



US Public Health Service Commissioned Corps

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The Public Health Service Today

In November of 1995, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) was reorganized. Agencies of the Public Health Service (PHS) were designated as Operating Divisions (OPDIVS) within DHHS. Additional OPDIVS and components of DHHS include the [Program Support Center](#) (PSC) and the [Office of Public Health and Science](#) (OPHS).

OPHS is under the direction of the Assistant Secretary for Health, who serves as the Secretary's Senior Advisor for Public Health and Science. The Office serves as the focal point for leadership and coordination across the Department in public health and science; provides direction to program offices within OPHS, and, where required by law, to other DHHS components.

The eight PHS Operating Divisions are the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR), the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Indian Health Service (IHS), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Additionally, the PHS Commissioned Corps assigns officers to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Federal Bureau of Prisons (BoP), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA).

In recent years, the Operating Divisions of the PHS' functions have continued to evolve. Operating Divisions of the PHS have accepted increased responsibility for:

- Expanding research into the cause, treatment, control and prevention of disease;
- Increasing emphasis on non-infectious diseases such as: cancer and heart disease;
- Supplying health-professional assistance to local, State, national, and international health organizations to cope with special health needs and challenges;
- Furthering programs to treat mental illness more effectively, to promote better mental health, and to combat drug abuse, alcoholism, and other hazards to health;
- Expanding food and drug programs to safeguard the health of the consuming public;
- Strengthening communicable disease control at home and abroad;
- Initiating the National Health Service Corps to provide health professionals for isolated communities without health care;
- Expanding medical, dental, and public and environmental health programs for Alaskan Natives and American Indians;
- Expanding efforts to achieve a smoke-free society; and
- Mobilizing Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) research and focusing on AIDS education and prevention.

In response to the increased responsibility, the Operating Divisions of the PHS has grown from a small nucleus of health professionals to more than 5,800 officers of the commissioned corps, plus 50,000 professional, technical and support personnel in civil service, working in a wide variety of health programs.

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