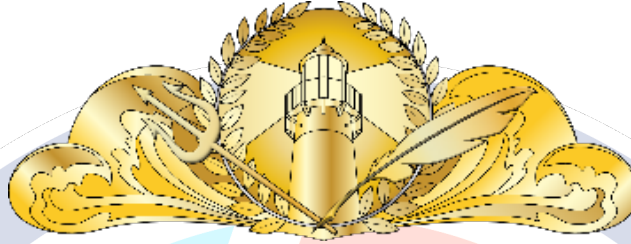


Direct Commission Lawyer Program

Use your legal expertise to serve your country.



We are a small yet dedicated workforce based who practice law, support the Coast Guard, and serve our nation. We are the uniformed lawyers of the U.S. Coast Guard.

Our work encompasses a diverse range of legal practice areas and is critical to the success of Coast Guard operations. We work together to deliver expert legal services across the full spectrum of Coast Guard missions to promote their effective, efficient, lawful, and safe execution.

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Application Deadlines

Application deadlines fall in the summer and winter.

You can find the latest deadlines at <https://www.uscg.mil/Resources/Legal/>. You should connect with a recruiting office *at least* two to three months in advance of the application deadline. It may take several months to complete all pre-selection panel requirements, including compiling your application documents and completing your commissioning physical.

Experience

- **Gain immediate experience.** You'll receive more leadership, sooner. We elevate our lawyers to positions of leadership early in their career.
- **Practice law in diverse areas.** Coast Guard legal supports all the Coast Guard's 11 statutory missions from search and rescue to drug interdiction to maritime environmental protection. Our lawyers can prosecute transnational drug crime rings, write bilateral agreements with friendly nations, and serve as professors at the Naval War College. You'll typically rotate to a new office every 3 years.
- **Serve in great locations.** The vast majority of legal jobs are in major, coastal U.S. cities.
- **Work with an outstanding team.** CGJAG is a very small community of close-knit practitioners that support each other and the Coast Guard's people.

Benefits

Becoming a Coast Guard judge advocate is personally, professionally, and financially rewarding. You'll receive financial and other benefits from the Coast Guard that aren't offered by other employers.

Competitive Salary

- Total pay and allowances start from \$88,000 to \$120,000
 - Calculate your total compensation based on your duty location, pay grade, years of service, and family size here: [Regular Military Compensation \(RMC\) Calculator](#)
- Enter the Coast Guard as an officer at an advanced pay grade (Lieutenant, O-3)
- Receive a pay raise every one to two years

Other Financial Benefits

- Receive a substantial tax-free housing and subsistence allowance each month
- Free medical and dental coverage
- Low-cost life insurance coverage
- Eligible employer for federal public service student loan forgiveness (PSLF)
- Retirement savings Plan—the Thrift Savings Plan—with government contribution up to 5% of your basic pay
- VA home loan eligibility

Work Life Balance

- Military exchange, commissary, and subsidized childcare privileges
- Generous paid parental leave

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- 30 days of paid annual vacation and 11 paid federal holidays

Advance Your Education

- Opportunity to receive the Post-9/11 GI Bill to help you pay for school
- Opportunities to get an LL.M. at no cost

Service Obligation

Four-year active duty contract.

3L applicants: You will begin active duty after graduating and sitting for the bar exam.

2L applicants: You will commission and be transferred to the Inactive Status List (ISL)—a non-drilling, unpaid status—until graduating from law school. Your four-year active duty agreement will begin after you graduate law school.

Appointment Grade

Lieutenant (O-3)

Locations

Judge advocates are assigned to legal offices across the U.S. for 2-3 year tours. Overseas opportunities may be available as you progress through your career.

Primary legal office locations include

- Washington, DC
- Charleston, SC
- Cleveland, OH
- Alameda, CA

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- Boston, MA
- Norfolk/Portsmouth, VA
- Miami, FL
- New Orleans, LA
- Yorktown, VA
- New London, CT
- Cape May, NJ
- Seattle, WA
- Honolulu, HI
- Juneau, AK



Location of CGJAG presence at various Coast Guard Offices throughout the Nation.

Practice Areas

As a judge advocate, you will work in diverse practice areas throughout your career. You'll rotate to a new legal office every 2-3 years.

Practice areas include

- Military Justice (Criminal Law)
- Maritime and International Law
- Environmental Law
- Intelligence and Information Law
- General (Fiscal, Employment, Ethics, Real Property, Administrative) Law
- Civil Litigation
- Cyber Law

Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility Criteria

- *Age:*
 - Law school graduate and 3L applicants: Minimum 21, Maximum 41, as of 30 September of the fiscal year in which the selection panel convenes
 - 2L applicants: Minimum 21, Maximum 39, as of 30 September of the fiscal year in which the selection panel convenes.
- *Education:*
 - Licensed attorney applicants: Graduate of an American Bar Association (ABA) accredited law school
 - Graduates of non-ABA accredited law schools may apply if
 1. Admitted to practice before the bar of the highest court of any State, the District of Columbia, or U.S. Territory;
 2. Have experience practicing law in one or more areas of law applicable to the Coast Guard; and
 3. Possesses military or other government experience indicative of success as a Coast Guard officer.
 - 3L applicants: Third-year student in a law school accredited by the ABA
 - 2L applicants: Second-year student in a law school accredited by the ABA
- *Licensure:* Judge advocates must be admitted to practice before the bar of the highest court of any State, the District of Columbia, or U.S. Territory.

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- Law school graduates: must provide proof of bar admission prior to commissioning.
- 2L and 3L applicants: must apply for admission to the bar and sit for the first available bar examination after graduating law school.
- *Citizenship*: Must be a U.S. citizen.
- *Medical Requirements*: Must meet commissioning physical standards, including normal color vision.
 - Coast Guard judge advocates must meet maximum weight or abdominal circumference standards. After graduating the Direct Commission Officer course, judge advocates are not required to complete an annual or semiannual fitness test.
- *Prior Military Service*: No more than 10 years of non-Coast Guard active-duty (or 14 years cumulative) military service. Members currently in another military service (or Reserve) must have an approved DD368 (conditional release).

Visit <https://www.gocoastguard.com/get-started/eligibility-requirements> for more information.

Application Instructions

1. Contact the Coast Guard Legal Program (CGJAG)

Contact the CGJAG Accessions Manager at CoastGuardDCL@uscg.mil if you'd like help connecting with a Coast Guard recruiter to start the application process. We can also connect you with a local judge advocate for information and advice.

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Visit <https://www.uscg.mil/Resources/Legal/> for general information about the legal program, direct commission programs, and application deadlines.

2. Determine Application Deadline

Application deadlines fall in the summer and winter. You can find the latest deadlines at <https://www.uscg.mil/Resources/Legal/>. You should connect with a recruiting office *at least* two to three months in advance of the application deadline. It may take several months to complete all pre-selection panel requirements, including compiling your application documents and completing your commissioning physical.

3. Contact a Recruiter

You must apply through your local Recruiting Office, regardless of whether you are a current Coast Guard member, a civilian, or a member of another branch of the Armed Forces. The CGJAG Accessions Manager can help you get connected. Visit <https://www.gocoastguard.com/connect> to identify your closest Coast Guard Recruiting Office.

4. Recruiter Screening

Your recruiter will conduct a screening to ensure you meet eligibility requirements. The screening process will validate that you meet the specific set of criteria (academic, financial, character, dependency, etc.) for your program. Your local recruiter will determine if you may be eligible to apply for any waivers based on your individual circumstances.

5. Complete Application Package

Your recruiter will provide the Officer Program Application form and checklist associated with your program of interest. Complete all application forms and assemble all application material.

Application Package

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Components of the application package include:

- *Resume*: maximum of 2 pages
- *Personal Narrative*: maximum of 2 pages, single-spaced, signed by the applicant, 12-point font, Times New Roman
- *Letters of Recommendation*: maximum of 2 pages and maximum of 3 total letters, signed by the author, addressed to “USCG Officer Selection Panel”
- *All Official College and Law School Transcripts*: must include all institutions, earned credits, and semester hours, including Joint Service Transcripts
- *College Diploma(s) or Official Letter* from degree granting institution proving conferment of degree prior to commissioning date
- *Personal Awards and Recognized Achievements*: 1 award per page, maximum 5 pages (certifications; academic, athletic, leadership, service, etc. awards; public recognition; letters of appreciation, etc.)
- *Proof of Bar Membership* (licensed applicants only)
- *Legal Writing Sample*: maximum of 10 single-spaced pages
- *Commanding Officer’s Endorsement*: maximum 2 pages, signed, New Page Memorandum format, content compliant with 7.B.2. of the Coast Guard Recruiting Manual (COMDTINST M1100.2 (series)) (current Coast Guard members only)
- *Officer and/or Enlisted Evaluations/FITREPs* for last 3 years prior to panel (current or prior military service only)
- *Bar Status Worksheet*: a Coast Guard-created document to indicate your bar status or intent to take the bar exam

Applicants will work with a Coast Guard recruiter to complete all other application requirements.

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6. Submit Application Package

Submit your application and supporting documents to your recruiter by the application deadline.

7. Medical/Physical Screening

Meeting accession height and weight standards and passing a commissioning physical are required as part of the eligibility screening process. Your recruiter will assist with scheduling the physical exam.

If you are currently serving in the military, your physical must be completed with a military treatment facility (MTF). All civilian applicants will receive their physical through a local Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS).

★ Your recruiter will provide you with a comprehensive questionnaire to examine your medical history and submit to MEPS. If you answer “yes” to any questions, more documentation will likely be necessary. To expedite the process, it’s important to start gathering medical documents early.

If you’re eligible for a waiver, your recruiter will provide information about submitting a waiver. Applicants will be medically screened and initiate the waiver process prior to selection.

8. Interview

Once your application is complete and your recruiter has ascertained program eligibility, they will be scheduled for an interview with three Coast Guard officers who will provide a recommendation to the selection panel on your potential to become a Coast Guard officer. Recruiters coordinate interview boards with local units. At least one member of your interview panel will be a Coast Guard judge advocate.

9. Recruiter Review

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Your recruiter will conduct a final review of your application for completeness, incorporate the interview recommendation, and submit the application for consideration by the selection panel.

10. Selection Panel

The selection panel consists of Coast Guard officers who will review your application package, including your interviewers' recommendation, and make a selection decision.

The fall selection panel typically meets in late October/early November. The spring selection panel typically meets in late April/early May.

11. Selection Notification:

Unofficial primary and alternate selection results are typically announced approximately two months after the panel starts. Your recruiter will notify you of your selection status.

★ Fall selection panel results are typically announced in December. Spring selection panel results are typically announced in May or June. ★

If you have any questions or concerns throughout the application process, please contact the Coast Guard Legal Program's Accessions Manager at CoastGuardDCL@uscg.mil.

Accession and Training Overview

1. Accession Information

If selected, you will receive information about onboarding, commissioning, and assignments.

2. Assignment

Licensed attorney and 3L applicants:

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Around August to September for spring selectees and around March to May for fall selectees, you will submit your preferred assignments list and receive your initial legal assignment.

2L applicants:

During your 3L year, you will submit your preferred assignments list and receive your initial legal assignment for post-graduation.

The billet selection process is a collaborative process designed to consider the needs of both the member and the service. That said, the Coast Guard is a military organization, so the needs of the service are paramount when determining assignments. Most legal billets are 2-3 years in length.

3. Commissioning

Licensed attorney and 3L selectees:

Spring panel selectees typically commission around December of that year. Fall panel selectees typically commission around March to July of the following year. You will commission as a Lieutenant (O-3). Your four-year active duty time will begin shortly after.

2L applicants:

Spring panel selectees will commission around December of that year. Fall panel selectees will commission around March to July of the following year. You will commission as a Lieutenant (O-3) and be transferred to the Inactive Status List (ISL) until graduating from law school. Your four-year active duty agreement will begin after you graduate law school.

4. Permanent Change of Station (PSC) Move

The Coast Guard's accessions team will counsel you on scheduling your PCS move, including any paperwork needed to execute your PCS move to

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your new duty station. You will set up your Household Goods move and travel to your new unit.

5. Reporting to Your First Unit

After your active duty agreement begins, you will report to your unit and start your entitlements, including basic allowance for housing.

6. Direct Commission Officer (DCO) Course

After reporting to your unit, you will receive orders to attend the 4-week DCO Course at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. The course includes instruction on Coast Guard leadership principals, organizational structure, and practical assignments including writing assignments and public speaking. DCO attendees will complete a basic swim test and fitness test including push-ups, sit-ups, a 1.5 mile run, and 12-minute swim test. You will receive a Pre-Reporting Guide from the school staff with more information. Following DCO school, you will return to your duty station.

Licensed attorney and 3L spring panel selectees typically attend the January or March DCO course the following year. Fall panel selectees and 2L selectees typically attend the August DCO course.

7. Naval Justice School (NJS) – Basic Lawyer Course (BLC)

After graduating from the DCO course and returning to your unit, you'll receive orders to Newport, Rhode Island, for the 10-week BLC at NJS alongside your Navy and Marine Corps counterparts. If you're assigned to a military justice billet, you will also participate in a 2-week Military Justice Orientation Course (MJOC) immediately after the BLC.

You will typically attend the first available BLC, offered from May to July or August to November, after graduating from DCO.

8. Operational Familiarization Tour

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You will also participate in an operational familiarization tour—1 to 2 weeks onboard a Coast Guard cutter—to gain hands-on exposure to Coast Guard operations.

