



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

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## **Scientist Category Handbook: Mentoring Commissioned Officers**

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## **Overview and History of Mentoring within SciPAC**

Commissioned Corps Officers who understand the mission, history, advancement requirements, and cultures of their Service, officer category, and career track, feel more a part of their Service and organizational unit and, as a result, will be more positive and productive contributors to mission accomplishment. To that end, SciPAC developed and implemented a mentoring program for Scientists—including training on how to mentor commissioned officers—in June of 1997. Since that time, the Scientist category, primarily through the efforts of the SciPAC Mentoring Subcommittee, has identified outstanding O-4, O-5, and O-6 officers to serve as mentors to respectively junior fellow officers. Participation in the mentoring program is voluntary.

## **What is Mentoring and Why is it Important?**

Mentoring is a relationship between a volunteer mentor and a mentee who is typically more junior in rank than the mentor. The role of the mentor is to inspire, encourage, and support the mentee and to contribute to professional and personal development.

A mentoring relationship is important to both senior and junior officers because:

- Mentoring helps direct the mentee's career development in positive ways (e.g., understanding the need for and formulating an individualized career plan);
- Mentoring not only helps the mentee prepare for promotion but also helps achieve other milestones of a successful career (e.g., finding billets of increasing responsibility, serving in leadership roles in professional organizations, enhancing officership); and
- Mentoring is an expected professional role for both senior and junior officers, part of the promotion benchmarks, and allows officers to show clear evidence of leadership capability and investment in the mission of the Corps.

## **How Does the SciPAC Mentoring Program Work?**

### ***Apply to Become a SciPAC Mentor or Mentee***

To apply to become a mentor or mentee, complete and submit the [mentoring application](#) form available through the [SciPAC Mentoring Subcommittee](#).

### ***Application Process***

- **Mentee**: The US Public Health Service is distinct from other Services in the amount of personal responsibility placed upon officers for their own career development. Because of this distinction, SciPAC encourages new Scientist officers to request a mentor shortly following entry on active duty. Mentorship is not simply for newly commissioned officers; officers can be mentored throughout the entirety of their careers and can reach out to the formal mentoring program at any time to request a mentor.

- **Mentor:** Experienced junior officers (O-4's with a minimum of 2 years of time-in-grade) and senior officers (O-5's and above) are potential mentors. Periodically, new mentors are solicited through SciPAC correspondence. Interested officers should contact the [Mentoring Subcommittee Chair](#) who will evaluate the need for new mentors with the background and skill of the interested senior officers and will collect further information that can be used to facilitate a good match with a mentee.

### Matching Process

Following the receipt of mentor and mentee applications, the mentoring program uses the best combination of important career criteria (e.g., discipline, anticipated career development track, agency, geographic location, prior service history, and other characteristics and interests) to match mentors and mentees. Once a suitable match has been identified, both mentor and mentee are asked to complete a [Mentor-Mentee Agreement](#). The agreement requests that mentors and mentees commit to a mentorship relationship for a period of one year, which can be extended annually.

As junior officers advance in their careers and develop new areas of interest, new mentoring relationships might become necessary; new mentorship may also be indicated as mentors change agencies, advance in their own careers, and retire. Both mentors and mentees are responsible for evaluating the mentoring relationship and determining whether it continues to meet professional needs. The mentor-mentee agreement must be renewed annually. The SciPAC Mentoring Subcommittee contacts officers annually to determine whether the mentoring relationship should continue and be renewed in the records of the formal mentoring program.

### Training and Guidelines for Mentors

The Chief Scientist Officer, the SciPAC, and the Mentoring Subcommittee are responsible for ensuring that all mentors are adequately and broadly familiar with the category career tracks and opportunities for career growth within the Corps and the diverse agencies that it serves. SciPAC designated mentors should be viewed as positive role models and function accordingly. Both mentors and mentees should be proactive in establishing and maintaining the relationship. Frequent contact (at least quarterly) is essential for establishing initial rapport and keeping the lines of communication open.

Additional information can be found on the [Mentoring Subcommittee webpage](#), including the [SciPAC Mentoring Guidebook](#).