



*Environmental Health Officer  
Professional Advisory Committee*



# The EHO Assessment

**June 2021 News and Updates**

*A place to learn about current events and updates from the EHOPAC*

## **EHOPAC Leadership Message**

Welcome to another edition of the all-digital format for EHO News and Updates!

*Disclaimer: This newsletter/article is for informational purposes only and does not reflect official views of the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps or USPHS leadership.*

EHOs,

It's hard to believe we're already into a new quarter and another issue of the EHO Assessment. With the current pace of deployments, additional assignments, covering for others when deployed, caring for your home front, ongoing policy changes Corps-wide, and trying to make space for personal mental health, welfare, and resilience, we are sure you are exhausted. We hope this issue gives you some solace in the fact that the PAC remains vigilant on your behalf and is doing our best to provide support to you as an officer and individual.

We remain committed to helping officers navigate this difficult time, and sincerely appreciate all of the feedback and perspective that has already been shared to help shape our support activities. There are several planned and upcoming products, events, and opportunities to share feedback and receive guidance and direction that we hope you engage in. Read on to see what we're up to, and please don't hesitate to contact us with your concerns either directly or through our anonymous feedback link (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NDXMFWX>).

## Important EHOPAC Updates

### Readiness:

Due to the continued high operational tempo and demand for EHOs to support a variety of missions, it is critical to keep CCHQ up-to-date on medical or personal issues that may preclude you from deploying, to keep up on your readiness tasks, and to take care of yourself mentally, emotionally, and physically so you can go the distance when called upon. Login to the Officer Secure Area (OSA) regularly to check your readiness status for the next 90 days. For questions or concerns, contact RDB via email at [PHSReadiness@hhs.gov](mailto:PHSReadiness@hhs.gov) or complete a [Readiness Assistance Form within RDB Self-Service](#). The EHOPAC Readiness Subcommittee is also available to help address any errors in your readiness history or projections – officers may reach out to LCDR Steven Merritt at [merritt.steven@epa.gov](mailto:merritt.steven@epa.gov) or LCDR Charlie Darr at [cdarr@hrsa.gov](mailto:cdarr@hrsa.gov).

### *Readiness Personnel Operations Memorandum (POM) Revisions*

Commissioned Corps Headquarters recently revised three policies related to Retention Weight Standards, Periodic Health Updates (PHUs), and Readiness Compliance. These are relatively minor procedural changes and clarifications, but officers are encouraged to be familiar with the requirements:

- [POM 821.66, “Retention Weight Standards.”](#) This revision requires officers who are below the minimum or exceed the maximum acceptable BMI limit outlined in Commissioned Corps Instruction (CCI) 241.01, “Readiness and Duty Requirements,” to submit additional documentation to CCHQ within specific due dates as they strive to return to compliance.
- [POM 821.71, “Physical Examination Requirements.”](#) This revision outlines the forms, laboratory test requirements, and instructions regarding the Periodic Health Update (PHU) for medical readiness. The POM also includes screening examinations required per recommendations of the United States Preventive Services Task Force.
- [POM 821.75, “Readiness Compliance.”](#) This revision more clearly communicates expectations for what officers must do to become Basic Qualified and maintain readiness continuously. Additionally, this POM is now more specific on the consequences of being identified and marked as “Not Qualified” for monthly readiness checks.

### *Remember: Basic Life Support (BLS) Deadline is June 30, 2021*

For all officers with BLS certification expiring between March 2020 and June 2021, plan to complete your BLS renewal through either American Heart Association or the American Red Cross, and submit documentation via eDOC-U no later than June 30, 2021. This is the final BLS extension approved by CCHQ leadership for the COVID-19 pandemic. If you’re having difficulty finding a BLS class via either of the approved organizations within your area, please reach out to the EHOPAC Readiness Subcommittee for suggestions – LCDR Steven Merritt at [merritt.steven@epa.gov](mailto:merritt.steven@epa.gov) or LCDR Charlie Darr at [cdarr@hrsa.gov](mailto:cdarr@hrsa.gov).

### *National Security and Suitability Requirements for PHS Officers:*

Federal personnel vetting process reforms are underway to improve efficiency and employ an enhanced risk management approach. Continuous evaluation vetting allows for risks to be identified in real time, not on a 5- or 10-year investigation timeline.

Per [CCD 111.03, "Conditions of Service,"](#) all officers are required to retain continual eligibility to obtain a Defense Security Service Tier 3 (Secret) security clearance. Per [CCI 231.04, "National Security and Suitability Background Investigations":](#)

1. Members are required to obtain and maintain a favorably adjudicated Tier 3 national security background investigation with an additional State criminal history childcare check for appointment and/or continued service on active duty.
2. All members are required to comply with periodic re-investigation initiated by either the USPHS Commissioned Corps, an Operating Division (OPDIV), Staff Division (STAFFDIV), or non-Health and Human Services (HHS) organization to which the PHS officer is assigned.
3. CCHQ initiates and funds the initial investigation with an additional childcare check for all applicants to the Regular Corps and Ready Reserve.
4. The duty station to which a member of the Regular Corps is assigned initiates and funds any subsequent/continuous vetting investigations with an additional childcare check while the member remains on active duty.

*What does this mean for PHS officers?* Traditional reinvestigations will be replaced with Trusted Workforce (TW) 2.0, which is based on tiers of risk, not tiers of time. Officers must be prepared to comply with more frequent continuous evaluation requirements, as determined by their agency's security programs. Full compliance with TW 2.0 is anticipated by September 30, 2022.

## Communications:

Got a great EHO photo? Send it to us! We are soliciting photos for the **2021 EHOs in Action photobook** to raise Commissioned Corps leadership's awareness of the great work EHOs do. Please submit photos from your duty station, deployments (PHS or agency), COSTEP assignments, physical fitness events, volunteer work, or recruitment events. In addition to photos of officers in action, we also welcome photos of interesting scenery or events that represent unique work, an environmental health issue, or an accomplishment. Think creatively!

### Request:

- Send high resolution photos from 2021 to CDR Christopher Smith at [nxz0@cdc.gov](mailto:nxz0@cdc.gov) with "EHOs In Action photobook submission" in the subject line.
- Include a short description (a sentence or two) that can be used as a caption and identifying the officers in the photo.
- Photo release forms are required for images with non-PHS people. Please email CDR Christopher Smith ([nxz0@cdc.gov](mailto:nxz0@cdc.gov)) or LCDR April Hill ([April.hill@hhs.gov](mailto:April.hill@hhs.gov)) for the form.
- 2021 photos will be accepted through October 2021.

## Marketing and Recruitment:

The EHO JRCOSTEP application window will be open from June 1, 2021 until September 30, 2021 for opportunities during the summer of 2022! Students who are eligible for the JRCOSTEP program are able to submit their electronic application using the [USPHS Apply Now website](#).

Please reach out to interested students and accredited programs to share this opportunity. Interested students must have completed at least two years of study in an accredited baccalaureate program and be returning to school in the fall of 2022.

If you are interested in becoming a JRCOSTEP Preceptor in 2022, please contact the JRCOSTEP Workgroup. For more information, please see the [Benefits of Hiring a JRCOSTEP brochure](#) and the [JRCOSTEP Preceptor Guide](#). Specific questions should be directed to [costep@hhs.gov](mailto:costep@hhs.gov)

## Mentoring and Orientation:

*Table 1. Mentoring Tips for June Issue*

Mentor Tips	Mentee Tips
<p><b>Mentors should ask open-ended questions:</b> Asking your mentee open-ended questions will help you as a mentor to identify their real needs, values, and passions. It is also a great way to encourage your mentee to think through situations themselves and draw out the consequences of the various choices or courses of action they can take.</p>	<p><b>Mentees should be clear on your expectations/goals:</b> Tell your mentor what you're hoping to get out of the relationship and what topics are the most important. Think of a specific goal you have in mind that you need help to accomplish. Come prepared to each meeting with an overview or an outline of what you want to accomplish during your session. Communicating and setting goals helps you progress quicker and stay on track.</p>

*Welcome to recent EHO Officer Basic Course Graduates!*

- LT Beau Carter, IHS
- LT Joseph Sarisky, IHS
- LT Olayinka Sotayo, BOP
- LTJG Natalie Cataldo, IHS
- LTJG Katherine Miller, IHS

## Environmental Justice (EJ) & Health Equity:

We are excited to announce the creation of the EHOPAC EJ Working Group (EJWG)! The EJWG is an ad-hoc team of volunteers led by LCDR Aaron Niman (EPA) and CDR Michelle Dittrich (ATSDR). This team will help facilitate the EHOPAC's priority of spotlighting EHOs and EHO work in the areas of environmental justice, climate change and healthy equity. More details will be announced at the June 2021 EHOPAC General Meeting.

## Call for Voting Member Nominations:

Motivated by all the exciting updates from EHOPAC Subcommittees? You can serve as a voting member (VM) representing the EHO Category! The EHOPAC provides advice and consultation to the Environmental Health Chief Professional Officer (CPO) and the EHO category on matters

relating to professional activities and personnel issues affecting EHOs. There is one vacant seat open for a representative from **Indian Health Services (IHS) for the Term 2022-2024**.

### **Voting Member Duties and Expectations**

The primary duties of a VM are to vote as a representative of EHOs assigned to a specific agency, attend EHOPAC monthly meetings, and manage an EHOPAC subcommittee or serve in an executive leadership position. VMs are expected to participate regularly in voting and at each meeting. The EHOPAC meets monthly via teleconference. VMs will also actively chair a minimum of one subcommittee during their term of service. Subcommittees typically meet monthly by teleconference to discuss specific activities and report on progress.

### **Application Procedures**

Interested applicants should submit a complete nomination package to CDR Jessica Havranek at [Jessica.havranek@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:Jessica.havranek@fda.hhs.gov), and copy Executive Committee members CDR Jessica Otto, Chair, [jessica.otto@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:jessica.otto@fda.hhs.gov) and CDR Elena Vaouli, Immediate Past Chair, [vaouli.elena@epa.gov](mailto:vaouli.elena@epa.gov) by **COB Friday, 9 July 2021**. Please include "EHOPAC – 2021 Voting Member Nomination Submission" in the email subject line. Individuals must include the following items in the nomination package:

- The EHOPAC self-nomination form with their supervisor's endorsement (form provided in email from CDR Havranek on June 8),
- Current curriculum vitae (CV), and
- A one-page statement of interest. In the statement of interest, officers should discuss which subcommittees and/or positions (top 3) they are interested in chairing and why, reasons for wanting to serve on the EHOPAC, and what the officer can contribute.

*NOTE: Incomplete and late nomination packages will not be reviewed. A complete package must include an endorsed nomination form, CV and statement of interest.*

### **Components of a Strong Application Package**

- Active participation on an EHOPAC subcommittee as a non-voting member for several years,
- Awareness of current EHOPAC activities, initiatives, and priorities,
- Interest in chairing an EHOPAC subcommittee,
- Success as a leader in other organizations (JOAG, COA, NEHA, AIHA, etc.),
- Strong written commitment (documented in your statement of interest),
- Willingness to devote a significant amount of personal time to the EHOPAC during your 3-year term.

### **Selection Process**

Current EHOPAC Voting Members will review each nomination package during the August 2021 EHOPAC business meeting, and score and rank nominees according to selection criteria due by 03 SEP 2021. Upon selection, the Chief Professional Officer (CPO) for our category will recommend candidates to the Surgeon General for appointment, with the concurrence of the applicant's direct supervisor and OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization representative. Interested individuals should plan for a membership tour that will begin on 01 January 2022. Members are elected for a 3-year term and may serve a maximum of two terms during their career.

For additional information or questions, please email CDRs Havranek, Otto, or Vaouli.

## Officer Leader Profile

We are happy to share another **Officer Leader Profile**, spotlighting fearless leaders in our category!

### **LCDR James Speckhart, Health Safety Officer FDA, Center for Devices and Radiological Health**

*I have served since 2014 as Health Safety Officer at the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Devices and Radiological Health at the Federal Research Campus for the Center's Biosafety Level 2 laboratories. My responsibilities are to help coordinate any technical field support to our Center's 75 research labs and the associated office spaces to promote injury prevention, and support emergency response across a five-building Center complex within the larger FDA Campus.*

*My previous assignments include five years with the U.S. Coast Guard in Ketchikan, Alaska and Norfolk, Virginia conducting safety officer duties and with the U.S. Dept of Agriculture – Food Safety and Inspection Service in Pennsylvania and New York conducting onsite safety inspections and training impacting the beef, chicken, and pork meat industrial processing operations.*

*My leadership style is mentoring and active listening for a positive and constructive result.*

#### **Career Highlights / Accomplishments**

- In 2020, I was locally deployed to the FDA COVID Emergency Response Call Center for 4-months to answer at least 1,000 general public questions about EUAs, diagnostic test kits, PPE items, hand sanitizer formulations, and basic medical concerns. I was the only EHO category officer to serve on this unique 25-member PHS multi-category and civilian employee combined team. I had brief times to utilize my partial Spanish speaking language skills.
- Elected NEHA Board Region 8 Vice President (2012 to the present) representing members in VA, MD, WV, Wash DC, DE, PA and all the uniformed services. Providing constructive feedback for the association's administrative budgets, policies, multimedia content, presenting at affiliate education conferences, and strategic growth planning to enhance the member needs.
- Published NEHA Policy Statement "*Research and Innovations that Enhance Environmental Health Science and Practice*", 2020

#### **Education / training**

- M.S. Environmental Health, Old Dominion University, 2005
- Graduate Certificate in Global Health, University of Maryland-College Park, 2019



*Figure 1. LCDR Speckhart*

*"Leader has a moral responsibility for a vision and to enable the members' capability"*

*– Peter Drucker*

### **Professional associations**

- National Environmental Health Association
  - Uniformed Services Environmental Health Association
  - American Industrial Hygiene Association
  - American Public Health Association
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## **Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) Updates**

### **Surgeon General's Message on PHS Missions:**

Dear Fellow Commissioned Corps Officers,

When I first wrote to you shortly after beginning my tenure as Surgeon General, we were well into our COVID-19 response mission and just beginning a rapid and large-scale deployment for the Unaccompanied Children (UC) Mission, also known as Operation Artemis. Now we are serving critical roles in both missions.

The recent decision to extend USPHS Corps officers for the UC Mission at the request of the department was made with the knowledge that our officers were the best, most capable Uniformed Service for this mission. The decision was not made lightly. I am keenly aware that many of our officers have been tasked with multiple deployments over the last year and face substantial physical and mental strain as a result. We are balancing this reality with the extraordinary public health challenges facing our nation right now.

I want to extend my sincere appreciation to RADM Orsega and the CCHQ team for their exceptional work to support these missions.

Given the growing demands of the UC Mission, I have asked RADM Richard Childs, MD, to be the Commanding Officer for the USPHS response to the UC Mission. He has accepted and will work closely with RADM Orsega and OSG Chief of Staff Max Lesko to oversee and coordinate response operations. RADM Childs' engagement will allow RADM Orsega and the CCHQ team to focus on the essential work of safeguarding the short- and long-term priorities of CCHQ operations.

For those of you recently deployed, currently deployed, or preparing to be deployed, thank you for your commitment to our Corps' mission. Because of your efforts, the Corps — and our entire nation — will emerge from these challenges with renewed resilience and strength.

### **Promotion:**

CCHQ has introduced one set of standardized promotion benchmarks for use by all 11 categories starting in Promotion Year 2022.

For more information on the new promotion benchmarks, please review the promotion benchmarks webinar on the [Learning Management System](#). Please reference the CCMIS

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[Promotion Website](#) for important announcements, instructions, and information. For additional promotion questions and concerns, contact your respective Agency Liaison.

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## Admin and Policy Updates:

CCHQ has updated the [Personnel Operations Memorandum \(POM\) 821.76, "Deployment Procedures"](#), to include:

- A provision to allow CCHQ, in consultation with the Surgeon General, to reevaluate the Mission Critical list at any time to ensure that the USPHS Commissioned Corps has sufficient officers for major response efforts;
  - Authorization for CCHQ to determine whether to extend an officer's deployment to maintain expertise and continuity during response operations; and
  - A new section on dwell time that aligns the USPHS Commissioned Corps post-deployment procedures with the military services and provides specifics on how officers can use dwell time. The period between deployments is called dwell time. Dwell time is authorized by the USPHS Commissioned Corps to any officer who deployed for 30 or more consecutive days in support of a Corps-led deployment.
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In addition to Deployment Procedures, CCHQ has updated several policies to support Ready Reserve Corps and streamline readiness processes. To keep track of all the policy updates and issuances in recent years, CCHQ developed a helpful **Policy Refresher Guide** for officers – sent via CCHQ email on May 20, 2021.

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The May issue of [The Commissioned Corps Bulletin](#) is now available on the Commissioned Corps Management Information System (CCMIS) website.

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## Upcoming Events

### Jun 29: EHOPAC Summer Recruitment Webinar

The EHOPAC JRCOSTEP workgroup is hosting a webinar to discuss recruitment and the general active duty application process for the EHO category, including the current window for 2022 JRCOSTEP internships. Please share with any students interested in learning about internship and job opportunities as a USPHS EHO. The webinar will take place on **June 29, 2021 from 2-3:30pm Eastern Time**.

- Join online via Microsoft Teams: [Click here to join the meeting](#)
- Or call in by phone (audio only): +1 404-718-3800 ; Conference ID#: 543 009 683#

### Jul 14-15: National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) Virtual Conference and Exhibition

The **NEHA Annual Educational Conference (AEC) and Exhibition** is transitioning to a Three-Part Virtual Series in 2021. The last session will be held **July 14-15**. The theme this year is "Together a Safer and Healthier Tomorrow." Visit the [Registration Page](#) for more information.

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## Jul 29: EHOPAC Deployment Webinar – Intra-Agency Deployments

The Readiness subcommittee is hosting a deployment skills webinar on **July 29, 2021 at 3pm ET**. This webinar will cover getting credit for intra-agency deployments and will feature experiences from officers deploying through their agency duties, such as CDC, EPA, USCG, etc. The subcommittee is seeking volunteers! Email LCDR John Skender at [skender.john@epa.gov](mailto:skender.john@epa.gov) if you have an intra-agency deployment experience to share.

## Aug 18: PHS Pre-Retirement Seminar

Save the date for a **Pre-Retirement Seminar** for all PHS officers hosted by CCHQ and the Office of the Surgeon General. Scheduled for **August 18, 2021 from 1-3pm Eastern Time**, the seminar will describe the retirement process, identify available resources, and cover retirement pay, annuity, medical coverage, and more. A link will be provided to officers at a later date. Please email the CCHQ Retirements and Separations Team at [phscseparations2@hhs.gov](mailto:phscseparations2@hhs.gov) with any questions you'd like addressed during the Questions and Answers segment.

## Sep 14: EHOPAC Virtual Training Series

The EHOPAC Training and Events Subcommittee is soliciting speakers for the **2021 EHO Virtual Training Series (VTS), to be held September 14, 2021**. In particular, they are looking for abstracts covering the topics of EHO Roles in COVID-19 Deployments and Vaccine Implementation and EHO Roles in POTUS Initiatives. The deadline for a session abstract is **June 30, 2021**. For more information on the speaker submission process and topics, see the email from LCDR Jona Johnson on June 9 titled *\*Soliciting speakers for the Sept 14, 2021 EHO VTS*.

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## Organization of the Month

The [Public Health Accreditation Board \(PHAB\)](#) is a nonprofit organization with a mission “to advance and transform public health practice by championing performance improvement, strong infrastructure, and innovation.” PHAB provides nationally recognized, practice-focused and evidence-based standards for local health departments. PHAB’s accreditation process assesses a health department’s capacity to carry out the ten Essential Public Health Services, provide effective management, and communicate with stakeholders.

As of May 14, 2021, a total of 39 state, 276 local, 4 Tribal, 1 statewide-integrated local public health department system (Florida), and 2 Army Installation Departments of Public Health have achieved five-year accreditation through the PHAB. Much of the work we do as EHOs involves coordination with local, state and tribal public health departments. PHAB provides a standardized approach through which we can better understand the challenges and opportunities facing our partners in public health. You can visit the [PHAB Training Page](#) for resources on health equity, performance measures, and more, or visit the [Quality Improvement Corner](#) for quarterly examples of how public health organizations can continuously evaluate and improve.

## About EHOPAC News

**Do you have a news story to share?** Submit your *EHOPAC News* stories or questions for inclusion in a future edition to LCDR Matthew Kozler [matthew\\_kozler@nps.gov](mailto:matthew_kozler@nps.gov), LCDR Tyler White [tyler.white@bia.gov](mailto:tyler.white@bia.gov), and LT Stephanie Bridges [stephanie\\_bridges@nps.gov](mailto:stephanie_bridges@nps.gov)!

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Thank you for all you do,

**EHOPAC Communications Subcommittee – Publications Team**

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