

# USPHS SRCOSTEP: Why Every Student Needs to Know This Alphabet Soup

US Public Health Service: Senior Commissioned Officer Student Training Externship Program



# Learning Objectives

The purpose of this webinar is to:

- Provide an overview of the US Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, one of the eight uniformed services.
- Discuss the Senior Commissioned Officer Student Training Externship Program (SRCOSTEP) and share a recent student and officer's experience.
- Discover ways you can apply to the SRCOSTEP.



Photo courtesy of LCDR Holland

US Public Health Service: Senior Commissioned  
Officer Student Training Externship Program



COMMISSIONED CORPS  
OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

# U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE COMMISSIONED CORPS

## INTRODUCTION



### *In Officio Salutis*

- Established in 1889, the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps is solely committed to protecting the public's health.
- The Commissioned Corps is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is overseen by the Assistant Secretary for Health.
- The U.S. Surgeon General and the Deputy Surgeon General provide operational command of the Commissioned Corps.



# U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE COMMISSIONED CORPS

## ABBREVIATED HISTORY



- 1798** Act for the Relief of Sick and Disabled Seamen
- 1870** Marine Hospital Service
- 1871** First Supervising Surgeon (later Surgeon General)  
Dr. John Maynard Woodworth
- 1878** National Quarantine Act
- 1889** Legislation created the Commissioned Corps
- 1912** Public Health Service (with broadened powers)
- 1930** Parker Act: Expanded Public Health Service to Non-Physicians
- 1955** Establishment of the Indian Health Service
- 1979** Department of Health and Human Services established
- 1999** First Dedicated Disaster Response Mission for the  
Commissioned Corps (20,000 Kosovo refugees)



# Who We Are

The Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service is one of the eight uniformed services, and is the only one dedicated solely to protecting America's public health

- **6,000+ public health professionals** dedicated to addressing public health and providing clinical care
- **One of eight uniformed services** and the only one dedicated solely to protecting America's public health



# OUR MISSION AND VALUES

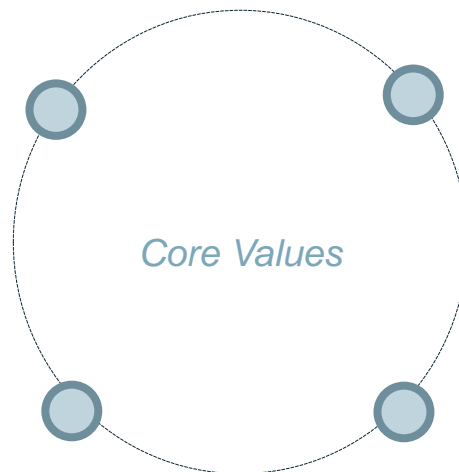
*Protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of the nation*

## ***Leadership***

We provide vision and purpose in public health through inspiration, dedication and loyalty.

## ***Integrity***

We exemplify uncompromising ethical conduct and maintain the highest standards of responsibility and accountability.



## ***Service***

We are committed to public health through compassionate actions and stewardship of time, resources, and talents.

## ***Excellence***

We exhibit superior performance and continuous improvement in knowledge and expertise.



# What We Do

- **Provide essential health services**

We go where most do not go to provide care for vulnerable and underserved populations.

- **Serve on the frontline of public health emergencies**

We respond quickly to natural disasters, disease outbreaks and global public health emergencies as well as serve on humanitarian missions.

- **Lead public health programs and policy development**

We utilize our experience, skills, and networks to provide leadership within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and throughout the federal government.

- **Advance innovation and science**

We work at the forefront of medical challenges like COVID-19, cancer, and the opioid crisis.

**Protect, promote and  
advance the health and  
safety of our nation.**



---

# Benefits of Service

## Career Diversity

- Ability to create your own career path focused on health services practice, policy and programs, while working across the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and with other federal Departments who share a common mission.

## Professional Development

- Training and educational opportunities for service leadership and career advancement

## Work/Life Balance

- 30-day paid leave per year that begins to accumulate on the first month of active duty

## Financial Advantages

- Nontaxable housing and substance allowance with possibility of specialty pay
- Comprehensive, economical health benefits for Public Health Service officers and their families
- Life insurance and survivor benefits
- 401-style retirement plan

# Join Our Noble Effort

The USPHS Commissioned Corps offers rewarding careers for public health professionals who desire to protect and promote our nation’s health and treat those most in need.

We are recruiting service-driven clinicians and public health professionals in 11 different categories, including physicians, nurses, dentists and veterinarians to serve in the Regular Corps. Learn more by visiting [USPHS.gov](https://USPHS.gov).

## Career Growth

Professional Development  
Leadership Training  
Mentorship  
Assignment Mobility  
Continuing Education Credits  
Post-9/11 GI Bill

## Financial Incentives

Competitive Compensation Package  
Housing Allowance  
Comprehensive Health Care  
401-Style Retirement Plan  
Life Insurance & Survivor Benefits

## Work/Life Balance

30 Days of Paid Vacation  
Paid Sick Leave  
Paid Maternity Leave  
Paid Paternity Leave  
Paid Federal Holidays

# U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE COMMISSIONED CORPS

## WHERE WE WORK

More than 6,000 officers in 800 locations, all 50 states and numerous foreign assignments including the World Health Organization

- Department of Health and Human Services
  - CDC, CMS, FDA, HRSA, IHS, NIH, SAMHSA
- Department of Defense
- Department of Homeland Security
- U.S. Agency for International Development
- Federal Bureau of Prisons
- State Governments and Local Agencies



# PROFESSIONAL CATEGORIES



MEDICAL



DENTIST



VETERINARIAN



NURSE



THERAPIST



PHARMACIST



DIETICIAN



HEALTH  
SERVICES



ENGINEER



ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH



SCIENTIST





# Health Services Officer (HSO): Physician Assistant

## HSO Category/Physician Assistant

- Third largest category and the most diverse with 53 disciplines, including PAs.
- ~170 PAs are in PHS- **high demand**
  - Clinical and non-clinical positions available
  - \$500/month Board certification pay
  - Retention bonus (up to \$20,000/year up to 4 years)
  - College loan repayment with certain agencies
  - SRCOSTEP opportunities

More info: <https://www.usphs.gov/professions/physician-assistant/>



# Thank You!

LCDR Sherray Holland, PA-C  
Project Officer/Public Health Analyst,  
HRSA

Chair, Recruitment Subgroup for  
Physician Assistant Professional  
Advisory Group (2019-2021)

Email: [sholland@hrsa.gov](mailto:sholland@hrsa.gov)



**COMMISSIONED CORPS**  
OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE



Photos courtesy of LCDR Holland

# Requirements and Application Process for PHS and SRCOSTEP



**To Protect, Promote and Advance the Health and Safety of Our Nation**

## Basic Qualifications for USPHS

- U.S. citizen
- Less than 44 years of age (with waivers, up to 50)
- Medically and physically qualified
- Ability to pass a suitability review
- Qualifying degree from an accredited institution (varies depending on profession)
- Current, unrestricted, and valid license to practice in one of the 50 States, Washington, DC, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, or Guam

## Student Opportunity- SRCOSTEP

- Senior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Externship Program
  - Become a Commissioned Corps Officer on Ready Reserve status while completing your PA program
  - Get paid an O-1 salary and receive active duty benefits for up to 12 months of school as you complete your program
  - Guaranteed a job at your sponsoring agency upon graduation
  - Obligated to serve the commissioned corps at your assigned facility for two years or twice the amount of time you received benefits while in school

# Military Pay Scale

## MONTHLY RATES OF BASIC PAY (Note 1&2)

*Cumulative Years of Service*

Pay Grade (Note 3)	2 or less	Over 2	Over 3	Over 4	Over 6	Over 8
<b>O-10</b> (Note 4)						
<b>O-9 (Note 4)</b>						
<b>O-8 (Note 4)</b>	11,329.50	11,701.20	11,947.50	12,016.20	12,323.40	12,836.70
<b>O-7 (Note 4)</b>	9,414.30	9,851.40	10,053.90	10,215.00	10,506.00	10,794.00
<b>O-6 (Note 5)</b>	7,139.10	7,842.90	8,357.70	8,357.70	8,389.80	8,749.20
<b>O-5</b>	5,951.40	6,704.40	7,168.20	7,255.50	7,545.60	7,718.40
<b>O-4</b>	5,135.10	5,943.90	6,341.10	6,429.00	6,797.10	7,192.20
<b>O-3 (Note 6)</b>	4,514.70	5,117.70	5,523.30	6,022.80	6,311.70	6,628.20
<b>O-2 (Note 6)</b>	3,901.20	4,442.70	5,116.80	5,289.90	5,398.50	5,398.50
<b>O-1</b> (Notes 6 & 7)	3,385.80	3,524.40	4,260.60	4,260.60	4,260.60	4,260.60



# SRCOSTEP Application Process

- Application period opens in June/July and runs until August/September
  - Best time for PA's to apply is in the first year of school to allow time to complete the application
- Application process after the initial application:
  - Expanded application including security clearance, payroll information, agency specific material and medical exam must be completed
  - Phone interview with Commissioned Corps officers from different areas and specialties
  - Complete online background check for USPHS and agency
- Agencies that accepted SRCOSTEP students in the past: Bureau of Prisons, Indian Health Services, National Institutes of Health (NIH), Immigration and Customs and Enforcement (ICE)

# SRCOSTEP Committee

- The USPHS has a committee created to help students in their path to becoming commissioned officers through the SRCOSTEP process
  - This committee works primarily with the Bureau of Prisons, as this is a high need area
  - When the application period opens, schools will be notified
- The application process is lengthy, but there is a team available to help along the way



Photos courtesy of LT Makowicz

# Applying After Graduation

- Federal civilian jobs on [USAJobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov)
  - Obtain a job as a civilian at an agency that is also staffed by U.S. Public Health Service Officers
  - During open application periods, can apply to transition from civilian to Commissioned Corps officer
    - Openings for PA's are typically on an ongoing basis as this is a high need profession in multiple agencies
- All federal agencies post positions online around the country

# My USPHS Story



Photo courtesy of LT Makowicz

- Joined USPHS through the SRCOSTEP program while attending the University of Bridgeport PA program
- Began working at FMC Devens in Massachusetts, a medical center for the BOP
  - Worked as a primary care/internal medicine PA for 4 years
  - Recently transitioned to Transplant Coordinator
- Given the patient population, I have had the opportunity to obtain a CAQ in Nephrology
- As a Commissioned Corps Officer I have deployed 7 times
  - Hurricane response x2, border medical screenings x2, Covid response x2, high profile inmate monitoring

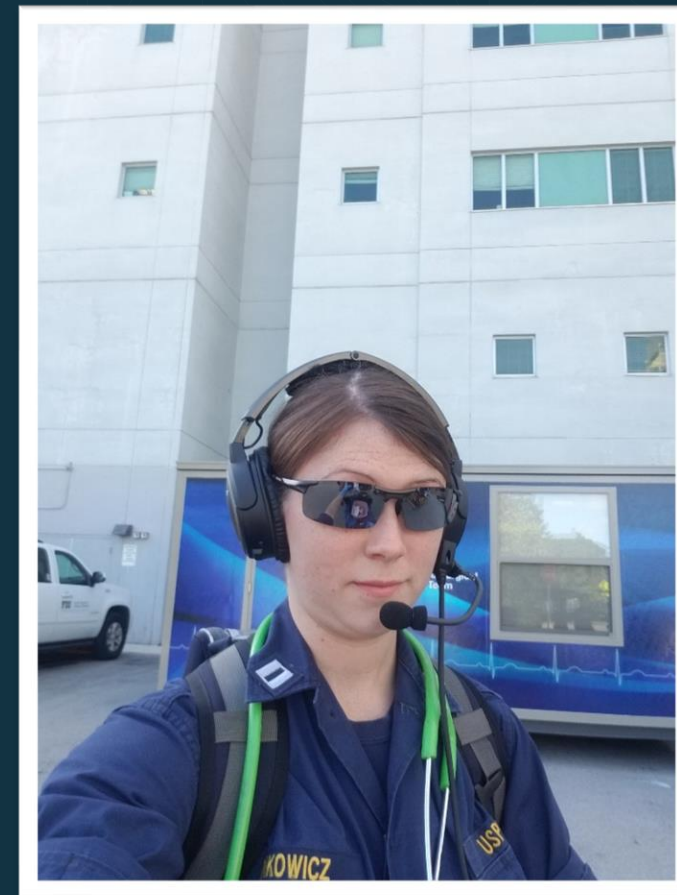
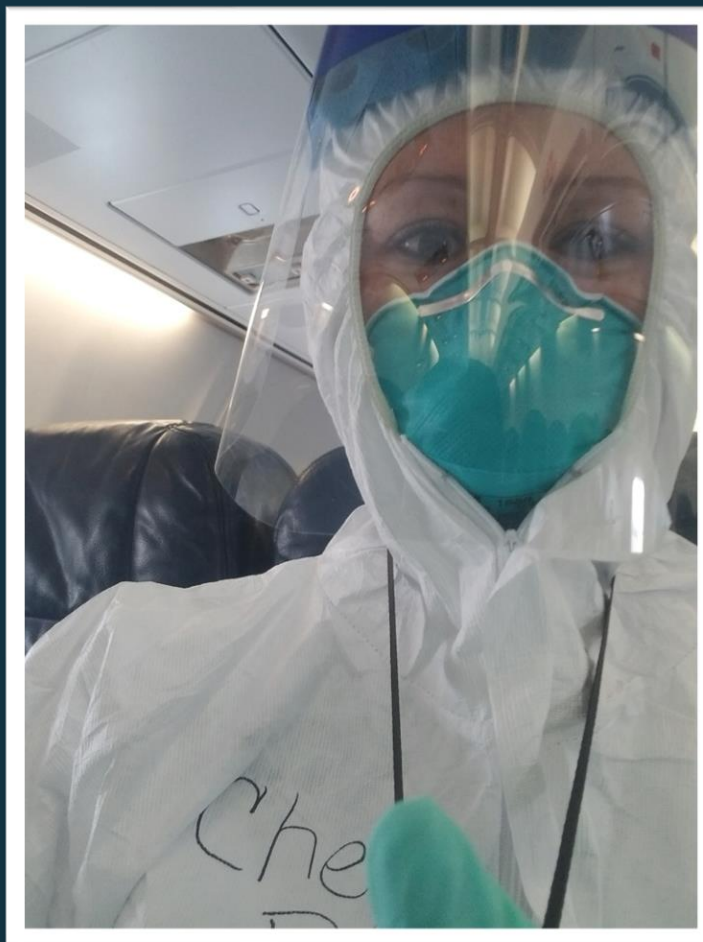
---

# Thank you!

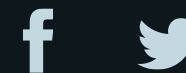
LT Chelsea Makowicz, PA-C  
Physician Assistant, BOP  
Email: [cmakowicz@bop.gov](mailto:cmakowicz@bop.gov)




**COMMISSIONED CORPS**  
OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE



Photos courtesy of LT Makowicz





## **SRCOSTEP PA Student Experience**

### **LTJG German Herrera**

- Being a SRCOSTEP during my final year of PA school reassured me that I would be able to pursue my goals of serving the United States
- The SRCOSTEP program granted me financial security during my senior of PA school because I was compensated as an active-duty uniformed service officer.



## **SRCOSTEP PA Student Experience Continued**

- Applying and obtaining a commission is a multifaceted process
- SRCOSTEP recruitment team is always available and willing to help applicants and newly commissioned SRCOSTEP officers
- Expect to spend approximately 2 hours weekly attending to matters pertaining to SRCOSTEP duties.

## PHS PA Working in the BOP

- I am currently stationed in Florida at Coleman Federal Corrections Complex
- The institution is staffed by an MD, two PA's including myself, and nursing staff.
- As a new graduate I have clinical support from the MD and the senior clinical PA who is also a PHS officer.

## A Typical Day Working in the BOP

- My day usually start at 07:30 am
- I am the COVID-19 APP at the institution, so I round there every morning
- After completing rounds in the COVID-19 unit I return to my office and see some sick call patients before taking lunch at around noon
- In the afternoon I often schedule patients who I do small procedures on and usually complete my day around 4 pm



## Should you apply?

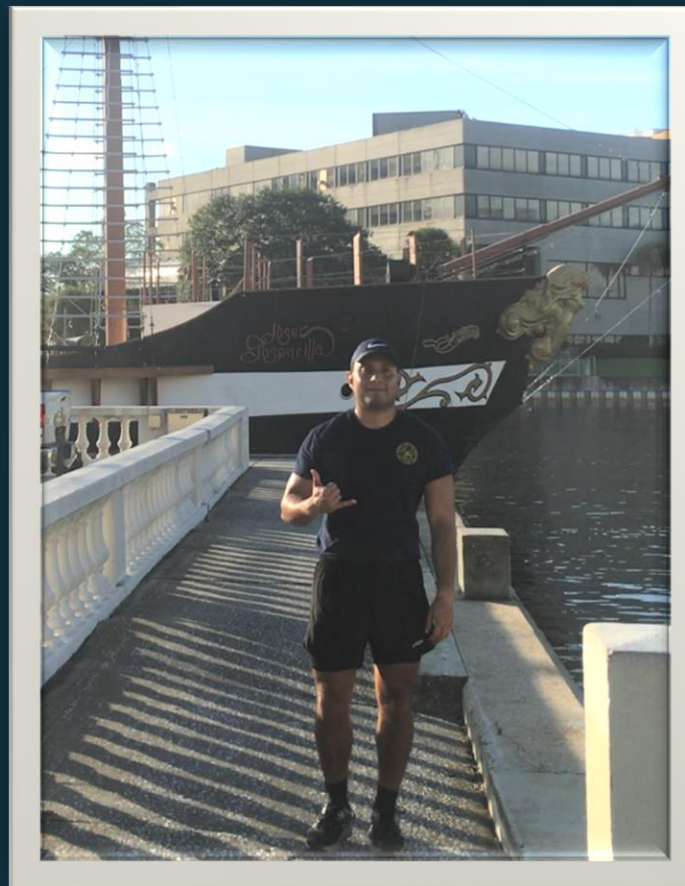
- Commissioning into the USPHS will lay the foundation for you to develop a rewarding career as a PA full of growth, and opportunities to have large scale impact on health
- I recommend applying for commissioning through SRCOSTEP to PA students who are interested in serving our nation by delivering healthcare in times of need, and who want to develop into leaders who will promote and advance healthcare in our country and beyond

# Thank You!

LTJG German Herrera, PA-C  
Physician Assistant, BOP  
Email: gherreraalzate@bop.gov



**COMMISSIONED CORPS**  
OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE



Photos courtesy of LTJG Herrera

# Questions?



---

Thank you!

For more information about student opportunities, visit  
<https://www.usphs.gov/students/> or call 1-888-225-3302



**COMMISSIONED CORPS**  
OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

