



Commissioned Corps Headquarters  
1101 Wootton Pkwy, Plaza Level, Suite 100  
Rockville, MD 20852

May 2014

RE: Annual Physical Fitness Test (APFT) Changes and Elimination of Use of President's Challenge for Basic Readiness

Officers and Colleagues,

We are writing to inform you that **as of 1 July 2015, the President's Challenge will no longer be an option to satisfy the physical readiness component of the basic readiness standard.**

A panel was convened of Commissioned Corps subject matter experts in multiple facets of exercise science, human physiology, and related areas of public health. This panel was charged with review, evaluation and recommendation of an updated evidence-based physical readiness standard. This included a thorough review of existing policy and practices as well as other uniformed service standards. The panel:

- addressed current physical readiness components: the Annual Physical Fitness Test (APFT) and President's Challenge (PC);
- accounted for the best science available to measure fitness levels needed to support USPHS missions;
- recommended fitness standards that:
  - offered flexibility in exercise options for each component of the test
  - opportunities for officers to complete the APFT without a USPHS officer physically present to evaluate
  - inclusion of an updated medical waiver system, and
  - standards that assured accountability

**Since the President's Challenge will no longer be an option for Commissioned Corps officers to satisfy the physical readiness component (as of 1 July 2015) all officers will be required to either:**

1. Complete and pass the updated Annual Physical Fitness Test (APFT) or
2. Complete a medical waiver for the APFT components that they are unable to complete due to documented medical limitations.

Removing the President's Challenge as an option to fulfill the fitness requirement should affect a very small number of officers. Current data indicate that only 11% of USPHS officers are completing the President's Challenge to meet physical readiness – 89% of officers already utilize the APFT.

This change is necessary to provide more accountability to assure the readiness status of officers. The President's Challenge is administered by an external organization which limits our ability to retrieve data and assess overall Corps' readiness. In addition, the President's Challenge provides documentation of physical activity but does not adequately measure one's fitness level.

Although these changes will not officially take effect until 1 July 2015, we will continue to keep you updated. Details on new components of the APFT will be communicated to officers through multiple outlets (email, website, social media, PAC presentations, etc.) as soon as they are finalized so that all officers are informed of the changes. This will ensure officers have as much time as possible to adjust to these new standards. The new APFT will include (at a minimum) the same components of the legacy APFT.

As leaders in public health and visible members of a uniformed service, every Commissioned Corps officer should be a role model of the attributes of health described in key policies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, including *Healthy People 2020*, the *National Prevention Strategy*, and the *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*. Additionally, officers are required to be prepared to rapidly and effectively respond to public health emergencies. As a result, each officer's fitness level and readiness status is expected to be commensurate with the level of effort needed to fulfill these requirements. As you are aware, all officers are required to maintain basic readiness as a condition of service as codified in US Code – Title 42 (42USC§204a).

We have enclosed frequently asked questions (FAQ's) that were developed to help address likely concerns about the upcoming changes to the physical readiness component of the basic readiness standard.

Thank you for your continued dedication and service.

With Pride,



RADM Scott Giberson  
Acting U.S. Deputy Surgeon General

CAPT Dan Beck  
Director, Readiness and Deployment Operations