USPHS Pharmacist Professional Advisory Committee (PharmPAC) Mentoring Program

Commissioned Corps Pharmacy Mentoring Network (CCPMN) Handbook

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Commissioned Corps Pharmacy Mentoring Network Handbook

A. Introduction

It is crucial to the success of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (Corps) to have trained, competent, and well-informed pharmacy officers capable of transitioning into leadership positions and carrying out the goals of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS). The Commissioned Corps Pharmacy Mentoring Network (CCPMN) mentoring program is a mechanism by which the Corps can develop such leadership. Formed in 1996, the CCPMN is a six-month formal, voluntary, one-on-one mentoring program for active duty Corps pharmacy officers. The mentor (an experienced officer, O-4 to O-6) provides guidance to the mentee (a less-experienced officer, typically with an O-5 grade or below) on career goals and objectives and professional development. The professional relationship assists in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the mentee’s professional and personal growth. The program is open to all qualified Corps officers appointed into the Pharmacist Category.

B. Responsibilities and Suggestions

For the success of the CCPMN, both the mentor and mentee must be active and committed participants. The following guidelines are recommended to ensure a successful relationship between the mentor and mentee.

Mentor

A mentor is an experienced and trusted Corps officer who provides knowledge about many subjects of interest to less-experienced officers, including health care, active duty benefits, uniforms, military courtesies, awards, mobility, career progression, the promotion process, USPHS-wide and category-specific activities, and professional organizations. While an individual mentor may not have all of the answers, he or she should be able to refer a mentee to the right source for appropriate information. The mentor must be available to serve for a period of six months.

Responsibilities of the Mentor

- Be prepared and responsive to the requests and needs of the mentee.
- Serve as a role model - share personal experiences; present a professional image.
- Be a resource person - provide general information about the USPHS, its personnel systems; the Commissioned Corps, its standards of conduct, the proper wearing of the various uniforms, military etiquette and courtesy; professional training opportunities, etc.
- Be structured - plan and organize before meetings with the mentee. The "Mentoring Relationship Guide" along with the listing of suggested topics should facilitate meeting flow and help ensure that identified topics are covered within the six-month time frame.
• Listen - actively listen; be open, flexible, and understanding; keep conversations confidential.
• Accessibility - be able to maintain an open-minded and innovative approach to ensuring there is adequate communication between mentor and mentee (such as video-conferencing tools, web-based appointment reminders, etc).
• Counsel - establish a trusting, open relationship; help identify strategies for achieving your mentee's career goals and objectives.
• Motivate - be encouraging, inspiring, supportive, and available; provide positive feedback.
• Guide - empower the mentee by offering suggestions and options, but allow the mentee to make the final decision.
• Offer insight - explain written and unwritten rules of the organization; help mentee to see the big organizational picture.
• Provide constructive feedback of the experience at the conclusion of the six-month mentoring period.

Mentee
A mentee is a committed and motivated Corps officer who is willing to work and take responsibility for their career development and professional growth. A mentee should be honest, open, and receptive to the guidance his/her mentor has to offer.

Responsibilities of the Mentee
• Initiate - be proactive; schedule meetings; actively seek out your mentor.
• Participate - communicate openly with the mentor; be eager to learn; take advantage of information and suggestions offered; think ahead and contemplate career goals and objectives; interact with mentor to achieve desired goals.
• Listen - actively listen; be open to constructive criticism and positive feedback; consider all suggestions and options with an open mind; respect mentor's confidence and trust.
• Be responsible - always be considerate and respect mentor's time; express appreciation for assistance given; make only positive or neutral comments about the mentor to others.
• Provide constructive feedback of the experience at the conclusion of the six-month mentoring period.

Some helpful suggestions:
• Take responsibility - it takes two to have a successful mentoring relationship.
• Schedule meetings in advance. If there is a scheduling conflict, notify the mentor/mentee immediately and reschedule. The importance of these meetings should not be minimized.
• Work together to establish ground rules for the relationship during the first meeting. The "Mentoring Relationship Guide" should help direct the meetings.
• Keep a log or journal of the mentoring meetings and experiences. Use a check off list to keep track of topics covered.
• Augment the CCPMN experience by participating in personal development classes and workshops available through the Agency or community.
• Tailor the mentoring activities to minimize the impact on agency work and responsibilities.
• Notify the CCPMN Committee in instances of a mentoring mismatch. Either party has the option of terminating the relationship for any reason, expressed or not. We recognize that some mentoring relationships may not meet the expectations of the mentor and/or mentee and we will make every effort to reassign either party.
• Remember to complete and submit the CCPMN Evaluation Form at the end of the mentoring relationship.

C. Benefits

The mentee, the mentor, as well as the Commissioned Corps, all benefit from active participation and utilization of the CCPMN.

Benefits to Mentees
• Development of an interpersonal professional relationship with a caring, informed, and supportive advisor.
• Direction in navigating a complex organization, and guidance in understanding the political and cultural environment of the Corps.
• Ability to receive constructive feedback.
• Direction in defining and achieving career goals.
• Sound advice and information from an objective and credible source.

Benefits to Mentors
• Satisfaction in helping the mentee define and achieve career/professional goals and objectives.
• A sense of pride from observing the development of the mentee.
• An opportunity to improve interpersonal communication, motivating, coaching, counseling, and leadership skills.
• An opportunity to impart valuable information, expertise, and wisdom to a receptive, less-experienced officer, and help shape and develop tomorrow's public health leaders.

Benefits to the Commissioned Corps
• Maintenance and continued development of public health leadership.
• Improvement in retention rate of competent pharmacy officers.
• Development of a more savvy, confident cadre of officers well versed in the culture and politics of the Commissioned Corps and the U.S. Public Health Service.
• Assistance in the cultivation of strong officers in the formative years of officership.
D. Qualifications

Mentor
- Appointed to the Pharmacist Category for at least 3 years and in the rank of O-4 or above.
- Currently in good standing with the Corps with no adverse personnel actions.
- Basic ready.
- Supervisory approval.

Mentee
- All qualified Corps officers appointed into the Pharmacist Category.
  - All new call to active duty (CAD) pharmacy officers are offered mentoring through the CCPMN program.
  - At any time during their career, officers may request for a mentor by submitting the “Mentoring Program Application” available on the CCPMN Web Page (located at https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/pharmacy/sc_career_mentoring.aspx).

E. Implementation and Management

Mentor Nomination
- Mentor volunteers must go to the “Mentoring Program Application” available on the CCPMN Web Page (located at https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/pharmacy/sc_career_mentoring.aspx). Once logged into the USPHS Commissioned Corps Mentoring Database, officers will need to select/update their role as either “Mentor” or “Both” (if requesting to be both a mentor and a mentee).
- The CCPMN Committee will be alerted to a new mentor application. The CCPMN Committee will review the qualifications of the officer based on the established qualifications.
- On a yearly basis, an email will be sent to all mentor volunteers and these officers will be asked to update their profile.

Matching Process
- Officers who complete the “Mentoring Program Application” have the opportunity to indicate if they have a potential mentor in mind. The CCPMN Committee will ask new CAD pharmacy officers if they are already working with and receiving guidance from an experienced pharmacy officer.
- The CCPMN Committee will keep the requests for specific mentors in mind when performing the matches. The CCPMN Committee will be responsible for the final match recommendations for mentors and mentees.
- Identification of a mentor
The mentee should have the freedom of confidential communication within the confines of the mentoring relationship. Therefore, the mentor should not be in the mentee's direct supervisory chain of command.

To reduce potential conflict of interest, the mentor should be at least two ranks higher than the mentee whenever possible.

To ensure potential mentors are able to relate to the mentee, an effort will be made to pair up a mentor who has current or past experience in the Operating Division (OPDIV) and/or geographic location to which the mentee is assigned.

Additional considerations
- Completion of OBC
- Prior military service
- Participated as a mentee in the CCPMN
- Successfully promoted through the Commissioned Corps process

- Mentors and mentees will be notified once an assignment has been made.
- The mentor should read and sign the “Mentoring Agreement” form (contract).

F. Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is critical to the constant improvement of the CCPMN.
- The CCPMN Committee will contact mentees after two weeks of match notification to ensure they have been contacted by their new mentor, and at 3 months and 6 months for follow-up (as outlined below in Diagram 1).
- Evaluation forms are sent to both the mentee and mentor at the 6 month conclusion of the program. Mentors and mentees should fill out and return the program evaluation forms to the CCPMN Committee.
- The CCPMN Committee is responsible for evaluating the feedback received from participants and incorporating necessary changes into the CCPMN Handbook.
- Mentees and mentors should plan to have an initial six-month mentoring relationship. Participants will have the option of continuing the mentoring relationship if both are in agreement.
G. Resources

Mentoring training and resources can be found on the PharmPAC’s Mentoring Web Page (located at https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/pharmacy/sc_career_mentoring.aspx). The resource tools are designed to assist both the mentor and mentee to effectively participate in the mentoring relationship. It is a compilation of information from various sources that address topics and matters frequently encountered in mentoring. It also contains a checklist of topics that should be covered within the six-month time frame of the formal mentoring relationship. Career development tools that might be useful for an officer who is uncertain about his/her professional goals and objectives can be found on the PharmPAC’s Career Guidance Web Page (located at https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/pharmacy/sc_career_guidance.aspx).