

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES

PERSONNEL OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM



POM 08-003
EFFECTIVE DATE: 31 March 2008

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

RADM Steven K. Galson, Acting Surgeon General

TO: All Regular and Reserve Corps Officers on Extended Active Duty

SUBJECT: Commissioned Corps Awards Processing

1. This Personnel Operations Memorandum (POM) establishes the operational procedures and guidelines to implement the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service (Corps) Awards Program found in [CC27.1.1](#) of the electronic Commissioned Corps Issuance System (eCCIS). The purpose of this POM is to streamline the Corps Awards approval process by ensuring the timely recognition of officers while maintaining the integrity of the awards review process.
2. Delegations of Authority. In accordance with CC27.1.1, Section 3-3, the Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH) has delegated award approval authorities to certain officials. In certain cases, these authorities may be re-delegated. All re-delegations of authority to approve an award must be in writing. Delegations must include the title of the official to whom delegated authority is being given and which authorities are being delegated. A copy of the delegation must be provided to the Director, Office of Commissioned Corps Operations (OCCO) by 30 May 2008.
3. Awards Coordinators.
 - a. The Commissioned Corps Liaison serves as the Awards Coordinator for each Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Operating Division (OPDIV)/Staff Division (STAFFDIV) or non-HHS organization to which Corps officers are detailed which has been delegated authority to approve awards. These individuals may delegate this responsibility. The Commissioned Corps Liaison will notify the Director, OCCO, in writing of any such delegation.
 - b. Serve as a liaison to OCCO for award issues for their OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization.
 - c. Serve as the first line of contact for officers and managers within the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization to address questions or concerns about awards, the awards process, and the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization's procedures.

- d. Assure that awards are processed within the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization within the nomination processing benchmarks in Section 5 and route awards not meeting the benchmarks as outlined in Section 4.f.
 - e. Provide an annual report to the Commissioned Corps Awards Board (CCAB) by 1 March of the number and type of award nominations that did not meet the benchmarks in Section 4. The CCAB may request more frequent reports as needed.
4. Nomination and Review Process.
- a. Nomination Forms.
 - (1) [Form PHS 6342-2](#) is used for the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM); Meritorious Service Medal (MSM); Outstanding Service Medal (OSM); Commendation Medal (CM); Achievement Medal (AM); and Citation (CIT).
 - (2) [Form PHS 6342-1](#) is used for the Outstanding Unit Citation (OUC) and Unit Commendations (UC).
 - b. Initiators of an award must assure that the award nomination is in compliance with the award criteria and limitations specified in CC27.1.1.
 - c. Award nominations will follow the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization procedures for processing nominations for individual and unit honor awards. The written procedure includes the organizational channels the nomination must follow and the appropriate levels of notification needed (Section 4.d.).
 - d. Upon submitting the nomination to the first organization level of review, the nominator is to notify the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization Awards Coordinator, as well as the appropriate levels within the organizational channels. The notification will include the officer's name(s), the type of award submitted, the date submitted, and other information required by the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization's written procedures.
 - e. Pursuant to CC27.1.1, Section 8-2, the CCAB serves as the only required board review for nominations for the DSM, MSM, OUC and all awards "With Valor." Nominations for the OSM, CM and UC require a review and recommendation by an OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization board prior to approval by the delegated approval authority. Nominations for the AM and CIT do not require a review by a board within the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization prior to approval by the delegated approval authority.
 - f. Awards not processed within the benchmarks outlined in Section 5 are processed as follows:
 - (1) Awards processed within the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization. The Awards Coordinator will include a statement that the benchmarks have not been met and then forward the nomination to the next appropriate level.
 - (a) AM and CIT.
 - i. If the approval authority for these awards has been re-delegated by the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS

organization Head, then the nomination is forwarded to the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization Head for a decision.

- ii. If approval authorities have not been re-delegated, the nomination is forwarded to the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) for a decision by the Surgeon General (SG).
 - iii. If a nomination for these awards has been forwarded to the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization Head for a decision in accordance with Section 4.f.(1)(a)i. and the award is not processed within a total time of 18 weeks from the time of submission, then the nomination is forwarded to the OSG for a decision by the SG.
 - (b) OSM, CM, and UC. These awards are forwarded to OSG for a decision by the SG.
 - (c) DSM, MSM, and OUC. These awards are forwarded to the Director, OCCO, for review and recommendation by the CCAB, and decision by the SG.
- (2) Awards processed within OSG. The OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization Awards Coordinator will notify the OSG. OSG will provide an explanation of the delay along with expected resolution. For award nominations from within OSG (see CC27.1.1, Section 3-2 (c)(3)), OSG will serve as Awards Coordinator.
 - (3) Awards processed within OCCO. The OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization Awards Coordinator will notify the OSG and the Chair of the CCAB if OCCO does not produce the required certificate, hardware, and other requirements of Section 5.d. OCCO must provide an explanation of the delay along with expected resolution.
 - (4) At any time, if the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization Awards Coordinator does not forward the nomination as required, the nominator or any official in the organizational channel may document the non-compliance of the Awards Coordinator and submit the nomination to the appropriate official as outlined in Section 4.f.(1) through (3). A copy of this submission is also forwarded to the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization SG's Policy Advisory Council Representative and Commissioned Corps Liaison.
5. Nomination Processing and Decision Benchmarks. The Appendix to this POM summarizes the following timeframes:
- a. Each level within the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organizational channel must act on the nomination in a timely manner when the nomination is submitted to them. Available actions include:
 - (1) Concurring with the award nomination and forwarding to the next level;
 - (2) Non-concurring with the nomination and forwarding to the next level; or

- (3) Returning the nomination to the initiator with suggestions for rewriting the nomination to strengthen the narrative justification. The nominator must address the suggestions and return the nomination within 1 week. In accordance with Section 8-1.d.(1) of CC27.1.1, a nomination is considered disapproved if it is not endorsed by any two levels of review in the organizational channel.
 - b. All award nominations must be processed and forwarded to the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization's Awards Coordinator within the following timeframes:
 - (1) AM and CIT. Must be approved or disapproved by the delegated approval authority within 18 weeks of initiation;
 - (2) OSM, CM, and UC. Must be approved or disapproved by the delegated approval authority within 22 weeks of initiation;
 - (3) DSM, MSM, and OUC. The authorities outlined in Section 3-3.a. of CC27.1.1 must concur or non-concur, and forward, within 22 weeks of initiation; and
 - (4) For the purposes of this subsection, if a nomination is considered disapproved under the provisions of Section 5.b., it will be considered as a disapproval or non-concurrence by the delegated authority.
 - c. All award nominations forwarded to OSG will be processed as follows:
 - (1) AM and CIT. Must be approved or disapproved within 4 weeks; and
 - (2) DSM, MSM, OSM, CM, OUC, and UC. Must be approved or disapproved within 10 weeks.
 - d. OCCO must process all approved award nominations within 3 weeks from the date an approved award is received. Processing within OCCO includes entering the award information into the Corps' electronic data systems (e.g., type of award, approval date, and citation), producing an award certificate, forwarding the certificate and appropriate hardware to the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization Awards Coordinator, and submitting the appropriate documentation for entering into the officer's electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF).
6. OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS Organization Written Procedures. In accordance with CC27.1.1, Section 8-1.a., OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organizations must develop written procedures for processing awards within their jurisdictions. These procedures must adhere to the policies in CC27.1.1 and the benchmarks and guidelines in this POM, however, the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization's procedures may have more stringent requirements to meet any unique needs that the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization may have. If the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization can meet the benchmarks and guidelines outlined in this POM, then changes to their respective approval processes need not occur.
7. Presentation of Awards. In accordance with CC27.1.1, Section 8-6, all awards will be presented to an officer within 13 weeks of processing by OCCO. The presentation may be in an informal setting, e.g., staff meeting. However, an informal presentation does not preclude an OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization from presenting the award at a formal awards ceremony at a later date.

8. Commissioned Corps Awards Board (CCAB).
 - a. Membership.
 - (1) The Chair of the CCAB is normally a flag grade officer appointed by the SG.
 - (2) The SG solicits recommendations from the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization Head, or their designee, of officers to serve on the CCAB.
 - (3) The CCAB consists of a minimum of six members and the Chair. The Board is made up of O-5 and O-6 officers (Commander or Captain rank) and is reflective of the diversity of the Corps, with respect to such factors as gender, minority status, OPDIV/STAFFDIV/non-HHS organization, and professional category.
 - (4) Every effort is made to assure that the CCAB does not consist entirely of one gender or race, however, no member is selected solely on these bases.
 - (5) Typically, two members of the Board are stationed outside the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area whenever possible.
 - (6) Members will serve for 3 consecutive years and are appointed in a sequence that allows for orderly replacement of two to three members each year.
 - (7) The Director, OCCO, appoints an Executive Secretary to facilitate the deliberations and operation of the CCAB.
 - b. The CCAB meets every other month on the first Tuesday of the even months. In addition, the CCAB may be convened at the request of the SG at anytime.
 - c. The CCAB reviews nominations for the DSM, MSM, OUC, and all awards "With Valor." The CCAB submits its recommendations for awards reviewed to the SG for decision. The CCAB provides written feedback on awards not recommended and not approved by the SG. An OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization may rewrite and resubmit an unapproved award within 1 year of the SG's disapproval.
 - d. The CCAB continually monitors the overall status of the Awards Program and provides an annual written report to the SG in April. The report will contain information, by OPDIV/STAFFDIV and non-HHS organization, on the number and type of awards approved, as well as, the number and type of award nominations that did not meet the benchmarks in Section 5. The report will also contain recommendations for improvements to the Awards Program. However, the CCAB may, at any time, bring urgent issues to the attention of the SG.
 - e. The CCAB will review the established benchmarks for the amount of time an award nomination should take from initiation to approval and make recommendations to update the benchmarks as necessary.
9. Individual and Unit Honor Awards Nominations.

- a. A nomination for a unit or individual honor award consists of the completed form and an attached narrative justification.
 - b. Page 2 (i.e., Part II) of the forms is optional. However, the nominator and/or the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization Awards Coordinator must assure that the nomination does not violate the Limitations on Awards specified in CC27.1.1, Section 6-8.
 - c. The narrative shall not exceed two single spaced typed pages with 1" margins. Times News Roman 12 point type style is preferred, but a comparable font that would provide no less than 12 point and no more than 12 characters per inch can be used. The justification shall address the following areas: scope of the impact; level of achievement; leadership/initiative; and length of time covered.
 - d. It is not necessary to include extensive biographical sketches, education, training, and experience, unless required for a better understanding of the officer's specific accomplishments.
 - e. As specified under Limitations on Awards in CC27.1.1, Section 6-8., an award must be based on actions and achievements that have not been the basis for a prior Corps honor award. The exception to this requirement is that information previously used to support a prior award may serve as part of the basis for a senior, subsequent award, based on additional activities and accomplishments over a longer period of service. Likewise, if the period for which the proposed award overlaps the date of a prior individual or unit honor award, the nomination must clarify the basis for the prior award(s) and its relevance or non-relevance to the present nomination.
10. Service Awards Nominations.
- a. Requests for the Isolated/Hardship Award (ISOHAR), Foreign Duty Award (FDA), and Hazardous Duty Award (HDA) may be submitted by the officer's supervisor, or the officer, through the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization Awards Coordinator. The request will include the following information:
 - (1) HDA requests will include the duty station at which the officer was/is assigned and the inclusive dates of the assignment along with the following for the specific type of assignment:
 - (a) Frequent Light Aircraft Flights: documentation of travel itinerary with dates and duration of stops at each destination; type of aircraft with indication of number of seats; and certification from the officer's supervisor and Commissioned Corps Liaison for each trip.
 - (b) Contact with inmates and/or detainees: description of type of contact (i.e., full-time or not full-time contact) and certification from Commissioned Corps Liaison that contact hours met.
 - (c) Industrial Hygiene Surveys of Mine Sites: itinerary of each survey with number of hours in the mine and certification from supervisor and Commissioned Corps Liaison for each survey.
 - (d) Hazard Duty or Imminent Danger Pay: copy of official personnel orders authorizing the pay.

- (e) Case-by-Case Considerations: detailed description of the assignment that includes environmental or risk factors outside of the officer's controls, level of exposure to the hazardous condition, length of exposure, and impact of the exposure on the officer's health or safety. Certification from the officer's supervisor and Commissioned Corps Liaison is required.
 - (2) FDA requests will include the duty station(s) at which the officer was/is assigned and the inclusive dates of the assignment.
 - (a) If the assignment(s) are temporary duty assignment(s), copies of the travel order(s) and voucher(s) are required to document the assignment(s). A brief description of the purpose of each assignment is also required.
 - (b) If the assignment is a permanent duty station, OCCO verifies the assignment by reviewing the officer's official personnel orders contained in the officer's eOPF.
 - (c) If the assignment is on a ship that transits through international waters, documentation of the ships itinerary, ports of call, and length of time in international waters and international ports must be provided. This documentation must be verified by the officer's supervisor and Commissioned Corps Liaison.
 - (3) ISOHAR requests will include the duty station at which the officer was/is assigned and the inclusive dates of the assignment. OCCO verifies the assignment by reviewing the officer's official personnel orders contained in the officer's eOPF.
- b. Requests for the Special Assignment Award (SAA) must have the following documentation:
- (1) Assignments effected via official personnel orders. A copy of the order(s) is to accompany the request. A brief description of the officer's duties and purpose of the assignment is also required.
 - (2) Assignments of 30 or more non-consecutive days to the same organization entity must include orders or a memorandum assigning the officer to the entity or other official documentation of the assignment, an accounting of the number of days engaged in conducting the organization's business (must be certified by the officer's supervisor or an official of the organization), and a brief description of the officer's duties and purpose of the assignment.
 - (3) Assignments to special initiatives or activities must describe the initiative and state whether it was an initiative of the Secretary, ASH, and/or SG. The request must also include a brief description of the officer's role in accomplishing the initiative. The request must be approved by the SG prior to submission to OCCO.
 - (4) Assignments to the SG's advisory groups (i.e., Surgeon General's Policy Advisory Council; categorical Professional Advisory Committee; Junior Officer Advisory Group; Minority Officers Liaison Council; Black Commissioned Officers Advisory Group; American Indian/Alaskan Native Commissioned Officers Advisory Committee; Asian Pacific American

Officers Committee; Hispanic Officers Advisory Committee, and the CCAB) are initiated by the OSG and approved by the SG, or his/her designee, prior to submission to OCCO.

- (5) Assignments to standing SG initiatives (i.e., Surgeon General's Honor Cadre and the Commissioned Corps Music Ensemble) are initiated by the OSG and approved by the SG, or his/her designee, prior to submission to OCCO.
- c. Requests for the Crisis Response Service Award (CRSA), Global Response Service Award (GRSA), and Response Service Award (RSA) require the following:
- (1) For the CRSA and GRSA, a written declaration or decision by the SG declaring the natural or man-made disaster as a 'crisis' event with eligibility for the CRSA or GRSA. The request must include the number of days deployed and indicate whether the officer deployed in uniform. Requests are initiated by one of the following:
 - (a) The Office of Force Readiness and Deployment (OFRD) will submit to OCCO a list of officers deployed to the event who meet the criteria in CC27.1.1; or
 - (b) The OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization emergency response coordinator, if the officer was deployed directly by the OPDIV/STAFFDIV or non-HHS organization, will submit to OFRD a list of officers deployed to the event who meet the criteria in CC27.1.1. OFRD will validate each officer's readiness status and submit their recommendation to OCCO.
 - (2) For the RSA, a written declaration or decision by the Secretary, ASH, or SG declaring the deployment as eligible for the RSA. The request must include the number of days deployed and indicate whether the officer deployed in uniform. Requests are submitted through OFRD who will validate the officer's readiness status and submit their recommendation to OCCO.
- d. Requests for the Recruitment Service Ribbon (RSR) are submitted to the Division of Commissioned Corps Recruitment (DCCR), OCCO, who will validate that the officer meets the criteria in CC27.1.1 and [CC23.1.6](#).
- e. Requests for the Bicentennial Unit Commendation (BUC) must include verification of the officer's active duty status during the period of 1 January 1998 and 16 July 1999.
11. Campaign Medals. Requests for the Smallpox Eradication Campaign Ribbon (SPEC) must include documentation of the officer's assignment to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Bureau of Smallpox Eradication or Smallpox Laboratory, to the World Health Organization's (WHO) Smallpox Eradication Program, or in a temporary duty assignment in a smallpox effort abroad. The service must have been while on active duty in the Corps.
 12. Training Ribbons. Requests for the Commissioned Corps Training Ribbon (CCTR) are submitted to the Division of Commissioned Corps Training and Career Development (DCCTCD), OCCO, who will validate that the officer meets the criteria in CC27.1.1.

13. Badges and Insignia.

- a. Requests for the Surgeon General Insignia (SGI), Deputy Surgeon General Insignia (DSGI), Officer-in-Charge Insignia (OICI), and Chief Professional Officer Insignia (CPOI) are made to the Director, OCCO. Upon verification that the officer meets the criteria for the insignia, OCCO will provide the necessary hardware to the officer.
- b. Requests for the Office of the Secretary of HHS Identification Badge (OSIB) are made to the Executive Officer, Office of Public Health and Science. Requests must include documentation demonstrating that the officer meets the criteria for the badge. Once approved by the Executive Officer, the request is forwarded to OCCO for processing. OCCO will provide the necessary hardware to the Executive Officer for presentation to the officer. OCCO will also provide a certificate to the Executive Officer after the officer has completed the required 1 year of continuous duty in a billet within the Office of the Secretary. Documentation of the award is entered into the officer's permanent record upon completion of the 1 year continuous duty. If the officer does not complete the 1 year continuous duty, the badge must be returned to the Director, OCCO.
- c. Requests for the Recruiter Badge (RB) are made to the Director, DCCR, OCCO, through the Director, OCCO. Upon verification that the officer meets the criteria for the badge, DCCR will provide the necessary hardware to the officer.
- d. Requests for the Associate Recruiter Leads Badge (ARLB), and Associate Recruiter Badge (ARB) are submitted to the officer's Chief Professional Officer (CPO). The CPO will verify that the officer meets the criteria for the badge and forward the request with his/her recommendation to the Director, DCCR, OCCO, through the Director, OCCO. DCCR will provide the necessary hardware to the CPO for presentation to the officer.
- e. Field Medical Readiness Badge (FMRB). The Director, OFRD, will verify the officers that meet the criteria for the badge and forward a request to the Director, OCCO, for processing. OCCO will provide the necessary hardware to the Director, OFRD, for presentation to the officers.

/s/

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Acting Surgeon General

Appendix

Nomination Processing and Decision Benchmarks

Award Type	OPDIV/STAFFDIV Decision Benchmarks	OPDIV/STAFFDIV Decision Goals	OSG Decision Benchmarks	OCCO Processing Benchmarks
Achievement Medal (AM) Citation (CIT)	18 weeks – if not met, forward to OSG	12 weeks	4 weeks	3 weeks
Outstanding Service Medal (OSM) Commendation Medal (CM) Unit Commendation (UC)	22 weeks – if not met, forward to OSG	16 weeks	8 weeks	3 weeks
Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) Outstanding Unit Citation (OUC)	22 weeks – if not met, forward to OSG	16 weeks	10 weeks	3 weeks