

Ms. Susan Orsega

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Services Policy and Oversight



Susan Orsega serves as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Services Policy and Oversight within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. In this role, Orsega leads a team of subject matter experts in establishing and overseeing Military Health System policies concerning 9.5 million military personnel, retirees, and their families.

Orsega's HSP&O team provides medical advice and consultation to senior Defense officials, Congress, and other Department of Defense stakeholders. HSP&O examines the MHS workforce environment and adjusts human resource policies for more than 150,000 military and civilian health professionals. Orsega and the HSP&O team serve as lead coordinators with several DOD committees, and in partnership with representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Areas of policy and oversight responsibility include, as follows: Medical Quality Assurance and Clinical Quality Management, Health Information Technology,

Preventive Medicine, Population Health, Warrior Care, Chronic Disease Management, Child & Women's Health, and Behavioral Health.

Prior to this senior executive service appointment, Orsega retired at the rank of Rear Admiral Upper Half, United States Public Health Service after 34 years of service as Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Health in December 2023. While serving in the USPHS, Orsega held various assignments leading teams to build programs and improve complex global health care problems. From Jan. 20, 2021, to March 23, 2021, Orsega served as Acting Surgeon General. Orsega is the first nurse practitioner to hold this position, chosen for her leadership and executive presence within the government, as well as her strategic operational expertise during health crises.

In 2019, she was selected as the Director of USPHS and managed activation of the largest historical deployment of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps in support of international and national COVID-19 efforts.

Earlier in her career, Orsega held various positions with progressive responsibility at the National Institutes of Health. Notably, she was selected by the NIH, National Institute of Allergy, and Infectious Diseases Clinical Director, to lead research operations partnerships in multiple African countries during periods of emerging infectious disease outbreaks such as Ebola. In addition to 15 public health crises around the world, Orsega deployed to: New York City after September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks; the U.S. Capitol following an anthrax terrorist event; New Orleans following devastation from Hurricane Katrina; and Pacific Partnership, DOD humanitarian-assistance mission in several Southeast Asian Ports.

Orsega's focus is addressing pressing issues of public health and health policy. Orsega works to collaborate and influence people to implement necessary changes while navigating complex government regulations, legislation, policies, and organizational structures.

Orsega graduated with a Bachelor of Science from Towson University, Baltimore, Maryland in 1990. In 2001, she graduated with a Master of Science from the Nurse Practitioner Program, Uniformed Services University, Bethesda, Maryland. Orsega later received honorary doctorates from USUHS and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. She is a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing and in the American Association of Nurse Practitioners.