



# Active Duty

## Direct Commission Lawyer Program

**Next application deadlines:  
February 10, 2025 & mid-August 2025**

**Job Description:** Coast Guard Judge Advocates are commissioned officers and licensed attorneys qualified to represent the Coast Guard and its members in military legal matters encompassing a diverse range of legal practice areas. Being a part of the CGJAG offers you the opportunity to serve the United States as a leader, an officer, and an attorney.

### Areas of Practice

- Military Justice (Criminal Law)
- Maritime & International Law
- Claims & Litigation
- Regulations & Administrative Law
- Cyber Law
- Intelligence and Information Law
- Procurement Law
- General (Fiscal, Employment, Ethics, Real Property, Administrative) Law
- Legislation
- Member Advocacy & Legal Assistance

### Benefits

- Up to \$40,000 Sign-on Bonus
- Enter service as a Lieutenant (O-3)
- Steady income based on military pay scale
- Basic Allowance for Housing (not subject to federal or state income taxes)
- Advancement
- Paid vacation (2.5 days/month for a total of 30 days each year)
- Health Care (Medical and Dental)
- Life insurance
- Post 9/11 GI Bill
- VA Home Loans eligibility
- Military exchange, commissary, & child development center privileges
- Paid Parental Leave

### Eligibility Requirements

- Licensed attorney or 3L law student
- Ages 21-41
- U.S. Citizenship
- Eligible for a Secret Clearance
- Must pass a commissioning physical (MEPS)
- Financially responsible

### Training

- Direct Commission Officer School (4-5 weeks duration)
- Naval Justice School (10 weeks duration)
- Operational Familiarization Tour (2 weeks duration underway)

### Potential Locations of Employment

- Boston, MA
- Portsmouth/Norfolk, VA
- Washington, DC
- Juneau, AK
- Honolulu, HI
- New London, CT
- Miami, FL
- Alameda, CA
- Charleston, SC
- New Orleans, LA
- Seattle, WA
- Cleveland, OH

### Contact Us

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<https://www.gocoastguard.com/active-duty-careers/officer-opportunities/programs/direct-commission-lawyer-dcl>

**The Coast Guard Legal Program  
Office of the Coast Guard Judge Advocate General (CGJAG)**

**Direct Commission Lawyer (DCL) Program**

**Application Overview**

1. Contact the Coast Guard Legal Program (CGJAG)

Contact the CGJAG Accessions Manager at [CoastGuardDCL@uscg.mil](mailto:CoastGuardDCL@uscg.mil) for the latest application deadline information and to get connected with your local recruiter.

Visit <https://www.gocoastguard.com/cgjag> general information about the legal program and <https://www.gocoastguard.com/connect> to identify your closest Coast Guard Recruiting Office.

2. Determine Application Deadline

It takes several months to complete all the steps in the application process. You should connect with a recruiting office *at least* three months in advance of the application deadline to get started.

3. Contact a Recruiter

You must work with 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.

4. Recruiter Screening

Your recruiter will conduct a screening to ensure you are eligible. The screening process will validate that you meet the specific set of criteria (academic, financial, character, dependency, etc.) for the relevant program. Your local recruiter will determine if any waiver is available depending on your individual circumstances.

5. Complete the Application Package

Complete the application form and assemble the required and optional documents that will be a part of your final application package.

Your recruiter will provide the Officer Program Application and checklist associated with your program of interest. Components of application package include your resume, transcripts, letters of recommendation, a personal narrative, legal writing sample, and other personal information.

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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 coordinating 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 the 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 MEPS process, it’s important to start gathering medical documents early.

8. Interview

★ Once your application is complete and your recruiter has ascertained program eligibility, you will be scheduled for an interview with three Coast Guard officers who will provide a recommendation to the 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

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

10. Selection Panel Review

The selection panel consists of Coast Guard officers who will review your application package, including your interview board’s recommendation, and make a selection determination.

For the August DCL application deadline, the panel typically meets in late October/early November. For the February DCL application deadline, the panel typically meets in late April/early May.

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**11. Selection Notification:**

Unofficial primary and alternate selection results are typically released approximately two months after the panel meets. Your recruiter will notify you of your selection status. Panel results are routed to the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security for final approval.

For the August DCL application deadline, unofficial results are typically released in December. For the February DCL application deadline, unofficial results are typically released in May.

*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](mailto:CoastGuardDCL@uscg.mil).*



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**Direct Commission Lawyer (DCL) Program**

**Accession Overview**

*Congratulations, you've been selected!*

1. Accessions Information

The Coast Guard's Officer Personnel Management Division (OPM) will contact you with initial onboarding information.

2. Assignment

Around September to October for February applicants or around March to May of the following year for August applicants, you will work with the Deputy, Legal Policy and Program Development, to discuss your first legal assignment. 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 billet location and assignment.

3. Commissioning

★ February applicants typically commission around December of that year. August applicants typically commission around May to July of the following year. As a DCL, you will commission as a Lieutenant (O-3).

4. PCS Move

The OPM Accessions team will counsel you on scheduling your PCS move, including any paperwork needed to execute your PCS move to your new duty station. You will set up your Household Goods move and perform PCS travel to your new unit.

5. Reporting

You will report to your unit to check in and start your entitlements, including basic allowance for housing.

6. Direct Commission Officer Course

After reporting to your unit, you will receive orders to attend the 5-week Direct Commission Officer (DCO) Course at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. You will receive a welcome package from the DCO school staff, including the current DCO Pre-Reporting Guide and information about what to bring. Following DCO school, you will return to your duty station.

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May panel selectees typically attend the January to February DCO course the next year after you are selected. November panel selectees typically attend the May to June DCO course (if already bar licensed at the time of commissioning) or the August to September of the following year (if you applied during law school).

7. Naval Justice School

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

For spring panel selectees, NJS is typically from May to July of the year after you apply. For fall panel selectees, NJS is typically from August to November of the year you apply.

8. Operational Familiarization Tour

New accessions will also participate in an operational familiarization tour to gain exposure to Coast Guard operations. Typically, you may spend 1-2 weeks onboard a Coast Guard cutter, subject to operational demands and scheduling.

