned Corps Management Information System (CCMIS) - Website**

The CCMIS website is where you will find all the division and their associated operational information. A banner along the top of the page displays button links to the most-used WebPages where information, forms, policies, etc. can be viewed and downloaded. The CCMIS website is the location for current hot topics in the USPHS, including posting of all policy memorandums and housing archival information.

ID Cards may be obtained at military installations or for those in or visiting the Washington, DC area at the Office of Commissioned Corps Operations at:

1101 Wooten Parkway  
Plaza Level, Suite 100  
Rockville, MD 20852

You will need to wait until you are enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) — which can take from a few weeks up to a month or two to be processed—and have a copy of your orders to be able to get IDs for you and your dependents. Carefully obey all traffic and other base rules, while visiting military installations! Use the [RAPIDS Site Locator](#) to find an office that issues ID Cards.

Be sure to also register your dependents in the DEERS. This will aid in a smooth transition for the provision of your dependents' health care needs. Dependents are required to register in DEERS to obtain a dependent ID card and access military bases and flights. Information is available on the [milConnect About DEERS webpage](#).

You will need to download and complete [DD Form 1172, Application for Uniformed Services Identification Card DEERS Enrollment](#).

### **ASSIGNMENT AND TRANSFER INFORMATION**

Are you getting ready to move? When accepting your first assignment, or later, when transferring to a different assignment you will likely have a geographic permanent change of station (PCS) move. There are many great resources to help you move and settle in. [PCS America](#) is a relocation network guide of military installations all over the world for the Active Duty as well as the Reserve community. The website is a great resource guide for transitioning to a new area with helpful tips such as lodging, schools and even weather. If you would like more information about military housing, please visit the [Navy Housing website](#).

For information concerning the shipment of household goods (HHG), contact your Agency Liaison. You will need to download and fill out [form PHS-40131-1](#). Be sure to check with your OPDIV travel clerk to ensure you claim all appropriate dislocation allowances or travel allowances on your travel voucher.

### **READINESS AND DEPLOYMENTS**

The USPHS mission is to provide a highly-trained and mobile cadre of health professionals who carry out programs to promote the health and safety of the Nation. During natural disasters and other public health emergencies, EHOs protect the public from environmental threats and help communities recover by assessing the safety and security of food, water and shelter. EHOs hold various leadership and response roles within the Commissioned Corps Readiness and Deployment Operations Group (RedDOG).

To accomplish this mission, every USPHS officer is required to meet and maintain high readiness standards. These standards include immunizations, physical fitness standards, basic life support (BLS) for health care providers and emergency response training. USPHS RedDOG Readiness standards can be found in the following documents:

- [“Basic Level of Force Readiness Standards for the Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health Service”](#)
- [Commissioned Corps Policy Memorandum \(PPM\) 04-003 Clarifications and Supplemental Policies and Procedures for Manual Circular Public Health Service \(PHS\) No. 377, “Basic Level of Force Readiness Standards for the Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health Service”](#)

### **RedDOG Website –**

There are a number of excellent free training courses listed under [“RedDOG training”](#) on the website.

### **Current RedDOG Standards -**

Scroll down to “Revised APFT Component Summary and Reference” at the [RedDOG APFT webpage](#).

### **CORPS Retention Weight Standards**

An overview of these standards and resources are available on the [Corps Retention Weight Standards webpage](#).

Officers will not promote nor will they qualify to deploy for emergency or humanitarian responses, without meeting and maintaining these standards.

## **THREE IMPORTANT WEBSITE LINKS EVERY EHO SHOULD KNOW**

**The Environmental Health Officer Professional Advisory Committee (EHOPAC)** - The EHOPAC serves in an advisory capacity to the OSG and represents the interests of Environmental Health Officers (EHO’s) in the Commissioned Corps on issues such as promotion, appointment standards, awards, etc. For more information on becoming involved with the EHOPAC or the EHOPAC subcommittees, please visit the [EHOPAC website](#).

**JOAG** - The Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG) is comprised of junior officers (rank O-4 or below). It is a cross-category and cross-agency group representing the interests of junior officers and advising the Surgeon General on issues likely to affect them. [JOAG website](#)

**MOLC** - The Minority Officer Liaison Council (MOLC) is comprised of several subgroups: the American Indian Alaskan Native Commissioned Officer Advisory Committee (AIANCOAC); the Asian Pacific American Office Committee (APAOC); Black Commissioned Officers Advisory Group (BCOAG); and Hispanic Officer's Advisory Committee (HOAC). Each independently and collectively provide advice and consultation to the Office of the Surgeon General on issues and activities related to minority officers in their respective groups. [MOLC website](#)

## **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO CONSIDER JOINING**

**Commissioned Officers Association** - The mission of the [Commissioned Officers Association](#) (COA) of the USPHS is to improve and protect the public health of the United States by advocating for the Commissioned Corps and its officers. In meeting its commitment, COA will provide comprehensive member services, conduct representation and advocacy, conduct education and training for health professionals, conduct studies and research, collaborate with related organizations, and disseminate public and professional information. COA regularly advocates with the United States governmental and businesses alike to ensure Commissioned Corp officers receive the benefits they are afforded as a uniform service. They work closely with our sister uniform services to make sure the USPHS isn't left out of important legislation. Their role as advocate cannot be overstated. As an officer in a uniform service there are times we must reserve comment but COA is able to speak to the needs of the USPHS openly on our behalf. Members of COA receive a ribbon that can be worn on the uniform at COA functions. Please visit the [COA website](#) or call 301-731-9080 to learn more about COA.

**USPHS Commissioned Officers Foundation** - The USPHS [Commissioned Officers Foundation](#) (COF) was established for the Advancement of Public Health by providing an array of programs and services including education and research efforts and an annual conference. The foundation is an affiliate of COA.

**Reserve Officers Association** - The [Reserve Officers Association](#) (ROA) represents the interests of all uniformed service members and their families, much the same as COA represents the interests of USPHS Commissioned Corps officers. Members of ROA receive a ribbon that can be worn on the uniform during ROA functions. Call 1-800-809-9448.

**Association of American Military Surgeons of the United States** - The [Association of American Military Surgeons of the United States](#) (AMSUS) is dedicated to all aspects of federal medicine - professional, scientific, educational and administrative. Members represent all healthcare disciplines and serve in the Active and Reserve Components of all of the uniformed services, including the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Members of AMSUS receive a ribbon that can worn on the uniform during AMSUS functions. Call 1-800-761-9320.

**Military Officers Association of America** - The [Military Officers Association of America](#) (MOAA) is operated exclusively to benefit members of the uniformed services — active duty, former and retired, National Guard and Reserve — their families and survivors.

**Additional organizations not covered, but are worth researching –**

[American Academy of Sanitarians](#)

[American Industrial Hygiene Association](#)

[National Environmental Health Association](#)

[Uniformed Services Environmental Health Association](#)

### **ONE FINAL PROMOTION TRACKING TIP**

The Health Services Category (HSO) created a promotion calculator to track when an officer will be up for Permanent (P) and Temporary (T) grade promotions. You should track and understand these dates. Also review the EHOPAC website for information regarding your T-grade and P-grade promotions.

[HSO website](#)

(select Promotion Calculator, bottom link)

[EHOPAC website on P-grade and T-grade promotions](#)

(select EHOPAC News tab on right, and scroll down to **“Affordable Care Act and Permanent grade Eligibility”** information dated 3/8/2017)

## **Appendix 1. USPHS Uniforms**

The rules and regulations of uniform wear can be daunting to new members of a uniformed service. However, there is guidance in the [USPHS Commissioned Corps Issuance System](#) in Book 4 – Uniforms. In this book, you will find information on general wear of uniforms, specific uniforms, uniform components, special situation uniforms, and much more.

You can purchase uniforms via several routes. Officers should be aware private companies may sell discounted uniforms that are used and not approved for wear. Most companies are very reputable, but it is the officer's responsibility to ensure their uniform is appropriate for wear. Uniform sources include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Military Clothing Stores (mostly on bases)
2. [Navy Exchange](#) at 800-368-4088
3. [Lighthouse Uniform](#) (private company)
4. [Marlow White](#) (private company)
5. [Ultra Thin](#) (a private company)

You are authorized a one-time uniform allowance of \$250. To receive the allowance, you need to fill out and mail in the [uniform allowance memorandum](#), which can be downloaded at according to [Chapter22 of the CCPM](#). Once processed by DCCPR, you will receive a uniform credit on your pay stub.

## **Appendix 2. USPHS Commissioned Officer Benefits**

**Health/Medical Care** – Medical care is one of the most important benefits USPHS officers and their dependents will use during their careers. When using a Uniformed Services Military Treatment Facility (USMTF), it is expected the officer be in uniform. If you are located within a catchment area of a USMTF you will be assigned to use their provider system for primary care. The Commissioned Corps Medical Affairs may authorize you for reimbursement for civilian medical services if an officer is not in a USMTF catchment area, or if the USMTF does not provide the services needed, you may contact Medical Affairs directly for further information Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Eastern Time at 240-276-8780.

**TRICARE** – The Military Health System, through [TRICARE](#), is the primary source of health care for active-duty USPHS officers. The TRICARE system has other options for active-duty family members, retirees, and their eligible family members, who live outside of the base catchment area (50 mile radius of the base). The dental program is available through payroll deduction, with information available on the [TRICARE Dental Program webpage](#).

### **Retirement Benefits**

**Blended Retirement System (BRS)** – As a new call to active duty you are automatically enrolled into the new BRS. This system uses a combination of time in service, base pay and a multiplier to determine the percent of base pay you receive upon retirement. However, the new system does have major differences. You are now eligible to retire before the legacy 20-year mark and receive retirement benefits. Also, there is now a government matching of the TSP (described below) up to 5% after the second year of service. More information can be found on the [DOD Military Compensation BRS webpage](#).

**Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)** - The thrift savings plan is a tax-deferred savings plan, meaning it is taken from your salary before it is taxed (which lowers your taxable income), and you pay taxes when you eventually draw the money. There is a TSP for civilian as well as uniformed services members, but the plans are much different. The civilian account is more like a 401K, where a percentage of contributions are matched by the employing agency. In the TSP, contributions are not matched, but they are tax deferred. As stated above, in the BRS, all TSP contributions are matched up to 5%.

The BRS and the TSP are not the sole retirement funding options for officers, because they have the military retirement plan. It provides a method of adding to the 'nest egg' an officer builds over their career. Also, you can borrow from your TSP account under certain conditions. To find out more about how to sign up and to get more information, go to the [TSP website](#).

**Servicemember's Group Life Insurance (SGLI)** - This is a program that provides low-cost term life insurance coverage to eligible all Servicemembers. As USPHS officers, you are issued



the maximum SGLI coverage. Once commissioned, you are automatically enrolled, and do not need to apply for coverage. More information about SGLI on the [VA Benefits SGLI webpage](#).

**Career Assistance Program (CAP) Loan** - New officers coming into the uniformed services may be eligible to receive a one-time "career assistance loan" at a special low interest rate. The loan is intended to help new officers get settled in their new job by providing money for personal expenses that may arise shortly after commissioning. Please check with your financial intuition(s) to see if you are eligible to receive this loan.

**Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty (MGIB-AD)** - The MGIB-AD program—sometimes known as Chapter 30—provides education benefits to Veterans and Service members who have at least two years of active duty. Upon commissioning, you may select a one year \$100 a month withdrawal from your paycheck to qualify for the GI Bill for education benefits. After fulfilling a 2 to 3 year commitment, you can receive up to \$1,000 a month for educational benefits over a period of time. More information can be found at [VA Benefits MGIB-AD webpage](#).

**Post-9/11 GI Bill** - provides education benefits for Servicemembers who have served on active duty for 90 or more days since Sept. 10, 2001. New information regarding how USPHS officers can utilize this benefit came out in July 2018, so be sure to check current applicability requirements. As applicable, the bill can be used to pay your full tuition and fees at school, provide you with a monthly housing allowance while you are going to school, and give you up to \$1,000 a year to use for books and supplies. Another provision of the Post-9/11 GI Bill allows eligible Servicemembers to transfer their unused benefits to family members. However, transferring this benefit to family members will require additional payback time for you, as the Active Duty service member. More information about the Post-9/11 GI Bill can be found on the [VA Benefits Post-9/11 GI Bill webpage](#).

**The VA Benefits – Education and Training [GI Bill comparison tool](#) is available to compare both bills.**

**Soldier's and Sailor's Civil Relief Act (SSCRA)** - In 1940, Congress passed the SSCRA to provide protections for uniformed service members. The USPHS has been covered by the SSCRA since 22 April 1976. The Servicemember's Civil Relief Act (SCRA) signed into law by President Bush on 19 December 2003 expanded and improved the SSCRA. Some key provisions of the Act are listed in this section. If you are on active duty, the SCRA guarantees your State residency will not change just because of your military orders – even if you buy a house in the State of your new duty station, register your car there, or obtain a new state driver's license. This means you will continue to pay State taxes ONLY to your home state, UNLESS you change State residency voluntarily. The primary means of changing State residency voluntarily are by voting in a new State or changing tax withholding to a new State.

**Home of Record vs. Legal Residence** - In the United States Military, there is a difference between the terms "Home of Record," and "Legal Residence." Home of Record and Legal Residence may or may not be the same address. One's Home of Record is the place an officer

was living when they entered the armed forces. Home of Record is used to determine travel entitlements when one separates from the military. It has nothing to do with voting or paying taxes, registering vehicles, nor any of the other privileges or requirements of State residency.

Home of Record can only be changed if there is a break in service of more than one day, or to correct an error. Legal Residency, or "domicile", on the other hand refers to the place where a military member intends to return to and live after discharge or retirement, and which they consider their permanent home. Legal residency determines what local (State) tax laws a military member is subject to, and in which local (City, County, State) elections they may vote in.

Because military members may have legal residence in one State, but be stationed in a different State, the SCRA allows military members to pay taxes, register vehicles, vote, etc., in their "State of legal residence," rather than the State they are stationed in. This can sometimes result in a tax advantage because some States exempt military pay from State taxes (**please be aware that some States may exempt military pay, but not USPHS pay, from State taxes, e.g., Michigan**), and some States do not have a state income tax (Florida and Tennessee for example). That does not mean a military member may select their legal residence based on whether the State has income taxes and therefore avoid paying State taxes. You may need to file an affidavit in your new State to avoid State tax or yearly personal property tax. The SCRA does **not** protect you against paying local real estate taxes or State income taxes on non-military income (e.g., a second job). It also does **not** protect your spouse who will be subject to all the normal State residency and tax rules.

The military is required by regulation to ensure military members are not selecting their legal residence for the sole purpose of obtaining a tax advantage. Therefore, when selecting a legal residence, officials at the USPHS Compensation require some degree of proof that the officer considers the selected state to be their permanent home. This proof can come in the form of being registered to vote in the State, by having cars titled and registered in the State, by having a valid driver's license in the State, and/or by preparing a new last will and testament (indicating the State as your legal residence).

**If you have any questions and/or need further clarification concerning the SCRA, you can call or visit the legal assistance office of any military base!**

To read more about the SSCRA and the SCRA, please look at the:

1. [Department of Justice SCRA webpage](#)
2. [Military.com SCRA webpage](#)

**Automobile ad valorem taxes** - It is wonderful to be able to keep the benefits of home. Each year, when your tag is renewed on your car, you can use the SCRA to protect you from paying ad valorem taxes in your duty station State, but only if it is not your home of legal residence.

**6% Interest rate protection** - The SCRA allows you to request the interest rate you pay on a debt incurred before you joined the military be reduced to 6% annually. To be eligible for the 6% cap, you must have incurred the debt before joining the service and your ability to pay must have been materially affected by military service. "Material effect" is a vague term that is often interpreted to involve mobilization for war or an extended deployment overseas. However, since the burden is on the creditor to prove a lack of "material effect", many creditors will grant the cap as a courtesy if properly requested.

It is up to you, as the service member, to request the 6% cap. There is a sample letter to use in writing your creditor included in this document. You should include a copy of your Call to Active Duty orders and you may be asked to include financial information in your request. If a creditor refuses to lower the interest rate on a qualified pre-service debt, you should see a NLSO Legal Assistance Attorney (on any military base). **This protection does not apply to government-backed college loans or to any debt acquired after joining the military.**

**Sample 6% Loan Repayment Request Letter:**

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Your name & home address)  
(Your Bank or Lender address)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

This is a letter requesting a reduction of the interest rate on my (account name & number), under the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 526). As an active duty member of the uniformed services, I am entitled to maximum interest rate protection of 6% per annum on pre-service debt obligation. This interest rate protection applies during peacetime as well as time of war. There is no requirement of overseas service and the difference between the old rate and the 6% maximum is forgiven. Attached you will find a copy of my enlistment contract and/or orders to active duty.

Thank you for your cooperation. Sincerely, LTJG John Doe

**Tax benefits** – For more information see Servicemember's SCRA tax benefits, visit the:

1. [InCharge Debt Solutions webpage on SCRA tax benefits](#), and
2. [Military.com SCRA Taxation Protections webpage](#)

### **Appendix 3. Other Uniformed Service/Military Benefits**

There are many other military benefits available to USPHS Commissioned Corps officers, aside from those related to compensation or financial services. A brief listing of some of the more common benefits are listed below. For more details of the benefits available, go to the [Commissioned Corps Salary and Benefits webpage](#). Your military benefits can be verified at the [Defense Manpower Data Center](#). In order to review these benefits, you must use your ID with a computer enabled with a card reader (CAC) and enter a pre-programed password for access. Some benefits are solely for Military personnel which do not apply to USPHS officers, however the COA is always working to have USPHS officers included in more benefits.

**The Base and Post Exchanges (BX/PX)** – USPHS Commissioned Corps officers may shop the BX/PX system online via [The EXCHANGE website](#). A valid uniformed services identification card is required to purchase merchandise and may be required for entry when not in uniform. There are several types of stores in this system including main exchanges, which are similar to department stores, auto services, uniform shops and miscellaneous stores including tailor/laundry, optical, flower, and fast food.

**Commissary** – Commissaries are the supermarkets at military installations. At many commissaries, a valid CAC card is required for entry. Both active duty and dependents may shop at the commissary. Typically, commissaries are crowded on military paydays, the 1st and 15th of every month, and weekends. They are often closed on Mondays. Baggers at the commissaries work for tips, so if you choose to have one bag your groceries, be sure to tip the person for taking your food items to your car for you. For more information, visit the [Defense Commissary Agency – Commissary webpage](#).

**Service Clubs** – The most frequently used club is the Officers' Club at military bases. You are also eligible to visit [United Service Organization \(USO\)](#) locations. USO is a charitable corporation providing morale, welfare, and recreation services to uniformed military personnel. Many USOs have "officer clubs" in airports that provide free services to officers on work related or personal travel. However, some USOs will not allow USPHS officers. If this is the case, do not push for access. Be polite and accept you may not have permission to enter.

**Air Mobility Command (AMC) Flights** – This is the ability to travel on military flights on space available (Space-A) basis. These flights are typically extremely inexpensive (\$15-30 each way, both domestically and abroad), and usually fly in and out of military bases. Officers must be on official leave to be eligible for a space on the flight. Information on Space-A travel can be found online or at commissaries/uniform stores on base. For more information, visit the [BASEOPS.net webpage on Military Space-Available Travel](#).

There is also a [Facebook page for Space A travel](#), where you can find hints regarding travel using Space A and what to do at destinations around the world.

**Lodging Facilities** – Almost all military installations have some form of temporary lodging on base, which is available as space allows and extremely inexpensive. Bachelor Officers’ Quarters (BOQ) and Visiting Officers’ Quarters (VOQ) vary widely ranging from simple rooms with shared bath to multi- room suites. Temporary military lodging (TML) quarters are designed for the military family. Some useful sources to identify these facilities are:

[Air Force Lodging](#): 1-888-AFLODGE (1-888-235-6343)

[Army Lodging](#): 1-800-GO-ARMY-1 (1-800-462-7691)

[Marine Corps Lodging](#)

[Navy Lodging](#): 1-877-NAVY-BED (628-9233)

[Coast Guard Lodging](#)

Many hotels, car rental companies, and airlines offer discounted rates to members of the Uniformed Services and their families while traveling with or without orders and are often referred to as the current “Military” or “Government” rates. Be prepared to show military ID (CAC Card).

**Armed Forces Vacation Club** - The [Armed Forces Vacation Club](#) (AFVC) is a "Space Available" program that offers excess condominium timeshares at resorts around the world for only \$349.00 per unit, per week. All Uniformed Services members and their adult dependents are eligible to use this program.

**Armed Forces Recreation Centers** - The [Armed Forces Recreation Centers](#) (AFRC) resorts are affordable Joint Service facilities operated by the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center and located at ideal vacation destinations throughout the world. AFRCs offer a full range of resort hotel opportunities for service members and their families.

– Most military installations have a variety of recreational facilities available. These include theaters, swimming pools, bowling lanes, sports equipment rentals, youth centers, and information/ticket offices. Several installations also have wilderness camps, waterfront sites, and other vacation-type sites. Check your closest base’s website for details. Other links are found on the [Military.com website](#).

**Reduced-price tickets** may be obtained at most military installations through the Moral, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) office for local attractions, movies and many well-known theme parks (i.e. Disney World, Universal Studios).

**Legal Services Benefits** – USPHS officers are entitled to certain legal benefits like the creation of “Simple Wills” and “Powers of Attorney.” These services are provided via the legal staff of the Judge Advocate General’s (JAG) office. Check your local base’s website for details or refer to:

- [DoD Military Installation Directory](#)
- [Air Force Legal Assistance Directory](#)
- [MyArmyBenefits – Legal Assistance Services webpage](#)
- [US Navy Judge Advocate General’s Corps webpage](#)
- [US Coast Guard Pay & Personnel Center – Legal Services webpage](#)

## **Appendix 4. Military Courtesy and Conduct**

USPHS officers visiting uniformed services installations must observe the general rules of courtesy practiced on those installations. It is important, therefore, to be familiar with such customs and courtesies. More information on uniformed services customs and courtesies can be found under [USPHS Personnel Instruction 2, Subchapter CC26.1, "Uniformed Services Courtesies."](#)

Military courtesy is a required standard of behavior among all military personnel. Therefore, USPHS officers must always ensure proper military courtesy is rendered to members of other uniformed services, and to uniformed military personnel of U.S. allied nations. If you are ever unsure regarding a foreign national in uniform, there is no disrespect to approach the member and ask regarding the uniform in a polite manner. Typically, you will not ever salute foreign uniformed officers, regardless of rank. For detailed information on military courtesy and on-base etiquette, please see CCPM Pamphlet 62: The [Commissioned Officer's handbook](#).

Commissioned officers are appointed by, or under the authority of, the President with confirmation by the U.S. Senate. USPHS officers serve at the pleasure of the President. Consequently, a "Commissioned" officer is a direct representative of the President, and as such, can give verbal or written order to subordinates which have the force of federal law. Given this status and responsibility, a USPHS Commissioned Officer, must be ever wary of his/her actions and comments when in public, and should act with proper decorum at all times. This also goes for how he/she conducts himself/herself on social media. A USPHS officer is technically never off duty in maintaining the highest standards in our interactions with other uniformed services and the community. This is also true regarding how we should conduct ourselves on social media. Please re-visit "Professional Organizations to Consider Joining" regarding speaking out on social media. COA is the public voice for the USPHS and serves as our advocate with elected officials and the public.

## **Appendix 5. Training and Awards**

### **Commissioned Officers Training Academy**

The [Commissioned Officers Training Academy](#) (COTA) hosts the Officer Basic Course (OBC), for the goal is to familiarize newly commissioned officers with the USPHS Commissioned Corps history and mission, proper uniform wear, military customs and courtesies, benefits, etc. This is a two-week course that provides training and information on officer competency and career development.

### **USPHS Awards**

The USPHS awards officers for service via individual, service and unit awards. All active duty Commissioned Corps and DoD officers are eligible for USPHS awards. Any DoD members eligible for USPHS awards must be approved by the DoD Liaison Officer prior to receiving a USPHS award. All Commissioned Corps officers must also meet the following requirements:

1. Be in compliance with the USPHS licensure policy as outlined in CC27.1.1, "Professional Licensure/Certification," of the eCCIS;
2. Maintain a Satisfactory Commissioned Officers' Effectiveness Reports (COER) on file in DCCPR for each year covered by the recognition award:
3. Most recent COER must also be on file; and
4. No suspensions or unfavorable personnel actions pending or ongoing adverse actions.

For more information visit the [Commissioned Officers' Awards Program webpage](#), and download nomination records from the [CCMIS Awards Forms webpage](#).

### **Field Medical Readiness Badge (FMRB)**

The FMRB signifies an officer demonstrated exceptional readiness competency. If an officer is interested in pursuing the FMRB, certain trainings, an annual physical fitness test (APFT), and deployment requirements must be met within a three-year period. Once authorized, the officer may wear the FMRB for his/her entire career. In addition to being authorized to wear the FMRB, an officer may receive awards for deployments, if certain criteria are met. More information about the FMRB and deployment-related awards can be found on the [RedDOG Deployment and Readiness Awards webpage](#) and the [webpage for the FMRB Required Modules](#).