

## Cadet Programs

### MENTORING

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#### WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is an essential ingredient in developing well-rounded, professional, and competent future leaders. The goal of mentoring in the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) Cadet Program is to help cadets reach their full potential, thereby enhancing the overall professionalism of CAP.

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

Mentoring is a relationship in which a person with greater experience and wisdom guides another person to develop both personally and professionally. Mentoring is one of the broadest methods we have available today to encourage human growth and develop the talent pool for today's and tomorrow's CAP!

Mentoring is an informal relationship because it fosters free communication by subordinates with superiors concerning their performance and duties, without fear of reprisal. It enhances morale and discipline and improves the operational environment while maintaining respect for authority.

CAP mentoring for cadets covers a wide range of areas, such as helping a cadet understand the progression steps through the program, guiding the cadet in his or her understanding of aerospace education, and setting an example of leadership. It also includes knowledge of the cadet program and an understanding of the Air Force's core values of integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do.

The key to mentoring is the direct involvement of the unit commander in the development of his or her cadets. The commander must create an environment that continuously challenges the cadets to excel. The commander must provide opportunities for clear performance feedback and provide guidance in helping the cadets to set realistic professional and personal goals.



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OPR: CPC

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#### WHAT DOES BEING A MENTOR INVOLVE?

Mentoring relationships can take several forms. One relationship might be *highly structured* with *short-term* goals. Largely, this type of relationship is more formal with specific organizational ends; for example, a new cadet being paired with a more senior cadet.

We also might see *highly structured, long-term* mentoring. This could include examples of senior members investing a year or more with a cadet providing formal training and counsel.

Perhaps the relationship that will be most used in the cadet program is the *informal, short-term* mentoring, which tends to be spontaneous, ranging from one-time help to help as needed, but usually with no real ongoing relationship. An example may be an aerospace education mentor giving assistance as needed to a Phase I or Phase II cadet.

Finally, some mentoring takes the form of *informal, long-term* mentoring. This involves more of an as-needed helping relationship, but over more time. These relationships might possibly last for several years or over a cadet's career. Typically, these are fostered through the friendships that the cadets develop and carry with them for a number of years.

We probably have benefited from all of these types of relationships at some point in our lives. Mentoring can almost be unconscious. Without even realizing it, a person might say or do something that has a powerful effect on another person. These powerful life experiences can be a potent force in developing cadets within our organization.

Today's cadet program is becoming increasingly more complex, high tech and streamlined. Because of this, many cadets experience the need for understanding and information that are outside the channels of our normal training programs. Mentors can help fill the gaps in a cadet's ability to rightly handle the problems they may face.

#### WHO SHOULD BE A MENTOR?

To be an effective mentor we must, at a minimum, have a heightened awareness or sensitivity to the needs of others, and be willing to pause and listen. Formal mentoring requires much more. It may mean inconveniences, it may take our time away from other things, and it definitely will require commitment. We should carefully evaluate whether this type of activity will cause significant stress or loss in other areas and whether we are emotionally and psychologically prepared.





