



|| USPHS Commissioned Corps



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

TATTOO POLICY (FROM CCI 412.01, "UNIFORMS AND APPEARANCE")

What are the significant changes to the USPHS Commissioned Corps' policy on tattoos?

- A. Previously, tattoos were limited in size and by location. The new tattoo policy allows officers to have unlimited tattoos of any size, even on exposed skin. Tattoos must not violate the content constraints outlined in the policy or on specific body parts such as the neck, face, mouth, hands, or where explicitly prohibited by policy.

What tattoos were previously prohibited but are now permitted?

- A. Previously officers were not allowed to have tattoos larger than the size of a dollar bill regardless of location and tattoos on exposed skin. The new tattoo policy is included in Commissioned Corps Instruction (CCI) 412.01, "Uniform and Appearance," Section 6-9. allows tattoos of any size, while the previous policy limited them to no larger than a dollar bill and tattoos on exposed skin such as arms, legs, and feet. It allows tattoos on the chest and back if they are covered.

Is there a limit on the number or size of tattoos visible on exposed skin when wearing the uniform?

- A. No. There is no limit to the number of visible tattoos nor a limitation on their size.

What documentation should an applicant submit with a tattoo?

- A. The applicant must complete the cover sheet in Appendix B (Statement of Understanding) and provide the necessary photographs, descriptions, and meanings of



such tattoos. The Director, CCHQ, or designee will review all such submissions to ensure they do not violate the USPHS Commissioned Corps' policy on tattoos.

What happens if an applicant has tattoos that violate this policy? Does the applicant have options?

- A. Applicants whose tattoos violate Section 6-9. will be barred from commissioning as long as their tattoos are in violation. The USPHS Commissioned Corps will not consider applicants with tattoos(s) that violate Section 6-9.a. of CCI 412.01, "Uniforms and Appearance," for an appointment. The USPHS Commissioned Corps will allow applicants to remove the tattoo and then reapply.

Where are tattoos prohibited on the body?

- A. The policy prohibits tattoos on the head, scalp, mouth, neck, and hands.

Where on the body must tattoos be covered?

- A. Any tattoos greater than a dollar bill must be covered by an authorized uniform component.

The policy requires discretion and good judgment regarding the application and display of tattoos. What does this mean?

- A. The USPHS Commissioned Corps recognizes that PHS officers are professionals. Therefore, we expect officers to understand that actions have consequences and relaxed rules do not mean unrestricted license. Officers should be aware that there are future career implications regarding the application of tattoos. Additionally, tattoos that are not explicitly prohibited may prevent specific future duty assignments.

If an officer transfers from another uniformed service, are any existing tattoos accepted by that prior service automatically accepted when the officer is commissioned in the USPHS Commissioned Corps?

- A. No. To include prior servicemembers seeking transfer into the USPHS Commissioned Corp, applicants must meet the current policy. The USPHS Commissioned Corps does not allow "grandfathered" tattoos, even if the tattoo did not violate the previous service's tattoo policy.