

Working with Families

Lesson Objective:

Lesson Objective: Comprehend the importance of establishing good relationships with members' families.

Desired Learning Outcomes:

1. Discuss the basic need for family involvement in Civil Air Patrol.
2. Explain the missions of CAP to members' families.
3. Identify opportunities to encourage family involvement.

Lesson:

Overview:

In this class we want to introduce you to one of the most powerful groups you will run into as commander of a CAP unit: the family members of your people. Families are a valuable but sometimes neglected resource. They certainly have great influence over your members' morale and motivation levels - their level of involvement in CAP. Their support and understanding of your efforts are key to your success as a manager and leader.

Families are more apt to support the efforts and sacrifices of their CAP members when they understand the missions and benefits of CAP. This is also true when they feel they are included in the process. As commander, you must always remember and respect this. Families also sacrifice for CAP.

Why Include Families?

As has been said, families are a very potent force in determining the nature and scope of the member's involvement. Families who don't know what CAP does, or otherwise don't support the member's participation in the program can seriously affect the member's involvement. As commander, you are the most visible spokesperson - or salesperson - representing Civil Air Patrol to the families.

Aside from merely accepting the CAP member's participation, family members can serve as valuable resources in assisting the unit. Indeed, once they understand what CAP is all about, many family members offer to help the unit; even if they wish not to become members themselves.

Explaining the Missions to Members' Families:

The first and most important thing you can do to foster family support of CAP is to explain to them what CAP is, does, and means. You must begin this effort when the perspective member walks in the door. Many families have observed that when their interested son, daughter, spouse, etc., goes to their first meeting the recruit is treated well, but they as "spectators" are neglected.

Always realize that family members' impressions have a great bearing on the member's decisions. Therefore, it is in your best interest to treat the family members as well as the recruit from the beginning. Include them in the member's orientation as much as possible especially when explaining CAP's vision, missions, and squadron specialties. Have a member stay with them and be ready to answer questions when they cannot be with the new member. Provide them with a special showing of the video material and copies of past issues of CAP's Volunteer magazine. Also share the web links to CAP's website, as well as the local unit's.

Explaining the Missions

- Begin the effort when the recruit and family _____
- Include family in the member's _____ as much as possible
- Assign a member to the family to _____
- Provide the family with _____
- As commander, send a letter of _____ to the family
- Encourage members to share their _____ with their families
- Address the squadron newsletter to the entire _____
- Always _____ family members when they visit

When the member joins, send a letter to the spouse or parent welcoming the member and family to CAP and offering your services should they be needed. In the letter, again explain the mission of CAP, especially your squadron's specialties. While it doesn't have to be a long letter, it is best that it comes from you. As commander you represent the squadron, and that prestige is not lost on new members or their families.

As the members are assigned their specialties, encourage them to describe to their families what they are doing and highlight the missions at squadron open houses, conferences, and other local activities.

Send the unit newsletter to the family of the member so they feel included in the process. And of course, always welcome them when they visit the unit.

Opportunities to Encourage Family Involvement:

CAP members and their families most often wish to share their experience with each other. Make it a priority to foster the shared experience as much as possible. While non-members are barred from doing certain things due to regulation or circumstance, there are many ways to encourage involvement. Many of these ways aren't just "feel good" programs but concrete ways to benefit the squadron as a whole.

A. Making Families Welcome at first Meeting:

First and foremost, *don't ignore them*. That is a sure way to start the family relationship - and the recruit's membership - on the wrong foot. Though time is tight, make the extra effort to personally say hello, have a member ask them if there are questions, offer refreshments, etc. Making families feel important and needed is good business.

Making Families Welcome

- Don't _____ family members
- Again, include them in the _____
- _____ to them yourself

As before, include them in the new member's orientation as much as possible. Assign a member to stay with the family when they can't be with the new member. Show them CAP's promotional material. Show off the squadron scrapbook. Provide web links to CAP's website as well as the local unit's.

Finally, talk to them yourself. Show them that as a commander you care about them as well as the new member.

Now, this sounds an awful lot like a recruiting pitch doesn't? In a way, it is. Like we've said, garnering the support of the member's family is important. The member notices this too. The point isn't necessarily to have the family members join CAP, though there's certainly nothing wrong with asking them, many can't or choose not to. The point is to make family members aware of the benefits and challenges of CAP membership.

B. Support and Booster Clubs:

Family support and booster groups are excellent ways to create organized support for your squadron. With your active support these groups can provide your unit with extra resources and ideas (within the confines of CAP directives).

Family support groups (a good comparison would be an Officers' Spouses Club) can assist you by providing family feedback on squadron programs. For instance, a support group can give you excellent feedback concerning the affects of increased flight or weekend programs. They can help you better schedule those activities.

Booster clubs can be very resourceful in obtaining resources and raising funds for the squadron. Before you use them for this purpose, *be sure* to check with your wing commander and with state and local officials. New regulations and laws have been adopted concerning fund raising, and it is in your best interest to thoroughly research the subject in your local area.

Both support groups and booster clubs can supply non-monetary support in the forms of networking assistance (in the planning of field trips and finding suppliers, donations, etc), administrative support, and private transportation.

C. CAP Squadron Activities:

Members' families should be included in squadron activities when possible. Open houses are an ideal way to thank the family members for their support, recognize the members, and provide a forum to update all on squadron projects and priorities. It is a great "feel good" program.

Just as they should benefit, families can also have a valuable voice in planning activities. As mentioned above, families are an ideal source when it comes to networking with the local communities. They can assist with many of the details such as organizing child care, food, transport, etc.

Support and Booster Groups

- Comparable to Officers' _____ Clubs
- Groups provide feedback about the effects _____ have on families
- _____ groups can provide excellent resources

CAP Squadron Activities

- Include _____ members whenever possible
- Families can also have a valuable voice in _____ and _____ with activities

D. **A special CAP membership** category can be attractive to CAP family members of cadets who want to help out but do not wish to fully participate. “Cadet Sponsor Members” pay only national dues and complete Level I (all components) to participate. They can then drive CAP members to and from CAP activities and act as chaperones. This could be an attractive alternative to parents who do not have the time to donate to full CAP membership.

In summary, don’t underestimate the value of members’ families both in terms of influence and assistance. They need to be kept informed almost as much as the members themselves, and they can be almost as valuable as contributors.

Most importantly, remember that members’ families are their number one priority. You as commander should constantly let the families know that the member’s family life comes first and mean it. Do the little things: keep them informed, keep out of pocket expenses low, ask their opinion, and remember that holidays aren’t always invitations to fill in the schedule. And finally, never, never take family support for granted.

Above all, remember: **Families are the members’ number one priority!**