



## Welcome to the United States Public Health Service

The “unofficial” **TOP TEN TIPS** for those just entering the PHS

1. Understand that your ability to successfully navigate and utilize key websites is absolutely essential to your career. Make time to explore and know these key websites in depth.
  - a. <http://dcp.psc.gov/> (personnel management site)
  - b. <http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf/> (readiness and deployment site)
  - c. <http://usphs-scientist.org/> (Scientist category site)
  
2. Get involved with the Scientist Professional Advisory Committee (SciPAC)
  - a. The SciPAC includes 20 Officers appointed by the Surgeon General to serve as voting members to provide advice and consultation directly to the Office of the Surgeon General and to the Scientist Chief Professional Officer.
  - b. The SciPAC supports members of the Scientist Category on issues related to promotion, career development, basic readiness, emergency preparedness and other issues that impact commissioned officers.
  - c. In addition, members of the Scientist category connect with each other by meeting via a bridge line on a monthly basis to discuss current issues
  - d. Get a mentor in the Scientist category by contacting the Chair of the Mentoring Subcommittee.
  - e. Update your Curriculum Vita into the required format for PHS Scientists (and then regularly thereafter).
    - Go to *Career Development* tab of the Scientist website and access document at the top for details
    - SciPAC enlists other Scientists to review your vita and provide advice
  
3. Sign up for the Officer Basic Course (OBC) as soon as possible
  - a. Contact your agency liaison officer to discuss course availability
  - b. See the *Scientist Handbook* under the *Career Development* tab for details

4. Ensure that The Office of Commissioned Corps Operations (OCCO) has your accurate information
  - a. Go to <http://dcp.psc.gov/> into the “Secure Area” tab on top left.
  - b. Get Username and password <mailto:cchelpdesk@psc.gov>
  - c. Update all information for all three sites (each require usernames and passwords)
    - Officer, Liaison, and Leave Maintenance Clerk Activities
    - Direct Access
    - OFRD
  - d. Consider applying for the Montgomery GI Bill or Post 9/11 GI Bill for VA educational benefits. Go to <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>.
5. Call the Compensation Branch at (301) 594-2963
  - a. Request that they walk through your pay information and answer questions
  - b. Ensure they have good address and contact info on file
  - c. Have them connect you to the Travel Office to process move monies if applicable
6. Go to a military or agency liaison office to get the following (if not done upon entry into service):
  - a. Common Access Card (CAC) aka a Uniformed Services I.D.
  - b. Entry of self and family members into Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS)
  - c. Enrollment in TriCare (Health Care plan)
  - d. Enrollment in United Concordia (Dental Plan)
  - e. Obtain a DoD parking sticker at a military base if you frequent it for medical care or if it is required for regular access
7. Acquire and wear the proper uniforms
  - a. Go to *Career Development* tab, in the *Scientist Handbook*, See *Officership*, click on *Uniforms*
  - b. Recommend using the “Bethesda NEX” if you are in the Washington DC area because of their familiarity with PHS.
  - c. Officer Basic Course (OBC) will help you with uniform wear and etiquette

8. Sign up for key listserv activity to ensure receipt of current information. The following four are most recommended:
  - a. [usphs-scientist@list.nih.gov](mailto:usphs-scientist@list.nih.gov) (Scientist category)
  - b. <https://list.nih.gov/archives/ccinformation-l.html> (OCCO)
  - c. <https://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/joag/> (Junior Officer Advisory Group)
  - d. OFRD – When you update your profile, you will be added to the listserv
  - e. Agency Specific listservs may be available. Contact your agency liaison officer
  
9. Consider joining the Commissioned Officers Association (COA). This organization exists to promote the mission and interests of the USPHS and its officers. There are local branches that may be able to provide support and resources for anything from policies to uniform wear. Go to <http://www.coausphs.org> for details.
  
10. Once you become more comfortable explaining the role of a PHS Officer, perhaps after attending OBC, meet with your Supervisor to discuss:
  - a. The PHS Mission
  - b. Your Readiness requirements and deployment “on call” times
  - c. The best fit between PHS and agency requirements
  - d. Supervisory role in the annual Commissioned Officer Evaluation Report (COER)
  - e. The benchmarks by which you will be measured for promotion

Bonus Tip: Although the process can be overwhelming at times, chances are that other PHS officers have already been through it and can help you navigate, so don't hesitate to ask.

## Welcome Aboard