COMMISSIONED CORPS
OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Encouraging Physical Fitness Among Public Health Service Officers

Fact Sheet





Physical Fitness

Physical fitness is a critical component of readiness and resilience for Public Health Service (PHS) officers. As uniformed service members, PHS officers are expected to maintain a high standard of physical health to effectively respond to public health emergencies, deploy rapidly, and serve as role models for healthy living.

Importance of Physical Fitness in the PHS

Operational Readiness: Officers must be physically prepared for deployments that may involve austere environments, long hours, and physically demanding tasks.

Mental Health Benefits: Regular physical activity is associated with reduced stress, improved mood, and enhanced cognitive function—key for high-stakes public health work.

Leadership by Example: As health professionals, PHS officers influence the communities they serve. Demonstrating a commitment to fitness reinforces public health messaging.

Strategies to Promote Fitness

- Structured Fitness Programs: Implementing unit-level fitness challenges, group workouts, or virtual fitness communities can foster accountability and camaraderie.
- Leadership Engagement: Command-level support for fitness initiatives encourages participation and prioritization of health.
- Policy Support: Allowing protected time for physical training during duty hours can remove barriers to regular exercise.
- Education and Resources: Providing access to fitness assessments, personalized training plans, and wellness coaching supports long-term behavior change.

Supporting Evidence

• The U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps requires officers to meet physical fitness standards as part of their readiness requirements (USPHS, 2023) https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/ccis/documents/cci_241.01.pdf
• The CDC highlights physical activity as a key determinant of health, reducing the risk of chronic diseases and improving quality of life (CDC, 2022) https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/benefits/index.html
• A study in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine found that workplace fitness programs improve employee health outcomes and reduce absenteeism (Cancelliere et al., 2011) https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3123596/

"Through PHS Mission Fit, we are building a culture that values readiness and fitness. We are not just responding to crises — we are preparing for them by strengthening unity and whole-person wellness across our nation's uniformed public health force "- Admiral Brian Christine.