# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs, Department of defense

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| **OVERVIEW** | |
| Senate Committee | Armed Services[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Agency Mission | The mission of the Department of Defense (DOD) is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country.[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| Position Overview | The assistant secretary of defense for health affairs oversees and administers the more than $50 billion Military Health System (MHS) budget and serves as principal advisor to the secretary of defense for health issues.[[3]](#endnote-3) The media and outside observers look to the official as the top health care official for the military and the entire Department of Defense. |
| Compensation | Level IV $155,500 (5 U.S.C. § 5315)[[4]](#endnote-4) |
| Position Reports to | The Undersecretary for Personnel and Readiness and the Secretary of Defense[[5]](#endnote-5) |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | The assistant secretary of defense for health affairs oversees the MHS, which includes more than 135,000 patients in the U.S., and 10 million more patients in 900 clinics and hospitals in 100 countries.[[6]](#endnote-6) The principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for health affairs reports directly to the assistant secretary of defense for health affairs.[[7]](#endnote-7) |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Assists in the development of strategies and priorities to achieve the health mission of the MHS[[8]](#endnote-8) * Administers the more than $50 billion MHS budget in close cooperation with Armed Services * Serves as principal advisor to the secretary of defense for health issues * Ensures the effective execution of the DOD medical mission * Oversees the development of medical policies, analyses and recommendations to the secretary of defense and the undersecretary for personnel and readiness * Issues guidance on medical matters to DOD components * Exercises authority, direction and control over the following entities: * Defense Health Agency, which under recent change in statute will directly oversee and manage critical military hospitals and health centers * Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences * Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute * Defense Center of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury * Armed Forces Institute of Pathology * Armed Services Blood Program Office[[9]](#endnote-9) * Is responsible for setting medical health standards for enlistments and deployments[[10]](#endnote-10) * Partners closely with the surgeons general of the military departments to assess medical readiness * Acts as a liaison for other offices within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the military departments, Congress and other executive branch agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs, to develop, coordinate and integrate health care policies with departmental priorities and initiatives * Oversees congressional and legislative activities for the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, and guides the office’s public affairs and communications programs[[11]](#endnote-11) |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * Substantial background in health care administration and health care policy * Understanding of politics and the sensitivity of health care issues often affecting the fundamental well-being of service members, families and veterans * Familiarity with the business aspects of health care, including hospital and health center management, costs, processes, payments and information technology * Strong background in change management, since the entire military health service will go through a broad restructuring as directed by Congress in 2016 * Health care expertise at the individual, population, business and management levels * Knowledge of medical administration, health care policy and change management |
| Competencies | * Strong ability to work cooperatively with higher-level leaders, peers with shared responsibility and subordinates to identify issues, develop options and implement changes and solutions * Excellent leadership and management skills * Ability to clearly communicate complex health issues to senior nonmedical leadership, as well as to the broader public * Ability to effectively and cooperatively work with the Armed Services in a matrixed relationship |
| **PAST APPOINTEES** | |
| Karen Guice (2016 to 2017) (acting) - Executive Director, Federal Recovery Coordination Program; Deputy Director, President's Commission on Care for America's Wounded Warriors; Professor of Surgery, Duke University[[12]](#endnote-12)[[13]](#endnote-13) | |
| Jonathan Woodson (2010 to 2016) - Associate Dean for Diversity and Multicultural Affairs and Professor of Surgery, Boston University School of Medicine; Senior Attending Vascular Surgeon, Boston Medical Center; Assistant Surgeon General for Reserve Affairs, Force Structure and Mobilization, Office of the Surgeon General[[14]](#endnote-14) | |
| Dr. S Ward Casscells (2007 to 2010) - Colonel, U.S. Army Reserve; Chair in Medicine and Public Health, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston; Senior Scholar, Texas Heart Institute in Houston[[15]](#endnote-15) | |

1. <https://www.congress.gov/nomination/111th-congress/1667?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22Jonathan+Woodson%22%5D%7D&r=1> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Previous Partnership for Public Service position description [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <http://prhome.defense.gov/leadership/jonathanWoodson.aspx> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. <http://prhome.defense.gov/leadership/jonathanWoodson.aspx> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Cardiologist-Trip-Casscells-dies-at-60-3954567.php> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. <http://prhome.defense.gov/leadership/karenGuice.aspx> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. <http://www.defense.gov/About-DoD/Biographies/Biography-View/Article/602709/karen-guice> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. <http://prhome.defense.gov/leadership/jonathanWoodson.aspx> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. <http://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/obama-taps-army-surgeon-head-dod-health-office> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. <http://www.defense.gov/About-DoD/Biographies/Biography-View/Article/602709/karen-guice> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/karen-guice-169229132?authType=NAME_SEARCH&authToken=a6-3&locale=en_US&trk=tyah&trkInfo=clickedVertical%3Amynetwork%2CclickedEntityId%3A544004001%2CauthType%3ANAME_SEARCH%2Cidx%3A1-7-7%2CtarId%3A1481820375726%2Ctas%3AKaren%20Guice> [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. <http://www.defense.gov/About-DoD/Biographies/Biography-View/Article/602709/karen-guice> [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. <http://www.defense.gov/About-DoD/Biographies/Biography-View/Article/602785> [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/16/us/s-ward-casscells-pentagon-medical-chief-dies-at-60.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-15)