

Susan Orsega

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Services Policy and Oversight Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness

Susan Orsega serves as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Health Services Policy and Oversight (HSP&O) within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness. In this role, Orsega leads a team of subject matter experts in establishing and overseeing Military Health System (MHS) policies concerning military personnel, retirees, and their families.



DASD Orsega's HSP&O team provides medical advice and consultation to senior Defense officials, Congress, and other Department of Defense (DOD) 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 senior executive service appointment, DASD Orsega retired at the rank of Rear Admiral Upper Half, United States Public Health Service (USPHS) after 34 years of service as Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Health in December 2023. While serving in the USPHS, she held various assignments leading teams to build programs and improve complex global health care problems. From January 20 to March 23, 2021, she served as Acting Surgeon General. DASD 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, Dr. Orsega held various positions with progressive responsibility at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Notably, she was selected to lead research operations partnerships in multiple African countries during periods of emerging infectious disease outbreaks.

Orsega has deployed to 15 public health crises around the world such as:

- New York City after September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks
- The US Capitol following an Anthrax terrorist event
- New Orleans following devastation from Hurricane Katrina
- Pacific region in support of Department of Defense Pacific Peleliu humanitarian mission

DASD Orsega's focus is addressing pressing issues of public health and health policy. She 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 (USUHS), Bethesda, Maryland. Orsega later received honorary doctorates from USUHS and Georgetown University. She is a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing and in the American Association of Nurse Practitioners.

