

COMDTINST 1514.1
JUN 24, 2005

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 1514.1

Subj: PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST “A” SCHOOL CANDIDATE SCREENING PROCESS

Ref: (a) Training and Education Manual, COMDTINST M1500.10B

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction sets forth mandatory procedures for screening enlisted members who apply for Public Affairs Specialist “A” School. Procedures include those to be administered by the applicant’s command and those to be administered by the nearest district/area Public Affairs Office.
2. ACTION. Area and district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistics commands, assistant commandants for directorates, Judge Advocate General and special staff offices at Headquarters, and commanding officers of headquarters units shall ensure widest dissemination. Internet release authorized.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. The Training and Education Manual, COMDTINST M1500.10B, will be amended to reflect this policy. This Instruction replaces an informal document entitled “Public Affairs Specialist Screening Interview Guidelines” previously posted on the G-IPA Intranet site.
4. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS. Environmental considerations were examined in the development of this Instruction and have been determined to be not applicable.
5. DISCUSSION.
 - a. A mandatory screening process for Public Affairs Specialist “A” School applicants has been in place for more than a decade. The screenings were established for a number of reasons: The PA rating is the smallest enlisted rating except for Musician. Since it is so small, most non-rated members have little to no exposure to PAs before deciding on a career path; PAs play an important role in public understanding and perceptions of the Coast Guard.
 - b. The screenings have two goals: 1) To determine whether the candidate has the personal qualities needed to succeed as a Coast Guard PA; 2) To ensure the candidate fully understands the roles and responsibilities of PAs.

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B	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
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D	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1
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NON-STANDARD DISTRIBUTION:

6. PROCEDURES.

- a. Command Screening. After a command endorses an enlisted member's "A" school training request (CG-5286) for PA "A" School, the command should initiate a PA "A" School Candidate Command Interview. Enclosure (1) is an example of the memo that the command will receive from the PA Rating Force Master Chief explaining the command's role in the screening process. Enclosure (2) must be used. The candidate will not receive a Public Affairs Supervisor Interview, the second of the two required screenings, until the Command Interview is completed.
- b. Public Affairs Supervisor Screening. After the candidate's command screening has been completed, the member must schedule a Public Affairs Supervisor Interview with the closest district or area public affairs office. This interview will entail a two- to three-day visit to a district or area public affairs office or detachment. Enclosure (3) is an example of the memo that the PA Supervisor will receive from the PA RFMC explaining his or her role in the screening process. The member must provide the completed, signed command screening form (Enclosure (2)) to the PA Supervisor prior to, or at the start of, the PA Supervisor Interview. The PA Supervisor will use enclosures (4), (5) and (6) to perform the screening. The PA Supervisor will forward all required documents as outlined in Enclosure (4) to the PA Rating Force Master Chief (Commandant G-IPA-5).
- c. PA RFMC review. The PA RFMC reviews all PA candidate screening packages and approves or disapproves all candidates for PA "A" School. Once the PA RFMC approves a candidate for "A" School, CGPC-epm-2 will lift the administrative hold placed on the member's name on the "A" School list. Members who are not approved for PA "A" School will be notified via their command.
- d. Questions Questions about the screening process may be directed to the PA RFMC at Commandant (G-IPA-5).

7. FORMS/REPORTS. Command Worksheet for PA "A" School Candidate Interview, CG-6073 (04-05), PA Supervisor Worksheet for PA "A" School Candidate Interview, CG-6074 (04-05) and PA Supervisor Interview Activities/Discussion Guides, CG-6075 (04-05) will be used and are provided as enclosures. Local reproduction is authorized. The Command Worksheet, CG-6073, is also available on the following web sites: <http://cgweb.uscg.mil/g-c/g-ccs/g-cit/g-cim/forms1/main.asp> and <http://www.uscg.mil/ccs/cit/cim/forms1/welcome.htm> It will be added to the next update of the Coast Guard Adobe Forms Library.

L. M. FARRELL /s/
Acting Director of Reserve and Training

- Encl: (1) PA "A" School Candidate Command Interview memo
(2) Command Worksheet for PA "A" School Candidate Interview, CG-6073 (04-05)
(3) PA "A" School Candidate Public Affairs Supervisor memo
(4) PA Supervisor Worksheet for PA "A" School Candidate Interview, CG-6074 (04-05)
(5) PA Supervisor Interview Activities/Discussion Guides, CG-6075 (04-05)

EXAMPLE



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

2100 Second Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20593-0001
Staff Symbol: G-IPA
Phone: (202) 267-1587
Fax: (202) 267-4307
Email: ccihelka@comdt.uscg.mil

1514

MEMORANDUM

From: PA Rating Force Master Chief
COMDT (G-IPA-5)

Reply to G-IPA-5
Attn of: PACM Cihelka
7-1209

To: Commanding Officer, USCGC Bear

Subj: PA "A" SCHOOL CANDIDATE COMMAND INTERVIEW

Ref: (a) CG Training and Education Manual, COMDTINST M1500.10B
(b) Public Affairs Specialist "A" School Candidate Screening
Process, COMDTINST 1514.1

1. I request your assistance in determining if a potential Public Affairs Specialist "A" School candidate at your unit has the personal qualities needed to be a successful PA. While PA "A" School does a great job teaching the basics of journalism, photojournalism and media relations, there are certain traits critical to the performance of today's PAs that cannot be instilled at "A" School.

2. Performance beyond the apprentice level is expected when PA3s graduate "A" School. Many start their PA careers at two-person Public Affairs detachments in large news media markets. PA3s represent the Coast Guard on TV, prepare spokespersons prior to interviews, brief commanders and deploy to incident sites to manage news media. To be successful in these tasks, candidates should have higher than average levels of:

- sharp appearance and strong military bearing
- self-confidence
- willingness to tackle difficult situations
- strong communication, leadership and social skills
- ability to work well with others
- ability to think quickly on their feet and to respond well under pressure
- good problem-solving skills, common sense and good judgment
- ability to travel on a moment's notice
- stamina, motivation, maturity
- personal and financial responsibility

3. Your opinion is crucial to determining whether your aspiring PA possesses the above characteristics. Therefore, your formal assessment via a command interview is the important first step in a process that screens candidates for PA "A" School. The other requirements are:

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- a) a Public Affairs supervisor interview, which involves a two- to three-day visit to a district Public Affairs office or detachment and ensures the member has a clear understanding of the duties and responsibilities of PAs;
- b) the ability to type 20 wpm, which must be demonstrated during a typing test administered during the PA supervisor interview.
- c) a 250-word essay written by the candidate on why he or she wants to be a PA and what experiences he or she has had that will help prepare him or her for the job. The candidate must bring this essay to the PA supervisor interview.
- d) submission of an NACLCL-PSI package to the Coast Guard Security Center. The candidate must be eligible for a Secret clearance.
- e) possession of a valid state-issued driver's license.

4. The enclosed worksheet contains a number of questions that will guide you in assessing your candidate. Please review the member's performance record and consult with his or her supervisor prior to making your recommendation. Above all, please ask yourself: "Would I want this person to represent my command—and the Coast Guard--on TV and in the newspaper?" "Why?" or "Why not?"

5. Thank you for your time and effort in this matter. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns at (202) 267-1209 or ccihelka@comdt.uscg.mil.

Enclosure: PA "A" School Candidate Command Interview Worksheet

Command Worksheet for PA "A" School candidate interview

Interviewer: Based on your knowledge of the member, your sit-down interview with the member, the supervisor's input and the member's documented performance history, please evaluate the member's suitability for the Public Affairs Specialist rating using the following categories and potential questions as a guide.

Responsibility (financial, personal, security)

PAs must have a Secret clearance and a government travel charge card in good standing to do their job, since they will need access to classified material and will travel extensively and on short notice.

Yes No

- Is there any fact or circumstance that would tend to call into question the member's financial fitness? *(For example, any Bankruptcies, have wages been garnished, any liens against property for failing to pay taxes or other debts, any judgments against the individual that have not been paid?)*

If YES, explain: _____

- Is there any fact or circumstance that would tend to call into question to the member's fitness for a security clearance? *(For example, any negative page 7 entries or other admin actions? Illegal use of drugs? Alcohol abuse? Is the person a non-U.S. citizen? Dual citizenship? Any businesses with foreign countries? (i.e. foreign property, business connections) Any reason to question individual's loyalty to the U.S?)*

If YES, explain: _____

Member's Name: _____

EMPLID: _____

Unit: _____

Command Worksheet for PA "A" School candidate interview

Communication Skills (written, verbal, public speaking)

PAs must be able to express themselves clearly, succinctly, professionally, respectfully, and persuasively. They will be conducting PA training at Coast Guard units and are likely to speak at community schools and other speaking engagements. They will also be briefing senior leadership.

Yes No

- Does this person treat others in a courteous, thoughtful and respectful manner?
- Does this person express thoughts clearly and logically, in both verbal and written communications?

If NO, explain: _____

- Is the candidate able to stand in front of a group and present information with clarity, organization and confidence?

If NO, explain: _____

Stamina / Adaptability / Judgment

PAs stand watch and are required to work long hours and travel at a moment's notice.

Yes No

Does this member handle stressful situations well, maintaining adequate productivity and safety during stressful situations or extended work hours?

If NO, explain: _____

Does the member adapt quickly to changes, maintaining effectiveness despite disruptions to work routine?

If NO, explain: _____

Member's Name: _____

EMPLID: _____

Unit: _____

Command Worksheet for PA "A" School candidate interview

Does the candidate demonstrate common sense and good judgment in the performance of duties?

If NO, explain: _____

Military bearing (sharp appearance)

PAs represent the Coast Guard on TV and in other highly visible situations. They must present a sharp appearance and carry themselves well.

Yes No

- Does this member appear sharp in uniform?
- Does this member comply with Coast Guard weight standards?
- Does this member maintain military formality, precedence, courtesies and respect to rank and privilege?

Ability to represent the Coast Guard (overall impression)

Yes No

- Would you want this person to represent your command or the Coast Guard on TV and in the newspaper?

Why or why not? Please elaborate:

Member's Name: _____

EMPLID: _____

Unit: _____

Recommendation: _____

Interviewer Name: _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Command Worksheet for PA “A” School candidate interview

After the screening

The original signed and completed command worksheet must be provided to the Public Affairs Office or Detachment where the member intends to undergo a PA Supervisor interview, either before the candidate arrives for the PA Supervisor interview, or when the member arrives at the interview.

The member should be prepared to take a typing test during the PA Supervisor interview demonstrating the ability to type 20 wpm. The member should bring to the interview a 250-word maximum essay on why he or she wants to be a PA and what experiences he or she has had that will help prepare him or her for the job.

The command shall provide a copy of the signed command worksheet to the PA applicant for his or her records. The commanding officer may keep a copy of the completed worksheet in his or her personal files but will not submit or use this assessment for any purpose other than the PA A-School interview process. An entry should not be made into the member's service record.

Please direct all questions regarding the command interview guidelines, other aspects of the PA candidate interview process and general questions about the PA rating to the PA Rating Force Master Chief at Commandant (G-IPA-5), 202-267-1209.



EXAMPLE
Commandant
United States Coast Guard

2100 Second Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20593-0001
Staff Symbol: G-IPA
Phone: (202) 267-1587
Fax: (202) 267-4307
Email:

1514

MEMORANDUM

From: PA Rating Force Master Chief
COMDT (G-IPA-5)

Reply to G-IPA-5
Attn of: PACM Cihelka
7-1209

To: Assistant PAO, 1st Coast Guard District (dpa)

Subj: PA "A" SCHOOL CANDIDATE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW

Ref: (a) CG Training and Education Manual, COMDTINST M1500.10B
(b) Public Affairs Specialist "A" School Candidate Screening Process, COMDTINST 1514.1

1. I need your help in screening potential Public Affairs Specialists. The PA "A" School Candidate Interview process involves several steps:

- a) the forwarded command interview;
- b) a PA Supervisor interview, which involves a two- to three-day visit to your office;
- c) final review by me.

2. The PA Supervisor interview ensures the candidate clearly understands the roles and responsibilities of PAs and the demands imposed at "A" School, and to further assess the member for skills, knowledge, requirements and personal characteristics. A successful visit requires advance planning and involves several parts:

- a) activities that immerse the candidate in the day-to-day world of PA work;
- b) your discussion with the member on what to expect as both an "A" Schooler and a PA;
- c) your assessment of the member's writing skills through review of two essays: one he or she brings to the visit and one written during the visit
- d) the administration of a typing test
- e) your overall assessment of how the member presents him- or herself and whether he or she meets certain minimum requirements

3. Candidate responsibilities include:

- a) bringing a 250-word maximum essay written by the candidate on why they want to be a PA and what experiences they have had that will help prepare them for the job
- b) ensuring you have received a copy of the completed command interview worksheet

Enclosure (3) to COMDTINST 1514.1

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PA SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW

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4. Please use the enclosures (also available as Enclosures 4, 5 and 6 to COMDTINST 1514) to plan and conduct the interview. Your investment of time now will help ensure only fully qualified candidates enter the rating. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns regarding the PA Supervisor interview or any aspect of the overall process.

Enclosures: 1) PA Supervisor Interview Worksheet for PA "A" School Candidates
2) Discussion Checklist
3) Activities Checklist

PA Supervisor Worksheet for PA "A" School candidate interview

Interviewer: Based on your discussion with the PA applicant, your observation of his or her behavior and appearance during the visit, the assigned PA mentor's input, your evaluation of the member's written essays, and your review of required items, please evaluate the member's suitability as a future PA using the following categories and questions. Some items ask you to rate the member on a scale of 1 – 20, 1 being the poorest and 20 being the highest rating. Mark or circle the location on the scale provided. Other items call for you to circle "yes" or "no."

NOTE: This assessment should be conducted by the Asst. PAO or PADET supervisor.

Communication Skills (verbal)

- Was this person courteous and respectful throughout the visit? Rate on a scale of 1-20.

1-----5-----10-----15-----20

- Did this person express his or her thoughts clearly and logically during the visit?

1-----5-----10-----15-----20

Comments on this section: _____

Writing Skills

- Rate the member's ability to organize and express his or her thoughts clearly or logically in **written** communications, as demonstrated in the two required essays, on a scale of 1-20.

1-----5-----10-----15-----20

- Were the member's finished essays free of spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors? Rate the essays with a 20 meaning "error-free."

1-----5-----10-----15-----20

Include both essays in the PA Supervisor package to the PA RFMC.

Member's Name: _____

EMPLID: _____

Unit: _____

PA Supervisor Worksheet for PA "A" School candidate interview

Appearance

- Rate the member's overall appearance in uniform, including apparent conformance with weight standards:

1-----5-----10-----15-----20

- Is this member's appearance free of obvious violations of regulations (offensive visible tattoos; unauthorized body ornaments such as nose rings, tongue rings, etc.)

Yes / No

Comments on this section: _____

Military fundamentals

- During the visit, did the member maintain military formality, customs, courtesies and respect to rank and privilege?

Yes / No

- Did the member arrive punctually every day and follow other instructions such as letting you know when they have completed an exercise? Rate on the 1-20 scale.

1-----5-----10-----15-----20

- How strong is the applicant's grasp of basic Coast Guard knowledge (roles and missions, history, rates and ranks) as exhibited in your discussion with him or her and the member's second essay?

1-----5-----10-----15-----20

Comments on this section: _____

Member's Name: _____

EMPLID: _____

Unit: _____

PA Supervisor Worksheet for PA "A" School candidate interview

Other requirements

Yes No

- Does this member possess a current, valid state-issued driver's license?
- Did this member pass the typing test (20 wpm minimum)?
- Does this member possess the minimum required ASVAB scores?
(VE 54, VE+AR=109). Member's scores: VE= _____, VE+AR=_____
- Has this member submitted an NACLIC PSI package?

Ensure the member understands the security package must be submitted in order to receive orders for "A" School.

Member's Name: _____

EMPLID: _____

Unit: _____

Interviewer Name: _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Is the member recommended for PA "A" School? YES NO

Comments. If the member is not recommended, you must provide specific reasons related to job criteria and suggestions for member improvement below.

PA Supervisor Worksheet for PA "A" School candidate interview After the interview

Forward the following to the PA Rating Force Master Chief, via fax or FEDEX:

- The Command Worksheet
- The PA Supervisor worksheet
- PA Supervisor Interview Activities/Discussion Guides
- Both member essays.
- Typing test results (see Required/Suggested Activities)
- DINFOS English Diagnostic Quiz results (see Required/Suggested Activities)

Be sure to provide a copy of the entire package to the candidate and keep a copy for yourself until you have verified that the PA RFMC has received the complete package. You may retain a copy of the package for your personal files but may not submit or use this assessment for any purpose other than the PA A-School interview process. Do not submit any portion of the package for entry into the member's service record.

The PA RFMC will make the ultimate decision on whether the member is approved to attend PA "A" school, based on the command and PA Supervisor interviews.

Inform the member that he or she will be notified, via the member's command, of the decision after the PA RFMC has received both the command and PA Supervisor interview packages. Once a member has been approved for PA "A" School, the administrative hold placed on the member's name on the "A" School list will be removed (unless another administrative hold was placed for another reason.)

PA Supervisor Interview Activities/Discussion Guides

The following items should be discussed with the member.

Check them off as you discuss them.

Public Affairs program elements

- Media, community, internal relations
- What PA shops do; what units do

Roles and responsibilities of PAs

- What PAs do
- What PAs don't do
- Watch standing responsibilities
- Be sure to review the applicant's essay on why he or she wants to be a PA, and solicit his or her input on expectations of the job.

Correct any unrealistic expectations.

Traveling on short notice

- The need to make prior arrangements for dependent and pet care
- Having a "crash bag" ready with essentials for TAD travel
- Accountability regarding use of the government travel charge card

The importance of writing to the PA's job

- Does the applicant enjoy writing?
- The applicant's writing ability will be assessed through the essays.

What to expect at PA "A" School

- The English Diagnostic Test. Students who fail are placed in a three-week English refresher course prior to starting BPAS-W. A self-quiz on the DINFOS web site will help candidates assess their readiness for the EDT (see the PA Interview Activities list.)
- Environment and rules:
 - Army post
 - Living in another service's barracks
 - Coast Guard student rules
- Military bearing: uniform, customs and courtesy, attitude
- Demands of "A" School: Lots of homework; hard course
- Note: Call the DINFOS CGLO or CG "A" School instructor prior to the interview to get an update on PA "A" School areas of concern.

The member's grasp of basic Coast Guard knowledge

- Roles and missions
- CG History
- Rates and ranks

Other requirements (Explain to the member why these are important)

- Eligibility for Secret clearance: member must submit NACLIC pkg
- Valid state driver's license
- Ability to type 20 wpm

PA Supervisor Interview Activities/Discussion Guides

The following activities **must be performed** during the member's visit:

- Have the member write a three- to four-paragraph essay on his or her current unit, including missions, assets and position in CG organizational structure. The purpose is to demonstrate the member's writing skills and grasp of basic Coast Guard knowledge.
 - Provide the member access to a SWS or PC with word-processing software.
 - Show the member how to use spell-check.
- Typing test
 - Member must be able to type 20 wpm
 - Go to the YN "A" School contracted web site to test the candidate: <http://YNASCHOOL.AssessTyping.com>
 - Print out a copy of the test results and include them in the PA interview package for forwarding to the PA RFMC.
- Mini-EDT
 - Have the candidate take the English Diagnostic Quiz on the DINFOS web site www.dinfos.osd.mil under the Skills Enhancement link.
 - Score the member using the answer key on the site.
 - Submit a copy of the scored test with the PA interview package to the PA RFMC.

The following are **suggested** activities to enhance the applicant's visit:

Incorporate these guidelines and as many of the following activities as possible into your PA applicant's visit to fully immerse the member in the PA experience. The overall goal is to fully engage the PA candidate. **Check off all completed activities.** Be sure to plan ahead!

- Assign a PA to be the applicant's mentor for the visit. This PA will also give you input for your assessment and recommendation.
- Have the applicant spend a full day seeing what PAs do day-to-day:
clips, news releases, answering phones, conducting research, reviewing photos/video, etc

(continued)

PA Supervisor Interview Activities/Discussion Guides

The following are suggested activities to enhance the applicant's visit:

- Show the member what a news release looks like and what is involved in writing one
 - Take the applicant to command center/operations center briefings
 - Take the applicant on a photo shoot
 - Take the applicant to a media opportunity
 - Provide meaningful exercises for the applicant to perform, such as:
 - Identifying the 5 Ws and H in message traffic or an OpSum of a case
 - Searching for CG clips
 - Answering the phone and taking complete phone messages
 - Identifying the parts of a digital camera / video camera
 - Shooting photos or video during a scheduled shoot
 - Use your imagination. **Don't** use the applicant as a worker bee.
 - Have the member review the PA EPQs and discuss them with the assigned PA mentor or you.
 - Show member PA tools: PA Manual, AP Stylebook, media lists etc
 - Other: _____
-