



Assistant Secretary for Health
Office of Public Health and Science
Washington D.C. 20201

TO: Commissioned Officers of the U.S. Public Health Service

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FROM: Acting Surgeon General
Special Assistant to the ASH for Transformation

SUBJECT: Transformation Accomplishments and Future Direction – **INFORMATION**

We have seen significant activity related to our Corps Transformation Initiative over the past year, and it can all be traced back to each of you, our officers. Several hundred of you have directly served on various Working Policy and Design Groups (WPDGs) or indirectly served through your PACs and other groups, and the results of your efforts have helped move the Transformation of the Corps forward. We sincerely thank you for the time, effort and energy you have invested.

Before we outline some of the accomplishments from 2007 and our future plans, we want to take a moment to recognize a visionary leader, without whom there would be no Transformation. RADM Bob Knouss led the Transformation effort with a passion and zeal that was contagious. He led workgroups and staffed the Transformation team, providing their members with glimpses into his vision for the Corps from which he hoped to retire. Unfortunately, he passed away in July of this year. Emblematic of his commitment to the Corps and Transformation, RADM Knouss was at his desk working a mere 5 days before his death. We will miss his enthusiastic and inspired leadership; however, we are fully committed to completing this work in his honor.

2007 – The Year in Review

By early 2007, we had hired 13 officers to lead various components of the Transformation implementation activities. Working together, they formed five WPDGs and four Functional Advisory Committees comprised of officers from all agencies to which our officers are assigned. Through your combined efforts, we now have the outline for how we will accomplish Secretary Leavitt's goals for Transformation. As expressed in the Secretary's Implementation Plan released last year, we are working on milestones to achieve his vision for sizing, recruitment, training and career development, assignments, classification and position management. Many of the strategies to accomplish these milestones have been operationalized, and new policies are under development to implement the rest.

Key accomplishments:

- The two-week PHS Officer Basic Course has replaced the 3 and 5 day Basic Officer Training Courses and will be the standard course taken by officers upon their calls to active duty. Nearly 100 officers have completed the course already and the feedback from both the officers and an independent evaluation has been enthusiastically supportive of the new course.

- The Commissioned Corps website, www.usphs.gov, was redesigned and is much more user-friendly. It will serve as the single portal for all information related to the Corps, and will be used by current officers, retirees and the public.
- Recruitment and marketing brochures and category-specific fact sheets have been produced and are available for officers to distribute at conferences, meetings and to their colleagues who are considering joining the Corps. These materials match the redesigned Commissioned Corps website.
- The new Recruitment Call Center was activated and potential applicants are now directed to recruiters who specialize in the potential recruits' disciplines. The next generation of this Call Center will be web-based and enable Associate Recruiters from across the country to assist with responding to questions from potential recruits.
- Incentives to reward officers who accept Isolated/Hardship, Hazardous and Hard-to-Fill assignments have been developed and policies are being drafted that will enable the Corps to begin offering them in 2008. These incentives will benefit the officer, as well as provide support to his/her dependents.
- We have forged a strong working relationship with the Coast Guard and are planning for the migration of our HR activities from our current systems to the Coast Guard's Direct Access personnel management system. When completed, we will have a fully integrated and robust officer selection, assignment, awards, promotion and force management system. The requirements for each of these actions are currently being fleshed out, and a migration plan is under development.
- The Recruitment WPDG developed a comprehensive Recruitment Operational Plan that will guide the Corps as we work to increase the size of the active duty force strength in a targeted way to meet the missions of our Service and the agencies in which we serve.
- Each officer will be on a unique billet in the coming months. The Billets, Officer Profiles and Selection Systems WPDG, working in concert with the PACs, has determined the elements of category-specific billet templates that will be used to construct the individual billet descriptions. A *Beta* test of the billet creation system was run this year. From that test, we have learned many lessons and refined our approach to completing this task.

This is just a brief accounting of some of the more significant accomplishments over the past year. It is clear that none of this would have been possible were it not for the hard work and determination of so many of you. While we now have a solid foundation upon which to build our transformed Corps, we realize that there is still more yet to accomplish.

Focus for the Future

One of our principal areas of focus in the coming year will be on developing improved communication with the officers in the field. We recognize that many of the accomplishments that are highlighted above could be new revelations to many of you. We also recognize that there may be misconceptions of what Transformation is (and isn't). Furthermore, we value the input from each of you and will be inviting your recommendations and suggestions as we continue with the implementation. With that in mind, we would like to outline for you some of the key goals and planned activities for 2008. As with the list of accomplishments above, the following list is not comprehensive. Likewise, none of it will be possible without your continued support and assistance.

Key initiatives and goals:

- Secretary Leavitt has directed that the Corps increase the active duty force strength by 10% to 6,600 officers by January 2009. To achieve this goal, significant changes to the organization and business processes of OCCO's Divisions of Recruitment (DCCR) and Assignments (DCCA) were deemed necessary. As of December 1, 2007, those changes have been implemented. DCCA has been reorganized into four teams of Career and Assignment Managers (CAMs), each of which will focus its attention on specific professional categories. They will work with applicants through to their call-to-active duty, current active duty officers (toward identifying new career opportunities) and HR Specialists in the agencies. Additionally, the leaders of DCCR, Suitability/Security and Physical Qualification of applicants will work closely with the CAMs as an integrated unit on the "Strike Team for Assignments and Recruitment" (STAR). The goal of these changes is to establish an intensive and highly effective internal process that will maximize collaborative efforts with agencies/organizations seeking Corps officers, and ultimately accomplish the Secretary's goals for growth of the Corps.
- A memorandum of understanding will be signed with the Coast Guard to handle our personnel actions using their Direct Access system. The Billets, Assignments and Officer Profile systems are scheduled to be migrated over to the Coast Guard in the spring and summer of 2008.
- We intend to launch the Assignment Incentive Pay program in 2008. This program will enable OPDIVs and STAFFDIVs to offer additional compensation to officers who accept assignments in Hard-to-Fill billets. Other officer and family support programs will begin to roll-out in 2008 as well.
- Officers in category-specific billets will have their billets rewritten by the end of 2008. This will capture the essential elements of the duties and responsibilities for nearly two-thirds of our current active duty force strength.
- Memoranda of understanding will be rapidly developed and signed with non-HHS agencies and non-Federal entities to enable the Corps to assign officers to non-traditional duty stations (*e.g.*, state and local health departments, universities, community health centers).
- Depending upon the outcome of the appropriations process, we intend to begin staffing and standing up to Health and Medical Response (HAMR) Teams.
- We will establish a Transformation webpage on the www.usphs.gov website, which will serve as a one-stop source of information on Transformation activities and events. It will also feature downloadable PowerPoint presentations, "talking point" summaries and an expandable FAQ section to enable each of you to individually discuss and promote the Transformation of the Corps.

Once again, we are excited about the direction in which our Corps is headed. Each of you who has contributed to our past, present and future successes is to be commended. We look forward to working with you throughout 2008 as we build the vibrant Commissioned Corps of the future and realize RADM Knouss' dream for our Corps.



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