



COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Local Branch Orientation
2025-2026

COA Local Branch Orientation Overview

- National COA
 - COA Staff, Board of Directors, National Committees
- Running a Local COA Branch
 - Branch Officers, Committee Structure, Meetings, Common Challenges
- Local Branch/National COA Interaction
 - Communication, Membership, Resources Available





COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

National COA: Staff, Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and Committees

National COA Mission:

To protect and enhance the public health and safety of the United States by supporting and advancing the interests of the Commissioned Corps and its officers.



COA/COF Staff



**Executive Director
Jacqueline Rychnovsky**

jrychnovsky@coausphs.org

**Chief Financial Officer
Teresa Hayden**

thayden@coausphs.org

**Membership Coordinator
Donna Sparrow**

dsparrow@coausphs.org

**Director of Administration
Erica Robinson**

erobinson@coausphs.org

**Director of External and
Legislative Affairs
Jasmine Stuart**

jstuart@coausphs.org

**Grants Manager
Annette Beadle
Contractor**

abeadle@coausphs.org



Points of Contact

Questions/ Request	Staff Point of Contact
Membership rosters	Donna
Bylaws	Donna
Local branch funds	Teresa/ Erica
Use of COA logo or letterhead	Jacque
State advocacy issues	Jasmine
Grants/ scholarships	Annette
Profile updates/ passwords	Donna
BOU forms	Donna



COA Local Branch Webpage

<https://www.coausphs.org/local-branches>



COA Local Branch Webpage

Sign In

Username

Password

Sign In

[Forgot username?](#) | [Forgot password?](#)

[Create a new account](#)



[About](#) [Membership](#) [Events](#) [Communities](#) [Advocacy](#) [Join or Renew](#) [Awards](#) [Frontline](#)

[Local Branches](#) [Donate to COF](#) [Benefit Hub](#) [COA Veterans Affairs](#)

Select or Manage Your Local Branch Affiliation

Start by logging in to your Member Account. Please remit applicable local dues upon affiliation at renewal. Already renewed? Please email coamembership@coausphs.org to request to be added to a local branch. If you are enrolled in payroll deduction, please contact [COA](#) for assistance.

Resources for Effective Local Branches

[Local Branch Handbook](#)- The key guide for all local branch leaders and officers want to start a new local branch

[Branch Officer Update Form](#)- BOU (this form must be completed following branch officer elections each year)



COA Local Branch Webpage

[Local Branch Committee SOP](#) - Standard Operating Procedures for the COA Local Branch Committee

[Local Branch Bylaws suggested template](#) – This fillable PDF can be used by officers who are submitting an application to form a new branch

[COA Membership Talking Points](#) – Emphasize the value of COA to prospective members

[Branch Leadership Orientation](#) – Incorporates COA policy and suggestions for a successful Local Branch

[Do's and Don'ts](#) - Tips for recruiting new members of COA

[Local Branch of the Year Award](#) – Nomination information

[Certificate of Appreciation Template](#)

[Draft template](#) to request use of the USPHS logo for Local Branch apparel and similar items

COA Logos

PNG Files [Logo \(Full Color\)](#) [Logo \(Gold\)](#) [Logo \(White\)](#) [Favicon](#)

JPG Files [Logo \(Full Color\)](#) [Logo \(Gold\)](#) [Favicon](#)

COA Photo Consent Form

COA appreciates when officers submit photos of themselves and branches at volunteer and social events for COA to use on our website, in Frontline, or on social media. If you would like to submit a photo for COA to use in the future, please email that photo and a [COA Photo Consent Form](#) to coa.comm.pr@gmail.com





COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
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National COA Executive Committee & Board of Directors

National COA Executive Committee & Board of Directors

- **Executive Committee**

- CAPT Kurt Kesteloot, Board Chair
- LCDR Chris Mendoza-Truong, Chair-Elect
- CDR Alyssa Givens, Treasurer
- CDR Kathryn Jacques, Past Chair
- Jacque Rychnovsky, COA/COF Executive Director

- **Board of Directors (18)**

- Representatives from each Commissioned Corps category (11) plus field (3), reserve (1), and retired officers (3)
- Serve as COA Committee Chairs & Vice-Chairs



Board of Directors

2025-2026

Dental	CAPT Renee Joskow	Therapist	CDR Kathryn Jacques
Dietitian	CDR Jenna Cope	Veterinarian	CDR Angelina Williams
Engineer	CAPT Kurt Kesteloot	Field Rep	LCDR Rachel Forche
EHO	CDR Kazu Okumura	Field Rep	CDR Lashley Hatch
HSO	CAPT Neelam Ghiya	Field Rep	CDR Carissa Haney
Medical	CDR Melissa Reyes	Ready Reserve	LT Jesse Samluk*
Nurse	CDR Alyssa Givens	Retired	CAPT (Ret.) Margaret Riggs
Pharmacist	LCDR Chris Mendoza-Truong	Retired	CAPT (Ret.) Terry Hoffeld
Scientist	CAPT Tracy Powell	Retired	CAPT (Ret.) Holly Williams



National COA Executive Committee & Board of Directors (cont.)

- **Mission:**
 - To execute the COA mission and objectives and provide strategic and operational leadership to COA and its Committees through facilitating decision-making between board meetings



National COA Committees

- Awards
- Communication & Public Relations
- Constitution and Bylaws
- Legislative Affairs
- Local Branch
- Outreach
- Retired Officers



Getting to Know: Local Branch Committee

LCDR Rachel Forche
Chair



CDR Lashley "Lash"
Hatch
Vice Chair



Getting to Know: Local Branch Committee



LCDR Sara Blackmon



LCDR Miaka Huynh



LCDR Tuan Nguyen



LT Tiffany Addison



LT Alexis Roberts



LT Triet Tran



NationalCOALocalBranch@gmail.com





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Running a Local COA Branch

Roles of Branch Officers

Roles of Branch Officers: President

- **President**
 - Serves as chief elected officer
 - Runs branch meetings
 - Appoints standing and special committees
 - Primary point of contact with National COA
 - Other duties as necessary
 - May request branch roster from Donna Sparrow



Roles of Branch Officers: Vice President

- **Vice-President or President-Elect**
 - Assumes all roles of President in his/her absence
 - Typically leads at least one standing committee
 - Completes Branch Officer Update Form
 - Other duties as necessary
 - Note: Vice-President vs. President-Elect
 - President-Elect automatically assumes role of President in following year
 - Not automatically so for Vice-President



Roles of Branch Officers: Secretary

- **Secretary**
 - Notify membership of all meeting and activities
 - Record and distribute minutes of meetings (provide to national COA for file)
 - Maintains accurate list of all branch members (cross-check with Membership Directory, with help of President)
 - Maintains files, records, and equipment belonging to the branch
 - May want to delegate some of these roles in large branches



Roles of Branch Officers: Treasurer

- **Treasurer**

- Maintains records of all funds received and disbursed by the branch
- Request branch dues disbursed by national COA
- Makes disbursements of money as authorized
- Maintains accounts with a local financial institution
- Prepares branch budgets
- Recommends new or revised financial policies
- If local branch is incorporated as a non-profit, may need to prepare information for IRS on an annual basis



Roles of Branch Officers: Optional Roles

- **Past-President (optional)**
 - Good idea to keep previous President on Executive Committee
- **Succession Planning**
 - Use of President-Elect rather than Vice-President allows for smooth transition in leadership
 - Use of Past-President further enhances continuity of operations and institutional memory



Committees & Meetings

Local Branch Committees

- Branches should form committees as desired to meet their goals; here are some examples to consider:
 - Membership
 - Education
 - Community Outreach/Service
 - Mentoring
 - Officer Readiness
 - Athletics
 - Merchandise/Fundraising
 - Communications
 - Awards
 - Finance
 - Newsletter
 - Events



Local Branch Meetings

- Local Branch meetings are an opportunity to discuss local branch goals, plans, activities, business, and finances; can also feature special topics
 - Business Meetings: regularly scheduled (e.g., monthly or quarterly); agenda and meeting minutes; may include special topics/presentations or guest speakers
 - Social Meetings: less structured than regularly-occurring business meetings; e.g., working dinner meeting; luncheon with guest speaker



Local Branch Events

- Local Branch events should assist in developing and promoting camaraderie; can also help with career progression
 - Restaurant night out for officers and their families
 - Annual picnic
 - Bowling/putt-putt/golf
 - Crochet club
 - CV workshop
 - BLS classes



Community Outreach

- Community outreach is a large component of local branch activity
 - Events sponsored by the branch with a positive impact on the community
 - Adopt-a-Highway cleanup
 - Judging local science fair
 - Renovating a local playground
 - Educational health booth at a local event
 - Thanksgiving meal distribution
 - Refer to the Branch Handbook for more information



Important Local Branch Topics: Challenges, Bylaws, Finances, Legal

Common Challenges Facing Local Branches

- Lack of motivation of local Corps officers to participate in branch functions
- Difficulty raising funds for branch activities or for community outreach
- Finding new ways to participate in community activities / being relevant in the community
- Many of these issues are addressed in the “Local Branch Handbook” document on the Local Branch Resources page



Bylaws

- Each existing local branch should have, maintain, and regularly update their own bylaws
- Newly proposed branches must submit proposed bylaws as part of their branch application
- Can use template provided by Constitution & Bylaws Committee, or can create your own



Financial Information

- Financial Independence
- Treasurer and President have authority to make financial transactions
- Bank accounts (savings, checking) in name of local branch is encouraged
- Setting and collection of dues
- Operating costs



Fundraising

- Primary source of funds for most branches is local dues
 - Local Branch dues are collected by National COA
 - Make sure your local members have accurate branch affiliation with National COA collected by national COA
 - Treasurer emails Erica Robinson (erobinson@coausphs.org) to request branch funds; request must come from branch email, not personal or work email address
- Fundraising may be conducted to fund local branch activities or to support charitable organizations
 - Examples: raffles, selling COA memorabilia (coins, t-shirts), requests for donations for charitable projects



Legal/Liability

- Incorporation
- Income Tax Exemption
- Restrictions on Political Activity
- Liability Insurance
- Public Relations
- Refer to Branch Handbook (pages 13-16) for details on the above topics



Local Branch & National COA Interaction

Required Reporting

*****Submit Branch Officer Update Form to COA every year after local branch elections!*****

- Complete annual branch form online: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6898XTQ>
- Branch President must complete and submit the form
 - Complete ASAP after elections are held and results are announced
 - Incoming branch leaders must be dues-paying members of COA
- **Best Practice:** Include branch name in “subject line” for all emails to COAS



Membership

- Local branches have a mission to encourage local Corps officers to join COA both at the local and National level
 - Effective outreach should include education about COA and its mission, explain incentives for membership
- Benefits of local COA branch membership:
 - Camaraderie, *esprit-de-Corps*
 - Leadership opportunities
 - Active participation can help with career development
 - Community outreach good for community and good for the Corps



Membership

- Benefits of National COA Membership:
 - Legislative Advocacy & Capitol Hill representation
 - PHS Symposium (membership discount)
 - COA *Frontline* (option to opt out of paper copy)
 - COA Benefit Hub
 - Discounted insurance programs
 - Discounted degree programs & CPH exam
 - Junior officer scholarships
 - Family member scholarships
- Official recognition for participation in COA-sponsored events (i.e., Certificates or Letters of Appreciation) should be offered only to local branch members in good standing (i.e., current dues paid)
- The “COA Membership Talking Points” document, on the Local Branch Resources of the COA website, provides additional ways to encourage COA membership.



COA *Frontline*

- The *Frontline* is COA's monthly publication about members of COA and the Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF) (10x/year – Jan/Feb and June/July are merged issues)
- The *Frontline* is an excellent way to for Local Branches around the country to showcase what they are doing and share with other COA members
 - Consider submitting articles about your branch's community outreach efforts, networking events, etc.
- **Submission instructions:** Email Frontline@coausphs.org by the 15th of each month; articles are accepted for submission year-round
- [Frontline Publication Guidelines](#)

***Note: All authors and PHS officers mentioned in articles must be current COA members*



Resources

- Track and encourage National COA membership
 - Donna Sparrow, Membership Coordinator, dsparrow@coausphs.org
 - Ensure COA members log in to the COA website to update their personal information (e.g., rank, address, manage branch affiliation)
 - For information on National COA membership benefits and dues rates, visit coausphs.org
- Support for branch issues or concerns
 - NationalCOALocalBranch@gmail.com
 - [COA Local Branch Resources website](#)
 - [COA Branch Handbook](#)
 - Respective Branch Bylaws
 - COA Staff
 - End of year Local Branch Checklist



Key POCs

- **Executive Director:** CAPT (Ret.) Jacque Rychnovsky, USN
- **Membership:** Donna Sparrow
- **Local Branch:** LCDR Rachel Forche, CDR Lash Hatch
- **Awards:** CDR Melissa Reyes, CDR Kazu Okumura & LCDR Angelina Williams
- **Communications & Public Relations:** CDR Jenna Cope & CDR Alyssa Givens
- **Constitution & Bylaws:** CAPT Neelam Ghiya & CAPT Tracy Powell
- **Legislative Affairs:** LT Jesse Samluk
- **Outreach:** CAPT Renee Joskow & CDR Carissa Haney
- **Retired Officers:** CAPT (Ret.) Margaret Riggs, CAPT (Ret.) Terry Hoffeld, & CAPT (Ret.) Holly Williams





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THANK YOU!