



# COMMISSIONED CORPS CONNECTIONS



## DIRECTOR'S CORNER



**CAPT Richard Schobitz,**  
Director of Commissioned  
Corps Headquarters

Greetings fellow Public Health Service Officers!

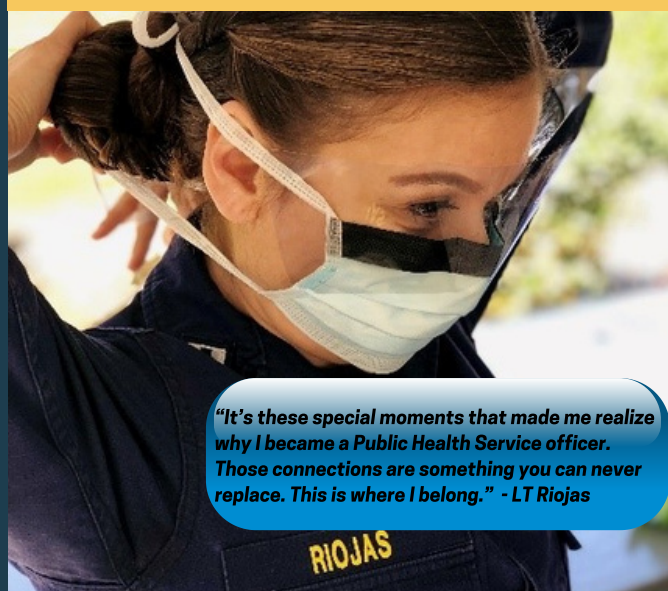
It is my honor to serve as the Director of Commissioned Corps Headquarters. I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to everyone who helped make this transition as seamless as possible. I look forward to working with all of you.

As Director, I plan to increase dialogue with our officers by leveraging new innovative communications strategies. The details of these strategies will be provided in coming months.

As a part of our effort to enhance the connection between U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps leadership and our Public Health Service officers, we have rebranded our Service newsletter to be called Commissioned Corps Connections. It is our goal to use communications strategies, such as this newsletter, as a vehicle to connect with you on information coming out of Headquarters, and to also spotlight our Public Health Service officers and some of the valuable work you do to support our mission. Leadership will continue to push for transparency and open communication with you. Thus, my daily commitment is to strive to continue to build a stronger force structure than the one we had yesterday.

I am grateful to each and every one of you for your tireless commitment to the U.S. Public Health Service. It is because of you that we have endured through these difficult times. Thank you for all the great work you do and will continue to do. In Officio Salutis!

## OFFICER SPOTLIGHT LT BRENDA RIOJAS



*"It's these special moments that made me realize why I became a Public Health Service officer. Those connections are something you can never replace. This is where I belong." - LT Riojas*

Deployed to Travis Air Force Base during the U.S. Repatriation COVID-19 mission, Public Health Service officer LT Brenda Riojas provided medical and social health case management services for hundreds of repatriates from Wuhan, China. Working alongside fellow Public Health Service officers and federal responders, LT Riojas connected repatriates with interpreter services as well as transportation and financial assistance services.

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# OFFICER SPOTLIGHT CONT: LT BRENDA RIOJAS

LT Riojas has deployed multiple times to serve those in need, including her response mission to Hurricane Maria in Ponce, Puerto Rico. LT Riojas noted that providing comfort and care for patients in the aftermath of such devastation was a highlight in her career, allowing her to connect with the communities that she served in the Federal Medical Station.

**“It’s these special moments that made me realize why I became a Public Health Service officer,”** said LT Riojas when reflecting on her deployments with the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps. Although these were tragic moments, she built long-lasting relationships with other Public Health Service officers and the people of Puerto Rico. LT Riojas reiterated, **“Those connections are something you can never replace.”**

LT Riojas joined the USPHS Commissioned Corps seven years ago to promote healthy lifestyles among Native American communities while embracing her own Native American heritage. Her desire to work for the Indian Health Service (IHS) and the USPHS Commissioned Corps became apparent after serving as a dietetic intern with the Southwest Dietetic Internship at Phoenix Indian Medical Center.

Although already a Dietitian, LT Riojas is currently in her second year of school at Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) to become a Physician Assistant. LT Riojas is a OHSU Presidential Fund Scholar and Long-Term Trainee for IHS. After completing her program this upcoming summer, she will return to IHS and serve the Portland Area Indian Health Services.

Before commissioning, LT Riojas was a Clinical Dietitian at a 400-bed inpatient hospital in Visalia, California, working in critical care and post-operative settings. She graduated from California State University, Fresno, in 2011 with her undergraduate degree in Food and Nutritional Sciences as a first-generation college graduate and completed her Dietetic Internship in 2013 at Phoenix Indian Medical Center in Phoenix, AZ.

In her own words as one of “America’s Health Responders” LT Riojas said, “being a Public Health Service officer means I am here to serve. I feel a deep connection with the civilians and Public Health Service officers that I serve with and I know we are leaders for our nation. Together as a team we strive to implement change through innovative strategies that include health promotion, prevention, and wellbeing. **This is where I belong.**”

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## Medical Affairs News

### Important Updates:

#### Periodic Health Update (PHU)

The PHU is meant to provide an annual snapshot of your current health status. Policy requires that officers complete and submit their annual PHU between the first day of the month prior to their birth month and the last day of the month after their birth month. The PHU should be submitted on time even if you are waiting for the results of medical tests. When available those test results should be upload separately through eDOC-U using the document name, Medical Records.

In consideration of possible scheduling issues with your providers, it is acceptable to complete your PHU early, but starting in July 2022, MAB will not accept PHUs completed prior to **two** months before your birth month.

If, after a reasonable effort to get an appointment for your PHU or if you are forced to miss your PHU appointment due to deployment, and it becomes likely that you will not be able to submit your PHU on time, please contact the [Readiness and Deployment Branch](#) well in advance of your submission due date and request a PHU due date extension.

If you are forced to miss your PHU appointment due to illness and you are likely to miss your PHU submission due date, please contact [MAB](#). If needed, MAB will contact RDB and request an extension for you. Please note that extensions for more than one month will only be issued under extraordinary circumstances.

Submit your PHU early enough prior to the due date to allow sufficient time (usually within 2 working days) for MAB to review your PHU for completeness and for you to re-submit prior to the readiness deadline if it is rejected for any reason. Compliance with the PHU readiness requirement is determined by the day that you submit a complete and acceptable PHU.

Review the [PHU page](#) on the CCMIS website for instructions on how to submit your PHU and common reasons for rejection.

No waiver granted by MAB waives the annual PHU requirement.

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## Medical Affairs News Cont.

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### Active Duty Dental Plan (ADDP)

On July 2, 2022, the USPHS dental contract with Delta Dental will expire. After that date, Active Duty USPHS officers will receive their dental care through the Department of Defense Active Duty Dental Plan (DoD ADDP) through their contractor, United Concordia. Please see the [DoD ADDP](#) webpage for additional information on the program. If you have any questions regarding this transition, please contact [MAB Dental](#).

### Deployment Waiver Requests

You should request a deployment waiver as soon as it is clear that you have a health condition that prevents you from deploying. Please do not wait until you are contacted for an upcoming deployment. Guidance on the proper submission of a deployment waiver, including the documentation necessary from your provider, can be found toward the bottom of the [Medical Waiver Program](#) webpage and on the [waiver request form](#).

## Personnel and Career Management News

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As part of Commissioned Corps Headquarters' ongoing modernization efforts, we want to introduce the following new changes to the Promotion Program implemented in Promotion Year (PY) 2022.

### Promotion Board Composition

Previously, each promotion board consisted of five Captains from the same category as the officers being reviewed. As of PY22, the Promotion Boards now consist of:

- One RADM (non-category specific)
- Three CAPTs (category specific)
- One CAPT (non-category specific)

The board composition has been changed to add new perspective to the boards and bring about parity with other uniformed services. Additionally, having non-category specific board members is intended to increase objectivity during the promotion review process of the officers' leadership and performance. Our sister services conduct their promotion boards with a similar board composition.

### Promotion Scoresheets:

Feedback populates on scoresheets only if three or more board members select it.

The number of board members that select a particular feedback is displayed in parenthesis after the statement.

Feedback is organized by the precept it pertains to.

Scoresheets display the average score for each of the four precepts for your category and grade.

These adaptations were implemented to increase the utility of the scoresheets to officers for future career planning based on feedback from the Promotion Boards.

Please click the following links to access the [FAQs](#) and [Webinar](#).

### Call for Transcripts

The Personnel and Career Management Branch (PCMB) at Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) is looking to pilot a new initiative, the electronic submission of academic transcripts.

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# Personnel and Career Management News Cont.

## Who We Are Looking For:

Public Health Service officers who may have completed an academic degree recently this past Fall Semester 2021 or will be completing one this Spring Semester 2022.

## What We Are Looking For:

Official Transcripts from programs where a Graduate Certificate, Master's or Doctoral degree is conferred to be submitted electronically from the Academic Institution to CCHQ via the PHS Licensure Resource Box at [PHSLicensure@hhs.gov](mailto:PHSLicensure@hhs.gov).

"Subject Line" Format:

[OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT] [YOUR NAME] [SERNO]

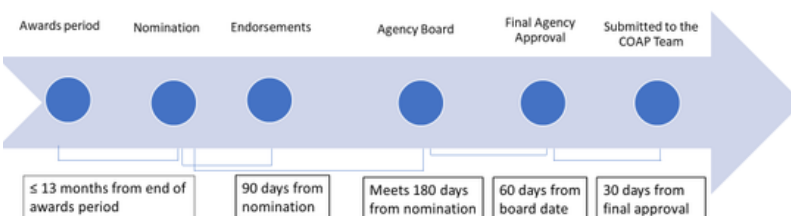
Example: OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT Emily Thomas PHS SERNO 12345

If any Public Health Service officers would like to volunteer to help in this initiative with their submissions, please do so. Our hope is that this will help to further streamline operations in service to all our Public Health Service officers!

## Awards Guidance Tips for Success:

- Narratives cannot exceed one single-spaced typed page with 1-inch margins
- Use block paragraphs
- Use Times News Roman 12-point type style
- Proof read the narrative
- Use rank throughout
- Avoid highly technical language
- Avoid future tenses for outcomes
- Stress the impact- especially quantifiable data
- Clearly state how the duties are above and beyond
- Read the award criteria and submit for the most appropriate level of achievement
- Ensure dates are in order and adhere to timelines in [POM 821.14](#)

### Agency Approved Awards Timeline



# Introducing Agency Tours & CCHQ Connect

As we continue to act on our commitment to increase communication and engagement, we are embarking on an agency wide tour to hear directly from Public Health Service officers. At each stop, we will also meet with Agency leadership, Chief Human Capitol Officers, and senior officers to discuss the steps the USPHS Commissioned Corps is taking to modernize its service. The agency tours were designed to be much smaller so we can directly engage with officers about the recent policies released and answer any of their questions.

We are committed to meeting officers in each agency. Your liaisons will provide further details regarding the date as well as how to submit questions. The Senior leadership team, in conjunction with Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) subject-matter experts, are looking forward to speaking with you. Agency tours are scheduled to conclude in mid-June.

In addition, we are creating another venue for officers to ask their questions. CCHQ is introducing a new communications initiative entitled, "CCHQ Connect." CCHQ Connect is a 'lunch and learn' styled discussion created to connect directly with Public Health Service officers. The goal of these sessions is to address any officer concerns and provide accurate, up-to-date, real-time information. CCHQ Connect will run on Wednesdays 1200 – 1300 ET, depending on informational need. Our next CCHQ Connect session will take place on Wednesday, June 1, 2022. Please see the next topic and livestream link listed below:

## June 1: Deployment Team Structure

**Watch Here:** <https://www.hhs.gov/live/cchq-connect-june-1/index.html>

To submit questions in advance of the CCHQ Connect sessions, email [CCHQ-Connect@hhs.gov](mailto:CCHQ-Connect@hhs.gov).

Each session will be recorded for those that are unable to attend the live session. The recording and slides from all CCHQ Connect sessions will be available to view. Please login to the [Officer Secure Area](#) on the Commissioned Corps Management Information System (CCMIS) server, select Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) Leadership Presentations & Reports from the column on the left, and then select the CCHQ Connect session you are interested in viewing.