



POM 821.84
EFFECTIVE DATE: 9 December 2021

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

VADM Vivek H. Murthy, M.D., M.B.A.

TO: All COSTEP Officers on Active Duty and Candidates for COSTEP

SUBJECT: COSTEP

1. This Personnel Operations Memorandum (POM) establishes the guidelines for the management of the Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (COSTEP) in accordance with Commissioned Corps Instruction (CCI) 371.02, "Junior COSTEP," and CCI 371.03 "Senior COSTEP."
2. Background.
 - a. This POM identifies the procedures for the application, appointment, and regulation of COSTEP officers.
 - b. The procedures in this POM only apply to applicants and to officers in JRCOSTEP or SRCOSTEP. These rules do not apply to graduates of these programs after they have assimilated into the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps, except for rules pertaining to licensure and Active Duty Obligations (ADOs).
3. Application.
 - a. If electronic enrollment is available:
 - (1) Applicants must go online to initiate the online pre-screening. If the student passes this pre-screening, he or she then fills out the electronic application forms, including Form Public Health Service (PHS)-50, "Application for Appointment as a Commissioned Officer," and uploads any additional required documents.
 - (2) Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) will review the uploaded documents and application and transfer them to the electronic tracking system.
 - b. If the electronic application is not available:
 - (1) Applicants must complete forms in the application packet, including the form PHS-50, "Application for Appointment as a Commissioned Officer." These forms must be received by the CCHQ, at the address below no later than the deadline determined by the director of CCHQ.

- (2) Applicants for SRCOSTEP must also complete form [PHS-1122-1](#), "Application for Training," and [Supplement to Form PHS-1122-1](#) and either email them to costep@hhs.gov or send them to:

Commissioned Corps Headquarters
Recruitment and Assignments Branch
ATTN: Senior COSTEP Coordinator
Suite 300
1101 Wootton Parkway
Rockville, MD 20852

- (3) CCHQ must receive new applications or requests for consideration for COSTEP assignments (JRCOSTEP only) within the specified timeframe for the assignment period desired. CCHQ will not consider applications received either before or after the specified dates. CCHQ will determine the application timeframes and disciplines that may apply.
- c. Once CCHQ has completed its preliminary screening, it will provide Agencies and programs up to one week to review candidates and make their selections. The applications will then remain open for three weeks for Agencies and programs to submit form [PHS-1662](#), "Request for Personnel Action – Commissioned Officer," to the USPHS Commissioned Corps. After this one-month review period, CCHQ will close all non-selected applications for that specific cycle.
- d. Minimum Grade Point Average: The minimum acceptable cumulative grade point average (GPA) is 2.8 on a 4.0 grading scale in the courses toward the candidate's qualifying degree (without rounding). The SG or his/her designee can make a determination for other grading scales.
- e. Once an OPDIV/Program/Agency has tentatively selected a student to participate in either JRCOSTEP or SRCOSTEP, the candidate must submit all required materials, including official sealed transcripts from the program in which he/she is currently enrolled, by the end of the appropriate date window. However, CCHQ will require the applicant to submit the next semester's updated official sealed transcript when available.
- (1) Applicants apply for the specific single timeframe only.
- (2) For JRCOSTEP only, the student must include the specific inclusive dates that he/she expects to be available for active duty on the application or on the request for additional JRCOSTEP assignments.
- f. If CCHQ returns an incomplete application to an applicant or requests additional information, the applicant must correct and complete the deficiencies and send to CCHQ with enough time to reach CCHQ by the deadline.
- g. In the event that more than one Agency/OPDIV or program selects the same student, the USPHS Commissioned Corps will assign the student to the Agency/OPDIV/program whose PHS-1662 form, notifying CCHQ of their intent to call the student to the program, arrived at CCHQ first. Otherwise, if there is no way to determine which PHS-1662 form arrived first, the Director, CCHQ, or his/her designee will make a final determination based on the needs of the USPHS Commissioned Corps.

4. Appointment.

a. Joining the USPHS Commissioned Corps

- (1) Medical Review: The COSTEP officer must have a [DD Form 2807-1](#), "Report of Medical History" completed by a licensed Physician or licensed mid-level provider (i.e. Nurse Practitioner or Physician Assistant) with each tour of duty. Medical Affairs Branch may request additional information needed for the medical review.
- (2) Security Check: A minimum investigation check includes, but is not limited to, a favorable Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Central Verification System (CVS) check, a Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint check using an OPM Special Agreement Check, and a favorable review of the candidate's Declaration for Federal Employment ([OF 306](#)). The USPHS Commissioned Corps requires this check in order for students to participate in JRCOSTEP. The Director, CCHQ or designee may request any additional information needed for security review.
- (3) A Health Services Officer Board will review JRCOSTEP and SRCOSTEP applicants when appointed to the JRCOSTEP or SRCOSTEP program.

b. Assignments.

- (1) SRCOSTEP requires the OPDIV or Agency/Program to complete two separate requests for personnel action due in CCHQ by the date designated by the Director, CCHQ. The initial "into long-term training" request for personnel action (form [PHS-1662](#)) will specify the field of training, the location of the training facility or actual physical location if the individual is attending a distance learning/online college/university (complete address), the date upon which the training will commence, and the local mailing address for the COSTEP officer. The "out of long-term training into a payback assignment" request for personnel action (form [PHS-1662](#)) must include a training end date.
- (2) For JRCOSTEP, the Agency/OPDIV/Program must use form [PHS-6279](#), "JRCOSTEP Statement of Duties," to provide a plan of utilization and training for the officer. The plan must include a description of:
 - (a) Major duties and responsibilities of the officer's assignment.
 - (b) The specific nature of the orientation and training to be given in order to acquaint the officer with his/her assignment and the mission, organization, and career opportunities of the USPHS Commissioned Corps.
 - (c) The name, grade, and organizational location of the senior staff member (preceptor) designated to provide supervision and direction to the JRCOSTEP Officer.
- (3) The agency will notify CCHQ if there are any changes to the proposed assignment and the senior staff if anything changes after they initially submitted the Form 6279.
- (4) For JRCOSTEP, the Agency/OPDIV/Program must also complete form [PHS-1662](#), "Request for Personnel Action," and send it, with form [PHS-6279](#) through the appropriate channels to their Commissioned Corps Liaison to CCHQ. The [PHS-1662](#) must clearly state the JRCOSTEP officer's effective date of entrance on duty and the effective date of release from active duty. CCHQ will issue only one personnel order that establishes the effective date of entry on active duty and the date of release from active duty.

- c. The USPHS Commissioned Corps will not call COSTEP officers to report to active duty on a weekend or a Federal holiday, nor issue a call to active duty effective on the 31st of the month.
 - d. Failure to comply with these dates by late arrivals or early departures may result in the USPHS Commissioned Corps placing COSTEP officers in Absent Without Leave (AWOL) status for those days when they were not at their assigned duty station (see [CCI 364.01](#), "Absence without Leave"). Only an official personnel order from CCHQ can change these official dates. CCHQ must receive requests for such changes at least 10 days prior to the new effective date.
 - e. Travel without printed orders or without explicit verbal orders from CCHQ will result in the loss of the officer's travel and transportation allowance (see Commissioned Corps Directive (CCD) [161.01](#), "Travel and Transportation Allowances"). In addition, the Agency/OPDIV/Program will not pay the officer for any days worked before the effective date of the personnel order.
 - f. The USPHS Commissioned Corps requires JRCOSTEP officers who accept an appointment in SRCOSTEP to end their JRCOSTEP tour in one month and be appointed as a SRCOSTEP no earlier than the following month.
 - g. The COSTEP Coordinator, CCHQ, will notify the OPDIV or Program representatives of the approval or disapproval of a new statement of duties. OPDIV/Agency/program officials cannot authorize PHS officers' appointments, issue officers' official call to active duty personnel orders, or direct their travel to a duty station.
5. College/University Procedures.
- a. If the sponsoring Agency or program agrees to pay a SRCOSTEP officer's tuition, fees, or other expenses involving payments to the university, which depends on funding availability, the sponsoring program/Agency will prepare a memorandum requesting a training contract and will complete form [PHS-1881-2](#), "Order Pursuant To Basic Training Contract" to obligate funds.
 - (1) The sponsoring program/Agency prepares a memorandum ([Request for Basic Training Contract](#)) and forwards it, along with form [PHS-1881-1](#), "Basic Training Contract," to the USPHS Commissioned Corps' Personnel & Career Management Branch to establish a formal written contract between the USPHS Commissioned Corps and the college/university involved.
 - (2) CCHQ Personnel & Career Management Branch signs the form [PHS-1881-1](#) and sends it to the college/university to be signed by the appropriate official.
 - (3) The USPHS Commissioned Corps' procurement office assigns the appropriate contract number for each college/university involved and notifies CCHQ of these contract numbers.
 - (4) CCHQ notifies each sponsoring program/Agency of the contract number, so that they can prepare form [PHS-1881-2](#) which obligates the monies (tuition (if applicable) and fees) for an academic year of training for the student.
 - (5) The sponsoring program must submit form [PHS-1881-2](#) through the agency finance office for accounting authorization. The information must be complete and submitted with an indication that funds are available prior to submitting it to the college/university for signature by the responsible official.

- (6) The college/university will then return the form to the sponsoring Agency and/or program for final distribution. One copy of the form is returned to CCHQ for accountability and tracking purposes.
- (7) Payments under any training contract will be made directly to the school by the sponsoring program/Agency. However, in the event that a student is required to pay the tuition and fees and/or other costs because of a delay in issuance, the sponsoring program will arrange for reimbursement to be made directly to the student.

6. Additional Procedures for COSTEP Officers.

a. Uniforms

- (1) Unless otherwise directed, the USPHS Commissioned Corps will not require COSTEP officers to wear uniforms, so COSTEP officers are not normally entitled to receive the one-time uniform allowance. However, Agencies/OPDIVs/Programs can require JRCOSTEP officers (and SRCOSTEP officers if serving in that Agency during a school break) to wear uniforms while serving in their duty stations.
- (2) Each OPDIV/Agency/program will notify CCHQ, in writing, by December 31, if its policy has changed on requiring JRCOSTEP officers to wear uniforms at their duty stations. A specific office or site cannot create a separate policy on uniforms that is different from the overall policy of its OPDIV or Agency.
- (3) The USPHS Commissioned Corps encourages OPDIVs/Agencies/ programs that will require or permit JRCOSTEP officers to wear uniforms to contact the JRCOSTEP officers, prior to their reporting date, to identify and assist those officers who wish or who are required to secure and wear the uniform. Some of the benefits for mandating the uniform include increased identification of the individual with the USPHS Commissioned Corps, esprit de corps, and greater visibility of junior officers.
- (4) In addition to the uniform policy set by the OPDIV/Agency/Program, the Director, CCHQ, may authorize a JRCOSTEP officer to wear the uniform in accordance with [CCI 411.01](#), "Required Wear of the Uniform," if the officer submits a written statement, with the signature of his/her supervisor, stating that the wearing of USPHS Commissioned Corps' uniform will be beneficial to the officer in the performance of his/her duties.
- (5) If the OPDIV, program, or CCHQ directs the JRCOSTEP officer to wear the uniform, the government can, at the officer's request, pay the officer a one-time uniform allowance pursuant to [CCI 612.03](#), "Uniform and Equipment Allowance." (See Appendix A for Sample Memorandum to Request Payment of a Uniform Allowance.) However, the USPHS Commissioned Corps cautions COSTEP students to be sure they have finished growing before requesting a uniform as they cannot request a second payment even if they need a new size.

b. Identification Cards.

- (1) The Government issues COSTEP officers a Common Access Card (CAC) for their tour of active duty. Even if the expiration date listed on the CAC extends beyond the JRCOSTEP officers' actual end of tour date, JRCOSTEP officers must not use their card when not on active duty and must return it to agency liaison at the end of their tour. SRCOSTEP officers must return their cards to the agency liaison if

they are issued a new one upon being assimilated into the Regular Corps after graduation. Agency liaisons must collect these cards as part of the out-processing of COSTEP officers and then mail the cards back to CCHQ within 60 days of the end of the officer's tour.

- (2) Authorized dependents of a JRCOSTEP officer are eligible to possess a ["Uniformed Services Identification and Privilege Card"](#) only during the period that the officer is on active duty. Dependents of a SRCOSTEP officer can use this card as long as the officer remains on active duty with the USPHS Commissioned Corps, including school holidays and breaks.
- (3) To establish identity for the benefits and privileges described in CCI 371.02, a JRCOSTEP officer must present his/her CAC along with a copy of the officer's official personnel order that shows he/she is currently on active duty. A JRCOSTEP officer must not use the CAC without showing this order. A SRCOSTEP officer can use this card as long as he/she remains on active duty with the USPHS Commissioned Corps, including during school holidays and breaks.
- (4) Former JRCOSTEP officers must return their CAC and all dependent ID cards to CCHQ within 10 business days after their last day of active duty. Failure to return the cards could result in a delay in the issuance or even withholding of their final paycheck, and potential legal actions. SRCOSTEP officers who leave SRCOSTEP without being assimilated into the Regular Corps must return their cards within 10 business days of their last day of active duty.

Vivek H. Murthy, M.D., M.B.A.
VADM, USPHS
Surgeon General

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE MEMORANDUM TO REQUEST PAYMENT OF A UNIFORM ALLOWANCE

Date: _____

From: _____

Subject: Request for Uniform Allowance

To: Division of Business Operations and Management,

ATTN: Chief, Financial Services Branch
Commissioned Corps Headquarters
1101 Wootton Parkway, Suite 300
Rockville, MD. 20852

In accordance with POM 821.84, I have been directed to own and wear the appropriate U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps uniform. Under the provisions in CCI 612.03, "Uniform and Equipment Allowance," I hereby apply for the uniform and equipment allowance in the amount of \$250.00.

I certify that I have not at any time, previously received a USPHS Commissioned Corps uniform allowance under the provisions of 37 U.S.C. § 415(c). Further, I understand that making a false statement or claim against the U.S. Government is punishable by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than five years or both (Act of June 25, 1948; 18 U.S.C. § 287, § 1001).

(Signature)

(Temporary Grade)

(Social Security Number)