



POM 821.73  
EFFECTIVE DATE: 3 August 2021

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By Order of the Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service:

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TO: All members of the Regular Corps and all members of the Ready Reserve Corps

SUBJECT: Annual COER for 2021 Forward

1. This Personnel Operations Memorandum (POM) establishes the guidelines for the Commissioned Officers' Effectiveness Report (COER) in accordance with Commissioned Corps Instruction (CCI) [351.01](#), "Commissioned Officers' Effectiveness Report."
  - a. The Annual COER is a web-based performance evaluation process accessed from the Commissioned Corps Management Information System (CCMIS) website at: [https://dcp.psc.gov/osa/osa\\_security\\_statement.aspx](https://dcp.psc.gov/osa/osa_security_statement.aspx). The purpose of the COER is to evaluate an officer's annual performance.
  - b. The evaluation should reflect the officer's conduct of duties within the officer's assignment and his/her demonstrated contributions to the mission of the department, agency, and the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps. The elements of the COER include leadership; initiative and growth; communication skills; interpersonal skills; planning and organization; professional competencies; and analysis, judgment, and decision-making.
  - c. This POM will take effect starting with the October 2020 to September 2021 evaluation year and apply to the COERs in subsequent years.
  - d. The Director, Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ), or designee, may issue additional guidance and instructions to implement the COER program.
2. The Annual COER evaluation year extends from 1 October of one year to 30 September of the following year. The following deadlines are in effect, unless otherwise posted on the [CCMIS](#) website or the officer is filling out an Annual COER before October 1 due to a rater change:
  - a. The officer must complete their section of the Annual COER in the online system by the 31 October deadline immediately after the completion of the respective evaluation year.
  - b. The Rater(s), as defined by CCI 351.01 (the officer's direct supervisor of record), must complete their section of the Annual COER in the online system by the 30 November deadline immediately after the respective evaluation year.

- c. The reviewing official (RO) must complete their section of the Annual COER in the online system by the 31 December deadline immediately after the respective evaluation year.
  - d. The agency liaison must approve the Annual COER in the online system by the 15 January deadline immediately after the respective evaluation year.
  - e. Interim COER(s) completed for the purpose of covering a gap in an annual COER must abide by the same deadlines.
  - f. For example:
    - For the evaluation year that covers 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021:
      - (1) Annual COER must be completed by the officer by 31 October 2021.
      - (2) Annual COER must be completed by the Rater by 30 November 2021.
      - (3) Annual COER must be completed by the RO by 31 December 2021.
      - (4) Annual COER must be approved by the liaison by 15 January 2022.
3. Officers on active duty on 1 April must complete the Annual COER for that evaluation year.
- a. Those listed in CCI 351.01, Section 6-3., do not have to complete an Annual COER (e.g., officers called to extended active duty after 1 April and officers who have separated or retired from the USPHS Commissioned Corps prior to 1 April).
  - b. If an officer's rater remains constant throughout the entire evaluation year, the officer's annual COER for that evaluation year will cover 1 October to 30 September.
  - c. If a Rater or RO becomes unable or unavailable to complete/review the COER, the next supervisor in the officer's chain of command will determine a substitute. The agency liaison must facilitate this authorization by the agency OPDIV/STAFF DIV supervisory chain.
  - d. If an officer's rater permanently changes (due to transfer, separation, or retirement of the officer or rater) during the evaluation year, the officer must have a COER approved by the liaison within two months of the rater change. Officers may initiate the COER in anticipation of the rater change up to one month before the rater change occurs.
  - e. The online system will designate the COER as annual if the period of evaluation entered by the officer is greater than or equal to six months during the evaluation year. If an officer has not spent six or more months with one rater, his/her annual COER will cover the longest period of evaluation by one rater during the evaluation year. If that officer has spent an equal amount of time with two raters, the COER covering the most recent of the equal time periods will become the annual COER. Officers can only have one annual COER per evaluation year.
  - f. Officers may (but are not required to) submit an interim COER for periods of evaluation less than six months during the evaluation year not covered by the annual COER. An officer's rater may elect to require an officer to complete an interim COER. If an officer fails to complete an interim COER deemed required by their rater, the officer is subject to the same repercussions as failing to complete an annual COER.
    - (1) The online system will automatically designate the COER as interim if the period of evaluation entered by the officer is less than six months during the evaluation year. Officers should contact their liaison to change an interim COER to annual if the officer does not have a period of evaluation

greater than or equal to 6 months by one rater during the evaluation year. Please see Section 3.e. for more details.

- (2) In the event an officer had multiple permanent rater changes during an evaluation year and did not complete a COER for any of the periods due to the periods being less than 6 months, the officer should complete a COER for the longest period of evaluation by one rater. This will count as the annual COER for that evaluation year.
  - g. Once the online system has designated a COER as annual, it will require the COER to be detailed (including scores and text). In the event an officer does not have a period of evaluation greater than or equal to six months within an evaluation year, the online system will allow an interim COER that is narrative (text only) to serve as the annual COER. Therefore, a rater writing a COER that covers less than a six-month period of evaluation, can write it as either detailed (with a Section 3) or narrative (without it).
  - h. Section 4 of the COER consists of the Reviewing Official's Statement (ROS). Officers can have only one ROS per evaluation year. The reviewing official who completes the officer's annual COER must complete the officer's ROS for the respective evaluation year. In the event that reviewing official is unable or unavailable to complete the ROS, the officer's liaison will determine the most appropriate reviewing official.
  - i. If an officer has a temporary duty travel (TDY) assignment, detail, or deployment for 30 days or longer, but for less than 6 months, the officer may (but is not required to) complete an interim COER for the period on TDY/detail/deployment. If an officer elects to complete an interim COER for TDY/detail/deployment, the officer should not include TDY/detail/deployment accomplishments in the annual COER. In addition, the rater can require an interim COER as specified in CCI 351.01. If an officer does not complete an interim COER for a TDY/detail/deployment, the officer may include those accomplishments in the annual COER for the year. CCHQ requires COERs for TDY/detail/deployments over 6 months or longer during the evaluation year and this will stand as the officer's annual COER.
4. Each officer is responsible for:
- a. Ensuring that his or her Annual COER is assigned and transmitted to the Rater and RO by the prescribed deadlines. In addition, the officer is responsible for ensuring the overall completion and submission of the COER to CCHQ. If the COER is not submitted to CCHQ in accordance with the above dates, the USPHS Commissioned Corps may block or delay promotions, awards, details, and/or special pays.
    - (1) In the event the officer cannot submit the COER by the deadlines, the officer must arrange an alternative deadline with the Rater, RO, and liaison that would still enable completion of the COER by the final January 15th deadline.
    - (2) The liaison will mark any COERs submitted after the final deadline as "late entry."
  - b. Reviewing the ratings and comments and discussing them with the Rater and/or RO, as applicable, if there are any questions or concerns.

- c. Ensuring that the completed COER is accessible in the electronic Official Personnel File (eOPF) by opening and reviewing each individual page of the archived COER.
    - d. Ensuring the COER scores are available in the officer's Promotion Information Report (PIR).
  5. Liaisons are responsible for:
    - a. Correcting any administrative data, if necessary, by 15 January.
    - b. Changing an officer's interim COER into an annual COER to align with policy, and vice-versa.
    - c. Communicating to the officer's supervisors the annual deadlines of the COERS and instructions to completing forms.
    - d. Serving as the primary point of contact for questions from the officer's supervisor or agency reviewing and Rating Official.
    - e. Verifying that the officer's rater is the officer's official supervisor of record (or the supervisor during a TDY, deployment, or detail) and that the Rater's supervisor serves as the Reviewing Official. An officer may not list a different officer as his or her Rater or Reviewing Official.
  6. The Rater must add a comment after each attribute justifying the rating level. This can be in the form of an example that demonstrates the attribute.
  7. Rebuttals and Other Rights.
    - a. If an officer does not agree with a rating or comment on the COER, the officer may submit a rebuttal through the online system.
      - (1) An officer submitting a rebuttal to CCHQ must do so within 90 days of the Archive Date of the corresponding COER in the eOPF. CCHQ will not accept rebuttals received more than 90 days after the Archive Date of the corresponding COER.
      - (2) A rebuttal does not substitute as a remedy for a formal complaint or other rights of due process. CCHQ will not act on a rebuttal to adjudicate the statements made or pursue remedy.
      - (3) Liaisons have the option of approving the rebuttal or rejecting it. Once the liaison has approved the rebuttal, the system automatically will add it to the officer's eOPF. The system will send rejected rebuttals back to the officer for modifications. However, the officer can choose to submit a rejected rebuttal directly to the HR director of the respective agency or to the liaison's supervisor to override the liaison.
      - (4) The Rater and RO may respond to an officer's rebuttal separately or through one combined response. The Rater and RO have 60 days from the Archive Date of the officer's rebuttal to submit their response. Liaisons have the option of approving or rejecting the response. The system automatically will add approved responses to the officer's eOPF and send rejected responses back to the Rater or RO for modifications.

- b. The officer may seek redress, if the Rater/RO is unwilling to respond to informal requests to change the COER, by filing a formal complaint in accordance with [CCI 211.04](#), “Complaints and Redress.”
  - c. If the officer believes that a superior has discriminated against him/her, the officer may file an Equal Opportunity (EO) complaint in accordance with [CCI 211.03](#), “Equal Opportunity: Discrimination Complaints Processing.”
  - d. If the officer is not satisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint filed in compliance with CCI 211.04 or CCI 211.03, the officer may apply for relief through the Board for Correction of Public Health Service Records in accordance with Commissioned Corps Directive (CCD) [129.01](#), “Board for Corrections.” The USPHS Commissioned Corps will consider an officer’s failure to initiate a complaint for redress, or a failure to complete/initiate other available administrative remedies (not including a rebuttal), as the officer relinquishing his/her right to proceed with an application to the Board for Correction.
8. The federal government evaluates civilian employees through the Performance Management Appraisal Program (PMAP) in accordance with the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA), the President’s Management Agenda, and other Federal performance initiatives. The USPHS Commissioned Corps does not require its officers to go through the PMAP. However, if an organization to which an officer is assigned requires the officer to complete a PMAP or a similar performance evaluation, the resulting document will be for that Operating/Staff Division or non-HHS organization’s internal use only. The USPHS Commissioned Corps does not use such evaluations nor place them in the eOPF. The COER remains the sole required performance evaluation instrument for officers.

Note: A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is distinct from a PMAP and CCHQ authorizes its use in cases of unsatisfactory or marginal performance.

9. Overall performance.
- a. For annual COERs and interim COERs that are detailed, the online system calculates overall performance from the average of the eight performance categories as follows:
 

<2.0	Unsatisfactory
≥2.0 to <4.0	Marginal
≥4.0	Satisfactory
  - b. For COERs that are narrative, the online system will allow the Rater to choose the overall performance grade (satisfactory, marginal, or unsatisfactory).

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