



|| USPHS Commissioned Corps



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

GENERAL

What types of positions can Public Health Service officers hold?

- A. Public Health Service officers hold positions most commonly in federal public health agencies such as the Indian Health Service, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Food and Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, and more. Public Health Service officers may be found in a variety of positions including as recognizable leaders. The appointed positions of Surgeon General of the United States and Assistant Secretary for Health may also be filled by Public Health Service officers. Agencies welcome Public Health Service officers across many disciplines and professions ranging from those focused on clinical services to contributions to the public health missions to excellence in leadership. Public Health Service officers may serve in direct patient care roles, as inspectors, federal regulators, and may even provide services within the National Park Service. Visit [usphs.gov/about-us](https://www.usphs.gov/about-us) to see where our officers are serving.

How does the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps differ from the Armed Forces of the United States?

- A. The mission of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps differs from that of the armed forces (i.e., Army, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Marines, Coast Guard) in that the focus is on delivering the Nation's public health promotion and disease prevention programs and advancing public health science. The USPHS Commissioned Corps is an unarmed uniformed service, meaning Commissioned Corps officers are not trained in arms. As America's Health Responders, Public Health Service officers may work throughout the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other



Federal agencies and programs. These opportunities offer Public Health Service officers flexibility and freedom to ensure they have a diverse and fulfilling career. In addition to contributing to important public health missions through their full-time positions, Public Health Service officers deploy to provide public health emergency response and disaster recovery support. Deploying as a Public Health Service officer means serving at the forefront of public health emergencies including natural disasters such as hurricanes and disease outbreaks such as Ebola and COVID-19.

Will I be assigned a position?

- A. Applicants to the USPHS Commissioned Corps have the unique opportunity to select and secure their own initial assignment. This is an important step in the Call to Active Duty process. Visit [usphs.gov/explore-opportunities](https://www.usphs.gov/explore-opportunities) to learn more.

Is there someone I can speak to regarding available positions?

- A. We encourage interested applicants to browse our website at www.usphs.gov to learn more about where our officers serve and to find available opportunities. Use the search bar to find your profession (e.g., dental hygienist, dietitian, biomedical engineer, etc.) or visit [usphs.gov/explore-opportunities](https://www.usphs.gov/explore-opportunities) to view a list of the 11 professional categories. For vacancies or additional job information organized by professional category, search the internet for your professional category along with the words "Professional Advisory Committee (e.g., Nurse Professional Advisory Committee, Health Services Officer Professional Advisory Committee, etc.) Each Federal Agency also has a Commissioned Corps Agency Liaison. A [list of the Agency Liaisons](#) is available online. For help with questions that are not answered on our website, click the Contact Us link or visit [usphs.gov/contact-us](https://www.usphs.gov/contact-us).

What is the difference between civil service and serving as a Public Health Service officer?

- A. Public Health Service officers protect, promote and advance the health and safety of our nation by serving in a wide range of health-related specialties within over 20 federal departments and agencies. While these positions can be filled by civil servants, serving as a Public Health Service officer is an option for those eligible. New Regular Corps officers have a Commissioned Service Obligation of 8 years (except for Physicians, Dentists and Veterinarians who have an obligation of 4 years). New Ready Reserve officers have a Commissioned Service Obligation of 6 years. [POM 821.85](#). There are many additional service obligations for Public Health Service officers including maintaining basic readiness (e.g., physical fitness, height/weight standards, basic life support certification, immunizations, etc.), professional service, promotion



preparedness, uniform requirements, and service on deployments.

When will applications be reopened for some categories?

- A. When searching for opportunities you may find that your professional category is not currently accepting new applications. These are temporary pauses typically due to the large volume of applications received or the limited vacancies available. There may be a date posted online as to when applications are expected to be accepted again. Please continue to check back frequently at www.usphs.gov for updates.

Is there a Reserve Component of the USPHS Commissioned Corps?

- A. Yes! The Ready Reserve Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service was established on March 27, 2020, with the signing of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The Ready Reserve Corps is actively recruiting candidates in all professional categories across the country. It is important to note that an individual applicant cannot apply to both the Ready Reserve and the Regular Corps at the same time. Learn more about the Ready Reserve Corps, including answers to Frequently Asked Questions specific to the Ready Reserve, at usphs.gov/ready-reserve.