



Tips on the Environmental Health Officer (EHO) Junior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (JRCOSTEP)

WHO: The United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps is one of the Nation's eight uniformed services and is under the Department of Health and Human Services. The USPHS Commissioned Corps has over 6,000 Commissioned Officers whose mission is "Protecting, Promoting, and Advancing the Health and Safety of the Nation."

Students interested in
Environmental Health
JRCOSTEPs should visit
[USPHS Student Internships](#)

WHAT: The USPHS Commissioned Corps offers internships through the JRCOSTEP. These training positions are available to fulltime students who have completed **at least 2 years** of study in a professionally accredited baccalaureate program, or **at least 1 year** in a professionally accredited master's degree program, in specific health disciplines that meet Environmental Health Officer (EHO) requirements.

JRCOSTEPs receive the basic pay and allowances of an O-1 (Ensign) Officer unless they have prior military service; pay calculations are determined by Commission Corps Headquarters (CCHQ).

WHEN: Assignments in locations throughout the country can range from **31 to 120 days**, but most assignments are between 60 and 90 days. Most JRCOSTEPs are hired for the summer months.

WHERE: JRCOSTEPs are selected by a preceptor who assigns work related to environmental health. Agencies likely to hire an EHO JRCOSTEP are Indian Health Service (IHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

WHY: Be part of something bigger by serving your country while receiving competitive benefits during the JRCOSTEP, gaining work experience, and building your resume and professional network.

HOW: The JRCOSTEP process is more involved than the typical environmental health internship.

- **Contact USPHS CCHQ** at 1-888-225-3302 or submit inquiry [online](#) to learn more about us, our opportunities, and the application process.
- **Check your eligibility and submit your application online!** Apply online, then receive an email with further instructions on how to complete the application process.
- **Submit your application early!** Once you have successfully completed the prescreen process and have been notified, you can apply for a JRCOSTEP. **All materials will need to be in by the date given by the call center. Keep a copy of your paperwork!**
- **Make sure you complete ALL the required components!** An application is not complete until all required materials are received. Application materials include letters of reference, current official college transcripts, and medical forms. Additional materials are required once an agency confirms sponsorship.
- **Follow-up!** Not receiving reference letters and transcripts are the most common delays.
- **Use agency contacts!** The USPHS processes the JRCOSTEP application but [agency contacts](#) make selections and placements. Students can increase their chance of selection by working

with their faculty advisors to connect with agencies seeking student interns and current USPHS EHOs.

Student Selection Tips

The following are some of the common reasons why some students are more likely than others to be selected for JRCOSTEP assignments. The information below does not guarantee selection.

Student Selection and Notification

Formal selection and notification of students typically occurs around March for a summer JRCOSTEP. Students not contacted by late April have less chance of selection, but it is possible if other students turn down their opportunity or an agency is late to begin the selection process.

Common factors that contribute to selection

- **Direct recruitment:** a preceptor contacts the school or student and lines up an assignment.
- **Student seeks opportunity:** Students can [contact the agency](#) of interest to find out if the agency is willing to provide sponsorship. This is essential in gaining a sponsorship if students missed agency selections week or completed an application late in the season.
- **Enrolled in School:** Applicants must be enrolled fulltime in school to be eligible.
- **Good References:** Strong letters of recommendation increase chances of selection.
- **Good Grades:** Having a 2.80 or greater GPA is required.
- **Good “Fit”:** The USPHS Commissioned Corps is not for everyone – We are looking for individuals with career potential, a willingness to accept any assignment, wear the USPHS uniform with pride, and possess diverse work and leadership experience. Students must meet the physical fitness requirements, including [height/weightstandards](#). The USPHS Commissioned Corps officer is compliant when they maintain a BMI between 19.0 kg/m² and 27.5 kg/m², regardless of age and gender.

Common factors that contribute to non-selection

- **Poor GPA, Weak References:** Having a GPA of less than 2.8, very few environmental health courses, very selective on assignment location or little leadership experience.
- **Limited Career Potential:** No plans of leaving home; no match of student interests and USPHS needs.
- **Close to Graduation:** JRCOSTEP participants must be in school to be eligible or they must return to college or to a post-graduate training program in a commissionable profession immediately following participation in JRCOSTEP.
- **Fail Medical Clearance:** The USPHS is a uniformed service with physical fitness requirements. Students have been turned down for chronic health conditions and exceeding height/weight standards.
- **Conflicting Obligation:** The student must be free of any obligations or responsibility that would conflict with a call to active duty in the PHS Commissioned Corps.

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