THE NATIONAL COMMODORE

OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

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From: James E. Vass, Jr.

To: DNACOs

Re: Youth Policy

In recent years, the Coast Guard Auxiliary has continued to meet our Nation's needs through increased attention to our younger citizens by providing youth oriented recreational boating safety instruction. This is being accomplished across the nation by our skilled members in many settings, including, presenting Auxiliary Public Education (PE) Courses, using Sea Partners programs, and working with "Coastie" at various public venues and in the classroom.

During the last few years, The Coast Guard Auxiliary has expanded its youth interaction by entering into participatory agreements with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and U. S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps (NSCC) to provide shoreside and underway training opportunities to interested youth of these organizations. The scope of this training was designed to be a subset of the standard Auxiliary boat crew and coxswain qualification tasks.

Since its inception, the BSA and NSCC Auxiliary training programs, and related youth interaction such as assisting at National Scouting Jamborees, have caused a number of our members to raise concerns about legal liability and personal risk while providing educational instruction and assistance to youth. These questions gave rise to the recent "ADVISORY ON AUXILIARY INTERACTION WITH YOUTH GROUPS" issued by the Chief Director. This document correctly states that the Auxiliary does not have a structured youth program and that the Auxiliary Manual (COMDTINST M16790.1 series), in section 2.B., specifically lists youth programs that Auxiliarists and Auxiliary units are not authorized to directly sponsor or interact with, other than providing standard PE programs or assisting with Coast Guard approved support initiatives.

One of my Strategic Imperatives is to maintain the high standards of the Auxiliary by ensuring that we continue to maintain the integrity and dependability of the organization. This requires accurate guidance to our members from their leadership when questions, such as theses concerning youth activities, arise.

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Our agreements with both the BSA and NSCC to provide specific shoreside and underway instruction is a commitment that some of our members may wish to undertake. However, before they do, they must understand the risks involved including potential legal liability inherent in working with youth in our litigious society. Before engaging in such activities, interested members and units should first use their Chain of Leadership to obtain the consent of the District Commodore to engage in the activities; and, thereafter, consult with the District Legal Officer (DSO-LP) regarding all pertinent legal issues. The DSO-LP can discuss many subjects, including, personal liability, unit liability, insurance and other protective measures, parental releases for underage participants, the need to have chaperones present, available training from outside organizations concerning working with youth, and can answer questions about the applicable agreements with the youth organizations. Also, interested members and units should use the Boating Department's AuxBWiki site at http://auxbdeptwiki.cgaux.org and fully review all of the information about providing instruction to youth.

As is the case with any on-the-water training, training youth should only occur on Operational Facilities, under reimbursable orders, and the required coxswain and crew should not participate as instructors while performing their duties. In addition, at no time should a youth trainee be permitted to operate the vessel. All safety measures should be utilized to the greatest extent possible during these activities to ensure a safe and rewarding experience for both the youth trainees and Auxiliary participants.

Very respectfully,

James E. Vass, Jr. / s /
National Commodore