

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES**



PERSONNEL OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM



**POM 821.73
EFFECTIVE DATE: 4 June 2024**

By Order of the Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service:

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- TO: All members of the Regular Corps and all members of the Ready Reserve Corps
- SUBJECT: Annual COER
1. This Personnel Operations Memorandum (POM) establishes the guidelines for the Commissioned Officers' Effectiveness Report (COER) in accordance with Commissioned Corps Instruction (CCI) [351.01](#), "Commissioned Officers' Effectiveness Report."
 - a. The Annual COER is a web-based performance evaluation process accessed from the Commissioned Corps Management Information System (CCMIS) website at: https://dcp.psc.gov/osa/osa_security_statement.aspx. The purpose of the COER is to evaluate an officer's annual performance.
 - b. The evaluation should reflect the officer's conduct of duties within the officer's assignment and their demonstrated contributions to the mission of the department, agency, and the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps. The elements of the COER include leadership; initiative and growth; communication skills; interpersonal skills; planning and organization; professional competencies; analysis, judgment, and decision-making; and overall effectiveness.
 - c. This POM will take effect starting with the October 2023 to September 2024 Evaluation Year and apply to the COERs in subsequent years.
 - d. The Director, Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ), or designee, may issue additional guidance and instructions to implement the COER program.
 2. The COER Evaluation Year extends from 1 October to 30 September of the following year. The following deadlines are in effect, unless otherwise posted on the [CCMIS](#) website or communicated by CCHQ:
 - a. Officers must complete their section of the Annual COER in the online system by the 31 October deadline immediately after the completion of the respective Evaluation Year.
 - b. The Rater(s), as defined by CCI 351.01 (normally the officer's direct supervisor of record for performance), should complete their section of the Annual COER in the online system by the 30 November deadline immediately after the respective Evaluation Year.

- c. The Reviewing Official(s) (RO) (the officer's second-line supervisor and normally the Rater's direct supervisor of record for performance) should complete their section of the Annual COER and the officer should concur in the online system by the 31 December deadline immediately after the respective Evaluation Year.
 - d. The agency Liaison must review the Annual COER in the online system for incorrect and incomplete information and, if necessary, work to correct it. Then they must certify the COER by the 15 January deadline immediately after the respective Evaluation Year.
 - e. End-of-year Interim COER(s) must abide by the same deadlines as above.
 - f. For example:

For the Evaluation Year that covers 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024:
 - (1) The End-of-year COER must be completed by the officer by 31 October 2024.
 - (2) The End-of-year COER should be completed by the Rater by 30 November 2024.
 - (3) The End-of-year COER should be completed by the RO and concurred by the officer by 31 December 2024.
 - (4) The End-of-year COER must be certified by the Liaison by 15 January 2025.
 - g. CCHQ will not penalize an officer for deadlines missed for reasons not under the officer's control. However, there may be consequences to a delayed COER if the delay is the fault of the officer (as detailed in Section 4. a. of this POM).
3. Officers on active duty or in the Ready Reserve on 1 April must complete the Annual COER for that Evaluation Year.
- a. Those listed in CCI 351.01, Section 6-3., do not have to complete an Annual COER.
 - b. If an officer's Rater remains constant throughout the entire Evaluation Year, the officer's Annual COER for that Evaluation Year will cover 1 October to 30 September (except for periods of extended absence as outlined in CCI 351.01, Section 8-1.a.).
 - c. If a Rater or RO becomes unable or unavailable to complete/review the COER (including by not abiding by the responsibilities in Sections 7-4. or 7-5. of CCI 351.01), the Liaison, working with the chain of command, may determine a substitute. If a Rater is currently under an active workplace complaint, adverse action, or investigation, the Liaison may allow a change of Rater (after consulting with the officer's chain of command).
 - d. If an officer's Rater permanently changes (due to transfer, separation, or retirement of the officer or Rater) during the Evaluation Year and the officer chooses to submit an Interim COER or is required to submit an Annual COER, the officer may initiate the COER in anticipation of the Rater change up to one month before the Rater change occurs and should complete this COER before the deadlines listed above.
 - e. The online system will designate the COER as Annual if the period of evaluation entered by the officer is greater than or equal to six months during the Evaluation Year. If an officer has not spent six or more months with one Rater, the Annual COER will cover the longest period of evaluation by one Rater during the Evaluation Year. If that officer has spent an equal amount of time with two Raters, the COER covering the most recent of the equal time-periods will become the Annual COER. Officers can only have one Annual COER per Evaluation Year.

- f. Officers may (but are not required to, except as specified below) submit an Interim COER for periods of evaluation less than six months during the Evaluation Year not covered by the Annual COER.
- g. An officer's Rater may elect to require an officer to complete an Annual or Interim COER even if not required by CCI 351.01. If an officer fails to complete an Annual or Interim COER deemed required by their Rater, the officer is subject to the same repercussions as failing to complete a required Annual COER.
 - (1) The online system will automatically designate the COER as Interim if the period of evaluation entered by the officer is less than six months during the Evaluation Year. Officers should contact their Liaison to change an Interim COER to Annual if the officer does not have a period of evaluation greater than or equal to six months by one Rater during the Evaluation Year. Please see Section 3.e. for more details.
 - (2) In the event an officer had multiple Rater changes during an Evaluation Year and did not complete a COER for any of the periods due to the periods being less than six months, the officer must complete a COER for the longest period of evaluation by one Rater. This will count as the Annual COER for that Evaluation Year.
- h. Once the online system has designated a COER as Annual, it will require the COER to be detailed (including scores and text). In the event an officer does not have a period of evaluation greater than or equal to six months within an Evaluation Year, the online system will allow a narrative (text only) Annual COER. Therefore, a Rater writing a COER that covers less than a six-month period of evaluation can write it as either detailed (with Section 3) or narrative (without Section 3).
- i. Section 4 of the COER consists of the Reviewing Official's Statement (ROS). Officers can have only one ROS per Evaluation Year. The reviewing official who completes the officer's Annual COER must complete the officer's ROS for the respective Evaluation Year. If the RO is unable or unavailable to complete the ROS, the officer's Liaison will work with the officer's chain of command to determine the most appropriate RO.
- j. If an officer has a temporary duty (TDY) assignment, detail, or deployment for 30 days or longer, but for less than six months, during a single evaluation period, the officer may (but is not required to) complete an Interim COER for the period on TDY/detail/deployment. If an officer elects to complete an Interim COER for TDY/detail/deployment, the officer should not include TDY/detail/deployment accomplishments in the Annual COER. In addition, the Rater can require an Interim COER as specified in CCI 351.01. If an officer does not complete an Interim COER for a TDY/detail/deployment, the officer should include those accomplishments in the Annual COER for the year and the Rater may receive notes from the officer's TDY supervisor to assist with the evaluation. CCHQ requires COERs for TDY/detail/deployments six months or longer during the Evaluation Year and this will serve as the officer's Annual COER.
- k. If an officer has a TDY/detail/deployment that is less than six months but longer than any amount of time under a single, direct supervisor throughout the year due to multiple Rater changes, the COER for this time-period will stand as the officer's Annual COER. If an officer completes a TDY/detail/deployment that leads straight into a permanent change of station (PCS) (which can include a short gap of less than four weeks at the original duty station) and the combined TDY/detail/deployment time and official duty time at the new duty station are equal to or greater than six months of the Evaluation Year and under the same supervisor, the COER for this time-period will serve as the officer's Annual COER and the aforementioned supervisor will be the Rater. In this case, the dates for the COER

would start on the officer's first day of the TDY/detail/deployment (or Evaluation Year, if applicable) and end on the last day of the Evaluation Year or the last day with the new duty station (whichever applies).

4. Each officer is responsible for:
 - a. Ensuring that their Annual COER is assigned correctly and transmitted to the Rater and RO (or the supervisor during a TDY, deployment, or detail) by the prescribed deadlines. An officer may not list a different individual or officer as their Rater or Reviewing Official. In addition, the officer is responsible for ensuring the overall completion and submission of the COER to CCHQ. If the COER is not submitted to CCHQ in accordance with the above dates/procedures, the following may be affected: retention ([CCI 341.02](#)), promotion ([CCI 331.01](#)), awards ([CCI 511.01](#)), special pays ([CCI 633.01](#)), involuntary termination ([CCI 382.03](#)), and/or other policies.
 - b. Arranging an alternative deadline with the Rater, RO, and Liaison that would still enable completion of the COER by the final January 15th deadline in circumstances when they experience problems completing the COER by the above deadlines.
 - c. Reviewing the ratings and comments and discussing them with the Rater and/or RO, as applicable, if there are any questions or concerns.
 - d. Ensuring that the completed COER is accessible in the electronic Official Personnel File (eOPF) by opening and reviewing each individual page of the archived COER.
 - e. Verifying that the correct COER scores are available in the officer's Promotion Information Report (PIR).
 - f. Communicating to their Raters and ROs the annual deadlines of the COER and instructions for completing forms.
5. Liaisons are responsible for:
 - a. Correcting any administrative data, if necessary, by 15 January.
 - b. Changing an officer's Interim COER into an Annual COER and vice-versa when necessary to align with policy.
 - c. Assisting in communicating to the officer's chain of command the annual deadlines of the COER and instructions for completing forms.
 - d. Serving as the primary point of contact for questions from the officer, Rater, or Reviewing Official.
 - e. In the case of an inquiry into the validity of an officer's COER, verifying that the officer's Rater is the officer's direct supervisor of record for performance (or the supervisor during a TDY, deployment, or detail) and that the Rater's supervisor serves as the Reviewing Official. An officer may not list a different individual or officer as their Rater or Reviewing Official without the consent of the Liaison working in coordination with their chain of command.
6. When completing a detailed COER, the Rater must add a comment after each attribute justifying the rating level. This can take the form of an example that demonstrates the attribute.
7. Rebuttals and Other Rights.

- a. If an officer does not agree with a rating or comment on the COER (including content provided by the Reviewing Official), the officer may submit a Rebuttal through the online system. A Rebuttal is limited to 15,000 characters including spaces (around 5 pages). Additional attachments must not be included.
 - (1) A Rebuttal does not substitute for a formal complaint or initiate any other rights of due process. CCHQ will not act on a Rebuttal to adjudicate the statements made nor pursue a remedy.
 - (2) An officer submitting a Rebuttal to must submit to their Liaison within 90 days of the Archive Date of the corresponding COER in the eOPF. Liaisons should not accept Rebuttals received more than 90 days after the Archive Date of the corresponding COER unless technical or other issues were encountered. The Archive Date can be found in the Document Attributes of the COER in the eOPF.
 - (3) A Rebuttal (and Rebuttal Response, see below) should only address or dispute items on the COER. Rebuttals with personal attacks or derogatory comments will not be accepted.
- b. Liaisons should either approve the Rebuttal if it meets the above criteria or send it back to the officer for edits (except in the case of Section 7.a.(2), in which case they should not accept it).
 - (1) Once the Liaison has approved the Rebuttal, the system automatically will add it to the officer's COER. The system will send rejected Rebuttals back to the officer for modifications.
 - (2) If a Rebuttal is sent back to the officer, they may choose to edit and resubmit it or send it to a member of the CCHQ Officer Advocacy and Employee Relations team or designee to appeal this decision. If the officer chooses the latter, they must state why they decline to edit and resubmit.
- c. The Rater and RO may then respond to an officer's Rebuttal through a combined Response or a Rater-only Response. They must do this through the online system. The Rater and RO have 60 days from the Archive Date of the officer's Rebuttal to submit their Response. Liaisons should then either approve the Response if it meets the above deadline and content criteria listed in Section 7.a.(3) or send it back for edits. The system will automatically add approved Responses to the officer's eOPF and send rejected Responses back to the Rater or RO for modifications.
- d. The officer may seek redress, if the Rater/RO is unwilling to respond to informal requests to change the COER, by performing the formal procedure in accordance with [CCI 211.04](#), "Complaints and Redress."
- e. If the officer believes that a superior has discriminated against them during the COER process, the officer may file an Equal Opportunity (EO) complaint in accordance with [CCI 211.03](#), "Equal Opportunity: Discrimination Complaints Processing."
- f. If the officer is not satisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint filed in compliance with CCI 211.04 or CCI 211.03, the officer may apply for relief through the Board for Correction of Commissioned Corps Records in accordance with Commissioned Corps Directive (CCD) [129.01](#), "Board for Corrections."
- g. The timeline for all above-mentioned actions occur separately from the promotion requirements timeline, should it apply to that officer. There may be situations where promotion boards convene prior to the resolution of one or more of the above complaints.

8. The federal government evaluates civilian employees through the Performance Management Appraisal Program (PMAP) in accordance with the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA), the President's Management Agenda, and other Federal performance initiatives. The USPHS Commissioned Corps does not require its officers to complete the PMAP. However, if an organization to which an officer is assigned requires the officer to complete a PMAP or a similar performance evaluation, the resulting document will only be for that Operating/Staff Division or non-HHS organization's internal use. The USPHS Commissioned Corps does not use PMAPs nor place them in the eOPF. If a supervisor chooses to perform a PMAP, they must also perform a separate COER for the officer. The COER remains the sole performance evaluation instrument required by the USPHS Commissioned Corps for officers.

Note: CCHQ authorizes the use of additional appropriate performance improvement actions used by the agency to which an officer is assigned to help improve their performance.

9. Overall performance.
 - a. For Annual COERs and Interim COERs that are detailed, the online system calculates overall performance from the average of the eight performance categories as follows:

<2.0	Unsatisfactory
≥2.0 to <4.0	Marginal
≥4.0	Satisfactory
 - b. For narrative COERs, the online system will allow the Rater to choose the overall performance grade (satisfactory, marginal, or unsatisfactory).
10. This POM replaces POM 821.73, "Annual COER for 2021 Forward," dated 3 August 2021. This POM is effective for the 2024 Evaluation Year (i.e., 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024) and subsequent years, and will remain in effect until it is rescinded or replaced.