



Uniformed Services University of the Health Science  
Office of Admissions  
4301 Jones Bridge Road, A1041  
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

# HOW TO CHOOSE A BRANCH OF SERVICE

Guide to Selecting the Military  
Service that is Right for You

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Captain Robert A. Liotta, MC, USN  
Associate Dean for Recruitment and Admissions

Lieutenant Commander Witzard Seide, MC, USPHS  
PHS Company Commander  
Assistant Commandant, SOM

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## HOW TO CHOOSE A BRANCH OF SERVICE

Each of the services have their own unique mission, culture, traditions, and strengths. Based on your interests, you may prefer one service over another. Regardless of the branch of service you select, you can expect to practice medicine in support of our country's military service members. As a result, you must be prepared to deploy to foreign lands around the world. If you like the ocean, the Navy may be a strong consideration. If the thought of jumping out of planes excites you, the Army and all Special Operations groups from each of the services provide opportunities for parachute training. If you prefer the work in support of land based operations, the Army may be your preference. If the ability to fly planes or helicopters excites you, all branches of service provide these opportunities. If the thought of flying off an aircraft carrier or assault ship interests you, consider the Navy. If you are interested in supporting the United States Marine Corps, Navy physicians are imbedded in all Marine units. As a future military physician, our students can expect to be assigned to military hospitals throughout the United States and world. By knowing the geographic locations of the military hospitals for each branch of service, you have a listing of potential places to live for future duty assignments. If you prefer to have a guaranteed contract to residency from medical school, you may consider joining the Army or Air Force. If the possibility of spending time as a general medical officer, flight surgeon, or undersea medical officer for 1-3 years after completing an internship (PGY-1 year) sounds exciting, you may consider selecting the Navy. The Army is the largest branch of service and typically has the largest number of residency positions available for each of the specialties. Each of the services has a full complement of residencies; however, physical medicine and rehabilitation is not an available residency in the Air Force.

The mission of the United States Army is to fight and win our Nation's wars, by providing prompt, sustained, land dominance, across the full range of military operations and the spectrum of conflict, in support of combatant commanders.

The mission of the United States Navy is to maintain, train, and equip combat-ready Naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression, and maintaining freedom of the seas.

The mission of the United States Air Force is to fly, fight, and win-in air, space, and cyberspace.

The mission of the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps is to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of our Nation. This critical mission is achieved through rapid and effective response to public health needs, leadership and excellence in public health practices and advancement of public health science.

For many people, they may have a relative, friend, or mentor who served or is serving in a particular branch of the military, and they would like to follow in their footsteps.

### Services:

- [U.S. Navy](#)
- [U.S. Army](#)
- [U.S. Air Force](#)
- [U.S. Public Health Service](#)



## U.S. Navy

Navy Medicine is a global health care system which provides high quality health care to beneficiaries in wartime and in peacetime. It is a global healthcare network of medical personnel around the world who provide high quality health care to more than one million eligible beneficiaries. Highly trained medical personnel deploy with Sailors and Marines worldwide while providing critical mission support aboard ships, in the air, under the sea, and on the battlefield. At the same time, Navy Medicine's military and civilian health care professionals provide care for uniformed services' family members and retirees at military treatment facilities around the globe. Every day, no matter what the environment, Navy Medicine is ready to care for those in need, providing world class care, anytime, anywhere.

Navy Medicine also plays a key role in humanitarian assistance/disaster response (HA/DR) missions in direct support of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard's Maritime Strategy. The skills of Navy medical personnel provide the cornerstone of the Navy's overall HA/DR response capability. This capability was truly evident during the USNS Comfort's mission to Haiti following the January 2010 earthquake.

Navy Medicine responds to disasters around the world and at home. Proactive humanitarian missions have occurred in places as far reaching as Africa through the Africa Partnership Station; to the Pacific Rim through Pacific Partnership; and to South America through Continuing Promise. These proactive humanitarian assistance missions build trust and cooperation with partner nations, provide much needed medical care to populations in need, and sow the seeds for long term stability and security in many places around the world.

[More Information >](#)

### **Locations**

The Navy is known to have very desirable base locations. These locations are usually, but not always, located near the water, and for the most part are in well-developed areas with plenty to do.

Highlights include:

- Naval Medical Center (NMC) San Diego in San Diego, CA
- NMC Portsmouth in Portsmouth, VA
- Walter Reed in Bethesda, MD
- U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka, Japan
- U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa, Japan
- U.S. Naval Hospital Rota, Spain
- U.S. Naval Hospital Naples, Italy

[Full list of locations on Navy Medicine website](#)

## Career Opportunities

The Navy offers you the option of serving two military forces: the Navy and the Marines. The United States Marine Corps (USMC) relies on Navy corpsman and Navy physicians to provide medical care and support and for their units. This gives graduates the opportunity to be at the front lines, in a hospital, or anywhere in between. Alumni also have the opportunity to earn the Fleet Marine Forces Insignia when they are stationed with a Marine unit.

Another career opportunity is the General Medical Officer (GMO) tour. This is a 2-3 year period of time (after intern year) where our graduates go out with the fleet or the Marines to serve as a general practitioner for their respective unit. GMOs are licensed, practicing physicians who are not residency trained in a specialty. Going on a GMO tour gives our graduates the opportunity to join and directly support U.S. sailors and Marines working within operational units.

The Navy has a lot of different options as a GMO that Army/Air Force doesn't have. Navy GMOs have the obvious opportunity to go on a ship, but there are many other opportunities.

- Fleet Marine Forces doctors work with marine units.
- Underwater/Dive Medical Officers work with submarines or special operations. The SEALs, Marine Recon, and Marine Special Operations Command (AKA Marine Raiders) frequently need dive docs AND you get certified in diving.
- Flight Surgeons take care of pilots. Students can even learn to fly the aircraft and get hours toward a civilian pilots license. The Army does have flight surgeons too but they do not get to fly.

The Navy is the only service that actively still requires a GMO (about 50% of interns are required to do a GMO tour). It is important to note that going on a GMO tour means putting residency on hold, increasing the time it takes to become a board certified physician.

## Uniforms

[Male](#)

[Female](#)

## Physical Requirements

The [Navy Physical Readiness Test \(PRT\)](#) occurs twice a year and consists of total pushups in 2 min, total situps in 2 min, and a 1.5 mile run. Everyone must complete an annual Physical Health Assessment (PHA) and weigh-in twice a year around the time that the PRT is happening. Weigh-in standards are based on height, if you are over the weight limit for your height, you can get a 'tape-test' where they measure your neck and abdominal circumference.

## Basic Training

Medical officers attend specific Navy training is known as [Officer Development School](#) (ODS), located at Newport, Rhode Island. This is very different from Navy Basic (for enlisted personnel, located at Great Lakes, MI) or Officer Candidate School (OCS, also located at Newport, RI). ODS is specifically designed for staff officers (officers whose job does not directly involve combat) and is much less demanding than Navy Basic and OCS. It consists of 5 weeks of basic physical training (PT), presentations, and keynote speakers to introduce new officers to the Navy and Navy traditions (such as saluting, wearing uniforms, how to address other personnel, etc.). It is also a time for incoming students to learn things like teamwork, leadership, and integrity by working with the people who they will be working with for the rest of their careers. For the most part, all Navy USU students in a matriculating class attend the same training. At ODS, students can also meet HPSP students who will attend different medical schools, and people going into other professions, such as JAGs (lawyers), social workers, pharmacists, and dentists. USU students attend the summer before their first year starts.

## Residencies

Navy residencies, located at Naval Medical Centers, are ONLY for Navy personnel. The Navy generally has less residency spots than the Army, because the Navy is smaller than the Army. That is why there are fewer Navy spots at USU and in general. Certain specialties are more competitive depending on the branch. For example, dermatology in the Navy is often very competitive. The number of residency positions available through the Navy fluctuate from year to year based on the needs of the service. Each year (around the June/July timeframe) the Navy publishes BUMEDNOTE 1524 which defines the Graduate Medical Education (GME) goals and GME application procedures for the Joint Service Graduate Medical Education Selection Board.

## Summer Experience

Some Navy specific summer operational experiences include the Mountain Medicine Course at the USMC Mountain Warfare Training Center, Bridgeport, CA; Navy Shipboard cruises from San Diego, Norfolk, or Bremerton; and at the Navy Operational Medicine Training Center in Pensacola, Florida.

## Research Opportunities

There are numerous opportunities within the Navy to conduct clinical and basic science research. Navy Medicine has 8 enterprise research and development laboratories which focus on delivering high-value and high-impact research products designed to support and protect our nation's deployed warfighters. Naval Medical Research and Development Enterprise laboratories are listed below:

**Naval Medical Research Center (NMRC):** NMRC is located in Silver Spring, Maryland. NMRC functions as a major research laboratory and headquarters for the seven other Navy Research Development Test & Evaluation (RDT&E) laboratories. Research at NMRC focuses on mission aborting infectious disease agents; infectious disease vaccine development; operational and undersea medicine; bone marrow research; and biological defense.

**Naval Health Research Center (NHRC):** NHRC is located in San Diego, California. Research at NHRC focuses on medical modeling and simulation; warfighter performance; deployment health; operational infectious diseases; and the Department of Defense HIV/AIDS prevention program.

**Naval Submarine Medical Research Laboratory (NSMRL):** NSMRL is located in Groton, Connecticut. Research at NSMRL focuses on submariner wellness, psychological fitness, shipboard health and performance, underwater bioeffects, submarine survival and escape, and human systems.

**Naval Medical Research Unit-San Antonio (NAMRU-SA):** NAMRU-SA is located in San Antonio, Texas. Research at NAMRU-SA focuses on ways to enhance the health, safety, performance, and operational readiness of Navy and Marine Corps personnel to include emergent medical and dental problems in routine and combat operations.

**Naval Medical Research Unit-Dayton (NAMRU-D):** NAMRU-D is located in Dayton, Ohio. Research at NAMRU-D focuses on maximizing warfighter performance and survivability through aeromedical and environmental health research. Key areas of research include spatial disorientation; situational awareness; motion sickness; unusual acceleration environments; fatigue; vision and hearing studies; effects of altitude; and the toxicity of chemicals and materials used in military operations.

**Naval Medical Research Center-Asia (NMRC-A):** NMRC-A is located in Singapore with a detachment laboratory in Cambodia. Research at NMRC-A focuses on infectious tropical diseases of critical military importance to the United States and regional partners.

**Naval Medical Research Unit-No. 3 (NAMRU-3):** NAMRU-3 is located in Cairo, Egypt. Research at NAMRU-3 focuses on emerging and re-emerging infectious disease threats of military and public health importance; and mitigation strategies against these threats in collaboration with host nations and international partners.

**U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit-No. 6:** NAMRU-6 is located in Lima, Peru. Research at NAMRU-6 focuses on emerging and re-emerging infectious disease threats; and prevention and therapeutic strategies to support public health interests in South and Central America.

[More about Naval Medical Research and Development](#)

[Return to Services List](#)



## U.S. Army

U.S. Army physicians get to work with elite medical professional teams throughout the world. Some areas of innovation include working with spray-on skin, operating room robotics, and phase-III trials for HIV and breast cancer vaccines. The Army has over 300 patents in science technology and medicine.

With over 90 areas of concentration, **Army doctors have a very high first-choice match rate for their chosen specialties.** The board certification passing rate for graduates of Army residency and fellowships programs on the first try is 94%, significantly higher than the national average. Army physicians have the opportunity to serve in other parts of the country and other parts of the world. These duty assignments create numerous places to vacation and travel with friends and family. Within the military health system, Army doctors are authorized to order tests and medications for their patients without excessive layers of approval from insurance companies. When you join the Army Medical Corps, you join an organization with a worldwide reputation for excellence in health care delivery and medical research. Within the U.S. Army Medical Department (AMEDD), there are over 5,000 active duty and reserve physicians practicing medicine throughout the world. Army physicians work in health clinics, hospitals, operational settings, and research labs. There are opportunities to serve as faculty for our graduate medical education programs, to command hospitals, and to serve on medical boards or councils.

[More about Army Medicine](#)

### **Locations**

The Army has the largest graduate medical educational program within all the military branches and encompasses all medical specialties. San Antonio Military Medical Center is the only Level I Trauma Center within the Department of Defense and home of the military's only burn intensive care unit. Of the 4,000 trauma patients treated in San Antonio each year, 85% are community members without any military affiliation. Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland is historically known as the President's Hospital where world-class care is delivered to all military beneficiaries, members of the Executive Branch, the U.S. Congress, Supreme Court Justices, and senior military leaders from commands and countries around the world. Within the Army, there are 11 training hospitals and three research institutes for the Army:

- San Antonio Military Medical Center, San Antonio
- Texas Darnall Army Medical Center, Killeen, Texas
- DeWitt Army Community Hospital, Alexandria, Virginia
- Eisenhower Army Medical Center, Augusta, Georgia
- Institute of Surgical Research, San Antonio, Texas
- Keller Army Community Hospital, West Point, N.Y.
- Madigan Army Medical Center, Tacoma, Washington
- Martin Army Community Hospital, Columbus, Georgia
- The Joint Pathology Center, Silver Spring, Maryland
- Tripler Army Medical Center, Honolulu, Hawaii
- Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Silver Spring, Maryland
- Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C
- William Beaumont Army Medical Center, El Paso, Texas
- Womack Army Medical Center, Fayetteville, N.C.

[Full list of all Army Medical Facilities and Hospitals](#)

## Career Opportunities

Upon graduation from USU, Army physicians match directly into a residency. The majority of Army physicians train in our 6 transitional programs, 68 residencies, and 57 fellowships. Residency training programs are offered in the following specialties:

- Aerospace Medicine
- Anesthesiology
- Dermatology
- Emergency Medicine
- Family Medicine
- General Surgery
- Internal Medicine
- Neurology and Child Neurology
- Neurosurgery
- Obstetrics/Gynecology
- Ophthalmology
- Orthopaedics
- Otolaryngology
- Pathology
- Pediatrics
- Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- Preventive Medicine/Occupational Medicine
- Psychiatry
- Radiation Oncology
- Radiology
- Urology

A full complement of Army fellowships and Army-Sponsored Civilian fellowships are also available to our graduates. Army fellows are accepted to many excellent training institutions including Johns Hopkins University, Stanford, University of California, Duke University, National Institutes of Health, University of Texas, University of Virginia, University of Pennsylvania, Emory University, Brigham and Women's Hospital, University of Washington, and Yale University. Some of the Army's programs are integrated with the Navy in the National Capital Area (Maryland, DC, and Virginia) and with the Air Force in San Antonio as well.

All USU medical students and Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP) medical students choose their own specialty goal and must apply to the Army's match for the First Year of Graduate Medical Education (FYGME). If selected, they will participate in an Army sponsored program. If they do not match to an Army program, they will receive a transitional internship position. Our graduates will only be deferred to match into a civilian program if there are insufficient training positions within the military to meet the Army's needs for that year.

Upon graduating from residency, graduating residents work with their specialty consultant to determine their first duty assignment. Primary care physicians (family physicians, internists, pediatricians, and emergency physicians) can be assigned to clinics, hospitals or serve as the battalion surgeon for an operational unit. Physicians whose skills require that they remain in the hospital setting (surgeons, anesthesia, radiology, ophthalmology, etc.) will be assigned to any of the Army's hospitals. Assignments vary in length, with the average length being three years. Current deployments for Army medical personnel have ranged from 30 to 365 days, depending on the needs of the Army. There are multiple opportunities in the Medical Corps as your career progresses. Army physicians excel in the clinical, research, operational, academic, and health administrative arenas. **Many have worked in more than one career track throughout their time in the Army**, and have held leadership positions ahead of their civilian counterparts. In fact, Army physicians are highly competitive for civilian jobs when leaving the Army. Many former Army physicians serve as faculty in medical schools and residency programs.

## Uniforms

[Army Uniforms](#)

## Physical Requirements

All of our Army students must meet height and weight requirements for their age. Students are required to maintain these standards and weigh in twice a year. Height and weight requirements are based on age and gender.

### [Army Physical Requirements](#)

All students must also complete and pass the [Army Physical Fitness Test \(APFT\)](#) at least two times per calendar year. The APFT consists of 3 events:

- 2 minutes of Pushups
- 2 minutes of Situps
- 2-mile run

## Basic Training

All Army Commissioned USU students must attend the Army Medical Department (AMEDD) [Direct Commission Course \(DCC\)](#) at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The course lasts 4 weeks and focuses on new officer development. Students learn the basics of saluting, how to wear military uniforms, how to march, etc. During the training there is a mix of didactic and hands-on field training. Prior officers, ROTC graduates, and service academy graduates are not required to attend this training. Upon completing DCC, Army students at USU are not required to attend the follow on Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC) at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. BOLC is not required as the USU curriculum provides for this training over the 4 years of medical school.

## Residencies

The Army has the largest number of graduate medical education programs among all the military branches and includes all of the medical specialties. All Army residency and fellowship programs are accredited by the American Council for Graduate Medical Education. Graduates of Army programs have an average 94% first time board pass rate which is well above the national average. Teaching faculty are board-certified in their specialty and are dedicated to training residents and fellows because they are not distracted by some of the business aspects of medicine. Many faculty members are involved in research, and their work is presented at annual specialty meetings and published in respected medical journals and textbooks. The Emergency Medicine residents at Darnall Army Medical Center achieved the top score on the annual in-service exam out of the 127 programs across the nation for an unprecedented six years in a row. One of the residents related, "Each individual in our program works hard to represent ourselves, our program, and the military on this in-service exam." The American Board of Surgery released board scores for general surgery programs in the U.S. from 2003-2008. Eight of 245 programs had 100 percent board pass rates during the 5-year period. Two of the eight were Army General Surgery programs.

## Summer Experience

The Summer Operational Experience is an approximately 2-3 week experience chosen from a menu of options that may be conducted at various points during the 7-week summer. A few of the experiences available for Army students are listed below:

- Center for Disaster & Humanitarian Assistance Medicine Stability Ops: USU/Rockville, MD
- Operational Ultrasound course: USU
- SouthCom Humanitarian Missions: Honduras and Dominican Republic
- AFRICOM-Ultrasound & Kenya

- Master Fitness Trainer Course: USU
- Combative Instructor Certification Course: Forest Glen, MD
- **US Army School of Aviation Medicine (USASAM): Fort Rucker, AL**
- Advanced Combat Medical Experience Tactical Combat Casualty Care Course: USU

## Research Opportunities

The U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command (USAMRDC) is the Army's medical materiel developer, with responsibility for medical research, development, and acquisition. The job of USAMRDC is to ensure our armed forces remain in optimal health and are equipped to protect themselves from disease and injury both on and off the battlefield. The Command is headquartered at Fort Detrick, MD, with 8 subordinate commands located throughout the world.

Six medical research laboratory commands execute the science and technology program to investigate medical solutions for the battlefield with a focus on various areas of biomedical research, including military infectious diseases, combat casualty care, military operational medicine, medical chemical and biological defense, and clinical and rehabilitative medicine. The Command manages a large extramural research program with numerous contracts, grants, and cooperative research and development agreements to provide additional science and technology capabilities from leading academic, private, and government organizations. Two additional commands focus on medical materiel advanced development and medical research and development. The Command is staffed with highly qualified scientists, program managers, acquisition experts, and support personnel. The critical expertise in these areas ensures the Army has the medical capabilities it needs to fight and win on the battlefield. From illness to injury, the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command is the only organization solely focused on research and development to address the military's unique medical readiness requirements.

**The Institute of Surgical Research**, which specializes in combat casualty care research, tested the chitosan bandage to show that it can stop lethal hemorrhage on the battlefield. Researchers at the Institute have also shown that tourniquets, which had fallen out of favor, have a place on today's battlefield and have saved lives during Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.

**The Walter Reed Army Institute of Research** and its unit in Europe have led the charge in the area of combat stress. They developed a mental health screening tool for returning Soldiers, to quickly identify those who need help. Walter Reed's leishmania lab was there to help diagnose cutaneous leishmaniasis when warfighters in Iraq developed sores from sandfly bites that wouldn't heal. The Battlefield Medical Information System-Tactical (BMIST), a tool to help medics do their jobs faster and to document care, was created at the Telemedicine and Advanced Technology Research Center.

In medical chemical defense research, the **U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense** and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research have developed a bioscavenger as a pretreatment for nerve agent exposure. When it's administered in an appropriate dose, it protects people from nerve agent exposure for up to two weeks.

The command's **Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program** continues to provide hope for advancements in military medicine as well as in public health through research programs that hope to find cures for breast cancer, prostate cancer, neurofibromatosis, and more.

Researchers at the **U.S. Army Aeromedical Research Lab** are helping the Army's aviation soldiers to fight better, longer, stronger, smarter and safer through their research in acoustics, aeromedical devices, jolt, vision, and safety equipment.

The **U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine** conducts basic and applied research to determine how exposure to extreme heat, severe cold, high terrestrial altitude, occupational tasks, physical training, deployment operations, and nutritional factors affect the health and performance of military personnel.

Subordinate Research Commands and Labs within the Army:

- U.S. Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory (USAARL) Fort Rucker, AL
- U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research (USAISR) JBSA Fort Sam Houston, TX
- U.S. Army Medical Materiel Development Activity (USAMMDA) Fort Detrick, MD
- U.S. Army Medical Research Acquisition Activity (USAMRAA) Fort Detrick, MD
- U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense (USAMRICD) Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD
- U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) Fort Detrick, MD
- U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine (USARIEM) Natick, MA
- Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) Silver Spring, MD

### **Special Research Activities**

#### **Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences (AFRIMS)**

AFRIMS is a joint undertaking between the U.S. and Thai militaries with satellite surveillance and research sites across Southeast Asia that develops diagnostics, preventives, and therapeutics against military-relevant infectious diseases.

#### **U.S. Army Medical Research Directorate - Africa (USAMRD-A)**

USAMRD-A is based in Nairobi, Kenya, with clinical research centers and field sites across sub-Saharan Africa. Working closely with local institutions, USAMRD-A addresses infectious disease threats and carries out disease surveillance, training, research, and outbreak response.

#### **U.S. Army Medical Research Directorate - Georgia (USAMRD-G)**

USAMRD-Georgia was established in 2014 in Tbilisi, Georgia with a mission to build Georgian scientific and medical capacity, monitor disease threats with a particular focus on antibiotic resistance, and use its laboratory facilities to support U.S. and allied forces deployed within U.S. European Command.

#### **U.S. Army Medical Research Directorate - West (USAMRD-W)**

USAMRD-West is located at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in the state of Washington and leads applied field studies to identify behavioral health concerns in Service Members as well as guides potential training and intervention efforts to improve psychological health and well-being throughout the Pacific region.

[Return to Services List](#)



## **U.S. Air Force**

The Air Force Medical Service is comprised of nearly 60,000 active duty, Reserve, civilian, and contract medical professionals who are responsible for the care of more than 2.6 million beneficiaries. Air Force physicians work in health clinics, hospitals, operational settings, and research labs. There are opportunities to serve as faculty for graduate medical education programs, to command hospitals, and to serve on medical boards or councils. There are also opportunities to pursue research in conjunction with academic institutions; private industry; the Department of Defense; and other local, national, and international government agencies. Air Force physicians have the opportunity to investigate questions related to all medical specialties. One such area includes physiological optics (the study of perceptual processes in the eye and associated neuronal structures of the brain) which supports the Air Force's air and space missions. The Air Force also has a world-class patient movement system that gets casualties from the frontlines to higher levels of care in a remarkably short amount of time. Since September 11, 2001, the Air Force has conducted nearly 340,000 global patient movements which contributed to an unprecedented 98% survival rate for U.S. service members injured in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Air Force Medical Service initiated the Ground Surgical Team program to upgrade and enhance the capabilities of Mobile Field Surgical Teams. Ground Surgical Teams are designed to be flexible platforms that undergo robust training and can drop into austere locations to save lives. The Air Force is also growing its Critical Care Air Transport capability which involves turning aircraft into flying Intensive Care Units which expand our nation's global patient movement capability. Air Force Graduate Medical Education also remains robust and allows for training in 85 potential specialties.

The Air Force gives constructive service credit for a master's degree or doctorate in Public Health or other field that adds adjunctive skills to your primary specialty and contributes directly to that specialty. This service credit can result in earlier promotions and increased pay. One year of service credit is given for each school year, not to exceed 24 months for a master's degree and 48 months for a doctorate. The total credit may not exceed 48 months.

### **Locations**

The Air Force has 76 military treatment facilities in the continental United States and overseas. More than 1,700 Air Force medical personnel are deployed to 19 countries.

[All Air Force military treatment facilities \(MTFs\)](#)

### **Career Opportunities**

Healthcare professionals work with patients all over the world in small ambulatory clinics to large medical centers. Since every base provides a unique, tight-knit community, your patients could be your neighbors or coworkers. Air Force Officers and Physicians are encouraged to take full advantage of their positions to pursue leadership roles in relevant professional societies to advance their careers and remain at the cutting edge of their respective specialties.

[Career Opportunities in the Air Force](#)

## Uniforms

[Air Force Uniforms](#)

## Physical Requirements

The Air Force's Physical Fitness Test (PFT) is a three-event physical performance test used to test your endurance. It is used to measure your physical strengths, abilities, and cardio-respiratory fitness. The three PFT events are one minute of push-ups, one minute of sit-ups, and a timed 1.5 mile run. The PFT is normally performed in workout gear and the run is completed in running shoes. Each component is scored on its own points scale, and each has a minimum that must be met. Service members must meet or exceed the minimum requirements for each category in order to earn a minimum of 75 total points to pass the test. [Scoring charts](#) are based on a service member's age.

[Height and Weight Requirements](#)

## Basic Training

[Officer Training School](#) (OTS) is a 5.5 week long program organized into four phases to help new students transition from the private sector into the Air Force. COT occurs at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base in Alabama. In the first phase of COT, newly commissioned officers focus on teamwork, discipline and standardization. Students begin to learn the fundamentals of leadership and military management while also experiencing the common activities in military training that teach "attention to detail" and the need to operate as a team. In phase two of the training, officers further develop their understanding of the Air Force culture and the fundamentals of leadership. They work as a team with fellow trainees to accomplish tasks that promote efficient teamwork, encourage conflict resolution, and establish working relationships. Phase three of training allows students to transition from practicing leadership to being a full-time leader as they apply the skills and knowledge they have learned in previous phases to lead the team on assigned missions. By experiencing the pressures of leadership and command, trainees gain a better understanding of what will be required of them in the future. During the final phase of training, officers will be tested and required to use their new leadership skills to function as the sole leader of their team. They will receive staff and peer feedback in order to gain an understanding of their individual leadership strengths and areas for improvement. Upon completion, trainees will be prepared to make the transition from a training environment to a career in the Air Force.

## Residencies

U.S. Air Force graduate medical education (GME) is consistently recognized as providing some of the best training opportunities in the United States. More specific and detailed information about Joint Service Graduate Medical Education Selection Board (JSGMESB) results and procedures for the Air Force can be found at the [Air Force Medical Service website](#).

Air Force training positions are available at two joint military training facilities:

- **San Antonio Uniformed Services Health Education Consortium (SAUSHEC)**  
Specialties: Anesthesiology, Dermatology, Internal Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Neurology, OBGYN, Ophthalmology, Orthopaedic Surgery, Otolaryngology, Pathology, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, General Surgery, Urology, Nephrology, Transitional PGY1 Year, plus 20 additional Fellowships
- **National Capital Consortium Washington, DC**  
Specialties: Family Medicine, Sports Medicine, OBGYN, Internal Medicine, Occupational Medicine, Pediatrics, Pediatric Endocrinology, Pediatric Gastroenterology, Pediatric Hematology/Oncology, Pediatric Infectious Disease, Preventive Medicine

Several joint military and civilian training positions are also available at the following locations:

- **Wright Patterson Air Force Base/Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio**  
Specialties: Internal Medicine, Emergency Medicine, OBGYN, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, General Surgery
- **Nellis Air Force Base/University of Nevada, Las Vegas School of Medicine**  
Specialties: Family Medicine, Emergency Medicine, OBGYN, General Surgery
- **Travis Air Force Base/University of California Davis**  
Specialties: Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, Diagnostic Radiology, Emergency Medicine, General Surgery, Vascular Surgery, Orthopaedic Surgery, Transitional PGY1 Year
- **Offutt Air Force Base/University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Medicine, Omaha, Nebraska**  
Specialty: Family Medicine
- **SAUSHEC/UT Health Science Center of San Antonio**  
Specialties: Integrated with San Antonio Uniformed Services Health Education Consortium (SAUSHEC) as listed above.
- **Scott Air Force Base/St. Louis School of Medicine**  
Specialty: Family Medicine
- **US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine/Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio**  
Specialty: Aerospace Medicine
- **Keesler Air Force Base/University of Mississippi Medical Center, Jackson Mississippi**  
Specialties: Internal Medicine, General Surgery

Additional military treatment facilities where training positions are available:

- **Madigan Army Medical Center, Takoma, Washington**  
Specialties: Developmental Pediatrics, Clinical Informatics
- **Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Virginia**  
Specialties: Pediatrics, OB/GYN, Diagnostic Radiology
- **Eglin Air Force Base, Florida**  
Specialty: Family Medicine

## Summer Experience

U.S. Air Force students are required to attend a 2-week Aerospace Medicine Primary (AMP) 101 course at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio as their summer operational experience. They are permitted (but not required) to participate in an additional summer operational experience during the 7-week summer period. One Air Force specific program is Top Knife at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona. This program lasts two weeks and provides a hands-on experience for students. The first week focuses on academics and flying specifics about tactical aircraft and human factors. The second week involves flying and the opportunity to experience what aircrew go through on a regular basis.

## Research Opportunities

The Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) is headquartered at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. AFRL's mission is to lead the discovery, development, and integration of warfighting technologies for air, space, and cyberspace forces. A component directorate at AFRL is the 711th Human Performance Wing (711 HPW) which is the first human-centric warfare wing to consolidate research, education, and consultation under a single organization. The 711 HPW is comprised of the Human Effectiveness Directorate, the United States Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine (USAFSAM) and the Human

Performance Integration Directorate. The primary mission areas of the 711 HPW are aerospace medicine, science and technology, and human systems integration.

Clinicians from the David Grant Medical Center at Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield, California have led advances in critical care, trauma resuscitation, long-term health outcomes for combat soldiers, traumatic brain injury, effects of energy drink consumption, evidence-based practice/continuous process improvement, and fitness nutrition. David Grant Medical Center is the U.S. Air Forces largest medical center in the continental United States.

Air Force physician scientists (as well as all uniformed military physicians) also have opportunities to participate in projects funded by the Defense Health Program (DHP) Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) appropriation. Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) provides Defense Medical Research and Development Program (DMRDP) execution management for the core research program areas listed below:

- Medical Simulation and Information Sciences Research Program
- Military Infectious Diseases Research Program
- Military Operational Medicine Research Program
- Combat Casualty Care Research Program
- Radiation Health Effects Research Program
- Clinical and Rehabilitative Medicine Research Program

There are also opportunities to participate in studies conducted at the Uniformed Services University Centers of Research.

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## **U.S. Public Health Service**

The United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (PHSCC) is an elite team of more than 6,000 highly qualified uniformed public health professionals employed for the purpose of delivering public health promotion and disease prevention programs and advancing public health science. The PHS Commissioned Corps includes officers from many disciplines including medicine, nursing, dentistry, and other health-related occupations. As one of the seven uniformed services, the PHS Commissioned Corps fills public health leadership and service roles within federal government agencies and programs.

The Public Health Service (PHS) differs slightly from the military services in that PHS officers are sponsored by their respectively assigned federal government agency, generally within the Department of Health and Human Services. These organizations select candidates based on the candidate's qualifications and interest of the respective agency. PHS-supported training at USU incurs a ten-year active-duty obligation following medical school and residency training.

Currently the only federal government agency sponsoring two PHS medical students every year is the Indian Health Service. The Indian Health Service's (IHS) mission is to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to their highest levels, and to assure that comprehensive, culturally acceptable personal and public health services are available and accessible to American Indian and Alaska Native people.

### **Locations**

Although Officers in the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (PHSCC) serve in duty stations in over 20 federal departments or agencies; students selected for the PHS training slots at USU are expected to complete their service obligation (10 years) with the sponsoring agency.

### **Indian Health Service**

The Indian Health Service (IHS) has an important mission to provide much-needed services for the American Indian and Alaskan Native people. The integrated health care system of the IHS is a collegial, multidisciplinary team providing primary care with special initiatives in traditional medicine, elder care, women's health, children and adolescents, injury prevention, domestic violence and child abuse. IHS medical professionals practice in a variety of settings, many surrounded by spectacular natural beauty, throughout the United States. The population we serve is approximately 1.9 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to 562 federally recognized tribes. The health care is provided in 35 states divided into twelve physical areas of the United States; Alaska, Albuquerque, Bemidji, Billings, California, Great Plains, Nashville, Navajo, Oklahoma, Phoenix, Portland and Tucson. Each of the 12 Areas offers its own unique career experiences and provides the opportunity to live and work in diverse Native American or Alaska Native communities that are rich with their own traditions.

[IHS Locations](#)

## Career Opportunities

### Indian Health Service

A [career in the Indian Health Service](#) offers adventurous, enthusiastic and dedicated practitioners a chance to live and work within Native communities, allowing them to discover traditions that have been carried down for generations and gain cultural insight into the beliefs and values of American Indians and Alaska Natives. Accepted PHS-IHS officers are expected to serve as leaders within the Indian Health Service.

Opportunities generally depend on specialty training completed and the current needs of the Indian Health Service. Upon completion of Residency training, PHS Physicians are expected to find available positions, interview, and choose a location in collaboration with IHS Headquarters. Job descriptions range from Staff Physician and Supervisory Physician, to Regional Medical Director, and are generally in the primary care specialty fields. The 10-year service obligation incurred by training does NOT have to be paid back at any single location but should be fully paid back to the IHS prior to considering another agency.

### **Uniforms**

The PHS uniform traces its roots back to 1871 when John Maynard Woodworth, the first supervising surgeon (now known as the Surgeon General), organized the service along military lines. The uniforms reflect the proud legacy and tradition of the more than 200-year-old service. Uniforms link today's officers to their heritage and connect them to past officers. Since they represent the Commissioned Corps history and tradition, rigorous standards apply to wearing the uniform and every officer upholds those standards with pride.

Similar to the other services, the Commissioned Corps has several uniforms including the Service Dress Blues, Summer Whites, Service Khakis, and Operational Dress Uniform (ODU). Each uniform reflects the great responsibility and privilege that comes with being a commissioned officer.

### [Public Health Service Uniforms](#)

### **Physical Requirements**

All active-duty U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (PHSCC) officers are required to meet specific standards for the basic level of Force Readiness. They must comply by weight standards and be tested annually on the Annual Physical Fitness Test (APFT). The APFT consists of 4 events:

- Cardiorespiratory endurance exercises: 1.5mile run; 450 meter/500 yard swim; 12 min elliptical exercise; or 12 minute stationary bike exercise
- Upper body endurance: push-ups
- Core endurance exercises: plank; side-bridge or sit up
- Flexibility: seated toe touch

## Basic Training

All PHS Commissioned Corps Officers at USU must attend the Officer Basic Course (OBC) located at the Bolger Center in Potomac, MD. OBC provides training in the values and skills necessary to represent the Surgeon General as a commissioned officer. This two-week course is an orientation to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service (Corps), and life in the uniformed services. OBC also provides training and information on officer competency and career development, uniformed service customs and courtesies, force readiness and deployment, and other essential areas. Officers who successfully complete this course are awarded the Commissioned Corps Training Ribbon (CCTR).

## Residencies

### Indian Health Service

Accepted applicants must agree to enter an ACGME approved residency (civilian or military) preferably in one of the primary care focused training programs noted below. Other specialties can be considered on a case by case basis depending on the need of the Indian Health Service. Dual programs, such as Med-Psych, Med-Prev Med and FM-Prev Med may also be considered.

- Family Medicine
- General Pediatrics
- General Internal Medicine
- Emergency Medicine
- Psychiatry
- Obstetrics and Gynecology
- General Surgery

## Summer Experience

U.S. Public Health Service students are required to attend a 2-week Summer Operational Experience related to their sponsoring agency. They are permitted (but not required) to participate in an additional summer operational experience during the 7-week summer period.

### Indian Health Service

PHS students sponsored by the Indian Health Service generally spend 2 weeks at an IHS site doing a student observership and becoming familiar with medical care capabilities on a reservation. Historically students have visited [Whiteriver Indian Hospital](#). This facility is located at Whiteriver, AZ on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation and serves approximately 17,000 tribal members and other Native American communities around the area.

## Rotation Opportunities

### Indian Health Service

There are several opportunities for rotations at IHS sites throughout your time at USU. These rotations are generally funded by the Indian Health Service. Several memorandums of understanding (MOU) are set up at IHS sites for advanced clinical rotations in the post clerkship time period (ie. PICU or OBGYN rotations in Alaska). There are also opportunities to get funding for the annual PHS Symposium conference or to set up rotations at Indian Health Service headquarters located in Rockville, MD.

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