



*Environmental Health Officer
Professional Advisory Committee*



The EHO Assessment

October 2020 News and Updates

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

EHOPAC Leadership Updates

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

You Asked: EHO Anonymous Feedback Responses

The following comments were submitted to EHOPAC leadership via the new anonymous feedback system. If you have a question or comment for EHO leadership and wish to remain anonymous, please utilize our new anonymous feedback system by visiting <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NDXMFWX>.

Q: Are students able to apply for SRCOSTEP as an EHO?

A: Students within one year of receiving a graduate degree in environmental health are eligible to apply for the SRCOSTEP program. However, EH-related SRCOSTEP opportunities are uncommon. Historically, agencies that offer EH-related student internship opportunities select JRCOSTEPs. Indian Health Service has consistently provided EH-related JRCOSTEP opportunities for undergraduates; FDA and CDC have periodically offered EH-related positions. JRCOSTEP positions require no service obligation; whereas, SRCOSTEPs must serve equal to twice the time sponsored. Benefits vary between JRCOSTEP and SRCOSTEPs. For more information visit: <https://www.usphs.gov/students/> or call 1-888-225-3302.

Q: Since officers are expected to meet physical fitness standards, they ought to be provided time each week for physical training. This would be in line with other services.

A: We understand the time required to maintain physical fitness, and the challenge this poses to officers who work many hours. On the recent USPHS Town Hall, this comment was also addressed by CCHQ indicating they would look further into this point .

Q: Please provide any guidance on how to handle COERS this year if you have been deployed for the majority of the Fiscal Year.

A: Many officers have been deployed back-to-back for many months because of public health emergencies like the 2019 Novel Coronavirus response. Officers who have served lengthy or frequent deployments might consider asking their deployment supervisors to provide feedback to their supervisor of record to help complete their COER. Officers' COER narrative can describe deployment accomplishments alongside any programmatic accomplishments. Officers who feel they are rated poorly due to their deployment status should consult their Agency Liaison.

COER & Promotion:

COERs are now available. Please review the [“New COER System”](#) webinar and [user guide](#) to familiarize yourself with the system.

Please note the following important dates for the 2020 Annual COER:

- The Annual COER is available on 1 October 2020
- The Annual COER is due to the Rater by 28 October 2020
- The Annual COER is due to the Reviewing Official by 24 November 2020
- The Annual COER is due to the Agency Liaison by 15 December 2020
- The Annual COER is due to Commissioned Corps Headquarters by 15 January 2021

Important EHOPAC Updates

Communications:

We are soliciting photos to compile [EHOs in Action](#) photobooks that will highlight the unique jobs we do across the category and in each agency. We want to include photos and stories of significant or unique work.

If you have photos from your duty station, deployments (PHS or agency), COSTEP assignments, physical fitness events, volunteer work, and recruitment or retirement events please submit them. We also need photo of interesting scenery or events that may not include an officer, but represent unique work, an environmental health issue, or an accomplishment.

The *EHOs in Action* photobooks raise Commissioned Corps leadership's awareness of the great work EHOs do. Please think creatively!

Request:

- Send **high resolution** photos from **2018-2020** to melva.palmer@fda.hhs.gov with “EHOs In Action photobook submission” in the subject line
- Indicate the year the photo was taken
- Include a short description (a sentence or two) that can be used as a caption
- Submit a photo release form for each image **if it contains non-PHS personnel**, see attached
- Submit 2018-2020 photos **by (11/02/2020)**; If you have previously submitted photos, please do not re-submit.

Readiness:

Big news regarding readiness was announced on the September 22nd CCHQ Town Hall. CCHQ recognizes the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency has made it difficult to maintain basic readiness and stated readiness requirements will not be due until **March 31, 2021**. Officers are encouraged to complete readiness requirements prior to the March 31, 2020 deadline and will still be able to submit their readiness information via the Officer Secure Area in CCMIS.

Marketing and Recruitment:

EHO JRCOSTEP:

- The deadline to submit an application for JRCOSTEP was September 30.
- Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, recorded recruitment presentation materials have been developed to help officers with recruiting throughout the year, in order to increase visibility for next year’s JRCOSTEP application window.
 - Any questions on these materials can be sent to the JRCOSTEP Workgroup members: LT Kyle Moller (yxq7@cdc.gov), LTJG Garrett Steiner (Garrett.Steiner@ihs.gov), or LCDR Erin Kincaid (wj8@cdc.gov).

Mentoring and Orientation:

The M&O Subcommittee is excited to launch the Mentoring Moments and Tips (MMT) Initiative!

The MMT is an initiative that includes testimonials, advice and resources to help mentors and mentees forge a meaningful and beneficial mentoring experience. MMT will be shared in future EHO Assessment Newsletters!

CAPT Carolyn Oyster, 2020 *Thomas E. Crown Mentor Award* Winner on the value of mentoring:

"At the heart of every mentoring partnership should be a supportive relationship with a main goal to build trust, share experiences and grow and mature both the Mentor's and Protege's Character."

Figure 1 - This chart summarizes the intent of the Mentoring Moments and Tips (MMT) Initiative.

Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) Updates

CCHQ is pleased to announce that, as a part of the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act signed by the President, **Public Health Service officers can now carryover their leave in excess of 60 days for FY 2020.**

Officers should be aware that the continuing resolution specifies this is a one-time carryover of excess leave over 60 days and cannot be applied to excess leave in future years unless another law is passed. Use or lose will apply to leave earned in FY 2021 and subsequent years. All excess leave from FY 2020 over the 60 days normally allowed for carryover must be used by September 30, 2023, or it will be lost.

More information will be forthcoming on the CCMIS website. Please contact your Agency liaison if you have additional questions.

Because of the critical need for Public Health Service officer expertise and skillsets, the Commissioned Corps has **extended the temporary pause** on the acceptance of Voluntary Separations/Resignation of Commission and processing of new Voluntary Retirements for

officers between 20 to 30 years of active duty service through **March 31, 2021**. CCHQ hopes to start accepting requests for Voluntary Separation/Resignation of Commission and Voluntary Retirements for officers between 20 to 30 years of active duty service starting January 1, 2021 for a separation date no earlier than April 1, 2021.

Uniform of the Day: As of Monday, Oct. 5, 2020, the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps uniform of the day is the Service Dress Blue. Alternate uniforms are the Service Khaki and the Operational Dress Uniform. For those officers detailed to the U.S. Coast Guard, please follow the U.S. Coast Guard uniform guidance.

For more information on uniform policy and the uniform of the day, please reference the Personnel Operations Memorandum ([POM](#)) 17-002, "Uniform of the Day" and Commissioned Corps Instruction ([CCI](#)) 411.01, "Required Wear of the Uniform."

Flu Vaccination due December 31, 2020. You can obtain your flu vaccine at a DoD Military Treatment Facility or at a TRICARE network pharmacy - <https://militaryrx.express-scripts.com/find-pharmacy>. The flu vaccine is free. If you went to a TRICARE network pharmacy and had to pay out of pocket for the flu vaccine, please go to the following website to complete a reimbursement form - <https://militaryrx.express-scripts.com/forms>.

CCHQ Leadership hosted a two-day **USPHS Commissioned Corps Town Hall** on September 22 and 24. Officers will be notified when the recording and written responses from both sessions are available in the Commissioned Corps Management Information System Officer Secure Area.

In order to help with financial burdens caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, an executive order was signed by President Trump that will **temporarily defer payroll taxes** for certain federal employees, including uniformed service members, from September 1 to December 31, 2020.

For United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps officers who receive **less than \$8,666.66 per month for basic pay, USPHS will temporarily defer the withholding of your 6.2% Social Security tax.** If your monthly rate of basic pay is at or **above this threshold**, your social security tax withholding will not be affected by the temporary deferral.

As more information becomes available, it will be posted on:
<https://www.dfas.mil/taxes/Social-Security-Deferral/>.

The Office of the Surgeon General invites you to view the current issue of [Public Health Reports](#) (PHR), the official journal of the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General and the U.S. Public Health Service, which has recently come out online. Below you will find the Table of Contents for this issue as well as brief summaries of a few articles from this issue that may be of interest to you.

Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE: Commissioned Corps Town Hall

An upcoming **Commissioned Corps Town Hall** is scheduled for Tuesday, October 27, 2020 from 1330 to 1530. The Town Hall will be both a strategic and tactical Town Hall. During the tactical Town Hall, leadership will provide policy updates, will discuss action items from the September tactical Town Hall and will answer questions from the field.

Organization of the Month

The [American Public Health Association \(APHA\)](#) represents all areas of public health, working both within and outside governmental organizations and educational institutions in every region of the country. The organization explores topics including environmental health, climate change, gun violence, health equity, racism and health, vaccines, and many other issues. Additionally, APHA publishes a monthly newspaper titled “The Nation’s Health” and oversees the 109-year-old American Journal of Public Health publishing monthly peer-reviewed public health research covering health policy, practice, and education.

Additionally, the organization has played a key role in sharing current COVID-19 information throughout the public health community. More about APHA’s COVID-19 response can be found here: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/communicable-disease/coronavirus>.

Lastly, APHA holds an annual conference. This year the meeting will take place virtually between OCT 24-28. More information can be found on the [APHA Annual Meeting and Expo Page](#).

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 at matthew_kozler@nps.gov and LCDR Tyler White at tyler.j.white@uscg.mil!

For More EHOPAC Information:

Visit the [EHOPAC Website](#)

Check out our FACEBOOK pages:

[EHO Closed Facebook Group](#)

To join, please log in, and click the green “Join Group” button.

[EHOPAC Open Facebook page](#)

To subscribe or unsubscribe, please visit the [EHOPAC Listserv page](#).

Thank you for all you do,

EHOPAC Communications Subcommittee – Publications Team

For more information, please visit the EHOPAC website at: <https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/eho/>

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