

## ***Frequently Asked Questions – DCL & SELRES-DCL Programs***

Hello,

Thank you for your interest in CGJAG and the DCL/SELRES-DCL programs. Below is a list of frequently asked questions (w/answers) about each program. If you have further questions, please visit: the GoCoastGuard DCL recruiting website at: <https://www.gocoastguard.com/active-duty-careers/officer-opportunities/programs/direct-commission-lawyer-dcl> or contact the Office of Legal Policy & Program Development (CG-LPD) at: [CoastGuardDCL@uscg.mil](mailto:CoastGuardDCL@uscg.mil)

### **a. Eligibility**

**Q: Who is eligible to apply for each program?**

A: DCL Program: 3Ls and licensed attorneys.

SELRES DCL program: Licensed attorneys *only*

For both programs:

- Age limit: 40 (must be no older than 40 on 30 September of commissioning FY)
  - Pass MEPS (military entrance physical)
  - Must be able to receive a SECRET security clearance
  - Graduates of ABA-accredited schools\*. For the DCL program, there is a non-ABA graduate exception, see <https://www.gocoastguard.com/active-duty-careers/officer-opportunities/programs/direct-commission-lawyer-dcl>
  - U.S. Citizen
- \*\*Full eligibility requirements can be found on: <https://www.gocoastguard.com/active-duty-careers/officer-opportunities/programs/direct-commission-lawyer-dcl>

### **b. Recruiters/Applications**

**Q: Who handles my application?**

A: Your local USCG recruiter handles all DCL & SELRES DCL applications. To be introduced to your local recruiter, contact [CoastGuardDCL@uscg.mil](mailto:CoastGuardDCL@uscg.mil)

**Q. What does the application consist of?**

A: DCL/SELRES-DCL applications consist of three main parts. Your local recruiter will guide you through all three parts:

- 1) “*Paper application*” – Resume, transcripts, 3 LORs, personal narrative, legal writing sample, other biographic/demographic info, SF-86, etc. (Speak to recruiter for official checklist).

2) *Formal interview* → Consists of 2-3 USCG officers, one of whom (at least) will be a CGJAG. Questions concern leadership ability, communication skills, reasons for applying, legal experience. Interview will be graded and grading rubric will be sent up with rest of paper application for selection panel review.

3) *Completed MEPS physical*

The first thing your recruiter will do is provide you with a comprehensive questionnaire document designed to examine your medical history and submit to MEPS. If you answer “yes” to any questions, more documentation will likely be necessary. The recruiter screens the questionnaire + supplemental information to MEPS, MEPS reviews to schedule physical..\*

\*To expedite the MEPS process, it’s important to start gathering medical documents NOW if you think something will be an issue.

Common issues MEPS will want more information on include: (but is not limited to): prescription medication, past surgeries, mental health counseling, etc.)

**Q: May I request a waiver for any eligibility requirement?**

A: Your local recruiter will determine if any waiver is available depending on the individual circumstance.

**Q: What is the average selection rate for the DCL program?**

A: Primary selection rate (on avg.) for last 3 years is anywhere from 10-30%.

**Q: How long are MEPS physicals are valid for?**

A: Two years from the date of your respective selection panel convenes.

**Q: When will I be notified of a decision?**

A: Applicants are normally notified by recruiters 2 months after board meets.

**Q. If I am not selected, may I apply again?**

A: Assuming you meet all other eligibility requirements, if not picked up, consult your recruiter about submitting your application for the next board

**Q: How often are selection panels?**

A: DCL Program: 2x a year (Usually May & November)  
SELRES-DCL: 1x a year (Usually August)

**Q: When are the application deadlines?**

A: DCL program: For May panel, usually early March. For November panel, usually early September. Consult your recruiter for exact dates.

### **c. Training/Onboarding**

#### **Q: How and when is a new selection assigned a billet?**

A: After notification of selection, CGJAG and the legal assignment officer reach out to selectee (Sep-Oct for spring selectees, March-May of following year for fall selectees) to go through billet options. The billet selection process is a collaborative process designed to help out both member and service. That said, the Coast Guard is a military organization, so needs of the service are paramount when determining billet location and assignment.

#### **Q: When will I commission?**

A: DCL program: If selected at the May panel, commissioning is usually in December of that panel year. If selected at the November panel, selectees commission usually in May-July of that following year.

SELRES-DCL program members commission following graduation of Reserve Officer training, usually in late June or early July of the following year after selection.

#### **Q: What rank will I commission as?**

A: DCL Program: LT (O-3)  
SELRES-DCL program: LTJG (O-2)

#### **Q: What does training look like?**

A: DCL Program: Attend Direct Commission Officer (DCO) School, which is five-week course in New London, CT at the Coast Guard Academy. For May panel selectees, DCO will likely occur from January thru February of the next year after you are selected. For November selectees, DCO will usually be held from either May-June (if already bar licensed at time of commissioning) or August through September of the following year (if you apply and get selected out of law school).

Following DCO, DCLs return to their first office, and await Naval Justice School (NJS). For May selectees, NJS is from May-July of year after they apply. For fall selectees, NJS is from Aug.-Nov. of year after they apply or Jan.-April of the next year. NJS is a ten-week course in Newport, Rhode Island at Naval Station Newport.

Following NJS, all DCL selectees must complete MJOC (military justice orientation course) which is a two-week course emphasizing military justice practice. MJOC normally takes place immediately after NJS and is held onboard Naval Station Newport.

Either between DCO and NJS or post NJS, all DCL selectees will receive orders to go on an Operational Familiarization Tour (OPFAM). OPFAMs are one to two week

opportunities to get underway on a Coast Guard and learn what your operational clients do on a daily basis. On your OPFAM, DCLs are full members of the wardroom and crew.

SELRES-DCL program: For SELRES DCLs, Reserve Officer Indoctrination Course (ROCI) is usually held in May/June of the following year after selection. ROCI is also a five-week course held at the Coast Guard Academy.

SELRES DCLs they start drilling month after they graduate ROCI. They do *not* attend NJS or go on an OPFAM.

#### **d. Practice**

##### **Q: What will I do as CGJAG?**

A: DCL Program: CGJAG offers its junior attorneys the opportunity to work at mostly five different offices/roles:\*

1. Area/District assignments (Judge advocates work at various field offices across the country, akin to a general-counsel position. At an Area/District, DCLs will handle operational, command advice, military justice issues, etc. all at once.
2. Legal Service Commands (LSC): DCLs assigned to the LSC predominately work as military justice practitioners (prosecution) or serve as command advice attorneys to the Coast Guard's larger commands.
3. Special Victim's Counsel (SVCs): DCLs who work as SVCs represent individuals who are victims of sexually based offenses and/or domestic violence perpetrated by a Coast Guard member. SVCs can represent individuals all the way from initial report to post-trial disposition,
4. Defense Attorneys: All Coast Guard defense attorneys work at Navy Defense Service Offices (DSOs) pursuant to a MOU with the Navy.
5. Coast Guard Headquarters: At CGHQ, CGJAG is split up into 12-13 different legal offices each specifically dealing with a set practice area (ex: Environmental Law). When assigned to one of these offices at HQ, DCLs advise CG clients and assist field counsel with related legal issues.

\*- This list is not comprehensive but rather includes the most popular and frequent assignments.

SELRES DCL program: SELRES DCLs are assigned to most Coast Guard active duty legal offices and function as contingency support. SELRES-DCLs do most of the same work as their active duty counterparts except for military justice.

**Q: How long are CGJAG legal tours?**

A: Legal tours on average are three years, some (SVC/DSO) are two years).

**Q: What is the minimum drill requirement for SELRES-DCL attorneys?**

A: All reservists must drill one weekend a month and two weeks out of the year.

**Q: Where could I be stationed?**

A: CGJAGs may be assigned to the following locations (not exclusive):

- Boston, MA
- New London, CT
- Cape May, NJ
- Washington, DC metro area
- Norfolk/Portsmouth, VA
- Charleston, SC
- Miami, FL
- Tampa, FL
- Mayport, FL
- New Orleans, LA
- Cleveland, OH
- San Diego, CA
- Alameda, CA
- Petaluma, CA
- Bremerton, WA
- Seattle, WA
- Honolulu, HI
- Juneau, AK

**e. Benefits/Other Questions**

**Q: Are any retention bonuses/monetary incentives offered?**

A: All DCLs qualify to apply for the U.S. government's public service student loan forgiveness program (student loans forgiven after ten years of public service).

**Q: What are CGJAG's promotion rates?**

A: On average, DCLs have promoted to O-4 at a 70-75% rate last five years

**Q: Does CGJAG offer LLM opportunities?**

A: DCLs may apply to have the service pay for an LLM (contingent upon the selectee(s) owing further obligated military service upon graduation. Commonly, CGJAG offers three (3) LLM opportunities every year for high-performing judge advocates.