

PHS Youth Corps Summary

The state of our nation's health is becoming increasingly dependent on public health problems that are modified by behavioral changes. Lifestyle health problems stemming from diet/active lifestyle, accidents, sexual choices, and substance abuse, to name a few, often begin in childhood or adolescence, the exact time of life for cognitive and moral growth as well as identity formation.

Although our government publishes excellent public health literature designed to educate and encourage healthy behavior, there is a need for young persons to bring those messages to life, encouraging the healthy behavior of their peers. There is also a need to mentor and encourage those youth interested in becoming active and educated in health-related fields of interest.

The PHS is one of the Nation's only uniformed services without any youth program. Youth groups like those found in the Civil Air Patrol (Air Force Auxiliary), Sea Cadets (Navy), Young Marines and Devil Pups (Marine Corps), as well as civilian youth groups (Boy Scouts of America, Interact, etc.), could serve as models for creation of a PHS Youth Corps.

A PHS Youth Corps could at once train future health care leaders, provide a source of young volunteers for public health projects, educate and inform about the health system, provide an outlet for adult volunteers, and provide visibility for the Commissioned Corps. Through learning modules, encampments, and live presentations, Cadets could learn about careers in health fields, the PHS, emergency preparedness, and environmental health. They could also participate in public health initiatives through dissemination of information and any number of community projects designed to stimulate healthy living.

Properly planned, a PHS Youth Corps could be implemented gradually, making use of today's technology, for example, internet learning modules developed by Corps officers. PHS categories could partner with respective health organizations to stimulate civilian volunteerism. The PharmPAC, for example, could encourage its partners, APhA, ASHP, and other professional groups to call for volunteers from the ranks of practicing and retired pharmacists.

The concept of a PHS Youth Corps will be presented at the October 10, 2007, PharmPAC meeting for before it is raised for discussion for all categories at the next level.