



DIETITIAN MENTORING PROGRAM MENTOR/MENTEE GUIDE

Prepared and Updated by the Mentoring Subcommittee*
Dietitian Professional Advisory Committee (Diet-PAC)
U.S. Public Health Service

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A. MISSION & VISION STATEMENTS

MISSION: Match junior and newly commissioned officers in the Dietitian Category with an experienced senior officer (O-5, O-6).

VISION: The U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Dietitian Professional Advisory Committee (Diet-PAC) Dietitian Mentor and Membership Subcommittee will cultivate the most prepared and able officers for a successful and rewarding career.

B. OPERATING GUIDELINES: DIETITIAN MENTORING PROGRAM

Purpose and General Information

The Diet-PAC Mentoring Program is designed to facilitate the transition of recently appointed Registered Dietitians (RDs) into the USPHS and to promote the long-term career development of RDs. The Program is open to all qualified Commissioned Corps Officers appointed into the Dietitian Category.

The success of the various operating divisions of the USPHS is dependent on the development of competent and capable individuals both uniformed and civilian. Investing time in the personal and professional development of the Mentee will enhance the overall effectiveness of the Dietitian Category and create stronger leaders for the future.

Mentoring is an active partnership between an experienced member of the Dietitian Category and a less experienced member to foster professional growth and career development. The Mentor's knowledge and insights gained over years of experience serve as a valuable tool to facilitate the effective and efficient growth of the Mentee.

The Mentor serves as an initial contact person from whom information about the Commissioned Corps and the USPHS may be readily obtained. Mentors should be knowledgeable about many subjects of interest to the mentee, including: health care and other benefits, uniforms and military courtesy, awards, mobility, career progression, the promotion process, USPHS-wide and category-specific activities, and military and professional organizations. While an individual Mentor will probably not have all of the answers, he or she should be able to refer a Mentee to the right source for appropriate information.

The Diet-PAC web site <http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/dietitian/> has many useful documents for both the Mentor and the Mentee to assist with learning, timelines, and managing your career in the USPHS.

For the Mentoring Program to be successful, both the Mentor and Mentee must be active, committed participants. The following guidelines are offered to ensure a successful relationship between Mentor and Mentee:

- Be proactive – do not wait to make the first contact
- Negotiate a commitment - agree to have regular contact at pre-defined intervals (i.e. once or twice a month)
- If local, consider meeting in person, or alternatively, via video conference when feasible
- Establish a rapport - learn as much as possible about the other person
- Be confident, respectful, and use proper military bearing- both the Mentor and Mentee have something important to offer each other
- Be enthusiastic - demonstrate mutual interest in the mentoring relationship
- Communicate - share knowledge and experience openly
- Be sensitive to degree of confidentiality/privacy of information shared between Mentors and Mentees. When establishing rapport, any personal information learned about your mentor/mentee should not be shared outside of the mentoring relationship.
- Be a good listener - hear what the Mentor or Mentee is saying
- Be responsive - act upon what has been learned and follow through with promises
- Set goals together (i.e. timeframe for completion of CV)
- Take responsibility - it takes two to have a successful mentoring relationship

C. Goals of the Mentoring Program

- Provide Mentee with timely, factual, and relevant information to encourage and support his/her professional growth as a Registered Dietitian in the USPHS
- Instill in officers the importance of the USPHS mission, officer responsibilities, and traditions of the Commissioned Corps
- Provide sound advice and counsel to officers throughout their careers, balancing category-specific and Operating Division (OPDIV)-specific needs and priorities
- Promote career progression throughout the various USPHS Operating Divisions

D. Role of the Mentor

A Mentor is an experienced and trusted individual who serves in a number of capacities: teacher, guide, counselor, motivator, sponsor, coach, advisor, referral

agent, and role model. The Mentor must be flexible to serve in the various capacities the Mentee may need.

1. Responsibilities of the Mentor:

- Serve as a role model - share personal experiences, be a good example
- Be prepared and responsive to the requests and needs of the Mentee
- Be a resource person - provide information on the organization, category, personnel system, training opportunities, networking contacts, etc. Regularly review category benchmarks with the mentee
- Listen - be open and understanding
- Set goals with the mentee
- Counsel - help identify options for promoting goals and solving specific problems; offer specific and practical suggestions
- Offer insight - orient the Mentee to the spoken and unspoken rules of the organization
- Guide - offer guidance, but allow the Mentee to make final decisions
- Validate - be an advocate and acknowledge achievements
- Motivate - help set realistic goals and provide encouragement to achieve them
- Give feedback - share positive reactions and offer constructive criticism
- Provide perspective - help the Mentee see the big picture
- Be knowledgeable – relay knowledge or be able to refer to those who know best
- Be approachable- be professional but friendly and encouraging. Don't be afraid to share lessons learned.

2. Benefits to Mentors:

- Satisfaction of helping a junior dietitian define and attain goals by identifying options and planning strategies
- Satisfaction in having a positive long-term impact, both on the individual and on the category
- Improvement in interpersonal communication, motivation, coaching, counseling, and other management skills
- Opportunity to gain perspective about comparable individuals supervised on a regular basis
- Impetus to reflect on one's own goals and performance

E. Role of the Mentee

A Mentee is a committed and motivated individual who is willing to work and take responsibility for their career development and professional growth. A Mentee must be honest, open, and receptive to the guidance their Mentor has to offer.

1. Responsibilities of the Mentee

- Discuss with your supervisor your interest in participating in the Mentoring Program.
- Initiate and schedule regular discussions, actively seek out the Mentor's advice.
- Be honest – open and frank, share your self-assessment of career development needs and personal career goals.
- Be respectful of the Mentor's time by being on time to meetings and following through on promises.
- Be respectful of the Mentor's rank and show proper military bearing.
- Listen - consider all suggestions without being defensive.
- Participate - take full advantage of the services and assistance offered; make decisions based on all information gathered.
- Work with the mentoring subcommittee to find a mentor who is a match for your personal and career goals.

2. Benefits to Mentees

- Connecting interpersonally with a caring, encouraging advisor.
- Obtaining guidance in defining and achieving goals.
- Gaining information to plan a clear and defined career track.
- Gaining an appreciation for the corporate culture of the PHS.
- Receiving constructive feedback.
- Acquiring an objective and credible source of information.
- Improvement in overall job performance.

F. Qualifications to be a Mentor

- Currently in good standing with the USPHS with no adverse personnel actions filed.
- Rank of Commander (O-5), Captain (O-6), or above and approved by the Chief Professional Officer.
- Preferably the same agency as the Mentee.
- Is Basic Ready.
- Exhibits strong interest in mentoring individuals through periodic phone calls, e-mail, and/or person-to-person contact.

G. Qualifications to be a Mentee

- Newly commissioned or Junior Officer.
- Desires to have a Mentor assigned to assist in his/her professional development.

H. Implementation and Management

1. Mentor Solicitation

- The Diet-PAC Chief Professional Officer (CPO) will approve all Mentors
- Mentors will be recruited via email and phone
- The prospective Mentor will be contacted by the Chair of the Mentor Subcommittee to discuss responsibilities and expectations

2. Mentee Notification

- Mentor and Membership Subcommittee Chair or designee will contact the Mentee to inform of the match and update the Mentor/Mentee roster.

3. Matching Mentor & Mentee

- To ensure potential Mentors are able to optimally relate to the Mentee, an effort will be made to match a Mentor who has current or past experience in the OPDIV and/or geographic location to which the Mentee is assigned.
- The Chief Professional Officer (CPO) will be responsible for the final match for Mentors and Mentees. Mentors and Mentees will be notified by the CPO once an assignment has been made.
- Unless indicated otherwise by either the Mentor or Mentee, the relationship will continue for at least one year.
- At one year, the Mentee or the Mentor may opt to continue the relationship with the current mentor, terminate the relationship with the current mentor or mentee and request a new mentor or mentee, or terminate their participation in the Mentoring Program. As participants in the Mentoring program the Mentor and Mentee will evaluate the program at the end of one year.

I. Career Topics for Mentor & Mentee

Career topics for mentors and mentees are available in AppendixA. More Information is provided on the Diet-PAC Mentoring Program website as a guide to interactive discussions between mentors and mentees.

J. Mentoring and the Officer's Career Potential

Each of us needs to grow and successfully meet new challenges as we move through our careers. Whether our goal is to experience a wide variety of different positions, or to explore a particular role to its limits, career development requires both knowledge and planning, if it is to be successful. Developing a successful career plan requires four elements: assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Career planning is

hard work, but the rewards make good planning well worth the effort. The following topics and suggestions are additional areas that you and your mentor can focus on during discussions together.

1. Career Assessment

Career development efforts begin with an honest assessment of yourself and your career goals. While interests, values, and skills change with time, it is important to put both your life and your career in perspective in order to be able to recognize opportunities, which would be most rewarding and fulfilling for you. Ask yourself the following questions, both now, and as you move through your career. Share your self-assessment with your mentor. Use these responses to guide discussion topics between you and your mentor.

- **Why did I choose dietetics/nutrition as a profession?**
- **What skills do I bring to dietetics/nutrition and to the USPHS?**
- **What do I find rewarding about my current position and what are its drawbacks?**
- **Is there any direction to my career and am I directing it?**

2. Career Planning

The second step in the career development process is to begin to make conscious career decisions and to set career development goals. This is the planning phase of career development. What actions can you take now and in the future to optimize your career? Most people reach a point in their career when they feel that the satisfaction and excitement, which initially attracted them to a particular assignment, begins to fade. Step back and review the options:

- Expand your present position.
 - Change how you relate to your work.
 - Increase your skills and knowledge.
 - Consider a new assignment within USPHS.

Several formal and informal means are available to you for investigating various types of positions and career paths. Spend some time familiarizing yourself with these sources and with the information and guidance they can provide to you. Given the extremely wide range of health related activities which the USPHS is involved in, it is unlikely that you will be able to determine the scope of career opportunities without substantial research. The following formal sources are a good place to start.

- The Commissioned Corps Management Information System (CCMIS) web site at <http://dcp.psc.gov> is available to answer questions about Commissioned Corps policies and procedures, available training opportunities, job vacancies and secure access to your own electronic official personnel file (eOPF).
- Vacancy announcements can be viewed at the USAJobs website at: <https://www.usajobs.gov/> and can be searched by keywords, location or by Department and Agency (by selecting advanced searches),
- The Diet-PAC meets regularly to discuss issues of significance and to make recommendations to the CPO. The Diet-PAC is comprised of RDs, both civil service and commissioned corps, representing each agency where a USPHS dietitian is assigned. The Diet-PAC representative from your agency can be an excellent source for current information. Minutes from the Diet-PAC meetings are available on line.
- As an advocate for all USPHS dietitians, the CPO routinely advises the Surgeon General and others on issues affecting USPHS dietitians.

In addition to the formal sources of information listed above, one of the most effective ways of expanding your career opportunities is through networking with other USPHS dietitians and officers from other categories as well. Joining organizations and attending their meetings can provide officers and civilians an opportunity to meet program managers and dietitians from throughout the USPHS and the Uniformed Services. Some of the organizations include the Commissioned Officers Association (COA), the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS), the Reserve Officers Association (ROA), The Military Officers Association (MOA), or dietetic/nutrition professional associations. Recruitment booths from these organizations and/or government agencies are often present at national dietetic meetings. Volunteering to staff these booths is a good method of information gathering while supporting your profession.

3. Career Implementation

After identifying specific career goals and developing a plan for achieving them, you are ready to evaluate positions that contribute to your professional development. Seeking new assignments in the USPHS can be a challenging experience. As one moves into more senior positions, the process will become more competitive with your peers within and outside the Dietitian Category. Although credentials are useful, the candidate with the strongest credentials is not always the one who gets the job. The candidate who has planned well, outlined and implemented a strategy, and remained flexible will frequently be the one selected.

How often you might consider changing assignments will be determined, in part, on your current career stage. Generally, initial positions are of shorter duration, perhaps two to three years. Assignments in several program areas provide enough time for you to learn the fundamentals and gain a general knowledge of the mission

and function of the program. Entry-level RDs can usually make changes easily; however, it becomes harder to identify suitable positions if the job change is delayed too long.

As you move further into your career and into more complex positions, assignments may last for five years or more. Typically, individuals are considered too advanced for most entry-level positions after six years. However, they are generally not advanced enough to go directly into a senior level position in another program, especially an established one. It may be easier to advance in a new and growing program. Should you later decide on a career goal with a specific agency, one or two positions in related program areas of other agencies will be valuable to broaden your knowledge base and interagency understanding.

Once you have identified the position you are interested in, be prepared to work hard to get it. Again, prior planning is the key element to success. If you have already studied the requirements for the position and thoroughly familiarized yourself with the agency and/or program, you will be able to act quickly and decisively. Often positions may not be widely advertised or may be open for only a brief time. There are several strategies which you should follow to increase your competitiveness:

- Have an up-to-date curriculum vitae (CV) and USAJOBS.COM resume ready at all times. If you are unfamiliar with how to write a CV, go to the Diet-PAC website for the template. You will also need a cover letter that addresses how you meet specific job requirements. This will allow you keep your CV more broadly applicable to a variety of assignments.
- It is most advantageous to be able to deal directly with the individual who will be making the selection. Make yourself available for necessary interviews, but do not badger the selecting official during the selection process.
- The interview is often the most important aspect of the selection process. You should prepare and practice for the interview. If your planning has been thorough you will have a great deal of information on the organization and the specific position available. During the interview it is important to ask questions about what your responsibilities will be and how your position fits into the overall program mission. Give honest answers to questions about your skills, abilities, and career interests.
- After the interview, contact the person who interviewed you to thank them for the opportunity to interview. You should also inquire as to when a decision will be made. This shows interest and professionalism. Even if you are not selected for this position, a follow-up call could ensure that you are considered in the future should another position become available.

4. Career Evaluation

Once a goal has been established and plans for reaching it have been implemented, it is necessary to evaluate your progress towards attaining it. There are many ways that

progress might be measured and the following list is provided only as a sample of the types of benchmarks which you might consider. It is important to review your career progress on a regular basis to determine if your goals remain realistic or if you might need to adjust them. This list is not in any particular order and the relative importance of the benchmarks will vary from person to person. Your career progression should include some or all of the following:

- Progressively more responsible assignments within USPHS
- Professional publications and presentations
- Graduate training at the Masters or Doctoral level
- Awards or other professional recognition for work achievements
- Advanced professional certification in a specialty area
- Assignments in supervisory positions or other positions of authority
- Increased responsibility and participation in professional organizations as an officer, committee chairperson, seminar director, etc.
- Assignments in advisory or consultant positions as a recognized authority on program areas or in highly specialized areas of considerable importance
- Recognition as a research specialist in areas of national or international importance
- Assignment to top-level positions involving responsibility for entire programs or important segments of extensive program activities

Remember, career development is not a static exercise. It is dynamic and ongoing, based on continuing assessment and changing conditions. While there are many resources available to help you in the process, it is ultimately up to you to achieve your goals. The USPHS offers RDs an incredible diversity of professional opportunities in literally all areas of health care. With a coherent strategy and some hard work, you can realize a fulfilling and awarding career. The choices are yours!

K. Mentoring Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is critical to the improvement of the Mentoring Program. Part of the commitment to function as a Mentor and to participate as a Mentee, includes the responsibility to provide a constructive critique of the experience. The Mentoring Subcommittee is responsible for evaluating the feedback received from participants and incorporating necessary changes into the operating guideline.

- Mentors and Mentees are required to complete an electronic feedback survey which will be emailed

Survey to be Completed by Mentee

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/M6DPN6M>

Survey to be Completed by Mentor

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MP62CDK>

- Mentor Subcommittee Chair or designee will collate information from the survey into a status report to the Diet-PAC. Information provided by these status reports will be used by the Diet-PAC to evaluate the effectiveness of the Program and make modifications as necessary

L. More Information on Mentoring

Visit the Diet-PAC web site at:

<http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/dietitian/>

US Coast Guard Mentoring Program at:

<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wt/g-wtl/mentoring.htm>

Appendix A Mentor/Mentee Discussion List

This list is a tool that can be used to assist the Mentor in ensuring that pertinent issues are adequately addressed during the mentoring process. Many of these items should be covered by the Officer's direct supervisor and details may not be necessary. However, many Officers are not provided satisfactory information on some topics or are unaware of their existence or importance. The introduction of each topic will give the Mentee the opportunity to determine whether he/she is familiar with the topic.

Mentor: _____ Mentee: _____

Date Mentoring Began: ____/____/____

Career Development Issues Date Discussed

- ④ Annual Physical _____
- ④ The Promotion Process, Precepts, Benchmarks _____
- ④ Importance of the Curriculum Vitae _____
- ④ Conducting a file review _____
- ④ Maintenance of your eOPF/Direct Access _____
- ④ The Awards System _____
- ④ Education and Training _____
- ④ Licensure/Professional Development Portfolio _____
- ④ Duty Assignments and Progression _____
- ④ Readiness and Deployment Operations Group (RedDOG) _____
- ④ Billets _____
- ④ Mobility _____
- ④ Promotion Information Report (PIR) _____

Personnel Issues

- ④ Leave _____
- ④ Pay _____
- ④ Performance Standards/COER'S _____
- ④ Standards of Conduct _____
- ④ Medical/Dental Benefits and Insurance _____
- ④ Life Insurance _____
- ④ Retirement _____
- ④ Military Protocol _____
- ④ Agencies/Opportunities in the PHS _____
- ④ Details _____
- ④ Separation and/or Permanent Change of Station (PCS) _____
- ④ Probation _____

Support Issues

- ④ Role and Function of the DIETITIAN PAC _____
- ④ Commissioned Officers' Association _____
- ④ Professional Organizations and Associations for Officers _____
- ④ Role of Agency Liaison _____

Appendix B

Mentor/Mentee References and Resources

References and Resources

- ▶ General Information – Commissioned Corps Management Information System (CCMIS): <http://dcp.psc.gov>
- ▶ Uniforms (Male) – https://dcp.psc.gov/eccis/documents/CC421_01.pdf
- ▶ Uniforms (Female) - http://dcp.psc.gov/eccis/documents/CC421_02.pdf
- ▶ CCPM Chapter 26.3; Instruction 1, Summer 2006:
http://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/POLICY_phs_mil_spec_m.aspx
- ▶ Commissioned Officer's Handbook – CCPM Pamphlet 62; Spring, 1998:
<http://dcp.psc.gov/eccis/documents/PAM62.pdf>
- ▶ USPHS New Officer Guide
http://dcp.psc.gov/osg/JOAG/documents/JOAG_New_Officer_Guide.pdf
- ▶ Active Duty Station Map -
<http://www.usphs.gov/aboutus/agencies/dutystationmap.aspx>
- ▶ USPHS Agency Liaisons - http://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/PDF_docs/sgpac.pdf
- ▶ A Supervisor's Guide to the Commissioned Personnel System, CCPM Pamphlet 58; Spring, 1999: <http://dcp.psc.gov/eccis/documents/PAM58.pdf>
- ▶ Commissioned Officer Roster and Promotion Seniority – CCPM, Chapter 23.4; Instruction 1, Winter, 2003:
http://dcp.psc.gov/eccis/documents/CCPM23_4_1.pdf
- ▶ Professional Growth and Development – CCPM, Chapter 25.2; Instruction 6, Summer, 1992: http://dcp.psc.gov/eccis/documents/CCPM25_2_6.pdf
- ▶ PHS Officer's Guide: Leadership, Protocol, and Service Standards.
<http://www.phscof.org/publications>