



NAME: CAPTAIN RAELENE SKERDA

JOB TITLE: TRANSFORMATION OPERATIONS  
OFFICER

AGENCY: OFFICE OF COMMISSIONED CORPS  
OPERATIONS – TRAINING SYSTEMS

**EDUCATION/DEGREES/CERTIFICATES/INSTITUTIONS:**

CAPT Raelene Skerda received her Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy at the University of Sciences in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1979. She also holds certifications in a variety of areas including American Pharmacist Association (APhA) Pharmacist Immunization; APhA Diabetes Education, Response Leadership Training, National Pharmaceutical Stockpile Training, Advanced Cardiac Life Support and Critical Reactions Aimed Towards Emergency Response Course (CRATER), a weapons of mass destruction training program.

**CURRENT JOB DESCRIPTION:**

As Transformation Operations Officer, CAPT Skerda serves as a member of a multidisciplinary team devoted to initiating the Transformation objectives as determined by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. These objectives entail a myriad of tasks including establishing and defining educational objectives and design for Commissioned Corps courses; consulting with differing agencies and Chief Professional Officers regarding course content, methods and design; coordinating with Uniformed Services University to utilize their expertise in design and delivery of USPHS Commissioned Corps educational programs; and lastly developing and implementing comprehensive educational program evaluation as well as outreach and marketing impact.

**QUALIFYING SKILLS FOR CURRENT POSITION:**

Previously, CAPT Skerda served as Northeast Regional Pharmacy Consultant for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, where she acted as the primary consultant to area/regional pharmacy program personnel on matters concerning pharmacy services. She also was the principal advisor to the Chief Bureau Pharmacist in all matters concerning pharmacy services and responsible for reviewing Area/Regional programs to assure that the quality of services meets established Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) standards. CAPT Skerda was heavily involved with recruitment as Northeast Coordinator which directed components of BOP Pharmacist recruitment, including coordinating externship sites, applicant contacts, and student rotations; and was responsible for updating and coordinating vacancy reports. Her interest in training was evident as she developed and presented "Introduction to Bureau of Prisons Pharmacy Policy and Procedure" at the

BOP Pharmacist Residency training in 2006 and with her adjunct faculty position with the Nesbitt College of Pharmacy.

**REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE USPHS AS A CAREER:**

CAPT Skerda cited opportunities for career progression as a major influence in her decision to join the USPHS. The “wearing of the uniform” and the challenges of becoming a service officer played a role in her decision as well. CAPT Skerda viewed her transformation from a private sector pharmacist to a USPHS pharmacist as going from “having a job to having a career”.

**PREVIOUS USPHS ASSIGNMENTS:**

CAPT Skerda served as Northeast Regional Pharmacy Consultant, Federal Bureau of Prisons as a collateral duty while acting as Chief Pharmacist of the U.S. Penitentiary in Allenwood, Pennsylvania, a high to maximum security Penitentiary serving more than 1100 male inmates, from 1997 to 2006. CAPT Skerda spearheaded a multitude of collateral duties during this time including serving as Pharmacy Professional Advisory Committee (PharmPAC) chair for 2 years; pharmacy category lead for Associate Recruiter Program; the primary point of contact for Wilkes University, Nesbitt School of Pharmacy, and secondary for the University of Sciences in Philadelphia, Philadelphia College of Pharmacy; the Deputy Director of pharmacist division of Rapid Deployment Response PHS-1 team; the past Team Leader for Region III for the National Pharmacist Response Team; and Adjunct Instructor of Pharmacy Practice, Wilkes University, Nesbitt College of Pharmacy.

**MOST REWARDING USPHS PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:**

CAPT Skerda cited her many TDY experiences as rewarding however her biggest sense of accomplishment came from her deployment to Baton Rouge, LA following Hurricane Katrina. As Chief Pharmacist Officer, she was responsible for the people, medical staff, and shelters in Shreveport receiving much needed resources and staffing. CAPT Skerda was also responsible for the deployment of pharmacy staff, scheduling and supplies. She felt that her prior study and training of the Office of Force Readiness and Deployment modules helped her in fulfilling this mission.

**OTHER PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS/ACTIVITIES:**

CAPT Skerda’s interest in physical fitness is evidenced by her servitude as Officer in Charge of Physical Fitness testing at her facility. She also organized an opportunity for USPHS pharmacist officers to qualify for the OFRD Physical Fitness Test at the Federal Bureau Prisons National Conference in September 2003. She enjoys attending and participating in national pharmacy conferences and has served as a delegate at several APhA national conventions.

*By LCDR Ryan Schupbach*