

U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 29, 2021

MEDCoE, FORT SAM HOUSTON, JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

CONTACT: TISH WILLIAMSON, DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

OFFICE: 210-221-8475/8472 or CELL: 210-336-0449 EMAIL: usarmy.jbsa.medical-coe.mbx.dcomm@mail.mil

U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence hosts large outdoor, open graduation ceremony

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas – On Tuesday August 3, 2021, at 8:30 a.m., the U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence (MEDCoE), U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), hosts the first large-scale, outdoor open graduation since the COVID-19 pandemic began. With the local case rates increasing at the time, community attendance at MEDCoE graduations was suspended on March 13, 2020, to help prevent the spread of the virus.

On July 9, MEDCoE conducted a pilot graduation for 14 soldiers and has hosted several indoor graduations since full implementation of COVID mitigated open graduations on July 16. Tuesday's graduation will be the first return to Fort Sam's largest outdoor venue, the MacArthur Parade field, directly across from MEDCoE headquarters.

Over 200 soldiers from Echo Company, 232nd Medical Battalion, 32nd Medical Brigade, will receive certificates for completing their Advanced Individual Training (AIT), graduating as fully qualified 68W Combat Medics. 68W Combat Medics are the second largest Military Occupational Specialty in the U.S. Army.

The graduation guest speaker will be Sgt. Maj. Christopher Felchle, Chief Medical Noncommissioned Officer, Capability Development Integration Directorate, U.S. Army Futures Command (AFC). Additionally Maj. Gen. Dennis P. LeMaster, MEDCoE Commanding General, along with Command Sgt. Major Clark J. Charpentier, MEDCoE Command Sergeant Major, will be available for media interviews.

Families and friends are expected for the event and may be able to visit with their soldiers immediately following graduation as long as it does not conflict with permanent change of station, or PCS, travel. The ceremony is invite only. All invited guests must demonstrate proof of being fully vaccinated and are required to wear masks during the ceremony and while they are in unit areas.

The large open outdoor ceremony marks a milestone in MEDCoE's ongoing process of mitigating COVID-19 while continuing to provide quality training for the Army's medical professionals since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

MEDCoE is the Army's component for medical training and education. They run 257 courses for 96 officer and warrant officer medical areas of concentration and 24 enlisted medical military occupational specialties, or MOSs, annually. While operating under COVID conditions, MEDCoE executed over 95% of their courses and graduated over 30,000 students in varying specialties ranging from doctors, nurses, and physician assistants to radiologists, medical logistic specialists, and animal care technicians along with combat medics.

News media interested in covering the graduation ceremony are asked to contact MEDCoE Public Affairs at usarmy.jbsa.medical-coe.mbx.dcomm@mail.mil or call 210-336-0449 no later than noon, August 2, 2021, in order to arrange access to Fort Sam Houston. Inclement weather location is the Academic Support Building. For additional information on MEDCoE graduations visit <https://medcoe.army.mil/graduations> and MEDCoE news article at <https://www.army.mil/article/247713>.

U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence



PHOTO CAPTION:

210628-A-WK488-018

Spc. Cole Westfall, holds his 68P Radiology Specialist phase I course completion certificate as he hugs his spouse, Sarah Westfall after the U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence (MEDCoE) pilot graduation ceremony on June 28, 2021. Westfall will now attend his phase II training Brooke Army Medical Center, Fort Sam Houston. Westfall was one of 14 Advanced Individual Training (AIT) students who were celebrated in the first open graduation since public graduations were suspended in March 2020 due COVID-19 concerns. (Photo Courtesy: Jose E. Rodriguez, MEDCoE Public Affairs)

