

Chapter 51

ROLE OF THE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT IN ARMY MEDICAL RECRUITING

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Introduction

A US Army Physician Assistant (PA) may be assigned as an Army Medical Department (AMEDD) health care recruiter. An AMEDD recruiting officer is responsible for leading a team of noncommissioned officers (NCOs) in recruiting the best medical professionals for the Army to sustain and maintain a healthy fighting force. As a leader first and recruiter second, the PA recruiter implements plans and actions to make the team a successful contributor to the overall mission set by the US Army Recruiting Command (USAREC). The PAAMEDD recruiter serves as a medical subject matter expert for the medical recruiting brigade, and as a mentor for new AMEDD officers.

Duties and Responsibilities

The job duties and responsibilities of the PA in AMEDD recruiting are based on the USAREC mission and the officer's role as leader or officer in charge (OIC) of a small team of NCO recruiters. In AMEDD recruiting, Medical Specialist Corps officers are placed in a leadership position at the medical recruiting station (MRS).

USAREC has one medical recruiting brigade (MRB), comprised of five medical recruiting battalions (MRBns), each of which contains three to five companies of four to seven MRSs,¹ as depicted in Figure 51-1. To ensure complete nationwide coverage, every battalion, company, and MRS is located in a strategic regional location. Depending on the

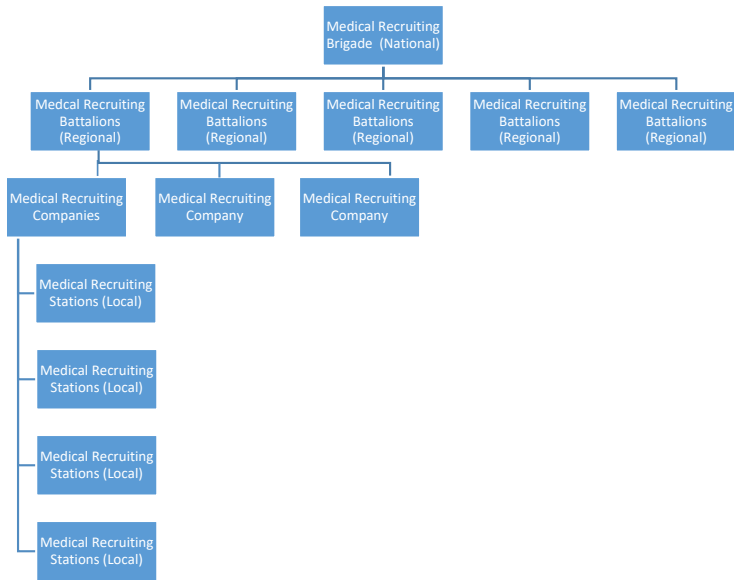


Figure 51-1. The medical recruiting organizational chart. The number of companies and medical recruiting stations may vary.

size and population density of the office’s territory, each MRS has a station OIC, a station commander (the senior NCO), and one to seven NCO recruiters.

Before each fiscal year begins, USAREC assigns an annual medical recruiting mission assignment (USAREC Form 711) to the MRB, which details the specific positions needed to ensure optimal health care of the US Army.² These positions include areas of concentration from the Medical Corps, Nurse Corps, Dental Corps, Veterinary Corps, Medical Service Corps, and Specialist Corps. The MRB disseminates recruiting assignments to the MRBns, who apportion them to the companies, using historical and geographical data to facilitate mission achievement. Each company then meets with their MRSs and gives them specific mission assignments. Each MRS mission specifies the number of health care professional recruits needed for the year by area of concentration

and component (regular Army and Army Reserve). These recruiting missions will include student programs such as the Health Professions Scholarship Program.

PAs in recruiting serve as one of the five Specialist Corps representatives in USAREC and are the only Specialist Corps representative for each regional MRBn. Being one of the few Army health care recruiters with professional clinic experience, PAs are indispensable for attracting top health care professionals at a high level (Figure 51-2). PA skills and experiences used at the national recruiting level help develop and implement effective recruitment strategies.

According to the Total Army Involvement in Recruiting (TAIR) Program, the entire US Army supports recruiting efforts.² Funding is available for recruiting activities involving subject matter experts from throughout the Army health care team. Subject matter experts convey a rich appreciation for the accomplishments of the Army health care team to civilians.



Figure 51-2. Then-Captain Kelly A. Guerra, MPAS, PA-C, Valencia AMEDD Recruiting Center OIC, Valencia, CA, meets a physician assistant student at Western University’s Physician Assistant Career Expo and discusses opportunities for student loan repayment and bonuses in the Army.

Once a potential recruiting lead demonstrates interest, it is the responsibility of the MRS to provide information about the benefits and opportunities of Army health care to engender their commitment and turn them from a prospect into an applicant. The MRS team works with the applicant to accomplish all required tasks so their packet is ready for the next selection board. If selected, the MRS will complete the commissioning ceremony, turning that health care professional into an AMEDD officer. The OIC plays a vital role of mentoring the new AMEDD officer until they successfully integrate into their first active duty or Army Reserve unit.³

USAREC needs the expertise of all AMEDD officers for local, state, and national events to inspire health care professionals to join the Army health care team. AMEDD officers with an interest in supporting this vital mission should contact their branch manager and volunteer to assist in health care recruiting events. Supporting the USAREC mission involves networking with military and civilian leadership throughout the nation and speaking to civilian health care professionals and students who demonstrate curiosity about Army medicine. It may include attending professional events as an AMEDD subject matter expert or talking with prospects in person, on the phone, or electronically. Performing commissioning events at major regional events honors new AMEDD officers and may motivate other potential Army health care prospects.

To fulfill the recruiting mission, the station OIC must perform the following duties:

- Mission planning—plan and conduct research and events to attract interested students or future Army health care professionals.
- Market management and analysis—use the tools provided by the respective battalion operations section, conduct research, and optimize market and demographics penetration. To find the most qualified students and health professionals, recruiters must determine where they live, work, and attend college.
- Quarterly and annual “battle rhythm” development—devise plans to ensure active pursuit of required new positions and maintenance of currently filled positions.
- Centers of influence development—engage with the civilian community to build relationships with universities, hospitals, clinics, and other potential resources.



Figure 51-3. Captain Robert Greener, Louisville, Kentucky, health care recruiting officer in charge, creating a “Stop the Bleed” train the trainer video for Army Medical Department recruiters.

- Future soldier management—assist and mentor those selected for service to ensure their success at their first unit.
- Event management—research, plan, coordinate, and conduct exhibit booths and speaking events at conferences, schools, and other professional gatherings (Figure 51-3).
- Prospect management—establish and maintain effective avenues to target potential Army medical officers.

The average day of an AMEDD OIC varies depending on the evolving needs of the MRC, which drives the plans (Figure 51-4).

0700–0900	Physical training, hygiene, travel to recruiting center
0900–0930	Center planning meeting
0930–1000	Follow up on email leads
1000–1200	Email potential prospects
1200–1300	Lunch
1300–1400	Process current applicants
1400–1500	Plan for upcoming events
1500–1700	In-person recruiting event

Figure 51-4. One example of a recruiter’s typical day at the recruiting station. The schedule and activities vary depending on temporary duty travel, events outside of business hours, and recruit needs.

Skills and Attributes

Subject matter expertise as a PA is not solely sufficient for recruiting success. Recruiters must also have the following crucial skills and attributes:

- high role model aptitude and a desire to mentor others,
- broad knowledge of the Army,
- basic understanding of medical area of concentration job descriptions,
- solid leadership and administrative skills,
- capability to thrive in an autonomous work environment,
- ability to meet hard deadlines and always be punctual,
- experience in evaluation and rating,
- interest in people and be able to encourage and assist others, and
- excellent speaking and communication skills.

Benefits of the Position

This position provides the following benefits:

- opportunity to live in non-traditional Army locations,
- flexible work schedule (can make family commitments and make up work without jeopardizing the mission),
- flexibility to accomplish the mission (use your skill set to determine the needs of the target audience and identify opportunities to recruit them),

- camaraderie (a small team setting allows for strong working relationships),
- travel opportunities (to attend events, conferences, and training)
- networking with civilian health care professionals (use many civilian medical recruiting practices and responsibilities in civilian hospitals and universities),
- opportunity to affect change throughout Army health care (your ideas can lead to greater success of the Army health care mission),
- opportunity to obtain and conduct continuing medical education.

Training

Medical recruiters attend the health care recruiting course after arriving at their health care recruiting center. This 3-week course at Fort Knox, Kentucky, teaches the fundamentals of medical recruiting. The “5N” additional skill identifier is awarded upon course completion. This course is followed by a 1-week health care OIC course that teaches the skills needed to perform as a health care recruiting OIC.

Metrics of Success

Evaluation of medical recruiters uses several criteria. Each medical recruiting center is assigned an annual recruiting mission, broken down by the number of personnel in each AMEDD specialty. A medical recruiting center that meets or exceeds the assigned mission demonstrates success. The ability of the team to reach and motivate high quality health care professionals to join Army medicine strengthens evaluations. Leading the center’s efforts to build relationships with referral sources, using various methods to contact prospects, creating and attending inspiring events, and ensuring a smooth transition for AMEDD applicants are all measures of success that culminate in meeting or exceeding the mission.³

As both an OIC and a health care professional, PAs can contribute to the team’s success by harnessing personal and teammate leadership skills, learning and adapting to the recruiting center processes and culture, and maintaining clinical skills to train other health care recruiters. Ultimately, great leadership and strong teamwork leads to a legacy of success.

Lessons Learned

The following are lessons learned to help foster AMEDD recruiter success:

- Network early. Reaching out to various AMEDD leaders (active duty and reserves), both locally and nationally increases your available resources. AMEDD recruiters use this expertise both in person and electronically to assist in mission accomplishment. Two years is a short time to develop these relationships, so start as soon as possible.
- Collaborate with the AMEDD recruiters in the company, battalion, and brigade for best practices and available resources. This diverse team will develop the best approach to bring healthcare professionals into the AMEDD team.
- Use a personal Army story to humanize military service. Technically and tactically proficient recruiters who can effectively personalize their AMEDD experiences present a compelling combination for AMEDD healthcare team prospects.

Tips for Success

Along with lessons learned, the following tips for success will enable future AMEDD recruiters to succeed beyond expectations:

- Encourage innovation in the team. Health care professionals are heavily recruited by electronic means by non-clinicians. However, the ability to reach them as a fellow clinician, preferably in person, is powerful.
- Rely on the enlisted recruiters' experience and share with them firsthand knowledge of life as an AMEDD officer.
- Use subject matter experts to provide training to targeted healthcare professionals. They will inspire civilians to join the Army healthcare team.
- Listen to the skills and interests of prospects and show them how they can contribute to the AMEDD team.
- Have fun! Fun inspires AMEDD prospects and leads to successful recruiting operations when coupled with sound recruiting strategies.

Conclusion

The PA in AMEDD recruiting serves a vital role in attracting students and health care professionals into the Army health care team. Success requires learning how to operate in a new environment, which provides unique opportunities for growth, professional recognition, and personal satisfaction. As a leader and healthcare professional, the Army PA brings the ideal skill set to the Army recruiting effort. This skill set is greatly needed throughout the nation. The pathway to success in this position is varied, and the recruiting mission sets up the PA recruiter to help shape the Army healthcare team of the future.

Every commissioning ceremony will be a rewarding event for the Army health care recruiting officer. Newly commissioned officers will reflect on the inspiration of recruiters that led them to join the Army team. These officers will know that they joined in the ultimate mission of “conserving the fighting force.” Any Army PA with the ability to clearly communicate the mission of the AMEDD and think creatively should consider becoming a health care recruiter.

References

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