

Reminder for Planning and Obtaining Health Care

February 2016

NOAA Corps officers are required to familiarize themselves with sick leave, convalescent leave and maternity leave policies and procedures covered in the NOAA Corps Directives (NCD), Chapter 6, Part 4. Since NOAA Corps follows the medical guidelines set forth in the USGC Medical Manual (COMDTINST M6000.1F August 2014; http://www.uscg.mil/directives/cim/6000-6999/CIM_6000_1F.pdf) regarding medical fitness for duty, NOAA Corps officers should consult this resource as well.

As prescribed in NCD 03101, officers are responsible for providing complete information regarding matters of their health to CPC's Medical Administration Branch (MAB) as soon as the officer becomes aware or is advised of a new health condition and for following any treatment plan established. Therefore, it is your responsibility to submit all medical records from all medical providers and other related medical visits as soon as possible after they occur. Medical records serve as supporting documentation of any service related injuries or illnesses and is used to determine your medical eligibility for permanent appointment, promotion (Part 3, NCD 04302, Physical Qualifications, page 21) and sea/dive/aviation duty. Medical records that are needed/required by CPC include much more than just what written information the officer is provided at the time of the appointment.

Many medical care facilities have an electronic patient portal where medical information can be retrieved by the patient. These sites do not contain all the medical information that is needed or required by MAB. Consequently, it is best to sign a formal release of medical information at the time of your appointment or visit for release of ALL medical records (this may be needed for each visit). You should follow-up in person or by phone call in a week to monitor progress.

All medical records include, but are not limited to: operative notes, physician progress notes, nurses' notes, lab test and x-ray results, diagnostic procedures, admission and/or discharge summaries, and emergency room records. **All such documents must be submitted via the Medical OPF or mail as soon as they are available after each medical appointment (usually one week) to the Commissioned Personnel Center's Medical Administration Branch (MAB).** The following examples **do not** meet this requirement and include but are not limited to: (1) waiting until you have completed all medical visits for a particular issue and then sending all medical records to MAB, (2) personal acceptance of diagnosis/testing results/recommendations before sending all medical records to MAB, (3) submitting a physician's note or letter only that provides a fitness for duty recommendation, (4) postponing submission of all medical records for any reason except when negotiated previously with MAB and/or the Director of Health Services (DHS). Failure to provide all the medical information and/or failure to provide this information when requested will delay any official change in your fitness for duty status, release of orders for upcoming PCS/PCA (if applicable), and potentially place you in an Absence Without Leave (AWOL) status and CPC will be notified. NOAA's medical personnel do not have access to DoD's electronic medical records systems (AHLTA or other). DoD's electronic medical records are only accessible to MTF medical providers and you, the patient.

At the time of your appointment or emergency room visit you should obtain from the physician his/her recommendation for duties or physical activity restriction(s). This recommendation must be submitted **immediately** to the MAB. All other medical documents are submitted as soon as they are available.

If you are planning a medical procedure, surgery, or other medical treatment you should first consult the USCG Medical Manual COMDTINST M6000.1F dated August 2014, Chapter 3, Section F, and it is your responsibility as an officer to do this. There are certain procedures/surgeries/treatments that require specific follow-up testing or require a certain amount of time to pass or in order to document the stability of your medical condition before your return to duty can be considered. One example is corneal refractive surgery. If you are unable to locate your procedure, surgery, or treatment in this manual or have questions, please contact CAPT Jane Powers, Director of Health Services, at (office) 541-867-8821 or by e-mail at Jane.Powers@noaa.gov. All elective procedures, surgeries, and/or treatments should be planned far enough in advance to allow for the resolution of any complications and performed at a time and far enough in advance as not to interfere with the mission of the ships/aircraft and schedules. It is also advisable to consult your Command or supervisor when planning time off for medical care.