

Public Health

Information provided by the [United States Public Health Service](#)

The mission of the Public Health Service (PHS) Commissioned Corps is to provide highly-trained and mobile health professionals who carry out programs to promote the health of the nation, understand and prevent disease and injury, assure safe and effective drugs and medical devices, deliver health services to federal beneficiaries, and furnish health expertise in time of war or other national or international emergencies.

As one of the seven Uniformed Services of the United States, the PHS Commissioned Corps is a specialized career system designed to attract, develop and retain health professionals who may be assigned to federal, state or local agencies or international organizations to accomplish its mission.

To accomplish this mission, the agencies/programs are designed to:

- Help provide healthcare and related services to medically underserved populations: to Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, and to other population groups with special needs;
- Prevent and control disease, Identify health hazards in the environment and help correct them, and promote healthy lifestyles for the nation's citizens;
- Improve the nation's mental health; Ensure that drugs and medical devices are safe and effective, food is safe and wholesome, cosmetics are harmless, and that electronic products do not expose users to dangerous amounts of radiation;
- Conduct and support biomedical, behavioral and health services research and communicate research results to health professionals and the public; and
- Work with other nations and international agencies on global health problems and their solutions.

The PHS Commissioned Corps is led by the Surgeon General and consists of approximately 6,000 officers... [including pharmacists]. "...The Division of Commissioned Personnel (DCP) is the Commissioned Corps' personnel office. DCP staff writes the policies and procedures that are published in the Commissioned Corps Personnel Manual (CCPM).

Frequently Asked Questions about the Public Health Service

Is the PHS part of the Navy?

No. The Department of the Navy, The Coast Guard, The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) and The Public Health Service are considered Sea Services, all fall under Navy protocols but are separate entities. The PHS is considered a Sea Service because the origins of the Public Health Service may be traced to the passage of an act in 1798 that provided for the care and relief of sick and injured merchant seamen.

How many professional categories does PHS offer?

There are 11 categories in PHS: Dentists, Physicians, Pharmacists, Engineers, Therapists, Scientists, Veterinarians, Nurses, Dietitians, Environmental Health, and Health Services (Health Services includes social workers, physician assistants, computer programmers along with 16 other disciplines!)

Where do pharmacists work in the Public Health Service (PHS) Commissioned Corps?

The 930+ pharmacy officers in the PHS Commissioned Corps work in a variety of agencies/programs throughout the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and in other federal agencies. The majority of pharmacy officers are assigned to the following:

- Indian Health Service (IHS) (approximately 47%)
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA) (approximately 26%)
- Bureau of Prisons (BoP) (approximately 14%)
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) (approximately 13%)

What are the entry requirements?

You must:

- be a U.S. citizen;
- be under 44 years of age (age may be offset by prior active-duty Uniformed Service time and/or civil service work experiences in a PHS agency at a PHS site at a level commensurate with the duties of a commissioned officer);

- have served less than eight years of active duty if you are/were a member of another Uniformed Service meet medical requirements;
- pass an initial suitability investigation; and
- a current, unrestricted and valid pharmacy license in any of the 50 States, Washington D.C., the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands or Guam is also required.

In addition, you must have earned a B.S. or Pharm.D. degree from a program which, at the time of graduation, was accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE).

How much will I earn?

Compensation varies depending on factors such as grade/rank, years of training and experience in your profession, base pay entry date (BPED), geographic location of your duty station and dependency status. The minimum starting pay grade/rank for a pharmacist in the Commissioned Corps with a B.S. degree is O-2 (LTJG). The minimum starting pay grade/rank for a pharmacist with a Pharm.D. degree is O-3 (LT). Pharmacy applicants receive five years of training and experience (T & E) credit for the qualifying bachelor's degree. Applicants with a Pharm.D. degree as their first qualifying professional degree will be given eight years of T & E credit. Minimum credit for completing a combined B.S./Pharm.D. degree program is 8 years. Additional T & E credit may also be earned for time spent after receipt of the qualifying degree in degree-related activities. This could be:

- paid or volunteer employment
- consultation or administration
- college or university teaching
- pharmaceutical industry practice
- research

For further information on Grades, Titles, visit: <http://www.usphs.gov/html/grades.html>

For information on Pay visit: <http://www.usphs.gov/html/pay.html>

For information on professional category visit: <http://www.usphs.gov/html/professions.html>

How do I apply?

You can obtain an application by calling the Commissioned Corps application hotline at 1-800-279-1605 during working hours (8:00 am - 4:30 pm Eastern Time). After hours, leave a message

with your request and an application will be mailed to you. You can download an application from the Office of Commissioned Corps Operations (OCCO) Web site at:
http://www.usphs.gov/html/general_application.html.

Your application to the Commissioned Corps is processed by the Recruitment and Assignments Branch, Office of Commissioned Corps Operations (OCCO).

To check on the status of your application you can call (240) 453-6135/6057/6058 or go to
https://dcpweb.psc.gov/rab/scripts/app_main_menu.htm.

What professional groups are available in the Commissioned Corps?

You are encouraged to find out more about the Pharmacy Professional Advisory Committee (PharmPAC). The PharmPAC exists to provide advice and consultation to the Surgeon General on issues related to the professional practices and personnel activities of all PHS pharmacists. The PharmPAC also provides advisory assistance to the Chief Pharmacy Officer and to the agency and/or program heads where pharmacy officers work. All members of the pharmacy category may express their concerns and voice their opinions through the PharmPAC. The current members of the PharmPAC represent a cross-section of interests, professional experience and responsibilities. The more pharmacists who contribute to PAC projects and activities, the more representative the products and policy recommendations will be. If interested in joining, please see the PharmPAC Web site: www.hhs.gov/pharmacy/main.html.

You are also encouraged to join the Commissioned Officers Association (COA), the only professional association specifically representing the PHS Commissioned Corps. In addition to being a "voice on Capitol Hill," COA offers its members a range of services, including a strong professional network, financial services and an annual scientific meeting. The annual meeting, usually held in late spring, is an excellent opportunity to meet colleagues from other agencies/programs, to exchange scientific and career information and to earn continuing education credits. For membership information, please call (301) 731-9080 or visit COA's Web site at www.coausphs.org.