



# The Commissioned Corps Bulletin

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## Director’s Message



*RADM Susan M. Orsega,  
Director of Commissioned  
Corps Headquarters*

Although the Spanish Influenza marked a pivotal moment in history, many people do not realize that it also marked a time where the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps deployed more than one-third of its officers. Recognizing this history and the role that USPHS has played throughout the years serving on the frontlines in “the silent war against disease,” as described in the Public Health Service March, it seems to be almost destined for our service to be on the frontlines during the tumults of COVID-19.

We are America’s Health Responders, acting as the safety net for underserved populations and communities suffering from natural disasters. In our 132nd year, it is befitting to implement our

Ready Reserve Corps to bolster our reach to Americans who are in underserved and minority communities, at a time when the Corps is marking its highest deployment in our history as a service.

As Director of Commissioned Corps Headquarters, my vision is to ensure that the USPHS Commissioned Corps’ legacy is preserved, and that we are a united front, standing as the public health warriors of today and tomorrow.

We cannot be limited by the challenges we face, we must view these as opportunities to position the USPHS Commissioned Corps for the next 100 years of service. The timing for the Ready Reserve could never have been more perfect. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the need for additional emergency pandemic response resources, both to respond to this pandemic and be better prepared for future ones. The USPHS has never been more appreciated nor visible on the national stage – nor have I ever been more proud of our service and my fellow

officers. The challenges we face call for new approaches to better protect the nation against public health threats, and the Ready Reserve is part of the solution.

The mission of the USPHS Ready Reserve Commissioned Corps is to provide trained, ready and equipped public health professionals, capable of mobilizing and deploying to augment the regular USPHS Commissioned Corps, under the authority of the Secretary for the Department of Health and Human Services in response to national emergencies and/or public health crises. The Ready Reserve Corps provides a unique opportunity for its officers to help underserved communities while also serving their country in times of public health emergencies, without the full-time commitment and risk of losing their job as civilian health professionals. In March 2020, the CARES Act made the Ready Reserve a reality with the necessary statutory changes that put Ready Reserve into law. The work began with senior leadership engagement and an all hands on deck approach. With the help of RADM Joan Hunter serving as a senior advisor, CAPT Elvira Hall-Robinson, and Mr. Greg Stevens (as the senior policy team) and the hiring of Mr. Henry Johnson and CDR Matt Kirchoff in Chief and Deputy Chief Ready Reserve roles respectively, the focus shifted to the development of infrastructure and policies, and we built out to where we are today.

Our Ready Reserve Corps will offer the vital skills that both compliment and support the United States in times of crisis by providing trained and ready health professionals with multidisciplinary skills from a variety of professions. Having a reservoir of responders to backfill in healthcare facilities will help reduce the challenges we currently face of pulling officers from critical roles during a federal response. As the need for a robust public health response increases on both a state and federal level, so does the need for an increased quantity of Public Health Service officers. I envision the Ready Reserve Corps acting as a force multiplier, providing continuous quality care during our current public health emergency and the public health emergencies of the future.

This past year has been the perfect model in showing us just how critical our public health needs can be. When COVID-19 hit we had no idea what we were up against. But our officers rose to the challenge, some serving on multiple deployments with very little dwell time in between. When the Health and Human Services Secretary declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency on January 31, 2020, our officers were rostered and out the door the next day. Our deployment expanded rapidly from 38 officers on February 1, 2020 to over 1/2 of the full Corps deployed before our COVID-19 response efforts ended. We recently demobilized our last officers earlier this month. The timing of the Ready Reserve could not be better with our first Officer Basic Course (OBC) scheduled to take place in July 2021.

If there is one thing I hope we all take away from this past year, it's how interconnected we all are and how we must work across the professions to address future public health crises and make changes to prevent them. I am optimistic about the future of the service and the future of our nation, and I believe that we will come out on the other side of this pandemic stronger because of it. The USPHS Commissioned Corps continues to search for service-driven individuals who have a passion to serve and a love for public health to join our Ready Reserve Corps.



## Medical Affairs News:

### **New Veterans Affairs Medical Records Upload Application**

The Medical Affairs Branch (MAB) is very excited to announce that a new application is operational that allows for secure direct digital uploading of officers' medical records to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This system will replace our current process of copying digital files to CDs, packaging the CDs, and securely shipping them to the VA using UPS. It will also eliminate multiple reshipping of records when, despite documentation that the package was delivered, the VA reports officers' medical records were never received.

The new application assigns a VA generated reference number for the files and allows MAB to track the digital files from upload to copying of the files to the VA's document database. We continue efforts to replace the VA's mailed record requests with digital communication. However, if that cannot be achieved in the near future, this new application should significantly decrease the time it takes for officer records to be available for post-retirement/separation VA disability evaluations.

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## Public Health Service (PHS) Active Duty Dental Program Coverage

Effective October 1, 2021, Public Health Service officers will be required to obtain dental services from Delta Dental Participating Network (PAR) dentists for covered procedures to be paid at 100%. If there are no PAR dentists available within 35-miles of the enrollee residence, authorization will be provided to use a non-PAR dentist and covered services will be paid at 100%. Officers are always responsible for the entire fee for any non-covered services.

If services are rendered at a non-participating network provider, without prior authorization, the officer will be responsible for any balance after payment made by Delta Dental. Delta Dental will only pay their local “usual and customary” payment for all covered dental services billed by the non-PAR dentist.

Please visit [phsaddp.com](https://phsaddp.com) to access a dentist locator to find Participating Network Providers in your area. While on the website, you should register for the Consumer Toolkit. The Consumer Toolkit allows you to view your explanation of benefits (EOB) which shows the cost of treatment and which procedures are covered under the PHS Active Duty Dental Plan.

For questions regarding the PHS Active Duty Dental Plan, please email: [MABDental@hhs.gov](mailto:MABDental@hhs.gov).

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## Personnel and Career Management News:

Public Health Service officers, please be aware of the following:

- Practice hours forms that were initiated between June 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020 that are left incomplete in system will be removed. The Commissioned Corps Headquarters Personnel and Career Management Branch will provide agencies updated lists of officers who have practice hours forms remaining. This process will occur every 6 months for incomplete/"in process" forms. Please contact your liaison if you have forms in que that need to be signed. Officers should remember to provide a detailed description of the clinical work performed on their practice hours form.
- **TDY memos for practice hours verification** should go back to January 1, 2021. On-site supervisors and liaisons need to sign these. Officers should upload these into the eOPF section marked "TDY W/O PO."

## Ready Reserve Affairs News:

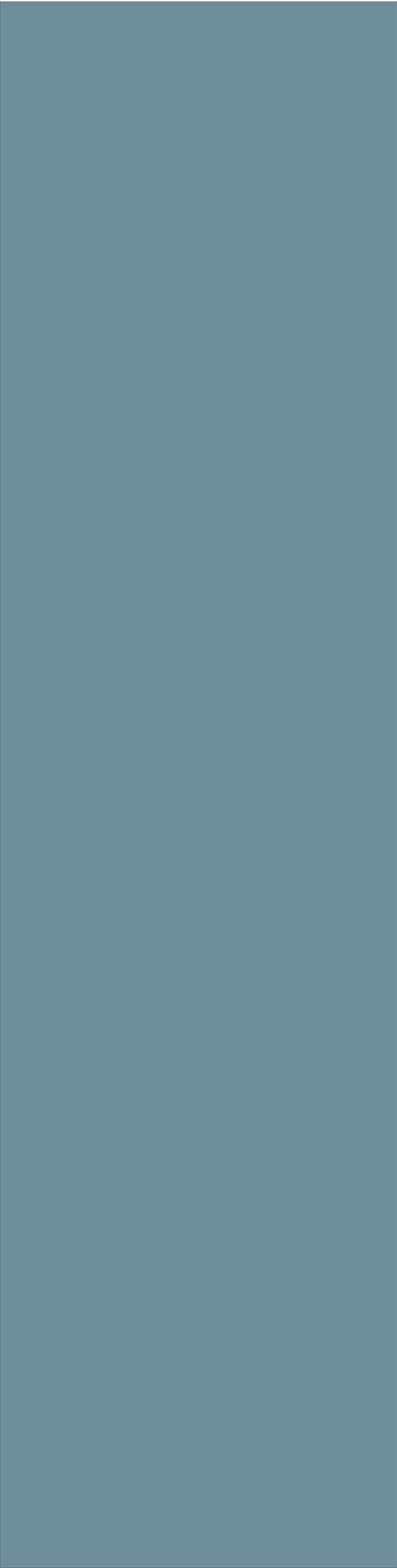


**Front left:** Col Joseph Shipp, RADM Joan Hunter, MG Jill Faris, RADM Susan Orsega, Col Jennifer Schmidt; **Middle left:** LCDR Ingrid St. Amand, CAPT Wanza Bacon, CAPT Michelle Baker-Bartlett, CDR Clara Stevens, CAPT Stefanie Glenn, LCDR Justin Markley, CAPT Christye Brown, CDR Sharon Rhynes, CDR Clinton "Kyle" Gropp, LCDR Trisha Chandler, Mr. Johnson, LT Ulysses Singleton III; **Back left:** CDR Matthew Kirchoff

On June 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Regional Commanders and Deputy Regional Commanders for HHS Regions 2, 3, 4, and 6 attended the first Pre-Command Course at Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ). This course marks the standing up of the first four regional offices of the United States Public Health Service Ready Reserve, which will expand to all 10 HHS regions in the years to come.

Officers were exposed to topics necessary to command a 300-person reserve unit and received instruction on a variety of topics including CCHQ operations, CCHQ administration, CCHQ systems, relevant statutes, policies, the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), deployment processes, and mobilization. Additional instruction was provided by senior service members of the Army and Air National Guard, covering topics including the military decision-making process, the National Guard organization and operations, command and control, logistics management, and training management.

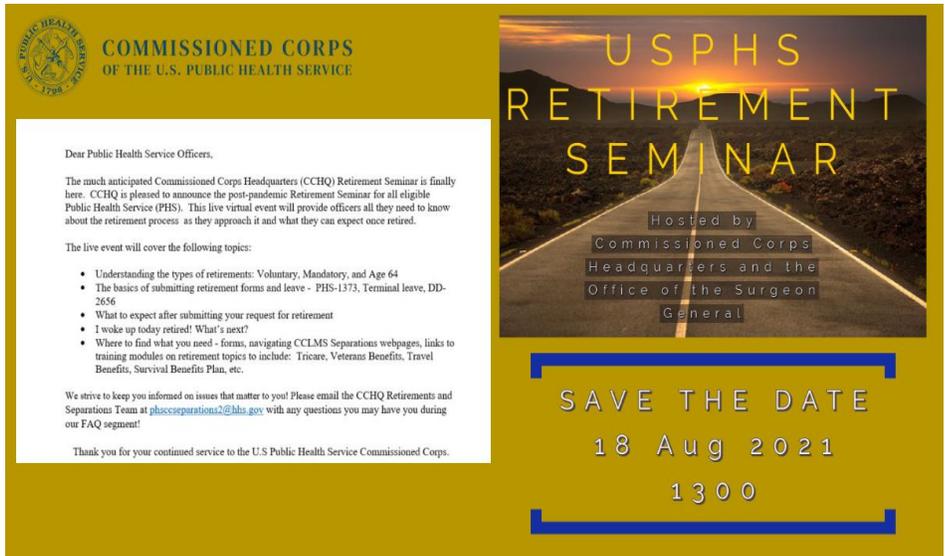
The experiential portion of the command course came early for the regional commanders as they were deployed throughout the U.S. to support the Unaccompanied Minors Mission prior to the pre-command course, where they served in a variety of leadership roles. Following the pre-command course, these officers remained at CCHQ on TDY for the month of June to continue their education in all-things related to the Ready Reserve and CCHQ operations and



administration. In July, the Regional Commanders will relocate to their respective regions, with the exception of Region 3, which will be based out of CCHQ.

Congratulations to the Regional Commanders and Deputy Regional Commanders for completing a grueling training program and jumping in headfirst to the task at hand, and thank you to the myriad of instructors and staff who came together to put on a successful course!

## Retirement News:



The graphic features a yellow background. On the left is the seal of the U.S. Public Health Service. To its right, the text reads "COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE". Below this is a white box containing an email notification. On the right side of the graphic is a photograph of a road leading to a sunset, with the text "USPHS RETIREMENT SEMINAR" overlaid in large yellow letters. Below the photo, it says "Hosted by Commissioned Corps Headquarters and the Office of the Surgeon General". At the bottom, a blue-bordered box contains the text "SAVE THE DATE 18 Aug 2021 1300".

Dear Public Health Service Officers,

The much anticipated Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) Retirement Seminar is finally here. CCHQ is pleased to announce the post-pandemic Retirement Seminar for all eligible Public Health Service (PHS). This live virtual event will provide officers all they need to know about the retirement process as they approach it and what they can expect once retired.

The live event will cover the following topics:

- Understanding the types of retirements: Voluntary, Mandatory, and Age 64
- The basics of submitting retirement forms and leave - PHS-1373, Terminal leave, DD-2656
- What to expect after submitting your request for retirement
- I woke up today retired! What's next?
- Where to find what you need - forms, navigating CCLMS Separations webpages, links to training modules on retirement topics to include: Tricare, Veterans Benefits, Travel Benefits, Survivor Benefits Plan, etc.

We strive to keep you informed on issues that matter to you! Please email the CCHQ Retirements and Separations Team at [phscseparations2@hhs.gov](mailto:phscseparations2@hhs.gov) with any questions you may have during our FAQ segment!

Thank you for your continued service to the US Public Health Service Commissioned Corps.

USPHS  
RETIREMENT  
SEMINAR

Hosted by  
Commissioned Corps  
Headquarters and the  
Office of the Surgeon  
General

SAVE THE DATE  
18 Aug 2021  
1300

Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) and the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) are pleased to announce the **Pre-Retirement Seminar** for all Public Health Service (PHS) officers.

The purpose of this seminar is to provide the basic features of the retirement annuity, to describe the retirement process, and to identify some of the important resources available.

The **PHS Pre-Retirement Seminar** will be hosted by OSG/CCHQ on August 18, 2021, from 1300 - 1500 EST. This 1-day virtual seminar, for all PHS officers, will be facilitated by the CCHQ Retirement and Separations team. The link for the seminar will be provided to officers at a later date.

Listed below are some of the areas scheduled to be covered during the seminar, but not limited to these topics:

- Veterans Benefits
- Retirement Process
- Retirement Pay
- TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy
- Survivor Benefit Program
- TRICARE Retiree Dental
- Social Security Benefits Post-Retirement Employment
- Travel and Death Benefits — PHS Travel for Retirees and PHS Death Benefits

Please email the CCHQ Retirements and Separations Team at [phscseparations2@hhs.gov](mailto:phscseparations2@hhs.gov) with any questions you may have to be addressed during our Questions and Answers (Q & A) segment.

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## USPHS Commissioned Corps Recent Vacancy Announcements:

Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) would like to announce the below vacancy opportunities:

- **USPHS Regional Liaison Officer (RLO) (Multiple Opportunities, Multiple Duty Locations) (O-4/O-5)**

We hope that all qualified officers will consider submitting an application for consideration. Instructions for submission are provided below. Thank you in advance for your interest and continued support of our mission. How to Apply:

Interested officers should submit the following in one PDF document:

1. Detailed cover letter not exceeding one page (12 point font) explaining your interest and how you meet the requirements and qualifications of the position
2. CV/résumé
3. Contact information for 2 references who can attest to your professionalism, dedication, officership, and communication skills (one must be supervisor)
4. Full length photo in Service Dress Blues (SDB) **and** Operational Dress Uniform (ODU)

**Submissions must be received by 11:59 p.m. ET Wednesday June 30, 2021.**

We hosted office hours to discuss this position vacancy with interested officers on June 28<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. ET. For officers who have questions and were unable to attend the office hours, email the materials above and any questions to the designated email in the vacancy announcement sent out to officers on 6/23/21.

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Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) currently has two exciting career opportunities to announce. Headquarters is looking for dedicated officers to reside in the following positions:

- **Team Lead, Response and Deployment, Readiness and Deployment Branch, Commissioned Corps Headquarters (O-6)**
- **Deputy Chief, Personnel and Career Management Branch (O-5)**

We hope that all qualified officers will be considering putting their names forward for consideration. Instructions for submission are provided below. Thank you in advance for your interest and continued support of our mission.

How to Apply:

Interested officers should submit the following in one PDF document:

5. Detailed cover letter not exceeding one page (12 point font) explaining your interest and how you meet the requirements and qualifications of the position
6. CV/résumé
7. Contact information for 2 references who can attest to your professionalism, dedication, officership, and communication skills (one must be supervisor)
8. Full length photo in Service Dress Blues (SDB) **and** Operational Dress Uniform (ODU)

**Submissions must be received by 11:59 p.m. ET Thursday July 5, 2021.**

Email the materials above and any questions to the designated emails in the vacancy announcements sent out to officers on 6/21/21.

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## Surgeon General Advisory Group Updates:



*Figure 1LT Edward McDonald at a walk-a-thon event.*

### Prevention through Active Community Engagement (PACE)

**About PACE:** Prevention through Active Community Engagement (PACE), an Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) advisory group created in 2013 and chartered in 2018, leverages the expertise of United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (USPHS) officers to provide public health education about the benefits of prevention in their local communities. PACE lesson plans focus on COVID-19, healthy eating, opioid misuse, vaping and more. PACE has reached over 70,000 people through almost 800 events since its inception. These events include over 100 community naloxone trainings, 88 opioid misuse education events, and 46 vaping, among many others.

**Why get involved:** PACE provides a wonderful opportunity for officers to use their public health knowledge to improve the health of their local communities. It offers the chance for officers to help build trust with their local community and increase the visibility of the USPHS CC. PACE also provides officers an opportunity to improve their leadership skills, serves as a source for public health training and career development, and supports the new training and experience promotion benchmark.

**How to get involved:** If you are interested in learning more about PACE visit our website at <https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/pace/>. Officers who are looking to participate in events in their local community should consider joining the PACE listserv at <https://list.nih.gov/cgi-bin/wa.exe?A0=nps-pace>. The next PACE monthly meeting will be June 10th at 1400. If you are an officer with an idea for a PACE event, please contact LCDR Jonathan Leshin ([jonathan.leshin@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:jonathan.leshin@fda.hhs.gov)) or LCDR Shiny Mathew ([shiny.mathew@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:shiny.mathew@fda.hhs.gov)).



## JOAG is calling all junior officers!

Are you a junior officer looking for any of the following?

- Leadership opportunities
- Professional development
- Readiness & deployment guidance
- Opportunities to impact other junior officers & the Corps
- Uniform guidance
- [Peer-to-peer networking](#)

To learn about these opportunities and so much more:

- Sign up for the [JOAG listserv](#).
- Visit the [JOAG website](#).
- Contact the JOAG Chair, [LCDR Beth Wittry](#).