



# **FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE COMMISSIONED CORPS CONCEPTS**



## **AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHS COMMISSIONED CORPS**

### **1. What is the PHS Commissioned Corps?**

- One of the seven Uniformed Services, along with the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard and NOAA.
- The Uniformed Service of the Department of Health and Human Services.
- An all-officer organization composed of nearly 6,000 biomedical, behavioral and allied health professionals practicing in over 20 areas of expertise.
- A non-military service with a personnel system similar to the Department of Defense.
- Composed of officers who are assigned to all DHHS Agencies and a variety of federal, state and local Agencies.

### **2. What is the mission of the Commissioned Corps?**

- To provide highly-trained and mobile health professionals who carry out programs to promote the health of the Nation.
- To prevent disease and injury, assure safe and effective food, drugs and medical devices.
- To deliver health services to Federal beneficiaries, such as federal prison inmates, veterans, American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- To furnish health expertise in times of war or other national or international emergencies.

### **3. Why does FSIS have Commissioned Corps officers?**

- To assist FSIS with its implementation of a prevention-oriented inspection system, put in place to better protect the public from food-borne disease and potential terrorism threats.
- To improve the qualifications of its workforce by hiring individuals with more extensive scientific backgrounds.

#### **4. How can Commissioned Corps officers be hired by FSIS?**

- In 1998, FSIS' Office of Public Health and Science signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Public Health Service to enable them to hire Commissioned Corps Officers.
- In April 2003, FSIS entered into an expanded MOA with PHS so that FSIS can assign Officers to any program throughout the country and utilize, as needed, all professional disciplines of the PHS Commissioned Corps.
- FSIS was the first agency within USDA to sign an agency-wide MOA with the Public Health Service.
- At the selecting official's discretion, officers can apply to advertised vacancies, be considered along with all civilian applicants, as well as being hired non-competitively.

#### **5. What will the officers do at FSIS?**

- Officers will help promote FSIS' public health mission.
- Officers will serve where there is a demand for scientific knowledge and judgment.
- Officers will help the Agency respond to food-borne disease outbreaks, investigate food security threats, and develop prevention measures to reduce the incidence of food-borne illness.
- Officers will work as permanent staff members alongside their FSIS civilian counterparts, as veterinarians, scientists, dietitians, environmental health officers, physicians, and nurses.
- Officers will provide an additional personnel resource to FSIS that will complement the existing Civil Service force.

#### **6. How does an individual become a PHS Commissioned Corps officer?**

Individuals apply to the PHS for commissioning. There are seven factors which an individual must meet in order to be a Commissioned Corps Officer. These are:

- U.S. citizen;
- Under 44 years of age (or older if have prior military service to offset age over 44);
- Physically qualified;
- Less than 8 years of active duty service in another U.S. uniformed service;
- Must pass an initial suitability/background investigation;
- Must have an active license (for certain officers, such as veterinarians); and
- An appropriate bachelor's degree or higher level (master's or doctorate) degree from an accredited university. The particular degree required will vary, depending on the occupation.