

Introduction to Mentoring

CAP Officer Basic Course

Introduction

Civil Air Patrol is a collection of volunteer professionals dedicated to our missions, our core values, and most importantly, each other. At its core, mentoring is making an investment in the future of our organization by sharing our knowledge, expertise, and experience with a younger generation of CAP members. Mentorship can take on many forms and complexities, and is a vital component of our growth as individuals and an organization by helping our members to reach their full potential. Most importantly, it is our duty and responsibility to our fellow volunteers. This lesson will provide an introduction to mentoring in the Civil Air Patrol, resources available to members, attributes and benefits of mentoring, and the role of the unit commander.

1. Define mentoring.

Mentor means a trusted counselor or guide, tutor, or coach. Mentors are helpers.

Mentoring is a relationship in which a person with greater experience guides another person in personal and professional development. It is one of the broadest methods available today to develop the talent pool for today's and tomorrow's CAP. Mentoring can be an informal relationship because it fosters among superiors and subordinates free communication about performance and duties, without fear of reprisal. Mentoring can also be a highly structured formal relationship like one might see with senior members investing a year or more with a cadet providing formal training and counsel, or among seniors as part of the Organizational Excellence program. (CAPP 50-7)

Overall, mentoring enhances morale and discipline and improves the operational environment while maintaining respect for authority.

CAP mentoring covers a wide range of areas, such as guiding a member through the steps of the Professional Development Program; clarifying a member's understanding of aerospace education, emergency services, and cadet programs; and setting a leadership example for new members. It also includes sharing knowledge of the organization and an understanding of CAP's core values of Integrity, Volunteer Service, Excellence, and Respect. (CAPP 50-7)

Mentoring helps prepare members for the increased responsibilities they will assume as they progress in the program. Mentoring is not a promotion enhancement program, rather it is a professional development program designed to help each individual reach his or her maximum potential. Professional development is not a new concept. It occurs at every echelon and activity. In reality, mentoring is one aspect of a professional relationship because it fosters free communication by subordinates with superiors concerning their careers, performance, duties and missions. Approaching mentoring as a professional relationship helps enhance morale and discipline and improves the operational environment while maintaining respect for authority. (CAPP 50-7)

Mentoring a cadet takes certain skills. Those skills are defined for you in CAPP 52-6. To read more about those skills click on the copy of CAPP 52-6 provided.

2. Identify resources available to mentors.

As a community of volunteers, Civil Air Patrol goes out of its way to provide resources for its members to ensure member growth and mission success. Listed below are 3 potential resources to turn to for advice and information on mentorship.

The first and usually best resource for members and potential mentors in CAP is other members. Your squadron, group, and wing staff contain experienced officers whose primary role is to provide assistance. This is often the best place to start because these individuals have first hand knowledge of local operations and often have access to other resources not listed here.

Civil Air Patrol has a multitude of official and unofficial online forums, chat rooms, websites and other useful tools that members can use. One benefit is that it provides you access to members of other wings and regions and is a wonderful tool to bring in outside ideas on how CAP functions in other areas of the country and around the world.

CAP Pamphlet 50-7 *Mentoring: Building our Members*, CAP Pamphlet 50-8, *Organizational Excellence Mentoring Guide*, and CAP Pamphlet 52-6 *Cadet Programs, Mentoring* are wonderful tools built specifically with you in mind. They provide general guidance on the process of mentorship and offer many valuable tips. These are attached to the lesson. Please click on them to learn more.

A list of suggested reading material has been devised by the Air Force Historian for the Chief of Staff to promote professional and self-development of Air Force people by enhancing the knowledge of the civilian work force on the history of air and space power. Designed for civilians and divided into grade range categories, the reading list was created to mirror the reading list of officers and enlisted. A complete reading list for all grades is available on the Air Force web site, "Air Force Link", under "library". The books are also available for commercial purchase or through the local base library. The suggested reading list is a part of the Air Force Chief of Staff Reading Program. (AFI 36-401)

CAP's Read to Lead program is designed to be a companion to the Air Force Chief of Staff's Reading Program and has additional offerings. It can be found at: http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com/media/cms/Read_to_Lead_Brochure_1EEFA62F4AE30.pdf.

There are many private organizations that seek to develop professional skills and associations for individuals in many career fields and technical specialties. Membership in such associations may provide additional opportunities for mentoring as well as broadening technical expertise. AFI 36-3401 Air Force Mentoring contains a partial list of associations to which members can reach out. Units may even decide to coordinate with some of these organizations to conduct joint activities or to have them visit their unit and provide presentations to unit members.

Remember, these are only a few suggestions. It is recommended that you reach out into other areas of your life as well for good examples and ideas for mentorship as well. Work, church group and other community or faith based groups, as well as friends and other volunteer organizations are all potential resources to help you become a better mentor.

3. Explain mentoring as it applies to cadets and senior members. (CAPP 50-7)

Mentors should influence the behavior of fellow members in a positive way. A mentoring partnership should build expectations for success and positive outcomes; it can be a powerful force in helping the member to succeed.

There are two vital components that must be present in order for mentorship to be successful.

1. The mentor. The mentor should have experience or knowledge in the aspects of the program they are guiding a member through. What is more important than technical knowledge is that the mentor must be dedicated to the mentorship process. While some forms of mentorship are short term (helping to recruit someone) and others long term (guiding a member through a specialty track), the mentor must make a commitment to see the process through.

2. The member. Whether the member being mentored is a cadet or a senior member has very little impact on the success of the mentorship process. What is very important is that the member takes an active role in the process. Ask questions, be attentive, present ideas, but most important of all is staying involved.

If both the mentor and the member are actively involved in the mentorship process and committed to its success, both stand to gain from it. The mentorship process cannot be forced. Mentorship is a rewarding process because the member learns new skills and grows as an individual both professionally and personally. It is also very rewarding for the mentor in that they get to see their student grow and develop increasing their effectiveness within the organization and often making positive impacts in their community as a result.

CAPP 50-7, CAPP 50-8, and CAPP 52-6, both contain lists of appropriate and inappropriate mentor behaviors that serve as a successful guide to potential mentors.

Appropriate Mentor Behaviors:

1. Providing a sense of vision
2. Active listening (without assuming their problem, providing advice or joining them in self pity)
3. Tactful Confrontation (be respectful and honest)
4. Providing information (or assist them in finding information)
5. Empowering (delegate responsibility and trust them)
6. Encouraging

Inappropriate Mentor Behaviors:

1. Criticism
2. Giving Advice (help them form their own conclusions)
3. Rescuing (teach them how to work through their problems, don't just remove obstacles)

At this time go to CAPP 50-7, and read part 3 (pages 5 to 9) for a more detailed description of the above behaviors.

It is important for mentors to distinguish between individual goals, professional development aspirations, and realistic expectations. Each individual defines a successful career differently--there are numerous paths to meet individual career and success goals. Foremost, however, individuals during the mentorship process must focus on CAP institutional needs: We must develop people who are skilled in the employment and support of CAP's Missions for America. While there is nothing wrong with lofty goals, mentors must ensure their people realize what high, but achievable, goals are.

**4. Discuss the role of unit commanders in the mentoring process.
(CAPP 50-7)**

Unit commanders are responsible for establishing mentoring partnerships in their squadron. The most common style of mentoring, informal and short-term, is relatively easy to initiate. Below are some examples about how to establish this type of mentoring.

1. The unit commander should begin with an awareness session with those that express interest in becoming a mentor. The unit commander may call upon an experienced senior members to discuss this guide with the potential mentors. This could be a group effort or one-on-one. The purpose of the awareness meeting is to discuss the potential pitfalls and rewards of becoming a mentor.
2. The unit commander should appoint an experienced senior member to mentor a senior member recruit (or a senior cadet to mentor a cadet recruit). This authority may be delegated. The purpose here is to provide the new recruit with a person that would be available to answer any questions and to guide the recruit towards fulfillment of his or her membership responsibilities.
3. In addition to mentoring recruits, the unit commander should identify senior members to serve as professional development mentors. The purpose here is to guide the members towards mastery of the organizational structure, the professional development program, and technical specialties. This relationship should last longer than just one course or one requirement for promotion, otherwise the mentor would be functioning more like a "substitute teacher."
4. The unit commander should appoint senior members serving in functional staff positions (such as administrative officer, public affairs officer, aerospace education officer, etc.) to also act as mentors to the seniors selecting those specialty tracks. The members studying their specialty should learn from their more experienced counterparts the duties of the staff positions as they work together.

Lesson Summary and Closure

In this lesson we covered the definition of mentoring, the resources available to our members, attributes and benefits of mentoring as well as commander involvement. Mentoring is an ongoing process that focuses on our greatest asset in Civil Air Patrol - people. Staying involved and investing ourselves in mentoring others is investing in our future.

Works Cited:

AFI 36-401, *Employee Training and Development*. Air Force Publishing, 28 June 2002

CAPP 50-7, *Mentoring: Building our Members*. Civil Air Patrol, Maxwell AFB, AL, 1 December 2004

Source Materials

1. CAPP 50-7, *Mentoring: Building our Members*. 1 December 2004 OPR: CAP/DP 105 S. Hansell St., Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6332
2. CAPP 50-8, *Organizational Excellence Mentoring Guide*, 15 February 2009, OPR: CAP/PD 105 S. Hansell St., Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6332
3. CAPP 52-6, *Cadet Programs: Mentoring*. 15 April 1999 OPR: CAP/CP 105 S. Hansell St., Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6332

4. GoCivilAirPatrol.com, 2009. Civil Air Patrol <http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com>
5. AFI 36-3401, *Air Force Mentoring*. 1 June 2000 OPR: HQ USAF/DPDE (Major Latour); <http://www.e-publishing.af.mil>
6. AFI 36-401, *Employee Training and Development*. 28 June 2002 OPR: HQ USAF/DPDE (Robert M. Wied); <http://www.e-publishing.af.mil>