

BCS 104

Contacting Units



Time allotted	50 minutes
Teaching format	Instructor-led group discussion with PowerPoint support, Buzz group activity

Resources

Handouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCS 104 - Relationship Pyramid – 1 per participant
Equipment and materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCS 104 - Contacting Units course plan • BCS 104 - Contacting Units PowerPoint presentation • Computer and projector • Whiteboard or flipchart, appropriate markers and eraser
Resources for additional participant learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/

Course Connections

Connections to other CCS courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCS 304 - Unit Service for Units at Risk • DCS 514 - Building Meaningful Relationships
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Presentation Outline

Introduction and Course Objectives – 2 minutes

This course examines the role of contacts between commissioners and their units. At the heart of unit service are the contacts commissioners make with their units.

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

- **Describe** how the concept of unit service is demonstrated in frequent unit contacts
- **Identify** ways to demonstrate good unit service as we serve as a coach/mentor and representative of the BSA

- **Explain** the importance of using Commissioner Tools to record and manage unit contacts

Course Focus - 3 minutes

Unit Commissioner Focus areas

Unit commissioners need to focus on the five commissioner objectives:

Quickly review the topic, which is covered in Commissioner Basic and BCS 101.

- Supporting unit growth and retention through the Journey to Excellence.
- Contacting units and capturing in Commissioner Tools their strengths, needs, and a Unit Service Plan that enables continuing improvement.
- Linking unit needs to district operating committee and other resources.
- Supporting timely unit, district, and council charter renewals.
- Supporting unit leaders by collecting and distributing information, enabling program training, and providing networking opportunities

Make the point that this session is going to focus on Objective 2: Contact units and capture their strengths and needs in Commissioner Tools

Make the following points:

Our core task remains making contacts with units over the course of a year. This is probably the most important objective we have as commissioners because nothing else happens in unit service until we contact a unit and establish a relationship with their unit leaders.

We'll talk more about Commissioner Tools and establishing relationships later.

A unit's strengths and needs, assessed through unit contacts and captured in Commissioner Tools enables commissioners to develop a customized Unit Service Plan to address those identified needs, but the Unit Service Plan is the subject of another course.

What is a Unit Contact & Supporting Our Mission – 20 minutes (including 5-minute activity)

BSA has defined a **Unit Contact** as “a meaningful exchange between a commissioner and 1 or more members of the unit.”

Why is it important to clearly define what constitutes a unit contact and why do you think BSA uses this definition?

Ensure that the following points come out:

In order to count contacts as a measure of successful unit service, we must agree on what contact is significant. To count as a unit contact it must satisfy the three criteria:

- “meaningful” – does it contribute to unit service
- “exchange” – implying two-way communication
- “between a commissioner and 1 or more members of the unit”

How do unit contacts support our mission?

Unit contacts are critical to commissioners achieving success in our mission. As commissioners, we share the BSA’s mission: To prepare youth to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.

Who makes unit contacts? Any commissioner or professional

Ensure that the following points come out:

- Any commissioner may make a unit contact
 - the assigned unit commissioner
 - a non-assigned unit commissioner
 - an administrative commissioner
 - a roundtable commissioner
- Which commissioner would be preferred? The assigned unit commissioner. Why? Because he or she has history with the unit.
- Can a professional scouter make unit contacts? Yes, commissioners and professionals both wear the wreath of service and are there to support units.
- What would be the advantage of professionals logging information from unit contacts? It adds to the picture of a unit’s strengths and needs.

Where and how are unit contacts made?

Reveal the following on the slide following the discussion:

- Visit to a unit meeting
- Visit to a committee meeting
- Visit to a unit activity (e.g., district/council event)
- Individual contact (e.g., at roundtable, private meeting or a chance encounter)
- A meaningful phone conversation or (two-way) email exchange (e.g., discussing a unit problem)
- Text messages (as a follow-up)

Discuss the appropriate use of each and the advantages of a mixture of types of contact.

Reveal the following on the slide following the discussion:

- Make as many contacts as needed to fulfill your unit service mission
- Recommend at least monthly
- When districts have insufficient resources, prioritize contacts based on need

Some basic ground rules for unit visits

- Call in advance to be sure that the visit is convenient.
- The visit should extend through the entire meeting.
- The commissioner should not make an effort to participate in the meeting, except to be introduced.
- Uniforms are to be worn and should conform to the appropriate uniform inspection sheet

Now let's identify some commissioner dos and don'ts for unit visits and other types of contacts.

Activity and Instructor Led Discussion, 5 minutes

Notes:

Do's and Don'ts Activity

Form two buzz groups, one to make a list of good practices for commissioner contacts with units and the other bad practices. Allow up to 4 minutes for discussion. Then have the buzz groups report back to the class. There are example do's and don'ts in the notes.

For virtual presentation, consider either of the following:

- Use breakout rooms for the buzz groups described above.
- Use the chat line feature, if the software supports it, for people to post their ideas.

Some example do's and don'ts follow:

DOs

- Visit often - Visit different types of meetings/activities
- Smile – Be Positive
- Bring something (e.g., a flyer for an upcoming event or news of some coming program change)
- Talk to several leaders and some youth
- Be cognizant of your body language
- Listen – actively and empathetically
- Ask if there's anything you can do to help
- Check your ego at the door
- Follow up on questions you couldn't answer
- Follow up on promises
- Follow up with a Thank You
- Respond promptly to messages

DON'Ts

- Act as the uniform police
- Enter your visit while you are there
- Be late
- Overstep your bounds
- Take sides
- Over post in electronic communications
- Lie – You will be found out
- Take too much of the unit leader's time – He/She has a meeting to run
- Start sentences with "You" if you're saying something negative
- Give advice directly if not asked for (Avoid "Should")

Commissioner/Unit Relationships – 10 minutes

Our success supporting a unit depends on a healthy and trusting relationship with the unit's leadership.

Let the class suggest some of the qualities people want in a relationship. After a brief discussion, show the next slide, listing the values people want most

What people value in a relationship

Top 10 things that people want from a relationship:

1. Appreciate peoples' worth - Genuine
2. Empathetic - Unselfish - Giving
3. Communicate openly – Knowledgeable
4. Listen - Demonstrate interest - Inquisitive - Quiet
5. "People person" - Upbeat - Optimistic
6. Positive
7. Reliable - Do what you say - Be honest
8. Trustworthy
9. Understanding - Objective-Unbiased-Respect other's point of view
10. Willing to find common ground - Persistent, but not aggressive

Ask: Which do you value? Which do you demonstrate in your relationships? How could you improve?

Distribute handout: Relationship Pyramid – 1 per participant

For virtual presentation, consider whether to distribute the Relationship Pyramid handout (a) prior to the class, (b) during class on the chat line, if available, or email, (c) after the class, or (d) some combination of those.

The Relationship Pyramid

- Where are you and your unit's Key 3 on the relationship pyramid?
- Where would you like to be and what actions can facilitate getting there?

Note that there is an entire course on Building Meaningful Relationships (DCS 514) in the doctoral program.

Commissioner Tools – 10 minutes

Unit Contacts - Assessments

Building trust in the relationship helps provide a basis for assessments and collaboration between the commissioner and the unit.

Support implementation of the Unit Service Plan through detailed assessments and an increased number of significant unit contacts to packs, troops, crews, ships, clubs, and posts.

A Unit Assessment is a first step in supporting unit growth on the Journey to Excellence. Scouting's *Journey to Excellence (JTE)* is the BSA aspirational planning, performance and recognition program designed to encourage and reward success of our units, districts, and councils. It is meant to encourage excellence and continuous improvement in providing a quality program at all levels of the BSA.

The JTE standards are based on achievements the previous year or previous few years, both individually and for the creation of national standards. Due to the extraordinary circumstances occurring in 2020, benchmarking 2019 to 2020 at the district and council level is not constructive and similarly basing 2021 standards on 2020 for districts and councils is equally inappropriate. Many units, however, have largely adapted their programs to the challenges of 2020 so their members have continued to enjoy Scouting.

For these reasons, the Journey to Excellence **recognition** program for districts and councils was discontinued in 2020. The Unit level recognition program continues, and recognition patches will be available for units.

Every unit is required to have a Detailed Assessment annually, and it must be recorded in Commissioner Tools in order to be counted. Any commissioners detailed assessment fulfills this

requirement. 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. Simple assessments are done as needed to follow up on progress of the unit service plan.

Whenever possible, it is preferred that a *Detailed Assessment* be done in collaboration with the unit Key 3. One is recommended at charter renewal time along with a unit service plan. Follow up with a second detailed assessment midway through the year to see if the service plan has been completed or is in need of modification. If there is a change in unit leadership or any other significant change, a third detailed assessment could be useful.

However, this is not always possible so the assessment can be done unilaterally by the commissioner or professional. The assessment is meant to engage commissioners and unit leaders in implementing a continuous improvement process for the unit. It provides the greatest insight into unit health.

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.

After making contact with your units, what do you do with the information you have acquired? You enter a contact report in Commissioner Tools – the software developed by commissioners, for commissioners, to enable fast and efficient unit service.

(Show slide of Commissioner Tools page)

There are several important pieces of information displayed here. The summary page provides; the unit type, number, the name of the chartered organization, the date of the last contact, and the name of the commissioner or professional who made the contact. You can also see the name of the commissioner assigned to the unit. Finally, you see the last contact score.

In the Contact Summary box, users can see three tabs labeled Completed, In Progress, and Scheduled, each with the number of contacts in that category shown parenthetically. In the upper right-hand corner, using the pulldown arrow the user can change the year for which the information is displayed. As required, from here commissioners have **48 hours** from submission to edit or delete a completed contact. Click on the 3 dots after the contact date to edit or delete the contact. After **48 hours** you will only be allowed to view or print the assessment.

The final box displays the unit health indicators for the unit based on the latest detailed assessment. These indicators only appear when a detailed assessment has been completed.

(Show slide of Commissioner Tools page for Simple Assessment)

Here we chose a Simple Assessment. At the top of the screen is the unit health scoring matrix. Hover your mouse over each number to get a brief definition of what that score means. Then,

choose the score you feel most accurately reflects the present health of the unit as determined from your latest contact with the unit.

The comments box must be completed. Remember, your comments should be **Actionable Information** about the unit so that the appropriate assistance can be provided. When you are satisfied with your comments and score, click on the SAVE button. Your simple assessment is now complete.

Unit commissioners input valuable and actionable information into Commissioner Tools when they record their unit contacts. This is important for them as unit commissioners so that they have a record of the assistance they are providing to their units. It is also important for unit commissioner succession planning because newly assigned unit commissioners can view the history of the unit.

Administrative commissioners at all levels of the organization can see the health of the units in their jurisdiction to provide help and guidance when needed. Reports give commissioners actionable information to ensure that units remain healthy and able to deliver the promise of Scouting to the youth they serve.

The reports available in Commissioner Tools provides the information you need as an administrative commissioner to lead your commissioners in achieving the objectives of Unit Service.

Important reports for district and council commissioners are shown below and on the slide in RED:

- Assigned and Unassigned Units
- **Commissioner Contacts**
- Commissioner Contacts without Sub Totals
- Commissioner Recruitment
- Commissioners without Contacts
- **Contacts In Progress**
- **Detailed Assessments with Comments**
- **District Contact Stats**
- **Newly Registered Commissioners**
- **Priority Needs Units**
- **Roundtable Attendance**
- **Simple Assessments with Comments**
- **Units with Service Plan**

Commissioner Tools training is available in 5 videos in the BSA Learn Center. These videos are part of the online Commissioner Basic Training. PowerPoints are also available on the Technology for Commissioners page.

Summary/Conclusion – 3 minutes

After taking the course, a commissioner should have a good understanding of the role of contacts between commissioners and their units.

Summarize with these points:

- A commissioner's core task remains making contacts with units over the course of a year
- Unit contacts provide opportunities to coach/mentor unit leaders and to develop a healthy relationship between the unit and the commissioner
- Unit strengths and needs captured in these contacts are recorded in Commissioner Tools to provide actionable information

Questions? – 2 minutes