

## Chapter 43

# ROLE OF THE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT AS THE ARMY MEDICAL SPECIALIST CORPS PERSONNEL PROPONENCY OFFICER

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## Introduction

The physician assistant (PA) filling the position as the Army Medical Specialist (SP) Corps personnel proponency officer (PPO), located at the Army Medical Department (AMEDD) Personnel Proponent Directorate (APPD), Medical Center of Excellence (MEDCoE), Joint Base San Antonio–Fort Sam Houston, Texas, holds a critical role for the SP Corps and the AMEDD. PAs are uniquely suited for the SP position given their vast experience in both table of organization and equipment (TO&E) and table of distribution and allowances (TDA) units at senior levels, in which they are required to work closely with and understand the responsibilities and requirements of all other SP professions. Also, PAs are adept in conducting analysis and research to inform AMEDD personnel initiatives. The briefs and papers the SP PPO prepares are heavily weighted as critical at AMEDD and Army senior leader decision points. The SP PPO's analysis undoubtedly shapes and influences the future of the AMEDD.

## Unit Structure

The APPD is a directorate organic to the MEDCoE. At APPD, each AMEDD corps is represented by a PPO, filled at the lieutenant colonel or colonel rank. The SP PPO is rated by the APPD's director and senior-rated by the MEDCoE's deputy commanding general. APPD also assists in conducting analysis for other MEDCoE directorate initiatives, and

the SP PPO answers questions requiring analysis for units outside of its organic structure, such as the Office of the Surgeon General (OTSG), the US Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), and Army Human Resource Command (HRC).

## **Skills and Attributes**

The SP PPO requires a self-starting, critical thinking officer who can build on existing relationships and negotiate and collaborate effectively with AMEDD leaders, while ensuring that personnel lifecycle management functions are integrated in all decisions and changes to doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership/education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P). The position requires prior leadership or senior staff experience and the following attributes:

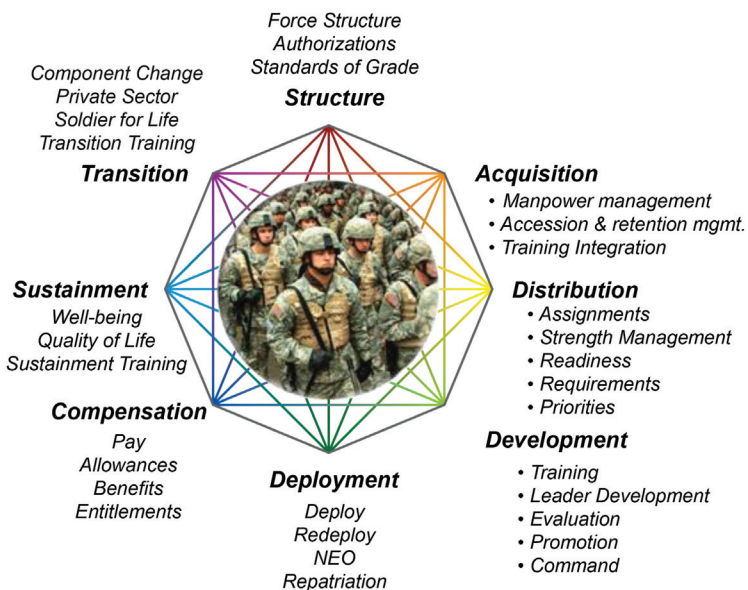
- knowledge of AMEDD and military medicine administrative functions across the TDA and TO&E;
- competence in the Microsoft Office Suite, especially Excel and PowerPoint;
- ability to prioritize;
- effective decision-making skills;
- ability to identify and mitigate adverse second- and third-order effects;
- knowledge of personnel database systems such as the Force Management System Web (FMSWEB), Medical Operational Data Systems (MODS), and Total Officer Personnel Management Information System (TOPMIS);
- general knowledge of statistical analysis;
- effective verbal and written communication skills, including the ability to produce cogent and persuasive written materials for diverse audiences; and
- ability to resolve and manage conflict.

Additionally, the SP PPO must have completed the following training:

- Organizational Research and Systems Analyst (ORSA) Military Applications Course,
- Force Management Orientation Course, and
- the “How The Army Runs” course.

## Duties and Responsibilities

When APPD, other MEDCoE directorates, or outside units recommend changes to DOTMLPF-P, the SP PPO analyzes the recommendations from a personnel developer lens to ensure that personnel lifecycle management functions will survive the recommended change. During any recommended SP Corps change analysis, the SP PPO must understand and support eight personnel lifecycle management functions (Figure 43-1) as described in AR 600-3, *The Army Personnel Development System*.<sup>1</sup> Prior to making any recommendation, the SP PPO must carefully consider other subjects, including applicable laws and regulations (US Code Title 10 and 32)<sup>2</sup>; force structure authorizations (as determined by Total Army Analysis and the planning, programming,



**Figure 43-1.** The personnel development system lifecycle management functions described in AR 600-3, *The Army Personnel Development System*. Graphic developed by the Army Force Management School, Ft Belvoir, VA.

budgeting and execution process); accession requirements (per AR 601-100, *Appointment of Commissioned and Warrant Officers in the Regular Army*)<sup>3</sup>; training requirements (as determined by the Army Program for Individual Training with input from the Structure and Manning Decision Review; AR 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*<sup>4</sup>; and AR 351-3, *Professional Education and Training Programs of the Army Medical Department*)<sup>5</sup>; promotion and or manning requirements such as annual Army manning guidance and the surgeon general's annual manning guidance; specific SP Corps guidance; and other initiatives or input from higher headquarters.

The SP PPO also has many “battle rhythm” requirements. The SP PPO works with in-house ORSAs to develop monthly SP Corps histograms, which are important and informative charts that give a snapshot of the current state of each SP Corps areas of concentration (AOC), including promotion year groups and personnel strength. These factors are compared to Title 10 personnel requirements and displayed graphically to visually inform personnel shortages or overages at certain ranks. Another SP PPO responsibility is preparing promotion board requirement recommendations for all SP Corps promotion boards, which may include histograms and Title 10 promotion limits. The SP PPO briefs these recommendations to the SP Corps chief for a final decision to be included in promotion board memoranda of instruction.

Additionally, the SP PPO gathers and evaluates personnel and manpower data, identifies issues, develops initiatives, and recommends force structure changes utilizing force-modeling techniques. The SP PPO analyzes and predicts accession needs, training requirements, potential future promotion rates, and the impact of proposing staffing changes or initiatives. The SP PPO coordinates with Army Reserve and Army National Guard PPOs to ensure PPO consistency across the total AMEDD. The SP PPO maintains coordinating staff relationships with OTSG, Medical Command (MEDCOM), USAREC, HRC, and Department of the Army deputy chief of staff for personnel (DA G-1) proponents responsible for force structure and personnel policy changes.

## **Lessons Learned**

A key lesson learned is to rapidly develop a keen understanding of the other AMEDD corps and their respective AOCs, as well as the other SP Corps AOCs (65A, 65B, 65C, and 65X [SP immaterial]). In

addition, the SP PPO should work closely with the SP corps-specific proponent officer and the SP corps representative assigned as the capability developers.

## **Tips for Success**

Some key tips for success in excelling as the SP PPO are attending the Capability Developers Course and the “How the Army Runs” course before or upon assuming the SP PPO role. In addition, the SP PPO must develop a thorough understanding of Microsoft Office applications, including PowerPoint, Excel, and Access. The SP PPO must be confident with public speaking and consulting senior AMEDD leaders as required. Other important tips include adhering strictly to all battle rhythm analysis to meet the given suspense; working closely with the available ORSAs; remaining confident in the analysis but always checking and re-checking the work; and being an “honest broker” with the information (not “spinning” the analysis to meet an agenda).

## **Conclusion**

The SP PPO is a fantastic career opportunity for the PA and provides a behind-the-scenes view of many aspects of the SP Corps and the 30-year career lifecycle. The SP PPO has an opportunity to work with the corps chief, deputy corps chief, and the different AOC consultants to influence the multitude of emerging AMEDD and Army-wide initiatives. The PA PPO holds the critical position of conducting analysis to provide senior leaders the information needed to inform decisions.

## **References**

1. US Department of the Army. *The Army Personnel Development System*. HQDA; September 16, 2019. Army Regulation 600-3.
2. US Code, Title 10, Armed Forces, and Title 32, National Guard.
3. US Department of the Army. *Appointment of Commissioned and Warrant Officers in the Regular Army*. HQDA; November 21, 2006. Army Regulation 601-100.

4. US Department of the Army. *Army Training and Leader Development*. HQDA; December 10, 2017. Army Regulation 350-1.
5. US Department of the Army. *Professional Education and Training Programs of the Army Medical Department*. HQDA; October 15, 2007. Army Regulation 351-3.