



MCS 314

The Commissioner and the Professional

Time allotted	50 minutes
Teaching format	Instructor-led discussions with PowerPoint support, Activity

Resources

Handouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MCS 314 – Fill in Blanks Exercise – 1 per participant• MCS 314 – Take Home Action Item/Six Major Tasks for Volunteer Success – 1 per participant
Equipment and materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MCS 314 – The Commissioner and the Professional course plan• MCS 314 – The Commissioner and the Professional PowerPoint presentation• MCS 314 – Fill in Blanks Answer Key (for instructor)• Computer and projector• Whiteboard or flip chart, appropriate markers and eraser
Resources for additional participant learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/manuals/• MCS 314 – Selecting District People https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/mission/pdf/34512.pdf

Course Connections

Connections to other CCS courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DCS 514 – Building Meaningful Relationships
---	---

Instructor Recommendation: It is suggested that this course be a joint presentation of a key volunteer and a key professional for balanced presentation.

Note that in some places was written from the point of view of the professional staff.

Ensure that the information and discussion is balanced in its discussion of the responsibilities of professionals and volunteers.

Presentation Outline

Introduction and Course Objectives – 5 minutes

In this course participants will learn more about the relationship between the commissioner and the professional and how they can work closely together to reach the common goal of providing quality service to units.

Introduce the learning objectives, noting that by the end of this session, each participant should...

- **Discuss** the elements of a positive and productive volunteer-professional relationship.
- **Discover** opportunities to work together to support unit success.
- **Describe** examples of a successful collaborative relationship.

Introduction/Motivation/Discovery: - Ask these rhetorical questions – (Asked, Not Answered)

- What are the common roots of commissioner and professionals?
- What are the goals of the commissioner staff?
- What are the goals of the professional staff?
- Do these goals coincide or have a lot of overlap?

Since the early days of Scouting in the United States, good volunteer/professional relationships have been one of the special hallmarks of the Boy Scouts of America. Today, this special partnership between volunteers and professionals is the core of its success at council and district levels.

When the partnership thrives, the Scouting movement thrives. If the partnership is not working well, Scouting suffers. The BSA trains Scout professionals on their responsibility for developing good working relationships with volunteers. However, both volunteers and professionals share responsibility for building good working relationships in Scouting.

No matter what your role in the district or council, skill in working effectively with your professional staff adviser is important. Both commissioners and professionals must work to build the partnership. They both share the wreath of service.

Discuss the elements of a positive and productive relationship – 10 minutes

- Good communication – open and often – clear definitions of expectations
- Share resources – value each other's time – be provided with resources
- Complimentary service to units – partnership – understanding of what each brings to the table
- Mutual trust and respect – Should be comfortable enough to ask for help

Good volunteer/professional relationships are characterized by mutual trust, mutual respect, and mutual recognition of each other's role and competency. When the partnership is working well, both partners are aware of their interdependence, they have complete confidence in each other, and they share the same objectives (to help units better serve more youth through scouting). In Scout districts, for example, mutual dependence results because district executives know they cannot possibly do all the work that needs to be done, and district volunteers know they need the coaching and experience of full-time professionals.

If partners have complete confidence in each other, they will seek each other's counsel. Neither partner has a monopoly on wisdom, judgement, or experience. When the full resources of both parties are applied to decision-making, the combination is unbeatable.

Instructor asks: What tips for a positive relationship would you give to a new commissioner or professional?

Tips for better relationships:

- Build a good relationship
- Be accessible
- Create a welcoming environment in your district
- Make efficient use of each other's time
- Be comfortable asking for help

Intentionally begin to build a good relationship with your professional from your very first visit. Be positive. Be enthusiastic. Be well prepared. Think in advance about the impression you want to make as one of the trusted volunteers of the district or council

Be accessible to your professional adviser. Exchange phone numbers, e-mail addresses, mailing addresses, etc. Avoid the impression that you are too busy or annoyed when he or she calls. Return his or her calls. Set up regularly scheduled visits and/or phone dates. You may need to talk weekly, monthly, or less frequently, depending on your responsibility.

Create a welcome environment for the new professional and plan ways to incorporate him or her into the team. Remember, it's easy for a group to turn inward and make newcomers feel awkward or unwelcome. Send a letter of introduction to appropriate volunteers from a person in authority (council president, Scout executive, etc.). This helps a person feel good about joining the district or council. It also helps volunteers get acquainted with the new professional.

A professional will try to make efficient use of volunteers' time and, as best they can, plan visits and meetings at times that are best for volunteers. Commissioners and professionals should help make the most efficient use of each other's Scouting time.

Commissioners should know that they can turn to their professional for advice or for troubleshooting. Help create the kind of relationship in which you are comfortable asking for help.

Discover Opportunities to Work Together to Support Unit Success – 10 minutes

Ask: What do you think commissioners & professionals can do to foster a great relationship?

- Discuss your working partnership
- Get to know each other
- Listen and understand each other
- Avoid confusion by delivering consistent messages to volunteers

For virtual presentation, students may be allowed to unmute and answer, required to raise their hands for the instructor or facilitator to call on, or required to input answers in a chat line so the facilitator can read them.

There will inevitably be some professionals you don't like as much as others. That's human nature. However, part of being a good Scouter is working with all kinds of people, even when human chemistry isn't just perfect. Feel free to talk with your professional partner about how you are working together.

While you obviously want to form a Scouting relationship, it is nevertheless important to get to know your professional as a whole person. Most of us will feel more comfortable working with someone who is interested in other aspects of our lives as well as our Scouting responsibilities. Keep in mind that Scouting is not a person's only priority in life. They will have family priorities and may be active in religious and other activities.

Develop good communications in which you and your professional really listen to and understand each other.

In some instances, the function of guiding other volunteers is shared between you and a professional. For example, both the council commissioner and district executives have a direct working relationship with district commissioners. Unit commissioners work with both their district executive and their assistant district commissioner. You and the professional should be careful to avoid confusion for volunteers and to ensure that they receive consistent messages and have a compatible relationship with both their volunteer leader and the professional.

Describe examples of a Successful Collaborative Relationship – 20 minutes including 10-minute activity

- What can commissioners do to help professionals accomplish their goals?
- What can professionals do to help commissioners accomplish their goals?

Thoughts to consider:

Agenda Planning: Begin with a conversation with the professional advisor. The executive often brings a pencil draft of the agenda, but the final agenda should be the volunteers.

Recruiting volunteers: The commissioner and professional together consider the best people available for the job.

Coaching in committee meetings: The volunteer always presides. The professional is usually seated beside the commissioner leader so they will have easy access to each other.

Evaluating meetings: After a meeting, the commissioner and the professional usually discuss what happened and the steps needed to follow up.

Setting goals: The setting of goals results in commitments for both commissioner leaders and the professional, so both participate in the process.

Helping units: The professional wants to keep in touch with unit leaders, but commissioners provide unit service. When special problems arise in units, commissioners ask the professional to help.

Organizing units: Each new unit needs an organizer, trainer and new-unit commissioner. The district executive gives overall support in the effort.

Remember: Professionals do not work for volunteers, but **with** them as partners on behalf of youth.

Class Exercise/Activity: “Fill in the Blanks” – 10 minutes

Distribute one “Fill in the Blanks Exercise” document to each participant allowing 5 minutes to complete it.

The goal of exercise is to underscore the benefits of good volunteer and professional relationships.

Instructor: Using provided answer key, discuss as time allows up to 5 minutes.

Distribute and briefly discuss “Six Major Tasks for Volunteer Success/Take Home Action Plan” (print double-sided) to each participant.

For virtual presentation, consider whether to distribute this handout (a) prior to class, (b) during class via the chat line, if available, or email, (c) after class, or (d) a combination. If the platform has a whiteboard, that might serve in place of an easel. Alternatively, this topic can be done as discussion (see guidance above) or a game on a program like www.kahoot.com.

- 1) Define Responsibilities**—Concise role descriptions in writing; Volunteers must know what is expected for them to be successful. Carefully define, in writing, the responsibilities for each position.
- 2) Select and Recruit**—Fit the right person to the job. Consider each prospect’s skills, interests, and other relevant factors. Consider the variety of motivating factors for people getting involved in Scouting. Use all the prescribed steps in recruiting district volunteers and use the recruiting resources of the BSA.
- 3) Orient and Develop**—Provide each person with prompt orientation on the individual assignment and with adequate training to be successful.
- 4) Coach Volunteers**—Provide ongoing coaching as needed. Build a volunteer’s confidence and self-esteem. Help conserve a volunteer’s time. Coaching should be provided by the appropriate committee chair or professional.
- 5) Recognize Achievement**—Prompt volunteer recognition has an important impact on the tenure and quality of service in the district. Recognition must be sincere, timely, and earned. Use the great variety of formal BSA recognition items, but also be creative with frequent locally devised thank-you. Even more effective may be the personal “pat on the back” for a job well done. Recognize volunteers on a face-to-face basis, from a person of status, and preferably in front of the volunteer’s peers.
- 6) Evaluate Performance**—Help district volunteers regularly evaluate how they’re doing using the “Continuous Improvement” section of position-specific self-assessment forms found at: <https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/manuals/>. More information may be found in *Selecting District People* workbook: <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/mission/pdf/34512.pdf>

Handout: MCS 314 - Take Home Action Plan

Have each participant complete a personal action plan to set some goals of two to three things they are going to do when they return to their district or council related to this session.

- What can I do to create a better relationship with my professional counterparts?
- What suggestions can I make to my professional to help us have a better relationship?

For virtual presentation, consider whether to distribute this handout (a) prior to class, (b) during class via the chat line, if available, or email, (c) after class, or (d) a combination.

Summary/Conclusion – 2 minutes

Historically, Scouting's great success has resulted because of volunteer talent and the professionals who guide and support talented volunteers.

The best relationships between professional and volunteer are those that include trust, friendship, mutual respect, recognition of each other's skills, and a further recognition created when those skills are combined.

The continuing greatness of Scouting as a volunteer movement is in your capable hands as you and your volunteer team effectively use the resource of your professional adviser.

Questions?

Discuss as time allows.