



# **2015-2020 Strategic Plan for the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG)**

**July 2015**

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## Introduction by the JOAG Chair

It is my sincere pleasure as the Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG) Chair to introduce the 2015-2020 JOAG Strategic plan. This plan is the culmination of nearly two years of hard work and dedication examining our organizations goals, mission and vision. While the goals set forth in this document are far-reaching, it is our hope that it will lend focus and intention to our work. I'm truly thankful for the hard work of the Strategic Plan Subcommittee, our Voting Members, and our general membership for their contributions to this plan. I am looking forward to moving the organization forward, and increasing involvement and diversity within JOAG.

For those of you not familiar with JOAG, we are a vibrant group of junior officers who strive to advocate for peers, provide training and professional development opportunities, engage senior leaders on policy and other issues, and provide a unified voice on issues affecting junior officers. If you haven't already, I encourage you to visit our website at <http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/JOAG/> to learn more about how you can become involved. The website is being updated daily with new initiatives, so check back often for updates. You can also join our listserv for announcements and items of interest by clicking [here](#).

This major revision of our strategic plan is far from an endpoint, and I look to each of you providing further feedback on how we can best accomplish our mission of being a "public health professional group whose purpose is to provide advice and consultation to the Surgeon General and other Corps and non-Corps entities on interests and concerns specific to junior officers in the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps." Part one of the new strategic plan includes a roadmap of objectives and goals. Part two, which is housed within each JOAG committee provides milestones we hope to accomplish over the next five years. As an all-volunteer group we need **YOU** to help us accomplish this work.

In conjunction with the JOAG Executive Committee, I look forward to hearing your concerns and working with you on strategies to move both JOAG and the Corps forward for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jessica L. Otto". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small blue rectangular stamp or mark to the right of the name.

Jessica L. Otto, MPH, REHS, HHS  
Chair, Junior Officer Advisory Group

## JOAG's Mission and Goals

The Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG) was formally established on December 7, 2001 by VADM David Satcher, Surgeon General. The mission of JOAG is to provide advice and consultation to the Surgeon General and other Corps and non-Corps entities on interests and concerns specific to junior officers in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps. The JOAG members represent junior officers from all USPHS categories and represent a cross-section of the interests, concerns and responsibilities of junior officers from all agencies in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and non-HHS Operating Divisions routinely staffed by Corps personnel. The charter defines JOAG's objectives as the following:

1. Identifying and advocating on behalf of junior officer issues and concerns
2. Assisting the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG), the Division of Commissioned Corps Personnel and Readiness (DCCPR) or its successors or assignees, the Professional Advisory Committees, and the Chief Professional Officers in the assessment of policies, personnel needs, and in recruitment, training, utilization, and recognition of junior officers.
3. Developing position papers, statistical reports, and/or guidelines where appropriate, to advise and comment on issues relating to staffing and utilization issues, professional practice and personnel activities affecting junior officers.
4. Promoting junior officer development and utilization.
5. Promoting cooperation and communication between junior and senior officers throughout the USPHS
6. Serving as a liaison between junior officers and other USPHS or external components and providing advice and consultation to the Agency Heads and OPDIV/STAFFDIV upon request.
7. Serving as communication link and information resource for junior officers.

The current JOAG leadership has identified five key goals and this strategic plan has been developed around those goals. The five goals are:

- Goal 1: Provide advice and consultation to the Surgeon General and other Corps entities on issues affecting junior officers
- Goal 2: Support the initiatives of the Surgeon General
- Goal 3: Serve as a resource and support network for junior officers
- Goal 4: Foster the development of junior officers by providing leadership opportunities and promoting professional development and high standards of officership
- Goal 5: Increase the visibility of the Corps

These five goals are in alignment with the objectives of JOAG and will help maintain JOAG's focus on projects that are consistent with the mission and vision of JOAG. Each committee participated in the development of specific strategies designed to meet the JOAG goals. Potential challenges were identified and mitigated when possible.

## How best to use this document

This document is broken into two parts to facilitate its use by various interested parties. Part 1, below, includes a goal by goal overview of how each committee supports JOAG's five strategic goals. The individual committee contributions are combined to form one comprehensive overview of JOAG's strategies, outcomes, and risk mitigation approaches. Part 1 is intended to be used by the JOAG leadership, the OSG, and any other parties interested in understanding JOAG's strategic vision as a whole. Part 2, which resides with the individual JOAG committees and is not included below, provides a detailed overview of each committee's planned strategies, predicted challenges, and risk mitigation methods for each goal. The Part 2 documents are living documents and should be revised as needed to reflect the current initiatives of each committee.

## PART ONE- Overview of JOAG's Activities

### ***Goal 1: Provide advice and consultation to the Surgeon General and other Corps entities on issues affecting junior officers***

To assist the SG with understanding the needs of junior officers (JOs), multiple JOAG committees will develop and disseminate surveys. Junior officers will continue to be surveyed to identify professional development needs, what training gaps exist, and what are the major issues impacting retention of junior officers. JOAG will work with the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) in developing new awards and other means of recognizing JO achievements. The OSG and the Chief Professional Officers (CPOs) are invited to the JOAG General Meeting to promote direct communication between JOs and senior Corps leadership. Updates from senior leadership will be provided on a regular basis with the general membership. JOAG will advise the Division of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) on JO involvement with the Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), who has a formal partnership with the MRC. JOAG works to recruit JO volunteers to serve as mentors to these students and as judges during their competitions.

### ***Goal 2: Support the initiatives of the Surgeon General***

JOAG engages the community through structured support of the OSG's initiatives. JOAG will work to promote and integrate OSG initiatives into community service projects and other outreach efforts. Community service projects highlight the OSG's initiatives and show that the PHS as a whole, and junior officers in particular, stand behind and staunchly support these initiatives. The OSG initiatives will be clearly articulated and promoted at the OBC open house, in the welcoming letter sent to all new JOs, in the one year anniversary letter, and at nationwide meet and greet events. A section of the JOAG website will be dedicated to JOAG's impact on the Surgeon General's initiatives, to include the acknowledgement and success of past and present activities in support of the initiatives, features on junior officers and their impact on these initiatives, recent changes or advances in the initiatives, and a recruiting/signup page for future events. Each issue of the JOAG Journal will also feature a summary and results from a particularly salient event in support of one or more of the Surgeon

General's initiatives. JOAG will strive for at least one public relations event based on one or more of the Surgeon General's initiatives in the community where the annual USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium is held. New awards or methods of recognition will be proposed to recognize officers who promote and support the initiatives of the Surgeon General.

***Goal 3: Serve as a resource and support network for junior officers***

JOAG provides representation at all OBCs and provides invaluable information for new officers on how to join JOAG and how to begin a career with the Commissioned Corps. JOAG has developed or plans to develop and disseminate several resource/officer guides (MWR, Family Support, Stay Fit/Get Fit, Awards guidance, uniform wear, customs and courtesies, mentoring, etc.) that will be periodically updated and easily accessed from the JOAG website, distributed through the Listserv, and/or provided to new officers at OBC. While JOAG does not develop Corps policy, JOAG is a vital source of information for junior officers on where to locate current policy. Regular updates are sent through the Listserv that provide an announcement on the release of new policy and a link to the location of the new policy. To help foster JO development, bimonthly seminars will be held on professional development topics and monthly officer spotlights will highlight the varied career opportunities for Corps officers. Policy and governing documents are available on the JOAG website and updates will be provided through the Listserv. In-person uniform inspection booths will be provided at the annual Symposium, FDA PHS Awareness Day and other events with a large JOAG representation to promote proper wear of the uniform. Local meet and greet events provide face-to-face networking and facilitate greater involvement with Corps activities and initiatives. Options for participating in websites or forums will be explored to enable junior officers to ask questions or communicate ideas, announcements, or concerns with other junior officers. Deployment and volunteer experiences will be recounted in a section of the JOAG Journal. In addition to the room and car share programs that have already been successful at the Symposium, an expansion of networking events are planned for the Symposium in order to strengthen the camaraderie and unity of junior officers as a group. To increase the understanding of working conditions and challenges/opportunities at the varied OPDIVs where Corps officers are stationed, a white paper will be developed on Agency Return Status (ARS) to better understand the working environment for Corps officers at different Agencies. This white paper will be shared with the CPOs and other leadership. To increase communication with the PACs on how best to recruit and retain exceptional officers, JOAG will have a representative on each PAC Recruitment and Retention subcommittee, as well as provide training materials to the official JOAG representative on each PAC.

***Goal 4: Foster the development of junior officers by providing leadership opportunities and promoting professional development and high standards of officership***

JOAG already provides many valuable leadership opportunities through service on any of its committees or subcommittees, but there are many more ways JOAG seeks to lead the way in developing junior officers into professionals who will lead the PHS into an exciting and dynamic future. One method will be through highlighting stellar officers that can motivate other junior officers. Officers living healthy, active lifestyles will also be selected for inclusion in the Fitness Corner. These outstanding officers will be featured in the JOAG

Journal and on the JOAG website as examples to emulate. The breadth of experience and leadership qualifications within JOAG is significant, and to better utilize the experience of seasoned JOs and increase the skill set of new officers, a Peer-to-Peer matching program has been developed. Another method of fostering junior officer development will be through increased service to the community (e.g., through implementing a Let's Move program) and at PHS-related events such as the Symposium. Developing merchandise that promotes high standards of officership and esprit de corps, such as a PHS Creed, will also help motivate PHS officers to be their best. To encourage continued personal and professional development, JOAG will host a quarterly virtual book club with a title chosen from the JOAG interactive reading list on goodreads.com. Additional professional development resources will be provided in the JOAG Journal. To provide JOs with a glimpse into the skills needed as a senior officer with their Agency, JOAG hosts a job shadowing program. JOAG will strive to increase participation rates annually in the job shadowing program. Selection as a JOAG voting member provides an invaluable opportunity for JOs to hone their leadership skills and directly contribute to the success of the Corps. Officers who applied but were not chosen for voting membership are provided feedback on how to strengthen their applications and are encouraged to reapply after gaining more experience.

***Goal 5: Increase the visibility of the Corps***

JOAG proposes to meet this goal via several strategies:

- a) Increase the number of community service projects completed annually throughout the 5-year Strategic Plan period. Many of these projects will advance one or more of the Surgeon General's Initiatives. Outcomes from these projects will be highlighted in JOAG (e.g., website or JOAG Journal) or PHS forums, and should be considered for inclusion in local or other media to increase the visibility of these efforts outside of the PHS. Community service projects that are part of the annual Symposium will also be highlighted, and other collaborative efforts (e.g., community participation in the Surgeon General's Run/Walk) should be considered during the Symposium (and other PHS-related events) to increase PHS visibility in the host city/area.
- b) Improve JOAG's online outreach. Official Facebook and Twitter accounts are proposed for dissemination of JOAG and PHS information, events, accomplishments, etc. These online tools can help create a following outside of PHS. A centralized website is proposed to include all PHS merchandise available by all organizations (i.e., links will be included to other organizations that sell PHS-related products). This "one-stop shop" may also include a "marketplace" for officers to advertise PHS-related items available for sale, trade, or otherwise. The link for this new website could then be used in PHS materials and shared with outside organizations or events to increase visibility.
- c) Utilize collegiate career fairs to provide visibility for and information on the Commissioned Corps, to include the COSTEP program. A list of career fairs will be maintained on the JOAG website, and reminders on upcoming opportunities will sent out via the listserv monthly.
- d) Highlight successes of junior officers. Names of officers who receive awards for their contributions will be routed through their OPDIVs/agencies/PACs and through their Commissioned Corps Liaisons to increase the visibility of officer contributions within and throughout their agency.
- e) Encourage junior officers to participate as judges for the HOSA regional, state and national level competitions as these are large events where officers in uniform will be highly visible participants.

Encourage HOSA participants to write and submit articles to PHS publications and campus newspapers that describe their experiences.

JOAG's wish is that this Strategic Plan, as a forward-thinking, visionary, and living document, will not only help to focus each committee's work on meeting JOAG's mission and goals, but will serve to motivate all junior officers to become an active participant in JOAG's activities to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of our Nation.