



Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health Service
Scientist Professional Advisory Committee



Scientist Category Handbook: PHS Awards

Last Updated: May 2022

Overview

- The purpose of the Commissioned Officers' Awards Program (COAP), established in 1961, is to: (a) recognize officers for outstanding achievement or service; (b) encourage maximum performance; and (c) improve esprit de corps among officers.
- There are several different recognition and award types including: Individual Honor Awards, Unit Honor Awards, Service Awards, Campaign Medals, Training Ribbons, Regular Corps Ribbons, Badges, and Insignia. PHS officers are not eligible for cash awards. More details on COAP can be found at: https://dcp.psc.gov/CCMIS/COAP/COAP_award_criteria_m.aspx
- Current official guidance on the Awards Program was disseminated 19 January 2021: https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/ccis/documents/CCI_511.01.pdf. This guidance describes all PHS awards along with the responsibilities and procedures in the award process.
- Award nominations may be prepared by an officer's supervisor or any other colleague (civilian or PHS officer) who is knowledgeable about the work performed by the officer. Officers are also encouraged to be proactive in obtaining awards given that awards play an important role in promotions and reflect career development. Officers can request that their outstanding performance in a specific project or completed task be considered for an award.
- Award processing is generally accomplished within 60-90 days after receipt from the agency. In order to process awards for review during the next promotion cycle, agencies need to have submissions to Commissioned Officer's Awards Program by August 31.
- There is no limit to the number of awards an officer can receive in a given time frame. However, officers should strive to earn awards regularly, achieving higher level awards as they progress through their career.
- An officer cannot receive both a Unit and Individual Honor Award for the same activity unless the officer "demonstrated a level of accomplishment that significantly exceeds the efforts of other members of the unit" and the unit nomination precedes the individual nomination.
- Officers must continuously meet the readiness requirements, starting from the date of the award nomination through the date that the award is approved.

Honor Awards

Each recommendation for an individual or unit honor award must be formally initiated **within 13 months after the noteworthy act or specific period of service** to be recognized. Factors to consider when selecting an appropriate award level include: (a) scope of impact; (b) magnitude of achievement; (c) leadership; (d) length of time; and

(e) valor. All nominations should have at least one level of Supervisory Line Authority review and endorsement. Please use digital/electronic signatures whenever possible.

- Individual Honor Awards (Distinguished Service Medal [DSM]; Meritorious Service Medal [MSM]; Outstanding Service Medal [OSM]; Commendation Medal [CM]; Achievement Medal [AM]; and Citation [CIT]) – use Form [PHS 6342-2](#) (PDF, 266kb).
- Unit Honor Awards (Outstanding Unit Citation [OUC] and Unit Commendation [UC]) – use Form [PHS 6342-1](#) (PDF, 414kb)

Service Awards

PHS grants service awards in recognition of a specific type of service, activity, and/or for service during a specific time period. Please refer to the Awards Program Policy [CCI511.01](#) (Section 6-3) for detailed information on the types of and criteria for service awards.

Awards Boards

- Agency Awards Board (AAB) – Most agencies have their own AAB for review of Honor Award nominations. They have delegated authority for final approval of awards at the OSM level and below (for individual honor awards) and UCs. Those agencies without an AAB (e.g., DoD, DHS/IHSC) have their nominations reviewed by the CCIAB. Check with your Agency for guidance on how to write a successful award nomination.
- Commissioned Corps Interagency Awards Board (CCIAB) – Managed by COAP, reviews all non-agency honor award nominations (i.e. PAC, certain deployment awards) and those for officers assigned to agencies without an AAB.
- PHS-Commissioned Corps Awards Board (PHS-CCAB) – Managed by COAP, reviews all high-level honor award nominations after an initial review by AAB or CCIAB, i.e. DSM, MSM, OUC, and any award w/Valor.

Ribbon Wear and Procurement

- Award ribbons are usually worn on the left breast of an appropriate uniform in a specified order. Photos of PHS ribbons, in order of precedence, can be found at: https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/bulletin/awards_poster_m.aspx
- Several websites have been developed to help officers “build their rack” or determine the proper order of earned award ribbons. However, we have found only one that

includes Public Health Service for rack building:
<http://www.ultrathin.com/rackbuilder.htm>.¹

- Award ribbons can also be purchased from Vanguard and the Navy Exchange. Prior to placing an order, we recommend Officers contact the vendor directly to ensure the proper order when building a rack.
 - <https://www.vanguardmil.com/collections/public-health-service>
 - <https://www.mynavyexchange.com/nex/uniforms>

Additional Resources

- Commissioned Officers' Award Program (COAP) Frequently Asked Questions
https://dcp.psc.gov/CCMIS/COAP/COAP_frequently_asked_questions_m.aspx
- CDC Guidance on Awards
<http://intranet.cdc.gov/hro/commissioned-corps/awards-and-recognition/index.html>
- FDA Awards Nomination Process
<https://fda.sharepoint.com/sites/OC-Intranet-OC-OO-OFCC-FCCA/SitePages/FDA-CC-Awards.aspx>
- NIH Awards Nomination Process
<http://hr.od.nih.gov/hrguidance/corps/awards/default.htm>

It is recommended that you check for award process updates and that you adhere to all guidance before submitting any awards.

¹ SciPAC does not endorse purchase of products from any particular vendor. Inclusion of product websites is only for informational purposes.