



Title: District/Assistant District Commissioner Basic Training

Time allotted	3 hours
Teaching format	PowerPoint presentation, Instructor led discussion

Resources

Handouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unit level JTE Scorecards• Onboarding Progress Records for Unit Commissioners, Roundtable Commissioners, District Commissioners
Equipment and materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Computer and projector• PowerPoint presentation• Course plan• Whiteboard or flipchart
Resources for additional participant learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Commissioner website

Presentation Outline

Introduction and Course Objectives – 5 minutes

Welcome to District and Assistant District Commissioner basic training. Congratulations on being chosen to serve in these very important positions.

This session will provide newly appointed district and assistant district commissioners with key information needed to begin a successful term of service.

(Introduce instructors. If time allows have participant introductions also.)

For virtual training:

Raise hand for questions or enter into Chat – we will answer when we can.

Please mute unless we have a question for group or discussion time.

Mission and Vision

Commissioners share the mission of the Boy Scouts of America which is To prepare youth to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetime by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law. The vision of unit service is to assist units in ensuring every member of the BSA has a great Scouting Experience. To this end, commissioners have five objectives.

Objectives of commissioner service

All commissioners share these objectives which are to:

Supporting unit growth and retention through the *Journey to Excellence*

JTE measures performance characteristics that unlock the door to a successful unit. We should analyze the unit's program and identify JTE areas where help is needed to move the unit to a higher level of JTE success. A new and revised *Annual Service Plan* will help support this task.

Making meaningful unit contacts that capture in commissioner tools their strengths, needs, and a unit service plan that enables continuing improvement. Our core task remains making significant contacts with units over the course of a year. *Commissioner Tools* enables commissioners to develop a customized *Unit Service Plan* to address identified needs.

Linking unit needs to district operating committee resources

The concept of linkage is critical to our execution mission. The unit commissioner is a link to the subject matter experts and resources who reside at the district committee level. The *Unit Service Plan* is used to capture the specifics of the linkages that need to be established.

Supporting timely charter renewal

Commissioners own unit retention. A quality program attracts youth and adults to Scouting and is a key factor in retaining them. To fulfill our mission in helping units better serve more youth through Scouting, we should support the district operating committee's efforts to build membership and meet our responsibility to increase unit retention. Effective and timely charter renewal is a key part of retaining units.

Supporting unit leaders by collecting and distributing information, enabling program training and providing networking opportunities. One of the methods commissioners provide these opportunities is through monthly roundtables.

Commissioner goals and methods

These goals and methods are universal to all commissioners but how each commissioner achieves these goals and employs the methods is determined by the type of commissioner they

are. Be sure that your unit service team is aware of these goals and know how to employ the methods.

The goals of unit service are to enable an increased number of units, enable the retention of units, and implement a unit service plan through collaborative detailed assessments and an increased number of unit contacts.

The methods we employ include the steps that are enumerated in the *Unit Roadmap*, assisting the units we serve in recruiting and training new member coordinators, collaborating with the unit Key 3, implementing a unit service plan once it is developed with the unit Key 3. We also encourage the use of the Journey to Excellence to guide continuous improvement and use the suite of MyScouting tools to stay abreast of the status of the units we serve. We never have enough commissioners, so we continuously recruit more, and we assign the resources we have to units with the greatest need for support.

District Level Unit Service– 20 minutes

Unit service

A district's corps of commissioners is the link between the district and local units. It's important to understand how commissioners are organized so that optimal unit service can be provided. The organization of the district's commissioners is up to the district commissioner who is free to change the organization at any time to meet any changing needs of the district.

Types and levels of commissioner support

Commissioners come in all shapes, sizes, and experiences and they can be organized in many ways but there are just three types of commissioners:

- Unit commissioners
- Roundtable commissioners
- Administrative commissioners

Those that are not unit commissioners or roundtable commissioners are *administrative* commissioners.

District Commissioners

The District Commissioner is recommended by the District Nominating Committee for approval and appointment by the Council Executive Board with the concurrence of the Scout Executive. The District Commissioner works directly with the District Chair and the District professional as part of the District Key 3. District Commissioners take ownership of the District team of Commissioners to ensure that all units are well cared for throughout the year, paying special attention to new units as these units are the most vulnerable to not renew their Charters. The District Commissioner guides and monitors the District's unit service function.

Assistant District Commissioners

Assistant district commissioners, or ADCs, can make or break a district's ability to see that every unit receives competent commissioner service.

Even the best district commissioner in the council cannot personally train and guide all unit commissioners in the district. So, assistant district commissioners are assigned certain units in the district, and they supervise the unit commissioners who serve those units. Assistant district commissioners are appointed by the district commissioners.

Assistant district commissioners work closely with the district commissioner and district executive. This team must have a vision of effective Scouting, and they must communicate that vision—through unit commissioners—to every unit leader in the district.

When a unit commissioner resigns, or cannot adequately fulfill the responsibilities of the position, the assistant district commissioner *temporarily* assumes the vacant position. However, immediate action must be taken to provide a replacement.

Administrative commissioners are *not* unit commissioners. Their responsibility is to *find* unit commissioners.

Roundtable Commissioners

Coordination of all Roundtables held in the Council is under the jurisdiction of the **Assistant Council Commissioner for Roundtable**.

This person reports to the Council Commissioner and conducts an annual Council-wide Roundtable planning meeting followed by a midyear review.

This process brings a level of standardization to District Roundtables in terms of content by promoting the use of ***Roundtable Support Pages*** on the National website and other resources while allowing local flexibility for the Districts.

In some larger Councils, there may be multiple Assistant Council Commissioners for Roundtable depending on the local needs.

District roundtable

Roundtable programs are implemented by the roundtable commissioners for Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA, and Venturing crews.

These individuals are responsible for coordinating and conducting the various parts of the roundtable meetings. They make their contributions with guidance and help from the assistant council and district commissioners.

Assistant roundtable commissioners conduct tasks directly to benefit the program-specific unit commissioners, assisting in the development and delivery of the monthly meeting agendas and program items.

Each roundtable commissioner may have as many assistants as needed. For example, Cub Scout roundtables may need several Assistants for their program breakouts while Scouts BSA roundtables may not need as many.

Unit Commissioners

A commissioner plays several roles. To include being a friend, a representative, a unit “doctor” or paramedic, a teacher, and a coach.

The commissioner is a **friend** of the unit. Of all the roles, this one is the most important. Building a great relationship with the unit leadership is key to success. It springs from the attitude, “I care, I am here to help you, what can I do for you?” Caring is the ingredient that makes commissioner service successful. Be an advocate of the unit needs. A commissioner who makes themselves known and accepted with the unit leadership will be called on to help in times of trouble.

The commissioner is a **representative**. The average unit leader is totally occupied in working with the scouts. Some scouts have little if any contact with the Boy Scouts of America other than your visits to their meeting. To them, you may be the Boy Scouts of America. Be a good example. Show that you believe in the ideals, the principles, and the policies of the Scouting movement. Represent it well!

The commissioner is a unit **“doctor”**. As “doctor” you know that prevention is better than a cure, so you try to see that your units make good “health practices” a way of life. Sometimes being a doctor and performing triage on a unit to keep its program going or providing support to their leadership is critical. When problems arise, and they will even in the best unit, act quickly. Observe symptoms, diagnose the real ailment, prescribe a remedy, and follow up with the “patient.”

The commissioner is a **teacher**. As a commissioner, you will have a wonderful opportunity to participate in the growth of unit leaders by sharing your knowledge with them. You teach not just in an academic environment, but where it counts most—as an immediate response to a need to know. That is the best adult learning situation since the lesson is instantly reinforced by practical application of the new knowledge.

The commissioner is a **coach**. As a Scouting coach, you will help guide units in solving their own problems. Coaching is the best role for you when unit leaders don’t recognize a problem and where solutions are not clear-cut. Everyone needs coaching or assistance from time to time,

even experienced leaders. You provide them with different “plays” that might be the right one for them to move ahead or succeed at solving a problem.

District Commissioner Staff Organization

This is a typical organizational structure for a district commissioner staff.

Administrative commissioners are represented in yellow

Unit service commissioners are displayed in green

Roundtable commissioners are displayed in orange

Remember, this is just one possible way that a district commissioner can organize the district commissioner staff. A district commissioner has the latitude to organize unit service to meet the needs of their district.

Council Commissioner

The council commissioner leads all commissioner personnel in the council. Their duties are set forth in the bylaws of the local council.

The council commissioner is selected by the council nominating committee and is elected at the annual meeting of the local council and serves as a member of the council Key 3.

The council commissioner also serves as an officer of the local council, a member of the executive board, a member of the council executive committee, and a National Council representative.

Assistant council commissioner

Successful council commissioners know they cannot do their task alone.

Council commissioners appoint the number of assistant council commissioners they think they need, and they can play a variety of roles.

The District – 20 minutes

District Structure

The Boy Scouts of America is organized into local area councils. These councils are organized into smaller units called districts.

For the next few minutes, we will explore how districts operate to support their council and the units they serve.

District Purpose

A Scouting district is a geographical area of the BSA local council, which is determined by the council executive board. District leaders mobilize resources to ensure the growth and success of Scouting units within the district's territory. The purpose of the district is to work through chartered organizations and community groups to organize and support successful units. The end result of effective district support is more youth members receiving a better program.

District Leadership

Another key element is the coordination and mobilization of resources to support the unit which ensures the growth and success of units within the district's territory.

These resources include Volunteers who are our greatest asset. All of the positions shown are volunteer positions except the district executive. Chartered organization representatives are voting members of the district because of their position. Council fiscal resources provide facilities and materials to units and Program knowledge, which is most often provided by our volunteers.

Four functions of the district

All Districts are responsible for carrying out four standard functions.

These four functions are the pieces to the puzzle that make up your District.

Membership

The first function of the district committee is **membership** growth.

The five sources of membership growth are:

- The establishment of new units
- Recruitment of new youth
- Retention of members
- Webelos to Scouts BSA *and* Scouts BSA to Venturing/Sea Scout transition
- Retention of units

Fund development

The second function of the district committee is Fund Development. The objective is to see that the district provides its share of funds to the total council operating budget.

Funds are raised from a variety of sources including Friends of Scouting, product sales like popcorn, special events and district activity budgets.

Special events are fund raising events like golf tournaments, sporting clays and silent auctions that are usually held at the council level and districts are encouraged to support these events.

District activities include program opportunities for youth and volunteers like camporees, pinewood derbies and district recognition banquets. Specific budgets are developed for these activities to cover the cost of conducting the activity. If there are excess funds, they go to the council and the council is also responsible for covering any shortfall.

District activities include program opportunities for youth and volunteers like camporees, pinewood derbies and district recognition banquets.

Program

The third function of the district committee is Program.

The committee assists Scouting units with camp promotions, activities and civic service, training adult volunteers, youth advancement and recognition.

Unit Service

The fourth function of the district committee is unit service. That's us! Commissioners!

The Unit service team provides coaching and consultation for unit adults to help ensure the success of every scouting unit.

Interrelationships

The order in which the functions are listed is not meant to suggest the order of their importance, but the natural interrelationship and flow of the functions:

- The Scouting movement cannot achieve its purpose without first organizing units and enrolling members.
- The district cannot support its units without the funds to do so.
- Unit programs are supported by the district through its program functions and unit service.

All four functions are equally important and necessary. If one suffers from lack of attention all the work of the district suffers.

As you are progressing through training you will notice that course content will commonly follow these four functional areas with the ever-present emphasis on volunteers.

When you successfully have all four functions working together in your district, outstanding Scouting programs will be the result.

Standard district organization

Each district, regardless of size, has a district committee to coordinate the work of the district. A typical district usually would have an operating committee for each of the four functions, including a commissioner staff for the unit service function. This is a look at where each of the four functions may fit into the district organization chart.

The exact method of organizing a district is flexible and should be based on the needs and characteristics of the communities in your district.

Notice that the program function has several subcommittees namely, Training, Camping, Activities, and Advancement.

Break – 5 Minutes

Unit Service in the District

District Commissioner

The district commissioner is approved and appointed by the council executive board, with the concurrence of the Scout executive and on the recommendation of the district nominating committee.

Working with the district executive, he or she recruits, trains, guides, and evaluates the required commissioner personnel of the district.

The district commissioner should be a proven leader capable of enlisting other effective persons to serve. The district commissioner, or DC, is the chief morale officer of the district: upbeat, personable, determined, and a role model for Scouting ideals.

He or she is passionate about the benefits of Scouting and is a champion of the unit to make Scouting happen in the lives of young people.

District Commissioner's Mission

A district commissioner has the same mission as that of the council commissioner and it involves 5 things, but with a focus on unit service at the district level:

To **Envision** what effective unit service in the district will look like and what goals must be accomplished during the district commissioner's term of service to fulfill that vision.

To **Represent** volunteers and Scouts to the District Chairman and the District Executive, and to the district committee.

To **Recruit** an adequate number of administrative, roundtable and unit commissioners to provide effective unit service throughout the district.

To **Retain** commissioners and units.

To **Enable** all commissioners to be successful.

A key distinction, however, is that the district commissioner's vision of effective unit service **must support the council's vision.**

Roles & Responsibilities

The district commissioner works directly with the district chair and the district professional as part of the district Key 3. District commissioners take ownership of the district team of commissioners to ensure that all units are well cared for throughout the year, paying particular attention to new units as these units are the most vulnerable to not renew their charters.

A district commissioner understands and communicates the best skills available in unit service: how to counsel, coach, and inspire unit volunteers; how to enrich the unit program and how to help units solve problems before the problems endanger the survival of the unit.

Specific district commissioner responsibilities include identifying and recruiting enough of the right people as commissioners so that all units in the district receive regular helpful service.

As commissioners are recruited, the district commissioner must prepare them to provide effective unit service by ensuring that each commissioner receives the appropriate orientation and basic training for the position they are assuming.

They cultivate an atmosphere of continual learning by providing a regular training topic at each monthly commissioner staff meeting.

Recruiting Commissioners

During conversations about recruiting commissioners, the question seems to come up repeatedly: “What makes a great commissioner?”

Usually, that question is seeking a list of skills, knowledge, and experience that should be considered prerequisites when looking for new commissioners.

The answer is relatively simple, but the list isn’t universal. There is, however, one item that should be first on every list: *a great commissioner has a servant’s heart!* Why? All commissioners are leaders; *great commissioners are servant leaders*. What does it mean to have a servant’s heart? Servant means to serve; Serve means to help, assist, or attend to. Most people think of the word servant with a negative attitude. They think the job of a servant is demeaning. In our context as commissioners, servants are people who help or assist others.

Recruiting isn’t the responsibility of every commissioner; it is typically a responsibility of administrative commissioners. But unit commissioners can be one of best resources for identifying great candidates for unit Service. They are in our units and engaged with their volunteers. If they understand what makes a great commissioner, they can be on the lookout.

Commissioner Tools provides a means for unit commissioners to capture information about potential candidates and for administrative commissioners to review those opportunities.

Watch the videos on how to use Commissioner Tools to see how this is done.

Training Commissioners: Why

District commissioners are responsible for equipping commissioners with the tools and confidence to succeed.

How commissioners interact with new and seasoned Scouting volunteers is crucial.

Scouting volunteers span a wider range of generations than ever before.

Education in how best to reach and work with Scouters is key. A trained commissioner is an effective commissioner. Just as every direct contact adult position has training requirements, so do all levels of commissioners.

Training Commissioners: Onboarding

A district commissioner has several mechanisms at his or her disposal to ensure commissioners are ready and able to serve their units, including online training, classroom training, training elements during monthly meetings and encouraging commissioners to participate in council level commissioner training as well as national training opportunities. All of these mechanisms are important to the development of the commissioners on your team, but one of the most critical tools at your disposal is the onboarding process. Onboarding is the mechanism through which new commissioners acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviors to become effective commissioners. The onboarding progress record is the tool that guides the new commissioner and coach through the process. District Commissioners are responsible for assigning an onboarding coach to every new commissioner. Usually, the coach will be the assistant district commissioner to whom the new commissioner is assigned, whether as a unit commissioner or roundtable commissioner. In some instances, you, as the district commissioner, will be the coach. The goal is to get the new commissioner excited while simultaneously affirming that they have made the right choice to accept this new position. If you have appointed onboarding coaches other than yourself, expect frequent progress reports from them so that you know when the new commissioner is ready to assume their duties. As a new district commissioner, you should expect the council commissioner or an assistant council commissioner to appoint a coach for you as you prepare to assume your duties as District Commissioner.

Guiding Commissioners

District commissioners and assistant district commissioners use their abilities to listen and react in a way that will help other commissioners solve their own problems and attain their own potential. District commissioners and assistant district commissioners provide guidance and counseling to help others arrive at the right answer by their own analysis of the situation and facts.

They are a resource to help commissioners provide the best service possible to the units of the district.

Evaluating Commissioners

District commissioners hold their staffs accountable for the service they provide to the units in the district.

They will review the contacts that are entered into commissioner tools and see if there is a workable unit service plan recorded for each unit.

They will hold unit commissioners accountable for the execution of the service plan and see to it that unit needs are being met.

They will check to see if units have regular attendance at roundtable and follow unit progress on their journey to Excellence.

Role of the Assistant District Commissioner

Assistant district commissioners, or ADCs, can make or break a district's ability to see that every unit receives competent commissioner support.

Even the best district commissioner in the council cannot personally train and guide all unit commissioners in the district. So, ADCs are assigned certain units in the district, and they supervise the unit commissioners who serve those units. ADCs are appointed by the district commissioners.

Assistant district commissioners measure people's progress, not in the number of meetings those people attend but in the way they handle their responsibilities.

The ADC's role is accomplished largely on a personalized basis. At monthly district commissioner staff meetings, they help their unit commissioners develop their unit service plans to help meet priority needs of units.

They hold their staff accountable for the execution of those service plans and discuss those unit service plans at each monthly meeting.

Assistant District Commissioner Responsibilities

Assistant district commissioners are appointed by the district commissioner to serve a specific group of units. You can set up assistant district commissioner areas using a variety of different methods.

Geographic

One of the most common methods used is to establish assistant district commissioner areas based on geography. In this model the district is broken into segments based on neighborhoods or communities in the district. A rural district serving multiple counties might establish an

assistant district commissioner in each of the counties. A more urban district might establish the areas using specific streets or natural boundaries like rivers.

Program Type

Some districts have chosen to establish assistant district commissioner areas around serving specific program types. Structuring your commissioners this way allows them to become experts in a specific program and how to build strong quality unit programs for that type of unit. The method used in your district depends on the needs of the district. Sometimes, a combination of these methods may be used.

The important thing is that the scope of responsibility is broken into smaller more manageable parts.

Special Assistant District Commissioners

Assistant district commissioners, besides leading unit commissioners, sometimes are asked to undertake special ongoing assignments.

To oversee a district's roundtable program, an assistant district commissioner for roundtables is appointed to plan and conduct monthly roundtables with each of the program specific roundtable commissioners.

An assistant district commissioner for training coordinates commissioner training for the district to ensure that all commissioners receive the training needed for their positions. This person also coordinates the monthly continuing education during staff meetings. This person also makes commissioners aware of training opportunities available from the council.

The awards and recognition assistant district commissioner helps the district commissioner track each of the district's commissioners training, and service so that commissioners are appropriately recognized for their service.

The charter renewal assistant district commissioner assists in tracking the status of each unit's charter renewal status so that units are renewed on time.

Responsibilities of an Assistant District Commissioner

Some of the major responsibilities of an assistant district commissioner include helping **recruit** the right people as unit commissioners. An assistant district commissioner also **provides clear instructions** and specific ideas for their staff. They **listen** to what people say and feel. assistant district commissioners are responsible for **coaching** unit commissioners through real unit problem solving situations and make sure that all Scouters are treated with courtesy and dignity. And they find ways to **praise** each unit commissioner as often as they can for specific achievements.

Most importantly, the assistant district commissioner does not try to take over for their unit commissioners but are always ready to support or help them to be successful. In instances where there is a shortage of unit commissioners, the assistant district commissioner should be ready to serve units as a unit commissioner as well.

The assistant district commissioner will also make sure that the new commissioner becomes registered with the Boy Scouts of America as a unit commissioner.

In the event that there is a vacancy in a unit commissioner position, the assistant district commissioner will temporarily provide service to the units assigned to that commissioner position.

Recruit Commissioners

One of the primary roles of an assistant district commissioner is to identify and recruit unit commissioners. Each assistant district commissioner will know different Scouters who will fit the profile for serving as a unit commissioner.

Having multiple people recruiting unit commissioners in your district makes easy work of achieving the goal of having an adequate number of trained unit commissioners.

Teach Commissioners

Once a unit commissioner is recruited the assistant district commissioner will focus on making sure that the unit commissioner is trained.

The ADC will conduct the onboarding process with the new commissioner to help them understand the role they have agreed to serve and to be sure that the unit commissioner is properly prepared to deliver unit service.

The ADC should also make sure that the unit commissioner completes youth protection training in the first 30 days of their new assignment.

When the district or council provides commissioner basic training, the ADC will promote the training program to any untrained commissioners and encourage the commissioner to attend.

Assistant district commissioner should also promote supplemental training programs like the College of Commissioner Science to their unit commissioners.

Listen to Commissioners.

The assistant district commissioner needs to be someone who listens to others. The assistant district commissioner needs to be able to treat all Scouters with courtesy and dignity and needs to be careful not to play favorites. Unit commissioners and volunteer leaders will often approach an assistant district commissioner to share a concern or issue they are facing. The skilled assistant district commissioner listens to their needs and helps match them with the best resources in the district and council to resolve their need.

Coach Commissioners

The assistant district commissioner is also a coach. They hold their staff accountable for the plans and assignments identified in unit service plans.

They coach unit commissioners through handling unit problems. They provide clear instruction and offer specific ideas to their staff.

Assistant district commissioner s work closely with the district commissioner and district executive to achieve a vision of effective Scouting in every unit through the unit service team.

Recognize Commissioners

Showing appreciation for the efforts of volunteers in Scouting is important at all levels of the program.

Recognition has been a fundamental part of Scouting from its beginning. Done well, it is a powerful tool that can help leaders set goals, define accomplishments, encourage skill development, celebrate commitment and achievement, and inspire others to strive for similar success.

Selecting and Assigning Unit Commissioners

Commissioner Fit

“Commissioner Fit” is an important consideration when administrative commissioners are developing a recruiting plan or asking unit commissioners to serve a unit.

The probability of a unit commissioner helping a unit to grow and thrive increases when there is a good fit. But how do we determine what makes for a good fit?

Consider the 5 key components of commissioner fit:

1. **Strengths:** what does the unit do well? If a unit does a great job at developing an annual budget and program plan, a commissioner with little or no experience in that area may still be a great choice if he or she is a good fit in other areas.
2. **Needs:** where does the unit most need support? A commissioner with expertise in those areas – or with knowledge of district operating committee and other resources to which the unit could be linked, would be the better choice.
3. **Skills:** does the culture of the unit call for a unit commissioner with particularly strong communication skills, or patience, or the ability to teach, or coach, or plan, or hold people accountable in a positive manner?
4. **Experience:** experience in the unit’s program (Cub Scouting, Scouts, BSA. Exploring, etc.,) is an asset, but may not be essential (see Strengths and Needs). Substantial tenure in Scouting may also be an asset but may also not be essential (see Strengths and Needs).

Strong units with skilled leadership may be excellent candidates for new unit commissioners as they can provide a great opportunity to learn and develop unit service skills.

5. **Interaction:** a unit commissioner's interactions with a unit change over time. After getting to know one another, unit commissioners may have a positive relationship with unit leaders that continues uninterrupted and enables them to work together effectively to help the unit grow and thrive. But that's not always the case. Sometimes the ability to work together effectively never develops; sometimes it deteriorates over time.

What If?

What if the fit just isn't right?

If all 5 key components of commissioner fit are carefully considered, it's likely a unit will be found that a commissioner can serve effectively.

When fit changes, unit assignments may need to change. Simply a change in unit leadership could cause a change in fit; or perhaps that new commissioner assigned to a strong unit may have grown and developed to the point that serving a unit with greater needs might be a better fit.

Administrative commissioners should review unit commissioner assignments annually and assess the need for adjustments. It's a great opportunity to celebrate achievements and to have a candid conversation about opportunities.

A "commission" is "a formal, written warrant granting the power to perform various acts or duties." Commissioners and professionals are the only groups in the BSA that hold commissions. An annual commissioning ceremony is a great opportunity to celebrate the commitment to serve units; renewal of a commission is an equally great opportunity to celebrate success. administrative commissioners should consider implementing an annual process of reviewing all existing commissions and assignments and making adjustments that will enable their team to have the greatest impact on units served.

Scouting's Diplomat

Qualities of Scouting's **diplomat include being an** effective communicator, a good listener, having sound judgment, being tactful while having a Scouting background or be a fast learner, be persistent and patient, be adaptable, know and practice Scouting ideals, be enthusiastic, and treat everyone with respect.

Exceptional service has 3 important qualities which are to Exceed unit leader expectations, provide caring service not just competent service and to provide it promptly.

Service Recovery

When mistakes happen, apologize sincerely, act immediately, take initiative, smooth ruffled feathers, let them know they care, turn the blunder into an opportunity.

Monitoring Unit Service

Commissioner Tools

Our second major objective as commissioners is to **Contact units and Capture their Strengths and Needs in commissioner Tools**.

Commissioner Tools was designed to help commissioners fulfill their mission by providing benefits in four areas:

1. *Enabling easy access to actionable information*

commissioners, in real time, will use dashboards to view summary information about a unit's membership, the status of its leaders' youth protection and position-specific training, their participation in district roundtables and the unit's current needs and opportunities to improve performance. As additional *my.Scouting* tools come online (such as advancement and charter renewal), commissioners will also have direct access to that information.

2. *Enabling improved focus on their primary objectives*

Commissioners will be able to work together with a unit's Key 3 to develop a Unit Service Plan: an assessment of the unit's strengths and needs and a prioritized list of action items, including accountability and target dates for completion. Completion of those tasks will enable continuous improvement in Planning and Budget, Membership, Program, and Volunteer Leadership. Through ongoing unit contacts, commissioners will be able to identify unit needs and capture periodic updates of the collaborative assessment of unit health and ensure the plan for improvement is moving forward.

3. *Supporting roundtable administration and promotion*

Roundtable commissioners will be able to publish dates of upcoming roundtables, agendas, unit participation information and note key developments. That will enable unit commissioners to effectively promote participation.

4. *Supporting commissioner administration*

Administrative commissioners will be able to assign unit commissioners and identify their training needs and identify units that need a commissioner assigned.

They will also be able to identify newly formed units so they can be assigned a dedicated new-unit commissioner. Reports will be available online and can be downloaded in MS-Excel format.

All of Commissioner Tools' benefits are available to all district and council commissioned professionals. They, too, are encouraged to become familiar with it and use it to support volunteers more effectively.

To learn the mechanics of Commissioner Tools, review the Commissioner Tools training that is available in the BSA Learn Center for commissioners, and discuss with your council's commissioner tools champion.

What Success Looks Like

Using the actionable information in Commissioner Tools, district commissioners can see:

Early Indicators of Success, including:

- An improvement in the percentage of units with assigned commissioners
 - An increase in the percentage of commissioners entering unit contacts
 - A higher percentage of units with Simple Assessments
 - A higher percentage of units with Detailed Assessments
- and

Ultimate Indicators, including:

- Higher retention rate of traditional units
- Improved performance ratings of units using Journey to Excellence metrics
- Higher percentage of unit leaders with current Youth Protection Training
- Higher percentage of unit leaders with current position-specific training
- Higher percentage of traditional units completing charter renewal in a timely fashion

Youth Protection and the Commissioner

Make yourself familiar with BSAs policies along with information about the risks of abuse.

Monitor the status of YPT training for the adult leaders of the units they serve. Make sure they are renewing their training every 2 years. The Training Manager tool in **my.scouting.org** gives them real time information on the training status of your unit leaders especially as it relates to YPT.

Encourage unit participation in Youth Protection Month each April.

Help your units follow the policies and submit registration applications for background checks.

Break – 5 Minutes

Unit Service Plan – 25 minutes

Instructor Note: This section is over a third of the material – give it the time needed to fully understand how, and why, the Unit Service Plan is done.

The Unit Service Plan

The *Unit Service Plan* is our primary tool that enables us to link unit needs to district operating committee resources. It is also a key element in the design of *Commissioner Tools*.

The *Unit Service Plan* is a better way to provide unit service. It supports all five objectives of excellent unit service *and* our approach to starting, sustaining and growing high-performing units.

Based upon a collaborative assessment of unit health, commissioners develop a service plan that is customized to respond to a unit's strengths and needs and draws upon resources available within the unit, its charter organization, and through the district operating committee.

Unit assessments

Each of the assessment categories have topics and statements that go into greater detail for each category consistent with the unit's *Journey to Excellence* scorecard

As you work through each of these categories with unit leaders, you will identify areas **where the unit would like to improve**. The *Unit Service Plan* is developed from these identified areas. It will become apparent that some action items will be the responsibility of unit leadership (for example, recruiting new youth members or adult volunteers), some will be the responsibility of the unit's chartered organization (for example, providing additional meeting space or equipment storage), and others will be the responsibility of the unit commissioner to coordinate by linking unit needs to district resources (for example, delivery of position-specific training for unit leaders or participation in the district's fall membership roundup). Some action items will fall into multiple responsibility buckets. The unit commissioner coordinates all these efforts to support the unit's youth and adult leader needs.

Collaboration

The Unit Service Plan enables you to fulfill your mission to help units' better serve more youth through Scouting. And in the process, it enables improved retention of units and improves the performance rating of units using *Journey to Excellence* metrics.

A *Unit Service Plan* will have greatest impact when it is built upon a **collaborative assessment** of the unit's strengths and needs.

Developing and executing a *Unit Service Plan* in *Commissioner Tools* touches every metric we use to help unit service continually improve and every metric we use to help our units continually improve, too.

Key benefits

The *Unit Service Plan* offers four key benefits to the unit leaders and you:

- Focus

- Actionable Information
- Linkage
- Efficiency

Focus

A Unit Service Plan provides *focus*.

The most effective *Unit Service Plans* are built upon a collaborative assessment of a unit's strengths and needs. That collaborative assessment enables unit leaders and you to identify and prioritize tasks that will strengthen the unit most quickly. Since collaborative assessments and Unit Service Plans should be updated at least twice each year, the tasks should be sufficiently limited in scope to enable completion within six months. That enables unit leaders and their unit commissioner to remain focused and best supports continuous improvement of the unit.

Before attempting a collaborative assessment, you must establish a solid relationship with a unit's leaders based on mutual respect and an understanding of one another's motivation for involvement in Scouting and vision of future success for the unit. Collaborative assessments are a new approach to unit service; not all unit leaders are going to immediately understand, or perhaps, accept it. Unit commissioners should do their best to gain acceptance (their relationship with unit leaders will be an asset in that), but each unit will be best served through a customized plan.

Sometimes, the only alternative will be to build that plan based on the unit commissioner's assessment of the unit's strengths and needs. Done well, that should ultimately cause unit leaders to think more highly of unit service and increase their acceptance of a collaborative approach to unit assessment and plan development.

Unit Service Plans based on a collaborative assessment will have the greatest impact as they provide the greatest focus to everyone involved.

Actionable information

A *Unit Service Plan* is action-oriented; as a result, it provides *actionable information*.

It includes a limited number (typically, five to seven) SMART goals; Remember, one of the benefits of a *Unit Service Plan* is the focus it provides to a unit's leaders and unit commissioner. Limiting the scope of the plan – the number of goals it includes and the time in which they will be completed – helps ensure focus.

SMART goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ctionable, **R**elevant and **R**esource-oriented, and **T**ime-based. They identify specifically what is going to be done, who is accountable for the task, and when it is expected to be completed.

One example of a SMART goal might be, “All registered unit leaders will be current on Youth Protection training by March 1 of this year.” The unit’s committee chair, or a designated member of the committee, might be the individual responsible for that task being completed by the established target date.

And remember, *Training Manager* in the my.scouting.org suite of tools will provide the unit commissioner with the *Youth Protection* Training status of each of the unit’s registered leaders, so the unit commissioner can provide additional actionable information to help sharpen the focus on the work to be done.

Linkage

A Unit Service Plan enables **linkage** to other resources needed to ensure success.

Neither unit leaders nor unit commissioners are experts in every element of Scouting. But unit commissioners can provide access to subject matter experts that serve on our district operating committees:

- If the collaborative assessment identifies, for example, specific needs for training of youth and/or adults, a member of the district training committee would be able to assist in coordinating the delivery of that training.
- District membership committee members could be a resource in developing new approaches to growing the unit.
- District camping committee members could assist a unit interested in developing a high adventure program for its older youth.

Once the need is identified, the unit commissioner can facilitate linkage. Individual districts will have different approaches to the best way to gain operating committee support commitments. Once established, the unit commissioner can coordinate and monitor the efforts of everyone responsible for completion of tasks included in the current plan.

Efficiency

Finally, the *Simple Assessment* function in *Commissioner Tools* provides a quick and easy way to document plan progress.

Simple assessments document regular, monthly contacts by a unit commissioner.

Unit contacts recorded in *Commissioner Tools* should involve substantive interaction with unit leaders that ensure *Unit Service Plan* progress or address some other significant unit need.

Implementation process

An unexecuted plan is of no value. Once a *Unit Service Plan* is developed, the unit commissioner follows up on the progress of the plan through monthly simple assessments that record the achievement of the goals identified in the unit service plan.

The unit commissioner is an essential element of the *Unit Service Plan’s* success. An engaged unit commissioner works closely with the unit Key 3 to continually assess progress and help the

unit *and* the district operating committee maintain accountability and make course corrections when necessary.

Updating the *Detailed Unit Assessment* at six-month intervals or when unit leadership changes will help ensure the unit continues to grow and provide the best possible program to the youth it serves.

Why do a *Unit Service Plan*?

The simple answer to the question remains: A *Unit Service Plan* enables commissioners to help units better serve more youth through Scouting.

And in the process, it enables improved retention of units and improves the performance rating of units using *Journey to Excellence* metrics.

Think about it: that means developing and executing a *Unit Service Plan* in *Commissioner Tools* touches **every** metric we currently use to help unit service continually improve **and also** every metric we currently use to help our units continually improve, too.

District commitment

Finalizing a *Unit Service Plan* requires commitment from the district operating committee. While the method of gaining commitment may vary from one district to another, the goal is to identify resources on the district operating committee that can help meet unit needs and complete action items on the *Unit Service Plan* (for example, the district's training committee might supply training needed by unit leaders while its membership committee might coordinate unit participation in the Fall Membership Roundup).

Unit commissioners will find the members of an effective district operating committee willing to offer resources to meet unit needs as they understand no one, including a unit commissioner, can be an expert on everything.

District commitment enables the unit commissioner to link district operating committee resources to unit needs and identify accountability for the related action items on the *Unit Service Plan*. With those commitments, the *Unit Service Plan* can be finalized.

The unit commissioner and the unit Key 3 should monitor the plan throughout the year and identify when adjustments are needed. Unit contacts recorded in commissioner tools will provide valuable information for the next unit assessment.

It's a Cycle.

It's a cycle... as the current Scouting year draws to a close and the charter renewal process begins, it is time for another Unit Assessment.

Things can and do change during a Scouting year and may require that the Unit Service Plan be revised. After all, this is what continuous improvement is all about!

Monthly commissioner staff meeting – 20 Minutes

These meetings are extremely important to motivate commissioners to do their job, to support them and provide feedback, to hold commissioners accountable for a high level of quality service and to plan, train and report on the status of units.

It helps us to work toward the vision of success!

This meeting sets the stage for how unit commissioners and assistant district commissioners perform their duties in service to their units.

The district commissioner has a key role in the commissioner staff meeting. After all, it is their meeting to conduct!

Their role is to:

- Develop the agenda—using input from the Key 3 and the council commissioner meeting (We'll look at a sample agenda in a moment)
- Run the meeting—guiding and facilitating discussion, inspiring commissioners, and keeping the meeting moving
- Set a good example—by wearing the uniform correctly, encourage your commissioner staff to wear the uniform correctly as well, and represent Scouting well
- Focus the meeting—helping units ensure every member of the BSA has a great Scouting experience is the heart of everything that occurs at this meeting

District Executive's Role

The district executive also has a key role in the commissioner staff meeting and that is to:

- Help with the agenda—share input from your Key 3 meetings.
- Give the district executive comments—Share new info, tell an inspirational story
- Set a good example—by wearing the uniform correctly and representing scouting well.
- Provide logistics—help with handouts and materials, promote attendance, take detailed notes.

Elements of the Commissioner Staff Meeting

So, what are the elements of a great commissioner staff meeting?

It should be held monthly in a location that is convenient to most commissioners.

It should be a separate meeting from other meetings, especially roundtable. This allows the district commissioner and district executive to give proper attention to individual unit and commissioner issues. The meeting is focused on the needs of individual units, not a preoccupation with district needs and projects.

The meeting is chaired by the district commissioner with guidance and support from the district executive.

Remember to start and stop on time and keep the meeting moving!

No meeting should run over two hours – in fact, ninety minutes or less is usually better!

Meeting Agenda

Here is a sample agenda for a district commissioner staff meeting.

Opening Ceremony

Every meeting starts with a short **opening ceremony**. The responsibility for leading the opening can be rotated among the various field service areas of the district or individual commissioners.

Welcome and Introductions.

The **welcome and introductions** led by the district commissioner is an opportunity to introduce new commissioners and any guests that might be attending the meeting.

Training Topic

Devote part of each meeting to a **brief training topic**.

Training is a continuous process for commissioners. The district commissioner should select a topic each month that matches the current skill needs of their commissioners.

Roundtable Reports

This portion of the meeting emphasizes the importance of the assistant district commissioner for roundtables and each program roundtable commissioner.

They report on unit attendance and future roundtable programs so that unit commissioners can use this information to provide better support to their units.

Assistant District Commissioner Breakouts

Be sure to allow time for breakout sessions of ADCs and their respective teams of unit commissioners to review the health of each unit by sharing important observations from recent visits with units and giving priority to unit trouble spots that could badly disrupt a unit. In the breakout, ADCs can identify specific ways to help each unit improve its program. Determinations can be made as to who will provide specific help during the coming month. Usually, this is the assigned unit commissioner, but more challenging situations may require assistance from the ADC, a district committee member, or even the district commissioner. Finally, following up on the progress of last month's assignments.

Assistant District Commissioner Reports

Perhaps the most important minutes of each month in the district are the assistant district commissioner reports.

Each ADC reports on unit health focusing on units with a unit health score of 2.5 and less. Included should be the presenting of plans for improvement and identifying unit needs that require district committee support.

The Roundtable ADC should also share issues and concerns that may have arisen from the last roundtable so that the whole commissioner team is aware.

Recognition and Announcements

This is the time to recognize commissioners with awards. Make any district, council or calendar related announcements.

Closing Comments

This is an opportunity for the district executive to pass on any comments or information to the commissioner team.

District commissioner's remarks end the meeting much like a Scoutmaster's minute might close a troop meeting.

Charter Renewal – 10 Minutes

Support on-time renewal

The commissioner's focus is the retention of the unit, though we should be especially mindful of supporting new youth membership efforts as we move more toward a volunteer led, professionally guided, approach to increasing membership.

Phases 1 & 2: prepare

At Least 90 days before unit renewal date.

The district executive visits the head of the chartered organization to renew the Scouting relationship.

This visit is a critical opportunity to connect, face-to-face with our chartered organizations. In districts where many units have the same renewal date, district executives will be very busy during this time. These meetings are central to our mutual long-term success.

If problems are anticipated in the reregistering of the unit or there are other sensitive issues to be discussed, the visit should be held earlier so that any action may take place prior to the renewal date.

Sixty days before unit renewal date.

The unit commissioner and unit committee conduct a membership inventory of currently registered youth and adults. All inactive members are listed and assigned to various persons who will visit or contact them to attempt to reactivate them. Be sure to brief the visitors/callers on what to say when they make their calls. Every effort should be made to recruit additional youth and adults so that the unit can reregister with no loss in membership.

Also, be sure to register any youth who are participating but are not yet registered.

Internet Charter Renewal

Units choosing to renew their charters online (internet rechartering) will select a person as their renewal processor. He/she will LOG IN to the local council's website, complete the steps through the submittal process, and print a revised charter renewal application to be brought to the unit's charter renewal meeting for review, discussion, and authorized signatures.

(To assist districts in this process, there is a report available to council employees with membership reporting capabilities titled *Commissioner's Status Report*. This report provides commissioners of each unit's electronic renewal status, including the date of first login, the current stage of the process completed, and date submitted. It will only show the electronic process.

Two other reports that are available are the *New Members Added Report* and the *Members Not Renewed Report*. Both of these reports are designed to provide information to the district in an effort to follow up with new youth and dropped youth identified through the renewal process.) The unit commissioner can run a *Unit Roster Report* at any time through my.Scouting.org.

Use the tutorial, view the Frequently Asked Questions

Tips:

- Reorganize before charter expiration
- Multiple registration is in the Update Fee section
- To make changes, after final transmission, you must make pen changes
- Must have signatures and money
- Fee computation does **not** include insurance
- With 2 or more units, don't transmit until all done
- Complete a Journey to Excellence form for units

Phase 3: Review and submit

The charter review date is set and officials of the chartered organization, the unit committee, unit leaders, and the unit commissioner or other district or council representative are urged to attend.

Phase 4: Charter presentation

On the Commissioner Web Page, under Internet Charter Renewal, the Charter Certificate "FAQ/How To" shows you how to customize for your units and print out the Charter certificate for presentation.

Stage the presentation under the auspices of, and at a regular meeting or activity of, the chartered organization. This serves to accentuate the character of the relationship, puts the chartered organization in a better position to recognize its unit leaders, and assures attendance of the largest possible number of the chartered organization's members.

The charter presentation should be directed to the chartered organization rather than the unit itself.

There are members of the chartered organization who will attend an organizational affair but will not be motivated to attend a meeting put on by the unit. It is important to capture the interest of as many members of the chartered organization as possible. Parents of youth members will be just as likely to attend in either case.

Each occasion must be considered individually, and circumstances will color the decision as to location of the ceremony. A unit consisting of youth of different religious faiths will require careful consideration if the organization is a religious one. Other things to consider are personalities involved, available facilities, and community attitudes.

The charter should be presented to the head of the chartered organization unless that person directs otherwise.

Developing and Recognizing Commissioners

Commissioner Training and Resources

Learning is a lifetime activity. As commissioners, we must continually adjust our skills to provide a more valuable service to our units. Therefore, commissioners should view learning as an important part of their Scouting lives—every month, every year.

Continuous learning and training is important but so also is recognizing commissioners for their efforts. Review the commissioner recognition sections of the national website and encourage the recognition of all commissioners.

Only commissioners and professionals are eligible to be commissioned. Conduct an annual commissioning ceremony for your commissioners.

Additional Training

These are training opportunities that you should take advantage of whenever you can and be sure to make your commissioner staff aware of these opportunities as well.

Make every effort to include a short training topic in your district commissioner's monthly meeting.

Check to see that your council hosts a College of Commissioner Science. During the college you will receive advanced commissioner training as you progress from your bachelor's degree to the doctorate of commissioner Science. The courses offered at a college will cover a wide range of topics that will help with most any situation you face in your position.

Commissioners are first and foremost leaders. If you have not already done so, please take advantage of the highest level of leadership training that the BSA provides to its leaders, Wood badge.

Training at the national level is available at the Philmont Training Center. During commissioner's week, the conferences feature the latest tools and techniques, discussions, and idea sharing led

by a faculty of experienced commissioners. National level impact sessions are held in various parts of the country several times a year and virtual impact sessions are monthly 2 hour live online training events. They provide a laser focused session on a relevant topic for commissioners.

Sea Base also provides an opportunity for training at the national Level. Conferences here, focus on the impact commissioners have on units. This conference has something for every commissioner regardless of their specific commissioner role.

Remember that training is continuous, and they can always get help when they need it. Check the Commissioner development website for details.

Commissioner Manuals and Resources

Commissioner manuals consist of a series of PDF documents, outlined on this page. Each manual module has several subtopics within the document. There is no provision for printing the information in book form. This format provides commissioners the opportunity to create their own hard copy book, or an eBook for tablet, phone or other digital devices.

These resources are all available through the mobile apps as well.

The modules are periodically updated as information changes. Check them regularly.

Resources

One of the primary tools we use as commissioners is the *Unit Roadmap*.

The process of building sustainable units requires purposeful thought, study, and investment of time and people for success.

The *Unit Roadmap* addresses the 3 phases of long-term unit success: starting, sustaining and growing.

The Unit Roadmap is *only* available in electronic format, either pdf or e-pub. The most current edition is always available at www.scouting.org/commissioners/manuals

The guide to safe scouting is available for download from the national web site. This is a resource that also should be in a commissioner's resource library. Be familiar with its contents so that they can better guide and advise your units.

Commissioner Website

This is the commissioner page on the BSA website.

You can scroll down the left-hand column and view all the topics that are there to help perform your duties as a commissioner.

Some of the topics include Recruitment and Retention, Awards and Recognition, The Commissioner Newsletter, and the Unit Service Plan and Commissioner Tools, just to name a few.

Commissioners are encouraged to visit this site frequently and just check out all the information that is available on this site.

Wreath of Service

BSA commissioners and professional staff members share the wreath of service in the design of their badges of office to signify their shared responsibility for providing unit service. They also share something else unique in Scouting: a commission. The issuance of a commission represents the formal empowerment by the BSA to perform the duties and undertake the responsibilities of a unit commissioner and your acceptance of that obligation.

Next Step

You have completed the classroom portion of District Commissioner Basic Training, It's time to begin the application phase. Over the next 30 days, review the District Commissioner Onboarding Progress Record with your coach.

If you do not know who your coach is just yet, ask your assistant council commissioner or council commissioner to connect you with someone who will guide you through the onboarding process. Once you have completed the steps outlined in the progress record, your coach will enter your training in Training manager, and you will receive your trained patch and commission as a district commissioner.

Summary

Close with the following statement –

As a district commissioner, you have made a personal commitment to Scouting and your district. It's a commitment of time, effort, and knowledge. It's a commitment of patience and understanding. It's a commitment to be a living example for the commissioners in your district, and to lend a helping hand to fellow commissioners.