

Student Opportunities

in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps



About the Commissioned Corps

The U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps protects, promotes, and advances the health and safety of the nation. With more than 6,000 officers, the Commissioned Corps is one of the nation's seven uniformed services and resides in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As the world's foremost public health service, it is composed entirely of officers who have been commissioned on the basis of their health-related training.

Commissioned officers deliver ongoing health promotion and disease prevention programs and are called on to provide onsite clinical and public health expertise in times of national emergencies and disasters. A career in the Commissioned Corps offers unlimited opportunities to serve your country while improving the quality of people's lives and making a real difference in public health.

Health Services is one of 11 categories in the Commissioned Corps. Health Services Officers (HSO) in the Commissioned Corps represent many disciplines, including the biological, physical, environmental, and social sciences; optometry; social work; podiatry; medical technology; dental hygiene; medical records administration; computer science; health education; health care administration; and other public health specialties such as physician assistant.

Student Programs

The Commissioned Corps offers opportunities for students to serve their country while completing their education. If you are interested in a public health career as an HSO professional, we encourage you to apply to the **Junior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (JRCOSTEP)** or the **Senior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (SRCOSTEP)**. Both programs offer excellent benefits and are highly competitive.

JRCOSTEP allows students to gain valuable professional experience with the Commissioned Corps early in their education. JRCOSTEP is available to students who have completed at least 1 year of study in a professionally accredited masters or doctoral program or at least 2 years of study in a professionally accredited baccalaureate program in specific health disciplines. JRCOSTEP assignments are located throughout the country, and participants work during their official academic breaks for periods of 31 to 120 days. These assignments occur in three rotations throughout the year—summer (May 1–Aug 31), spring (Jan 1–Apr 30), and fall (Sep 1–Dec 31) with most occurring during the summer. JRCOSTEP participants do not have an obligation to serve in the Commissioned Corps after graduation.

Selections Process: There are no deadlines for JRCOSTEP applications.

SRCOSTEP is a competitive program designed to assist students financially during their final academic year of professional health care training. In return, these students agree to work for the Commissioned Corps after graduation for twice the time sponsored. SRCOSTEP positions are available to individuals who are enrolled as full-time students in HSO disciplines, including biological, physical, environmental, and social sciences; optometry; social work; podiatry; medical technology; dental hygiene; medical records administration; computer science; health education; health care administration; and other public health specialties such as physician assistant. Students must have at least 8 months of educational commitment remaining in the final year to be eligible for SRCOSTEP.

Selections Process: SRCOSTEP applications are due by December 31 for applicants whose final school year begins in the fall of the following year. Applications received after December 31 will be processed on a case-by-case basis.

To learn more about the US Public Health Service, please visit us at www.usphs.gov.

Level of Degree Required For Specific Health Discipline

To be eligible for the JRCOSTEP or SRCOSTEP, you must be enrolled as a full-time student in an accredited program for each specific degree.

Please visit our recruitment website to see what “level of degree” is required for your specific health discipline. The following information can be found on www.usphs.gov. Click on “Professions,” “Health Services,” and then “Requirements.”

Pay

Participants in JRCOSTEP or SRCOSTEP receive the basic pay and allowances of an O-1 officer, with the rank of ensign. If they have at least 4 years plus 1 day of prior military experience, they are paid at the O-1E level.

Upon completion of their assignments, JRCOSTEP participants become inactive reserve members in the Commissioned Corps and have the opportunity to activate at a later time.

Upon graduation, SRCOSTEP participants are promoted to the rank of lieutenant junior grade (O-2) or lieutenant (O-3) depending upon their degree.

Benefits

JRCOSTEP participants are entitled to limited rights, benefits, and privileges accorded to Corps officers serving on extended active duty.

SRCOSTEP participants receive the same generous benefits as general duty officers in the Commissioned Corps. Benefits include:

- Health care and dental care at no cost
- Thirty days of paid vacation per year
- Paid sick leave
- Paid maternity leave
- Malpractice insurance coverage
- A retirement plan with benefits eligibility beginning after 20 years of service

Many additional benefits are listed at www.usphs.gov. Officers in the Commissioned Corps have opportunities for mobility among government agencies and career advancement in diverse work settings, allowing for varied experiences and promotions. The Commissioned Corps encourages you to expand your knowledge base and grow professionally so that you can effectively deal with the challenges of improving public health. Tuition and long-term training opportunities may be available.

Join America's Public Health Team

If you are interested in joining the fight for public health, or if you have questions about what we do and how you can make a difference with the Commissioned Corps, we would like to talk to you. For more information, call us at 800-279-1605 or visit our Web site at www.usphs.gov.

To apply, click on “Apply Now” and download the application forms. Be certain to indicate which student program you are applying to on the PHS-50 form, item #6.



To learn more about the US Public Health Service, please visit us at www.usphs.gov.