



Commissioned Corps Awards

Overview

- The purpose of the Commissioned Officer's Awards Program, established in 1961, is to: (a) recognize officers for outstanding achievement or service; (b) encourage maximum performance; and (c) improve esprit de corps among officers.
- There are several different award types including: Individual Honor Awards, Unit Honor Awards, and Service Awards. Commissioned Corps officers are not eligible for cash awards. Factors to consider when selecting an appropriate award level include: (a) scope of impact; (b) magnitude of achievement; (c) leadership; (d) length of time; and (e) valor. More details on USPHS awards and guidance for determining the appropriate level of an award can be found at: http://dcp.psc.gov/CCMIS/COAP/COAP_index_m.aspx.
- Current official guidance on the Awards Program was disseminated 20 February 2015: http://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/ccis/documents/CC511_01.pdf. This guidance describes all USPHS Commissioned Corps awards, including Individual Honor Awards, Unit Honor Awards, Service Awards, Campaign Medals, Training Ribbons, the Regular Corps Ribbon, Badges and Insignia, and responsibilities and procedures in the award process.
- Award nominations may be prepared by an officer's supervisor or any other colleague (civilian or Commissioned Corps officer) who is knowledgeable about the work performed. Officers are also encouraged to be proactive in obtaining awards given that awards play an important role in promotions and reflect career development. Officers can request that their outstanding performance in a specific project or completed task be considered for an award.
- There is no limit to the number of awards an officer can earn in a given time frame. A general guideline to follow is that an officer should have a minimum of one award for each billet served in and at least one award for every two (O-6 benchmark) or three (O-4/O-5 benchmark) years of active duty.
- An officer cannot receive both a unit and individual award for the same activity unless the officer "demonstrated a level of accomplishment that significantly exceeds the efforts of other members of the unit" and the unit nomination precedes the individual nomination.

- Nomination procedures must include three items: (1) a correctly completed PHS 6342-1 (http://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/PDF_docs/PHS-6342-1.pdf) for Unit Honor Awards, or 6342-2 (http://dcp.psc.gov/CCMIS/PDF_docs/PHS-6342-2.pdf) for Individual Honor Awards, (2) a correctly formatted narrative of no more than two pages, and (3) a printout of the officer's award history from the eOPF or Direct Access. Each recommendation for an Individual or Unit Honor Award must be formally initiated within 13 months after the noteworthy act or specific period of service to be recognized has been completed.
- Service awards may be initiated at any time after the criteria for the award has been met and follow a separate nomination process. For these awards, a complete nomination package includes a Commissioned Corps Request for Service Award Memorandum, which is prepared by the officer and signed by the officer's supervisor and the Center's Budget Office, appropriate signed travel voucher(s) and travel orders that indicate the completion of travel (when applicable), and a personal letter requesting the specific award (if desired).
- Check your Agency for guidance on how to write a successful award nomination.

Ribbon Wear and Procurement

- Award ribbons are worn on the left breast of an appropriate uniform in a specified order. Photos of PHS ribbons, in order of precedence, can be found at: http://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/COAP/COAP_Award_Criteria_m.aspx.
- Several websites have been developed to help officers "build their rack" or determine the proper order of earned award ribbons. However, we have found only one that includes Public Health Service for rack building: <http://www.ultrathin.com/rackbuilder.htm>.*
- Awards can also be purchased from the Navy Exchange: <https://uniforms.nexweb.org/>

Additional Resources

CDC Guidance on Writing Nominations

http://intranet.cdc.gov/od/hcrmo/html/commissionedcorps/award_guidelines.html

FDA Awards Nomination Process

<http://inside.fda.gov:9003/EmployeeResources/CommissionedCorps/OfficeofCommissionedCorpsAffairsOCCA/FDACommissionedCorpsAwardsProgram/default.htm>

NIH Awards Nomination Process

<http://hr.od.nih.gov/hrguidance/corps/awards/default.htm>

It is recommended that you check that all guidance is up-to-date before submitting any awards.

*SciPAC does not endorse purchase of products from any particular vendor. Inclusion of product websites is only for informational purposes.