

# JUNIOR OFFICER ADVISORY GROUP

## AIDE-DE-CAMP GUIDE



**JOAG** | JUNIOR OFFICER ADVISORY GROUP

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# CHAPTER 1: AIDE-DE-CAMP

**This chapter will review the roles, responsibilities, duties, and expectations for officers serving in the position of aide-de-camp, both in a permanent and temporary capacity.**

The definition of an aide-de-camp varies but, in general, refers to a subordinate uniformed officer who acts as a confidential assistant to a flag officer. A flag officer refers to a high-ranking officer who holds the pay grades of O-7 through O-10 in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS), Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). It is common for aides-de-camp to also serve civilian leaders within an organization, such as a Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Assistant Secretary. In agencies like the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), which has a mix of uniformed and civilian leaders, it is more common to refer to senior leaders as a principal. The typical tour of duty is one to two years depending on the needs of the position. Throughout this guide, you will see either flag officer or principal used interchangeably.

The aide-de-camp position is critical to the function of the office and is a highly competitive position. Your primary mission is to assist your principal in the performance of his or her duties. All principals expect their aides to be model officers of smart appearance, courtesy, tact, adaptability, and honesty. This position can be precarious since the aide has minimal authority and is typically the lowest-ranked person in the room. This is an honorable, trusted, and key position in your organization. The aide is the shadow – always a step behind supporting, guiding, directing, and executing the will of your principal. This position will provide you with unique opportunities to learn and engage at a level that few officers ever see.



An aide is a jack-of-all-trades who functions in multiple roles. These include but are not limited to, being a secretary, companion, diplomat, author, map-reader, travel guide, and mind reader. You must be able to produce documents and information at a moment's notice – schedule of events/meetings, purpose of meetings, people attending those meetings, itineraries, seating arrangements, timing, and detailed travel routes. You will need to know the full details of your principal's schedule starting with the current day, while simultaneously planning and supporting the following day's schedule, all while predicting the schedule for the following week. As the jack-of-all-trades, you should be prepared for a variety of situations while understanding that the schedule is fluid and subject to change.

**Your primary mission is to assist your principal in the performance of his or her duties.**



You will be a key buffer between your principal and others. This requires you to quickly learn whose time to prioritize, what items are urgent, and what can wait or be delegated to other members of your team to address. It is important that you establish clear roles, responsibilities, and boundaries early with your principal to ensure that you are executing their directives to the best of your ability.

As previously stated, your position is one of honor, and with it comes a duty and responsibility to execute your position in the best interest of the USPHS and your principal. You should not use your public office for personal gain. This includes for the private gain of friends or other people in a non-government capacity or for the endorsement of any product, service, or enterprise. As an aide, you are the eyes, ears, and support to your principal, but do not misuse your position or act as if you are an admiral. VADM Benjamin once noted about the aide position: "Do not hang yourself with that rope" [rope references the aiguillette]. Your aiguillette will provide you with great access along with great responsibility. Do not misuse your position because the trust between an aide and principal is fundamental. Without it, your time as an aide will be short.

## REQUIREMENTS

As a USPHS Commissioned Corps Officer, to hold the position of aide-de-camp or special assistant, you must possess strong interpersonal and organizational skills along with robust professional and diplomatic judgment. This role is typically reserved for junior officers (O-2 to O-4) with outstanding records of accomplishments and/or work experience. Aide candidates must meet all requirements outlined in POM 821.69 for readiness compliance with a strong preference towards having at least three years of experience as a Commissioned Corps officer or prior military service. Below is a list of additional expectations that may be required depending on the agency and level of the position:

- Solid understanding of military customs and courtesies
- Impeccable military bearing and appearance in uniform
- Maturity and skillset to work effectively in a high-volume and high-operational environment for sustained periods of time
- Working knowledge of the organization's travel system to accurately book travel for you and your principal
- Working knowledge of common Microsoft Office programs such as Microsoft Teams, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and OneNote
- Working knowledge of Adobe Acrobat, Adobe Reader, and various video conferencing platforms
- Ability to travel for prolonged periods of time CONUS and OCONUS
- Lifting and carrying materials weighing over 15 pounds

*"The Aide-de-camp position is integral to the success of a flag officer. Discernment, trust, and mutual respect are paramount to the success of the Principal-Aide relationship."*

***-RADM Denise Hinton, Deputy Surgeon General***

## DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As a newly assigned aide-de-camp, it is important that you focus on building a relationship between yourself and your principal. Learn their priorities, understand your duties and responsibilities, and establish boundaries to understand to what extent you will be able to act autonomously. This last point will develop over time and will be specific to each principal. As you move forward with your duties, it is important that you limit your role to supporting official functions only. Your principal has the responsibility to determine if an event is official or personal. If there is ever a concern, you can reach out to the principal's legal counsel or Office of General Counsel (OGC) for guidance. This will protect both you and your principal as you faithfully execute your role.

You are responsible for providing a variety of professional tasks and administrative services for your principal, which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Organize, review, and process the invitations to meetings and other events
- Develop both long-term and day-to-day operational requirements and priorities through tactful and timely communication with event points of contact and others wishing to meet with your principal
- Assist your principal in the operation of the office with responsibility for recognizing and referring to the principal any matters that need direct attention
- Coordinate briefings, briefing materials, meetings, and events as relevant to your principal's priorities and preferences
- Conduct research and literature searches and provide technical assistance and materials for briefings, presentations, meetings, events, or other communications
- Execute confidential assignments and prepare reports pertaining to plans and activities, often in the early planning stages, sometimes of sensitive, confidential, or restricted nature
- Promote cooperative working relationships with partners at all levels of government and the private sector to ensure your principal's priorities are met, and scheduled communication is executed accurately and appropriately



- Participate with technical specialists and subject matter experts at meetings, prepare executive summaries of the meetings, and identify decisions reached and key issues discussed
- Assist your principal with the development of routine responses to incoming correspondence and communications, including researching topic areas for narratives or briefings as required
- Assist your principal with activities requiring protocol and military courtesies
  - OASH is the sole source for USPHS protocol, including preparing scripts, planning, coordinating and recruiting resources, assisting at ceremonies, and other support.
- Communicate effectively with coworkers, subordinates, superiors, governmental officials, the general public, representatives of public and private organizations, and others to exchange or convey information
- Complete all other duties as assigned by your principal, their chief of staff, or deputy chief of staff

## TEMPORARY AIDE-DE-CAMP

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The temporary aide-de-camp is typically someone who was selected or requested by a flag officer to support them during a special event, conference, or short deployment. Examples may include but are not limited to deployment or trip that requires additional logistics support, retirement ceremony, promotion ceremony, formal ball or dinner, White House event, or a conference such as the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS) Conference or USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium. This is a detail position that is typically limited to a short period of time, such as a day, a few weeks, or the length of a deployment.

The temporary aide-de-camp role similarly provides junior officers with an opportunity to learn and engage with flag officers and other senior leadership. In some ways, this temporary role may prove more challenging compared to the permanent aide-de-camp role since you may not have a prior relationship with the assigned flag officer. It is recommended that you learn the flag officer's priorities, understand your duties and responsibilities, and establish boundaries to understand to what extent you will be able to act autonomously. A brief conversation with the flag officer's current support staff, chief of staff, deputy chief of staff, or the flag officer prior to the detail is extremely valuable.

## DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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The temporary aide-de-camp is responsible for knowing all aspects of the upcoming special event or conference. The flag officer will look to you for guidance if they have any questions which require preparedness on your part. The duties and responsibilities you may be requested to complete are very similar to those of a permanent aide-de-camp; I recommend reviewing the section above. For a quick reference, please utilize the [Temporary Aide-de-Camp Handout](#) located on page 30 of this guide.



### TEMPORARY AIDE TIPS:

- Establish expectations early with the flag officer and/or support staff to ensure you can meet deliverables in a timely manner.
- Review the schedule of events with your flag officer.
- Ensure that you have all the conference materials and understand the layout of various rooms or specific meetings.
- Conduct a site/room visit to ensure you understand the layout and best route between/during events.
- Your job is to keep the schedule. A light tap or quick hold on the elbow is a subtle sign to your flag officer that it is time to go (see photo above).

## WHAT AN ADMIRAL LOOKS FOR IN AN AIDE

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“The role of an Aide-de-Camp is vital to the ASH and requires a very special person. An Aide should be organized, personable, professional, competent, inquisitive, diligent, and hardworking. They also need to be prompt and stay one step ahead to keep up with the grueling schedule. Finding an Aide who is also a team player and maintains a flexible approach to demands is significant to the culture of the office and helps to ensure the success of our mission.”



**RACHEL L. LEVINE, MD**

Admiral, United States Public Health Service  
17<sup>th</sup> Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH)



**JEROME M. ADAMS, MD, MPH**

Vice Admiral, United States Public Health Service  
20<sup>th</sup> U.S. SURGEON GENERAL (SG)

“I look for an aide who is flexible as well as steady. There will be times you will have to rush me out and have to play the bad guy in order to keep me on schedule. You always need to be respectful; for some of the people we meet, this may be the only time they ever meet a Surgeon General of the United States. Make sure that they remember how amazing it was rather than how rude or disheveled that aide was to me. You have a hard job, but you need to be flexible and steady at all times. I rely on that”.

*In Officio Salutis*

“One of the most important assets to a flag officer is their Aide. An Aide makes it possible for flag officers to focus on the job they have to do, without concerns about all the things that go on in the background. This individual is your lifeline to every aspect of your life, professional and personal. A great Aide knows how to get things done, anticipate every “what if”, and is able to coordinate all details of commitments seamlessly. The relationship is a two-way street.

Show your Aide respect for what they do for you and always remember to thank them for their efforts. It is a hard job, but the good ones do it with poise, grace, commitment and dedication. I personally would not have been able to be successful as flag officer without my aides. They kept me on top of everything down to last minute. This includes changes to a speech moments before going on stage to policy implications that would impact the organization years down the road.”



**RADM SYLVIA TRENT-ADAMS**

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health  
(2019-2020)



**RDML FELICIA COLLINS**

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health,  
Director, Office of Minority Health

“Flag aides’ administrative duties provide invaluable opportunities to enhance operational management and informal leadership skills. But the benefits go beyond that. Flag aides also have a front row seat in programmatic arenas impacting the health of the nation. All of these experiences can spark new interests and serve as a unique launchpad for future career endeavors.”

*In Officio Salutis*



## REFLECTIONS OF AN AIDE-DE-CAMP



### **LCDR Dennis Anderson-Villaluz, Aide-de-Camp to the U.S. Surgeon General (2019–2020)**

"When looking for my replacement, I looked for a service-oriented officer, willing to learn, driven to excellence, and most of all, knows when to admit they don't know something. Too often, young officers only want my position because of the proximity to the U.S. Surgeon General. The truth is, this role is very humbling and requires a level of dedication and determination that will test the abilities of any officer. You will work long hours, but the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important it is to have America's Doctor leading with science and elevating the importance of health. As the shadow to the Surgeon General, you play an important role in making that happen."



### **LCDR Fengyee Zhou, Aide-de-Camp to the U.S. Surgeon General (2020–2021)**

"Welcome to your role! I hope you are feeling the same sense of wonder and awe as I did when I first took on this job. Make no mistake: the role of aide or Special Assistant will be constantly demanding, sometimes frustrating, but always rewarding. There will be a steep learning curve when you begin learning all that you need to learn, but those long days in the office will be worth it when you see a little kid's face light up in excitement when they meet the U.S. Surgeon General."



### **LCDR Kinbo J. Lee, Aide-de-Camp to the Assistant Secretary for Health (2021–2022)**

"An aide-de-camp serves in a position of immense trust and requires, above all, integrity, good judgment, and a strong sense of service above self. The days will be long. You will have your highs, and you'll feel your lows as you pave the path for your principal's success, oftentimes focusing on the granular so your principal can focus on the grand. As you diplomatically engage with stakeholders on behalf of your principal, remember that your actions and speech can be a positive reflection on you, your principal, and the Service. Exercise professionalism in your daily goings, build camaraderie and foster collaborative working relationships to achieve objectives. And, embrace the generalist mindset to command and integrate a broad array of skills and knowledge; remember, "a jack of all trades is a master of none, but oftentimes better than a master of one."



### **CDR Shamika P. Brooks, Aide-de-Camp to the Deputy Surgeon General (2021–2023)**

"Customs and courtesies along with the desire to serve the USPHS in any way necessary to ensure the success of our service is vital to the role of Aide-de-camp. When the days feel long and you feel stressed, it is this passion for service that will keep you afloat."



### **LT Michele L. Brown, Aide-de-Camp to the Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH) (2022–2023)**

The experience of working as an aide de camp has been one of the most rewarding and challenging assignments of my career. The work is fast paced and ever changing. It requires long hours, quite a bit of travel, and constant flexibility. There are many facets to the role and no two days are the same. The aide to the ASH handles coordinating all travel, ensuring all necessary meeting materials are available and up to date, and assisting with any needs and requests of the office. Importantly, the role serves as the interface between the ASH and outside professionals and organizations: answering questions, coordinating meetings, and ensuring all tasks and requests are processed and completed. The aide is integral in allowing the ASH to lead, connect, and inspire officers and civilians alike.



### **LCDR Oluwabukola (Bukky) Akinsiku, Aide-de-Camp to an Assistant Surgeon General (2022–2023)**

"A Flag-Aide role is a unique and great opportunity in an officer's career. It challenges you in ways that you may not experience in other career roles. Our Flag Officers carry a huge weight on their shoulders and have to do this while managing multiple aspects of running an office. You will quickly realize how difficult this job is and that things are always moving. As a piece of that puzzle, you have to be flexible and willing to serve in whatever capacity is needed. You are serving not only your Flag Officer but also the Office in which they sit and the populations they serve. A large portion of training for this job is learned on the go. As a result, it is important to listen, take notes, and ask questions. Communication, interpersonal and organizational skills are a huge benefit. Additionally, connecting with other Flag-Aides will help you build relationships that will help out in the long run. This is an ongoing learning experience with great value. Remember that your service has the potential to help achieve great impacts!"

## CHAPTER 2: UNIFORM GUIDANCE

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**This chapter will review uniform guidance, provide recommendations and resources, and recommend tips to ensure that you are successful in this position.**

The aide-de-camp must have a vast knowledge base of uniforms, regulations, policies, and procedures. This includes the correct wear of an admiral's uniform along with your principal's preferences to ensure that your principal is always in the correct uniform. When interacting with other uniformed services, utilize the [Service Equivalent Uniforms Reference Table](#) to ensure that you and your admiral are dressed in appropriate attire.

Everyone will be looking at your principal and you, which is why it is critical that you set time aside to know USPHS uniform policies and regulations (CCI 400 Series). Your job is to ensure that you and your principal always look sharp and represent the best USPHS has to offer.



## FLAG OFFICER UNIFORM

One of the most important tasks performed is preparing the admiral's uniform. This section will provide a review of what you should keep in mind when performing this task. Ultimately, you need to become the expert in USPHS policies and regulations regarding uniforms. It is your responsibility to ensure that their uniform is correct, regardless of who puts it together.

### PREPARING THE UNIFORM FOR WEAR

- Know the admiral's preference for the Uniform of the Day since everyone in the office will try to match that uniform. That being said, you will have to guide your principal on what they should be wearing since you will know their schedule better than them. For example, if you are attending meetings at the White House, they will need to be in Service Dress Blues.
- Attach rank, medals, and ribbons to the uniform. A tailor's ruler will ensure the greatest accuracy for spacing and placement. It is recommended to have a second person look at the uniform just in case.
- Recheck the retaining clasps and placement of ribbons and medals to ensure proper placement and solid attachment to the uniform. You do not want your principal's ribbons falling off during a public appearance.
- Hang and display the uniform as appropriate.

### SHOES AND BOOTS

- Perform frequent inspections of the admiral's shoes and boots.
- Remove sand, dirt, and grit from shoes as needed.
- Clean shoes with a cleaning cloth, and if necessary, polish and shine shoes.
- Position shoes neatly in an appropriate storage area.

### RIBBONS, DECORATIONS, AND RANK INSIGNIA

- Replace ribbons, decorations, and rank insignia per regulations.
- Never use your own money when replacing uniform items. It is the responsibility of the principal to pay for his or her own uniform components.
- Inspect items for torn, worn, or soiled areas.
- With the admiral's approval, repair or replace torn/worn items with new ones. As previously stated, never use your own money when doing this task.
- With the admiral's approval, clean/buff silver and brass accoutrements and awards.

#### Note

*Typically, your flag officer will provide you with their uniform from the cleaners, and you will be responsible for putting on ribbons, decorations, and rank insignia correctly. Every principal is unique, which means some may require more or less support with putting their uniform together. Regardless, it is ultimately your responsibility to ensure uniform appearance is correct.*

## AIDE-DE-CAMP UNIFORM

In this position, you are always on public display. Both senior and junior officers will be inspecting your uniform at all times and looking for any item to point out. That means you will always need to look sharp, be prepared, and know uniform regulations. Below are general items of which to be mindful:

- Ensure that you own a full set of all potential Uniforms of the Day (UOD).
- Lay out your uniform the night before.
- Ensure all uniform components are worn properly (e.g., collar devices, name tag, ribbons, etc.).
- Maintain your uniforms in high-quality condition – ensure that they are clean, pressed, and well-measured.
- Ensure that you are familiar with the manner of wearing a service and dress aiguillette.
- Maintain requisite grooming standards:
  - Haircut (neat and off the collar for females)
  - Trimmed nails
  - Clean-shaven
- Ensure that jewelry worn is in compliance with USPHS regulations.
- Shine your shoes.

### Note

*It is highly recommended to prepare your uniform the day prior. You could get a call requiring you to come into the office early. This will ensure that your uniform is always sharp and correct.*



## AIDE STORY: DOUBLE-CHECK YOUR UNIFORM

“As a newly pinned-on O-4, I had the opportunity to travel all the way from my duty station in Alaska to spend a week in Washington, DC, on a detail to the Office of the Surgeon General. I already had my uniform with the tailor to update my stripes, and it was perfect timing that I would get it back the day I was scheduled to fly out.

I had an amazing learning experience that week in OSG, and of course, I was able to meet the 19<sup>th</sup> Surgeon General, VADM Murthy, and get my photo taken! What an exciting time... until I noticed (in the PHOTO) that my sleeve insignia had been sewn on UPSIDE DOWN. My tailor was careful not to let me drag anchors, but it was completely wrong. I hadn't checked my uniform carefully in my haste to get to the airport.

Though not in an Aide role, this experience emphasizes that it is imperative to check your uniform when you will be interacting with or representing senior leadership.”

-CDR Katie Bante

## SERVICE AIGUILLETES (CCI 431.01)

- Aiguillettes are furnished by the staff requiring them and as such, remain in the custody of the organization.
- Authority to Wear: wear aiguillettes while performing duty as Aide to the President, Aide to the Vice President, Aide at the White House, Aide to any Cabinet Secretary, Aide to the Secretary of HHS, Aide to the Deputy Secretary and Assistant Secretaries within HHS, Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH), Deputy Principal Assistant Secretary for Health (PDASH), Aide to the U.S. Surgeon General (SG), Deputy Surgeon General (DSG), Aide to any other Flag officer, Aide to any State or Territorial Governor, and to any Foreign Head of State. Officers no longer actively performing this function are not authorized to wear the aiguillettes.
- The Aide to the President, Aide to the Vice President, aides at the White House, and officers designated as aides to foreign heads of state wear aiguillettes on the right shoulder; all others on the left shoulder.
- The aiguillettes will be the same style as those utilized by the U.S. Navy.
- Worn with Service Uniforms (Service Dress Blues / Service Dress Whites / Khaki / Summer Whites), Jackets, All-weather coat, Overcoat, Reefer, Navy sweater, or Army Cardigan. It is **NOT** authorized for wear on the Operational Dress Uniform (ODU).
- When attaching service aiguillettes to the uniform, bind the cords together lying flat, side by side, with a strip of 1-1/2 inch gold lace, and fit with a clasp pin. Attach aiguillettes to the shoulder of the coat or Service Uniform shirt with the 1-1/2 inch gold lace centered on top of the shoulder with the 1-1/2 inch gold lace paralleled and up to the shoulder sleeve seam. The longest loop of the cords is worn on the inboard side closest to the wearer's body. Ensure that the aiguillette is beneath the epaulet or shoulder board.

Aide to the President: Four loops, all gold.



Aide to the Vice President, Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH [Admiral, if a Corps officer]) or General or Official of Higher Rank: Four loops, gold with dark blue spiral bands.



Aide to Surgeon General (Vice Admiral) and Lieutenant General: Three loops, gold with dark blue spiral bands.



Aide to ASH (if a civilian), Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health (Rear Admiral, if a Corps officer), Deputy Surgeon General (Rear Admiral), Major General, Brigadier General and Officers of Lower Rank: Two loops, gold with dark blue spiral bands.



Aide to Governor of a State or Territory: Two loops, gold with dark blue spiral bands.

## DRESS AIGUILLETES (CCI 431.01)

Wear dress aiguillettes with Formal Dress, Dinner Dress, Full Dress, and Service Dress uniforms, and the overcoat and all-weather coats:

- At official ceremonies
- On occasions requiring special honors
- To social functions as directed, and to all social functions for which formal invitations have been extended
- At all times by aides to foreign representatives



### Tip:

*Prior to formal events, sew a small flat button under your dress collar at the height of the collar bone to secure the dress aiguillette.*



*DO NOT put the aiguillette on ODUs*

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF HHS IDENTIFICATION BADGE (OSIB) (CCI 511.01)

Officers assigned on a permanent basis to a position located within any of the organizational components of the Office of the Secretary (OS), HHS including STAFFDIVs, qualify to wear the OSIB.

- An officer may temporarily wear the badge upon initial assignment to a position within the Office of the Secretary.
- Upon completion of one continuous year of duty in a position with OS, an officer may permanently wear the badge. Time spent on a detail or temporary duty outside the OS does not count in this computation.
- An officer detailed or on temporary duty from the OS, to activities located in other OPDIVs or non-HHS organizations locations outside the OS, is not eligible to wear this badge during the period of detail or temporary duty, unless she / he has previously met the criteria for permanent authorization.



## OFFICER IN CHARGE BADGE (CCI 512.01)

Full size (not miniature) Assistant Secretary for Health Officer in Charge (ASHOIC), Surgeon General (SG), Deputy Surgeon General (DSG), Officer in Charge (OIC), and Chief Professional Officer (CPO) insignia are worn only while the officer is the incumbent of the position. The Corps does not authorize officers in an acting or temporary position to wear of badges not annotated in his/her eOPF. These officials only wear the miniature size post-tour.



Assistant Secretary for Health  
/ Principal Deputy Assistant  
Secretary for Health Officer in  
Officer In Charge Insignia



Surgeon General



Deputy Surgeon General



Officer in Charge



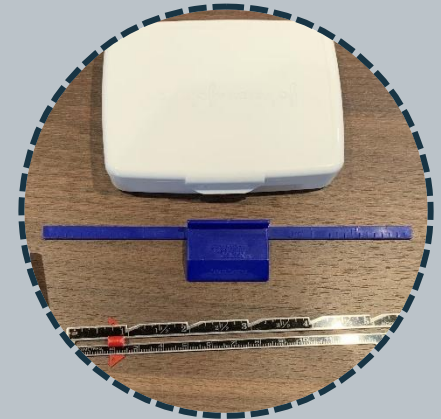
Chief Professional Officer

## AIDE BAG / SUITCASE

CCI 412.01 outlines requirements for carried bags, including luggage, which must be carried or placed on the officer's left side to facilitate saluting. All bags must be black, brown (optional when wearing a khaki uniform), or navy blue, except for the olive drab duffel bag.

The aide's bag or suitcase is a critical tool to being prepared. It will also need to be adaptive to your principal's preferences and needs. In general, if your principal requires a specific item, they should purchase the item for you to carry. Recommended items include:

- Wet wipes / stain remover
- Sewing kit
- Superglue
- Ruler / uniform guide
- Breath mints or strips
- Common over-the-counter medications and principal-specific prescription medications
- If applicable, additional uniform components such as rank, insignia, ribbons, combination cover screws, and extra jewelry clasps







## AIDE STORY: DOUBLE-CHECK YOUR UNIFORM

"I got home late and did not prepare my uniform for the next day since I knew I would have enough time in the morning (first mistake). I got up (tired), prepared my khakis, and went to meet the U.S. Surgeon General at Walter Reed Medical Center. The Red Sox were doing a special event to honor service members. The air was filled with excitement, and everyone was happy and taking photos. As a Red Sox fan, I was excited to take a photo with the legendary pitcher Chris Sale. After my photo, a Master Chief Petty Officer pointed his finger and motioned to me. He leaned in and asked, "Where's your rank?" Mortified, I realized in that moment I did not put anything on my lapels because we had been wearing Summer Whites all week. Thankfully, I always carry extra uniform components, so I was able to quickly adapt. The moment had passed, and I could not get another photo.

Bottom-line: Prepare your uniform the night before, always carry extra uniform components, and learn from your mistakes. The silver lining of the story was that the Master Chief Petty Officer said, "Don't worry, you got this. I know who runs this show."

-LCDR Dennis Anderson-Villaluz

## **COMMISSIONED CORPS ISSUANCE SYSTEM (CCIS) UNIFORM GUIDANCE REFERENCES:**

USPHS uniform guidance can be found on the [Commissioned Corps Issuance System \(CCIS\)](#):

### **Book 4: Uniforms (CCI 400 Series)**

- **Chapter 1:** Uniforms and Appearance – General
  - Section 1: Local Uniform Authority
  - Section 2: Wearing of the Uniform – General
  - Section 3: Wearing of the Uniform – Specific Situations
- **Chapter 2:** Uniforms – Male and Female Officers
  - Section 1: Officer Uniforms – General
- **Chapter 3:** Insignia, Devices and Ribbons
  - Section 1: PHS Insignia
- **Chapter 4:** Accessories – Miscellaneous
  - Section 1: PHS Sword and Accessories – No Instructions
  - Section 2: PHS Flags

### **Book 5: Medals and Awards (CCI 500 Series)**

- **Chapter 1:** -- Awards and Decorations
  - Section 2: -- Wearing of Medals and Ribbons

# CHAPTER 3:

## CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

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**This chapter will focus on general military customs and courtesies during common situations you will encounter as aide-de-camp.**

Customs are a widely accepted tradition that dictates how someone should or should not behave. Sea services – Navy, Coast Guard, USPHS, and NOAA – observe many different customs and traditions. New customs arise in an effort to modernize, while others live on without change. To an astonishing degree, people enjoy following these practices to connect to the service members before them. Whether a custom is ancient or new, its influence is profound. This section is intended to explain and perpetuate those sea service customs. In knowing and practicing these customs, you will take part in a shared experience and build new bonds of friendship, strengthen your purpose to serve, and ultimately accomplish the mission to which we have dedicated ourselves.

As aide-de-camp, you will meet hundreds of people, both officially and socially. The impression that you make depends on your social conduct in all its aspects: politeness, proper clothing, respect for seniors, table manners, courtesy to ladies, and correct correspondence. It is, therefore, in your best interest to become familiar with these procedures as soon as possible. To start off, there are three important expressions you must master in your vocabulary: “please,” “thank you,” and “you are welcome.” Even though you may be a little rusty on the rules governing a situation, these three expressions are magic.

There is an old military maxim in the relations between seniors and juniors: the senior should never degrade the difference in rank; the junior will never forget it. This adage is just as true in social settings as it is in official relations. Adherence to this principle leads to ease and harmony.



## GENERAL CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

### SIR OR MA'AM

In addressing a uniformed superior, use the word "sir" or "ma'am." In the uniformed service, the matter of who says "sir" or "ma'am" to whom is clearly defined; in civilian life, it is largely a matter of discretion. The proper, natural, and graceful use of "sir" or "ma'am" is something that comes with training and experience in the USPHS. Some fall into the habit easily; others must work at it. It is always used when speaking either officially or socially to any senior officer. The word is repeated with each complete statement. "Yes" and "no" should not be used in speaking to a superior without "sir" or "ma'am."

### PLACE OF HONOR

Another uniformed custom dictates that you should always walk or sit to the left of your superiors. During the life of the United States, there have been firearms, but this was not always the case. For centuries, men fought with swords, and because most men are right-handed, the heaviest fighting occurred on the right. The shield was on the left arm, and the left side becomes defensive. Those who preferred to carry the battle to the enemy and who were proud of their fighting ability considered the right of a battle line to be a post of honor. Therefore, when an officer walks or sits on your right, he is symbolically filling the post of honor. As aide-de-camp, you will always walk a half step behind off the left shoulder, thereby placing your principal in the place of honor.

### NO EXCUSES

One of the most firmly established concepts of the uniformed service is the practice of accepting any task assigned and of accomplishing each task. In the event that some task might not be accomplished, it is traditionally expected that the individual assigned that task should not offer excuses to justify failure.

If the task in question was not accomplished for reasons which indicate that some part of the system is not functioning properly, then the aide has the obligation to point out these flaws in the system rather than to allow them to remain unnoticed in a misplaced sense of self-attempt to throw up a smokescreen behind which to conceal your own shortfalls. As aide-de-camp, you are the eyes and ears of your principal, which means that sometimes you will be required to be the bearer of bad news. Your professional judgement and discretion are key in making these determinations and briefing your principal accordingly.



### AIDE TIPS: DO'S AND DON'TS

#### DO'S:

- Carry paper and pencil
- Carry hard candy / cough drops
- Be concise
- Rehearse
- Walk on the left
- Keep an eye on the admiral's uniform
- Coordinate, anticipate, and verify
- Breathe!

#### DON'TS:

- "Wear the stars" of the admiral or forget your own rank
- Get lost or arrive late
- Look disheveled
- Chew gum
- Eat while walking
- Make excuses
- Be afraid to admit you made a mistake
- Lose or forget any of the principal's equipment

## WALKING

When walking, a junior officer does not precede a senior officer. The lower-ranking member should give the superior walking room, allowing the senior officer to stay on the right. The junior officer should stay in step with the senior officer.

As aide-de-camp, you will always walk a half-step behind off the left shoulder, placing your principal in the place of honor. You will become the shadow of your principal, meaning that you are always there but seldom noticed. This is a general rule; there may be situations where you need to be in front of your principal such as in cases where you will be calling “attention on deck.”

## “ATTENTION ON DECK”

It is a common practice, especially when meeting with groups of people in uniform, for the aide-de-camp to walk into a room ahead of their principal. First, scan the room quickly to see if there is a flag officer who outranks your principal. Second, use this opportunity to provide a friendly reminder that your flag officer is about to walk in. Typically, you first announce “standby.” That provides everyone in the room a moment to get situated since they know a flag officer is about to walk in. Once the flag officer enters the doorway, announce “attention” or “attention on deck.” The flag officer will typically say “at ease” or “carry on.” You never want to call a room to attention if your flag officer is of lower rank than someone already in the room. If you do make that mistake, just announce “please disregard.”

If you are around enlisted personnel or cadets, they will call the room to attention for any officer who enters the room. If they are working, one enlisted person will go to attention and greet you. Since USPHS does not have enlisted service members, this is just for your situational awareness. Below are a few examples of when to and not to call the room to attention.

## EXAMPLES:

- **DO:** If a 1-star flag officer is in the room and a 2-star flag officer walks in, do call the room to attention.
- **DO NOT:** If the Assistant Secretary for Health (4 stars) is already in the room and the Surgeon General (3 stars) walks in, do not call the room to attention.
- **DO NOT:** If the HHS Secretary is in the room and the Assistant Secretary for Health walks in, do not call the room to attention.



## GET UP!

One common custom that junior officers sometimes forget to do is stand. When a flag officer walks into a room or into your office, you need to stand EVERY TIME. As aide-de-camp, you will find yourself in a variety of situations; sometimes you may be the only person in uniform in the room; in those moments, use common sense and stand. The tradition of calling a room to attention is to let everyone know that a flag officer just entered the room. In a meeting in which people expect the Assistant Secretary for Health or the U.S. Surgeon General, officers should stand when they enter the room without a prompt. You do this out of respect for the rank.

## PHOTOGRAPHS

- Utilize professionalism and tact when taking photographs, and ensure that pictures are of appropriate quality.
- For an officer and your principal, ensure that the higher rank officer is standing on the right when facing the camera.
- For a group of officers and your principal, ensure that the highest ranked officer is in the center.

## ENTERING AND EXITING ELEVATORS

When arriving at the elevator, allow the flag officer to enter the elevator first. When exiting the elevator, allow flag officers to exit first. This is similar to vehicles in that the lower-ranking officer will exit last.

Please note that sometimes this is not practiced. If you leave the elevator before your flag officer due to the elevator being crowded, just wait by the elevator door to allow the flag officer to exit and follow appropriately. Also, you may need to leave before another officer who is more senior because at the end of the day, you should never lose your principal. Bottom-line: use common sense!

## WHILE RIDING IN A MILITARY VEHICLE

When officers of varied grades ride in a staff car or similar military vehicle, the senior officer sits in the right rear position. The next senior sits in the rear left, and the third senior sits in the front seat passenger side. A junior officer enters the vehicle first and takes the place on the left side. If officers enter the car from the left door, the junior would allow the senior member to enter first so the senior can take the place to the right.

If there are too many people to allow everyone to ride in the rear, the lowest-ranking officer will ride in the front and upon reaching the destination, will remain in place until the senior officers get out.

As aide-de-camp, you should always plan to ride in the front passenger seat. This allows you to confirm the address with the driver and be able to jump out to open the door for your principal.

## WHEN BOARDING AND LEAVING A MILITARY AIRCRAFT

Protocol dictates the order in which military members board and leave military aircraft. The protocol may vary slightly from base to base, but the standard practice is as follows: dependents of military personnel accompanied by their sponsors come first. Next to board are unaccompanied military members in descending order of grade. Very Important Persons (VIPs; normally colonels and above) board last and depart first.



## WHEN BOARDING AND LEAVING A NAVAL VESSEL

### General Boarding

When in uniform and boarding any ship and the national ensign is flying, you halt at the gangway, face aft, and salute the ensign. You then turn to the Officer on Duty (OOD) and salute.

When you salute the OOD, you say, "I request permission to come aboard, sir/ma'am" [if OOD is of higher rank]. You should then add the purpose of your visit: "to visit a friend" or "to go to small stores." The OOD returns the salute and says, "Come aboard" or a similar expression.

### Flag Officer Boarding

When you salute the OOD in boarding a ship after your flag officer, they typically know you are coming and have permission to board. In that case, you would say, "I have permission to come aboard,

sir/ma'am." The OOD returns the salute and says, "Come aboard" or a similar expression. Your flag officer would say the same thing. The ship will announce the boarding of your flag officer with the appropriate number of bells.

### General Departure

When you leave a ship, the order of saluting is reversed. You salute the OOD first and say, "I request permission to leave the ship, sir/ma'am, to [insert official activity here]." After receiving permission, you then face and salute the ensign (if flying) and depart.

### Flag Officer Departure

When you leave a ship with a flag officer, you salute the OOD first and say, "I have permission to leave the ship, sir/ma'am." Typically your flag officer would salute and provide a friendly greeting when departing the ship. The ship will announce the departure of your flag officer with the appropriate number of bells.



## COMMON SITUATIONS

Below are common situations you may find yourself in while serving in this position. It is important to note that each principal is an individual and may have specific preferences regarding the following situations. Below are general guidelines, but understand that each situation is unique, which is why proper planning can help mitigate any potentially embarrassing situations.

### MEALS / DINNERS

In general, the aide should not attend private dinners unless invited or cleared by the principal. There may be situations where your principal would like to attend alone, which is why it is important to have this discussion early in the planning process. You can use this time to discuss any food preferences, allergies, or intolerances, which can be communicated to the host. Next, you should schedule a discussion with the host to understand who will be at the event, what will be served, where people will be sitting, and the general timeline for the event. The host wants the event to be a success, which is why it is important to have proper planning.

If attending a dinner with your principal, it is important to recognize these common customs and courtesies:

- Do not sit before your principal during meals. There may be situations where this is not possible, so use common sense.
- Do not start eating before your principal or other high-ranking officials. Once they start eating, you can eat.
- Hosts will sometimes place you next to your principal during meals. If possible, recommend sitting at a different table or in a place where it is easy for you to see the face of your principal. This is helpful since during meals, they may look at you, give you a signal that it is time to leave, or that they need something such as a coin or business card.
- You are the bad guy! Recommend having a discussion with your principal on when they would like to leave. When that time arrives, you may need to tell the host that they need to depart. You will sometimes get pushback but your job is to make your principal look great while maintaining your schedule.

### AIDE TIPS: GENERAL ADVICE

- You speak for the principal:
  - Be cautious in your words. Any comment, positive or negative, can be viewed as that of the principal.
  - You cannot speak “off the record.”
  - Do not quote your principal’s thoughts as you perceived them.
  - Personal and sensitive conversations are not to be repeated.
- You do not wear the admiral’s stars. You must always be tactful when speaking to senior officers.
- Do not be late.
- Be a sounding board – give your honest opinion. Be smart and respectful but always honest. Your principal is counting on it.
- Do not forget that each principal is an individual. The previous aide is your best source for information on your new principal.
- Keep personal information confidential (credit cards, date of birth, social security number, etc.).

# CHAPTER 4: FLAG ETIQUETTE

**This section will provide guidance and tips on how to successfully display and post your principal's flag.**

Title 36, United States Code Chapter 10 governs flag etiquette and protocol. This law is intended to always maintain the U.S. National Flag in the position of honor whenever exhibited. Military tradition has added its own customs in addition to that outlined in the U.S. code. The presentation of Colors, otherwise known as flags, is performed in a variety of ceremonies such as promotions, retirements, awards, and changes of command. Regardless of the ceremony or venue, the Colors will be in the order of precedence/establishment.

Throughout history, the Colors were used to represent countries, distinguished governmental subdivisions, agencies, military units, officials, and functioned as forms of signaling devices. In times of battle, the position of flagbearer was awarded to those who possessed supreme levels of bravery, confidence, and loyalty. The flagbearer's mission was to carry the Colors, rally the forces, lead the charge, and protect the flags with their lives, if necessary. Armed guardsmen were often assigned a position flanking the flagbearer to ensure the defense of the flag, forming a color guard. As aide-de-camp, your role is to ensure that the colors are displayed correctly in order of precedence and that your principal's flag is posted prior to their speaking engagement.





## FLAG PRECEDENCE

As a general rule, regarding the placement of flags in a line, the higher rank flag is always to the right (left as you are looking at it) of the subordinate agency flag. The U.S. National Flag, also referred to as the National Ensign, is the highest ranking of all flags and is always to the right of all. Below is a list of ranking from highest to lowest.

- National Flag
- Foreign National Flags (in alphabetical order using the English alphabet)
- Flag of the President of the United States of America
- Flag of the Vice President of the United States of America
- State Flags
  - Normally, state flags are displayed in order of admittance of the State to the Union. However, they may also be displayed in alphabetical order using the English alphabet.
- Territorial Flags
  - These are displayed after the State flags either in the order they were recognized by the United States or alphabetically.
- Department Flags (USDA, HHS)
- Military Organizational Flags, by order of echelon; service flags in the order:
  - United States Army
  - United States Marine Corps
  - United States Navy
  - United States Air Force
  - United States Space Force
  - United States Coast Guard
  - Army National Guard of the United States
  - Army Reserve
  - Marine Corps Reserve
  - Naval Reserve
  - Air National Guard of the United States
  - Air Force Reserve
  - Coast Guard Reserve

- Uniformed Services
  - United States Public Health Service (USPHS)
  - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Personal Flags (by order of rank, Secretary Flag, Assistant Secretary for Health flag, Surgeon General flag, Admiral flag, SES flag)
- Other

### AIDE TIPS: FLAGS

- Keep a copy of the photos in your phone so that you can always ensure that the flags are in the correct order based on precedence.
- HHS/Secretary/DEPSEC flags: the eagle should be flying up. If flying down, the flag is backwards.
- USPHS flags: the anchor should always point towards the American flag. If not, the flag is backwards.
- Do not let the flags touch the ground.
- When moving and setting up the flags, it is good idea to have two people.



## USPHS Flags

USPHS order of precedence is as follows:

- USPHS Flag
- Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH)
- Principal Deputy Secretary of Health (PDASH)
- U.S. Surgeon General (SG)
- Deputy Surgeon General (DSG)
- Assistant Surgeon General (O-8)
- Assistant Surgeon General (O-7)



**USPHS FLAG**



**ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
FOR HEALTH**



**PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT  
SECRETARY FOR HEALTH**



**U.S. SURGEON GENERAL**



**DEPUTY SURGEON  
GENERAL**



**ASSISTANT SURGEON  
GENERAL (O-8)**



**ASSISTANT SURGEON  
GENERAL (O-7)**

## Examples

National Flag  
United States Army Flag  
United States Navy Flag  
United States Air Force Flag  
United States Coast Guard Flag  
USPHS Flag  
NOAA Flag  
Tricare Flag

National Flag  
HHS Flag  
USPHS Flag  
HHS Secretary Flag  
Assistant Secretary for Health Flag  
U.S. Surgeon General Flag  
Deputy Surgeon General Flag  
Assistant Surgeon General Flag

National Flag  
HHS Flag  
USPHS Flag  
Agency Flag (CDC, NIH)  
Admiral Flag and/or SES Flag



**FIGURE 4.1: Common flag setup:** U.S. National Flag, HHS Flag, USPHS Flag, U.S. Surgeon General Flag, Deputy Surgeon General Flag and Assistant



**FIGURE 4.2: Example of a Joint Services Ceremony depicting the following flags:** National Ensign, US Army, US Marine Corps, US Navy, US Air Force, US Coast Guard, US Public Health Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Tricare.

# REFERENCES & HANDOUTS

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This document utilized established Aide programs from the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Coast Guard. Their guidance greatly influenced the materials presented.

## GENERAL REFERENCES

- U.S. Navy Enlisted Aide Handbook – Quartermaster Corps:  
[https://quartermaster.army.mil/jccoe/Special\\_Programs\\_Directorate/Enlisted\\_Aide\\_web\\_documents/navy%20ea%20handbook.pdf](https://quartermaster.army.mil/jccoe/Special_Programs_Directorate/Enlisted_Aide_web_documents/navy%20ea%20handbook.pdf)
- Marine Corps Institute, Marine Aides Handbook:  
[https://quartermaster.army.mil/jccoe/Special\\_Programs\\_Directorate/Enlisted\\_Aide\\_web\\_documents/MARINE\\_AIDES\\_HANDBOOK.pdf](https://quartermaster.army.mil/jccoe/Special_Programs_Directorate/Enlisted_Aide_web_documents/MARINE_AIDES_HANDBOOK.pdf)
- Officer/Enlisted Aide Handbook – Quartermaster Corps:  
[https://quartermaster.army.mil/jccoe/Special\\_Programs\\_Directorate/Enlisted\\_Aide\\_web\\_documents/Senior%20Leader%20Aide%20Handbook%202009.pdf](https://quartermaster.army.mil/jccoe/Special_Programs_Directorate/Enlisted_Aide_web_documents/Senior%20Leader%20Aide%20Handbook%202009.pdf)
- United States Coast Guard: Special Command Aide Handbook:  
[https://quartermaster.army.mil/jccoe/Special\\_Programs\\_Directorate/Enlisted\\_Aide\\_web\\_documents/SCAP\\_Pub\\_Draft\\_v1.pdf](https://quartermaster.army.mil/jccoe/Special_Programs_Directorate/Enlisted_Aide_web_documents/SCAP_Pub_Draft_v1.pdf)

## CHAPTER 1: AIDE-DE-CAMP

- Marine Corps Enlisted Aide program: General Officer Guidebook:  
<https://www.barracks.marines.mil/Portals/74/Enlisted%20Aide%20Guidebook.pdf?ver=2016-11-07-101853-813>

## CHAPTER 2: UNIFORM GUIDANCE

- United States Public Health Service: Commissioned Corps Issuance System (CCIS):  
<https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/ccis/CCISToc.aspx?ShowTOC=Y>
- Navy Personnel Command:  
<https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/References/US-Navy-Uniforms/Uniform-Regulations/Chapter-5/5401-Aiguillettes-Brassards-Buttons/>

## CHAPTER 3: CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

- Social Usage and Protocol Handbook: A guide for Personnel of the U.S. Navy:  
<https://www.cmu.edu/nrotc/battalion/documents%20and%20directives/directives/1710.7a.pdf>
- Chapter 9 – Customs and Courtesies:  
[https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/navy/nrtc/12018\\_ch9.pdf](https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/navy/nrtc/12018_ch9.pdf)

## CHAPTER 4: FLAG ETIQUETTE

- US Public Health Service Commissioned Corps – Surgeon General's Honor Guard Drill and Ceremonies Manual:  
[https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/PDF\\_Docs/USPHS%20SGHG%20Drill%20and%20Ceremonies%20Manual.pdf](https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/PDF_Docs/USPHS%20SGHG%20Drill%20and%20Ceremonies%20Manual.pdf)
- Army Regulation 840-10 Heraldic Activities: Flags, Guidons, Streamers, Tabards, and Automobile and Aircraft Plates.  
<https://history.army.mil/html/forcestruc/docs/AR840-10.pdf>
- Department of Defense Directive: 1005.8: Order of Precedence of Members of Armed Forces of the United States When in Formations: [DoD Directive 1005.8, Certified Current as of November 21, 2003 \(floridalegion.org\)](https://www.floridalegion.org/)

# REFERENCE: SERVICE EQUIVALENT UNIFORM TABLE

EVENT WHEN WORN	ARMY	MARINE CORPS	NAVY	AIR FORCE	COAST GUARD	USPHS	CIVILIAN ATTIRE	
	FORMAL & DINNER DRESS UNIFORMS						GENTLEMEN	LADIES
Official formal evening functions, State occasions	Blue Mess/Evening Dress	Evening Dress "A"	Formal Dress	Mess Dress	Formal Dress	Formal Dress	Tuxedo / White Tie	Evening Gown
Private formal dinners or dinner dances	Blue Mess	Evening Dress "B"	Dinner Dress Blue Jacket		Dinner Dress Blue Jacket	Dinner Dress Blue Jacket	Tuxedo	
	White Mess	Evening Dress "B"	Dinner Dress White Jacket		Dinner Dress White Jacket	Dinner Dress White Jacket		
Less formal occasions requiring more formality than service uniforms	Army Blue (bow tie)	Blue Dress "A" or Evening Dress "B"	Dinner Dress Blue		Dinner Dress Blue	Dinner Dress Blue		Evening Gown/ Cocktail Dress
	Army White (bow tie)	Blue/White Dress "A" or Evening Dress "B"	Dinner Dress White		Dinner Dress White	Dinner Dress White		
<b>CEREMONIAL UNIFORMS</b>								
Parades, ceremonies, and reviews when special honors are being paid, or official visits of or to U.S. or foreign officials	Army Blue	Blue Dress "A"	Full Dress Blue	Service Dress	Full Dress Blue	Full Dress Blue	Civilian Informal	Civilian Informal
	Army White	Blue/White "A"	Full Dress White	Service Dress	Full Dress White	Full Dress White		
<b>SERVICE UNIFORMS</b>								
Business and informal social occasions as appropriate to local customs	Class "A"	Class "B"	Service Dress Blue	Service Dress	Service Dress Blue "A" / "B"	Service Dress Blue	Civilian Informal	Civilian Informal
	Class "A"	Blue/White "B"	Service Dress White	Service Dress	Service Dress White	Service Dress White		
	Class "B"	Service "C" / Blue Dress "D"	Service Khaki	Class B	Tropical Blue Long	Summer Khaki		
	Army Green/Class B	Service "C" / Blue Dress "D"	Summer White	Class B	Tropical Blue	Summer White		
<b>WORKING UNIFORMS</b>								
Working in field or plant environment where soiling of clothing is expected	Army Combat Uniform (ACU)	Marine Corps Combat Utility Uniform (MCCUU)	Aviation Working Green	Operational Camouflage Pattern (OCP)	Operational Dress Uniform (ODU)	Operational Dress Uniform (ODU)	Civilian Casual	Civilian Casual
	Army Combat Uniform (ACU)	Marine Corps Combat Utility Uniform (MCCUU)	Coveralls/Dungaree / Utility	Operational Camouflage Pattern (OCP)	Operational Dress Uniform (ODU)	Operational Dress Uniform (ODU)		
	Army Combat Uniform (ACU)	Marine Corps Combat Utility Uniform (MCCUU)	Working Khaki/ Dungaree	Operational Camouflage Pattern (OCP)	Operational Dress Uniform (ODU)	Operational Dress Uniform (ODU)		
Note: Some uniforms are optional, seasonal, or required for specific pay grades only. Check each Service's uniform regulations for specific guidelines.								



# U. S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE COMMISSIONED CORPS

## TEMPORARY AIDE-DE-CAMP HANDOUT

*A temporary aide-de-camp is an officer selected or requested by a flag officer (O-7 to O-10) to act as a personal assistant during a special event, conference, or short deployment. This is a unique detail position that is limited to a short period of time such as a day, a few weeks, or the length of a deployment. This role provides junior officers with an opportunity to learn and engage with flag officers and other senior leadership.*

### **GENERAL TIPS**

- Establish expectations early with the flag officer and/or support staff to ensure you can meet deliverables in a timely manner.
- At the beginning of the day, review the schedule of events with the flag officer.
- Do not be late. Be 15 minutes early; being on time is considered late. Do not make the flag officer wait for you. Be prepared and use the schedule as a guide so that you can take the appropriate breaks and ensure that the flag officer is not waiting on you.
- During a conference event, ensure that you have all the materials and badges and understand the layout of the conference to best support transitions between meetings.
- Personal and sensitive conversations are not to be repeated. Again, personal and sensitive conversations are not to be repeated.
- Do not “wear the admiral’s stars.” You must always be tactful and respectful when speaking to senior officers.
- Be a sounding board – give your honest opinion. Be smart and respectful but always honest.
- Remember that each principal is an individual. The previous aide is your best source for information on how best to support the flag officer.
- Lastly, when in an office environment, it is important to arrive before and depart after your principal. This will ensure you are prepared for the day and in a position to best support their duties.



**JOAG** | JUNIOR  
OFFICER  
ADVISORY  
GROUP

## UNIFORM TIPS

- Inspect your principal BEFORE events / meetings. Check alignment of devices and ribbons. Check for cleanliness or stains (post meal). Check zipper and buttons (post bathroom break). Consider carrying a lint brush and stain remover when possible. Any adjustments should be handled quietly and in private.
- Be mindful of gig-line alignment and always carry your principal's challenge coin.
- For jackets and sweaters, make sure that the aiguillette is under the epaulets. Summer Whites / Service Dress Whites ensure that the aiguillette is under the hard shoulder boards.
- Ensure you have all the prescribed uniforms for the event.

## AIGUILLETTE

When attaching the service aiguillettes to the uniform, bind the cords together lying flat, side by side, with a strip of 1-1/2 inch gold lace and fit with a clasp pin. Attach aiguillettes to the shoulder of the coat or Service Uniform shirt with the 1-1/2 inch gold lace centered on top of the shoulder with the 1-1/2 inch gold lace paralleled and up to the shoulder sleeve seam. The longest loop of the cords is worn on the inboard side closest to the wearer's body. Ensure that the aiguillette is beneath the epaulet or shoulder board.

# TEMPORARY AIDE-DE-CAMP HANDOUT

## WALKING

When walking, a junior officer does not precede a senior officer. The lower ranking member should give the superior walking room, allowing the senior officer to stay on the right. The junior officer should stay in step with the senior officer and walk a half step behind, off the left shoulder placing your principal in the place of honor.

You will become the shadow of your principal, meaning that you are always there but seldom noticed. This is a general rule; there will be many situations in which you need to be in front of your flag officer such as in cases where you will be calling "attention on deck."

## "ATTENTION ON DECK"

It is a common practice especially when meeting with groups of people in uniform for the aide-de-camp to walk into a room ahead of their flag officer. You do this for two reasons. First, use this opportunity to scan the room quickly to see if there is a flag officer that outranks your flag officer. Second, this provides a friendly reminder that your flag officer is about to walk in. Typically, you will announce "standby." That provides everyone in the room a moment to get situated since they know a flag officer is about to walk in. Once the flag officer enters the doorway, announce "Attention" or "Attention on deck." The flag officer will say "at ease" or "carry on." You never want to call a room to attention if your flag officer is of lower rank than someone already in the room. If you do make this mistake, just announce "please disregard."

If you are around enlisted personnel or cadets, they will call the room to attention for any officer that enters the room. If they are working, one enlisted person will go to attention and greet you. Since USPHS does not have enlisted airmen or soldiers, this is just for your situational awareness.

## ENTERING & EXITING ELEVATORS

When arriving at the elevator, allow the flag officer to enter the elevator first. When exiting the elevator, allow the flag officers to exit first. This is similar to vehicles in that the lower ranking officer will exit last.

Please note that sometimes this is not practical. If you leave the elevator before your flag officer due to the elevator being crowded, just wait by the door to allow the flag officer to exit and follow appropriately. Also, you may need to leave before another officer that is more senior because at the end of the day you should never lose your principal. Bottom-line: Use common sense!

## GET UP!

One common custom that junior officers sometimes forget to do is stand. When a flag officer walks into a room or into your office you need to stand EVERYTIME. You may wonder, why not yell "Attention" or "Attention on Deck." As aide-de-camp, you will find yourself in a variety of situations; sometimes, you may be the only person in uniform in the room, so in those moments use common sense and stand. The tradition of calling a room to attention is to let everyone know that a flag officer just entered the room. In a meeting in which people expect a flag officer, officers should stand when they enter the room without a prompt.

## REFERENCE: ADMIRAL UNIFORM - KHAKI



The center of the insignia is **1 inch** from the front and lower edge of the collar and positioned on the vertical axis of the insignia along an imaginary line bisecting the angle of the collar point (CCI 431.01).



The center of the insignia is **1 inch** from the front and lower edge of the collar and positioned on the vertical axis of the insignia along an imaginary line bisecting the angle of the collar point (CCI 431.01).



If authorized, the Officer in Charge badge is worn centered on the right pocket below the pocket flap. Female officers may wear the badge in this location or  $\frac{1}{4}$ " above the name tag (CCI 512.01).



If authorized, the HHS identification badge is worn centered on the left pocket below the pocket flap. Female officers may wear the badge in this location or may alternatively place the badge above the left pocket or ribbon (CCI 512.01).





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### REFERENCE

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