The Camp Commissioner Program

Purpose: The Theodore Roosevelt Council Camp Commissioner program utilizes our high performing camp staff and most qualified and experienced volunteer Scouters to serve units in camp.

− Unit service is the keystone and enhancing unit leadership is the priority for our Camp Commissioner program.
− Camp Commissioners are recruited and retained based on their performance as self-starters. They require little supervision. They leave their footprints all over the camp each day.
− Camp Commissioners are highly motivated and always take the initiative to seek out opportunities to serve the Scouts and leaders in camp. They are dedicated to service.

While there is a need at all times for the Commissioner to contribute his/her counsel and encouragement, this should be balanced with some private time in camp for relaxation and reflection. Having FUN is contagious.

Commissioner Training

The following levels of training are REQUIRED:

− Youth Protection Training (current)
− Current National Camp School Commissioner Certification or Camp Commissioner Orientation

The following training is desirable:

− Unit Commissioner Fast Start (online at MyScouting.org)
− Commissioner Basic Training (offered by Council Commissioner Staff)

Camp Commissioner Prerequisites

− Team Players
− Dedicated to the ideals of Scouting (Oath and Law)
− Possessed of good judgment
− Flexible and understanding
− Trained in:
  o Troop operations (Basic Leader Training)
  o Camp operations
  o Camp program
  o Youth protection
− Counselors to individual Scouts and Scouters, especially unit leaders
− Objective mediators
− Creative and imaginative in overcoming unit leadership deficiencies
− Oriented in PROMOTING FUN!
Your Mission as Camp Commissioner

Your mission as Camp Commissioner is to help units obtain the maximum benefit from their summer camp experience, maintain regular contact with the unit leaders, counsel leaders on where to find assistance, and suggest remedies to program needs. Your objective is to send home from camp stronger, better-qualified units than came to camp through coaching the unit leaders. No other camp staff members are specifically charged with this particular responsibility. It has a year-round impact! The result of your efforts will be better quality units during the other 51 weeks of the year.

Yours is a very demanding challenge. Fulfillment of your challenge is the unequalled reward of knowing that you have made a significant contribution to the lives of the boys who benefit from your diligence. Experience through the years of Scout camp history has repeatedly demonstrated that positive camp experiences have a lifetime impact on our young men. You do make a difference!

Your Role as Camp Commissioner

Your more detailed, specific duties and responsibilities will depend upon the capabilities and deficiencies of each unit.

− As Camp Commissioner, you are the liaison between the camp leadership team and the units in camp.
− You are an integral part of the camp staff. You are the glue between the staff and the unit.
− You are guided at all times by the ideals of Scouting (Oath and Law) and encourage their practice in all unit activities.
− Your role as Camp Commissioner requires that you must play many parts. You must be:
  ▶ A communicator
  ▶ A diplomat
  ▶ A helper of troops
  ▶ A friend to troop leaders
  ▶ A member of the Camp Director’s team
  ▶ A promoter of fun

Your Commissioner Responsibilities

− You are the conduit for concerns, feedback and advice.
− You actively seek out and work with leaders.
− You lean each unit’s objectives for camp and advise the leaders on meeting them.
− You support unit logistical requirements.
− You assist leaders in resolving problems.

Your Commissioner’s Toolbox

Scout leaders’ material is scarce at camp. Be sure to put together and bring to camp a kit of useful items that you have accumulated and have used over your years in Scouting. Standard items in your toolbox will include this guide, handbooks for the program (Cub Scout or Boy Scout), current camp leaders’ guide, Guide to Safe Scouting, Commissioner Field book, Commissioner Notes (appendix), current Advancement Requirements, program and course materials, Scout craft items, writing materials, etc. You need not bring an extensive library with you to camp, but the above materials all provide valuable tools for helping the troops and troop leaders succeed. Use the materials that you are the most comfortable with.
Other Duties

We see Commissioners as being the focal point of the theme area in which they are assigned. A Commissioner should be available to help units move in, setup camp, point out schedules, and pack up at the end of camp. The idea is for the Commissioner to be the "go-to" person if anything is needed. Specific duties may include the following:

- Check-in/check-out within the campsites
- Assisting leaders with discipline or advancement problems
- Assisting with program areas as directed by the Camp Director
- Having a radio for nighttime emergencies (medical, weather, wildlife, etc.)
- Assisting with supplemental activities and games.

You are a Role Model

Role models are fundamental to Scouting, especially at summer camp. Camp staff is viewed as role models by our campers. Adult staffs are the models for the younger staff members, and Commissioners are recognized by all as examples of experienced, mature leaders of high character selected because of the quality of their efforts and dedication to the ideals of Scouting. Be assured that the example you set will be emulated by others.

You Are a Part of the Staff

Commissioners should take an active role in camp staff activities during the week to encourage unity with the rest of the staff members. This should include participation in flag ceremonies, in songs, skits, and other staff activities. Primarily, this will occur at the opening and closing campfire programs or in the dining halls.

Judgment

This guide is not intended to replace your own good judgment. Trust in the quality of your judgment and experience was fundamental to your selection to serve as a Camp Commissioner. You are expected to exercise your prerogatives within the policies of the Boy Scouts of America and conduct yourselves in accordance with the Scout Oath and Law.

A Word about Profanity and Smoking

Although profanity has no place in Scouting, it does occur in summer camp. Usually it is the product of careless speech habits and should be corrected as such. First, set the example by not swearing or using profanity yourself. Provide a general reminder at camp staff and leaders’ meetings, stressing the reality that younger staff and campers will certainly mimic what they hear from their revered role models. It is a chain. Campers lean from staff members what is learned in the staff area. We can’t expect campers to respect us and Scouting if we permit the ideals of Scouting to be ignored. On-the-spot reminders are effective, but they should not be directed to an individual. The appeal should be to group responsibility to maintain our mutual standards of speech and conduct.

Private counseling to individuals should accept that no offense was intended and that the harm was probably not even recognized as such. Try to appeal to the individual’s pride and desire to uphold the ideals of Scouting.

Smoking is not allowed in tents, any buildings, or camp sites. Smoking is allowed in designated areas that will be announced at the opening leaders’ roundtable.
Aims and Methods of Scout Camping

Especially in summer camp, you will need to depend heavily on Scouting's basic fundamentals, the aims and methods of Scouting. You will want to reiterate these basics as you meet the daily challenges as Camp Commissioner. These basics set Scout summer camp aside from other summer camp opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIMS</th>
<th>METHODS - Cub Scouts</th>
<th>METHODS - Boy Scouts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build character</td>
<td>The Ideals: The Cub Scout Promise and the Law of the Pack help remind a boy to do his best. They teach good citizenship and strengthen feelings about reverence and respect for God.</td>
<td>The Ideals: The Scout Oath, Law, motto, and slogan. A Scout measures himself against these ideals and continually tries to improve.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster citizenship</td>
<td>Den</td>
<td>Patrons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop fitness</td>
<td>Advancement</td>
<td>Outdoors</td>
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<td>Family Involvement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Personal growth</td>
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<td>Home- and neighborhood-centered</td>
<td>Adult Association</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The uniform</td>
<td>Leadership development</td>
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The aims and methods for the for the Cub Scout program is enhanced by camping, which involves parents and the pack by dens so that the Scouts can enjoy a guided outdoor experience dominated by activities to have fun.

The aims and methods for the Boy Scout program is designed to take place outdoors. Scouts share responsibilities, practice leadership, and apply the skills and activities practiced at troop meetings.

Commissioner Individual and Team Effort

Specific needs often deserve specific expertise. Each Commissioner possesses talents in which he or she excels. When you encounter a special need such as counseling an inexperienced leader who seems to be overwhelmed by behavior problems with the campers in his troop or a homesick Scout who cannot be reassured by his troop leaders, you will want to call on the Commissioner best qualified to deal with the problem.

This is where the depth in the Commissioner team pays off. You may need to cover a fellow Commissioner while they are dealing with a time-consuming need. It truly takes a team effort to be successful.

Uniform

The uniform is one of the key methods in Scouting. Your uniform should be appropriate to your position and identify you as a Commissioner and a member of the camp staff at all times. Your appearance should set an example for both staff and campers. Only the field uniform or staff shirt should be worn in camp, and you should wear your staff name tag at all times.

Site Assignment
Each Commissioner can expect to be assigned to primary unit sites for the purpose of monitoring campsite maintenance and appearance. You are available to any and all units to provide Commissioner service and support youth and unit leaders, as needed, in a timely fashion. Although leaders are briefed that this is the policy, it is natural and appropriate that units will tend to look to the Commissioner assigned to their campsite as "their Commissioner." The paramount consideration is for you to identify and satisfy a need as quickly and completely as possible for any of the troops in camp.

**General Unit Service**

Your Commissioner service and support will be the major factors in units having a successful and meaningful week or weekend in camp. The primary location where your assistance will be the most valuable and effective is the unit campsite. This is where you can have the most direct impact in assisting the leaders with camp activities. You will be helping units find the activities and materials they need and how to best utilize what is available to them. You will help in showing leaders how to develop teamwork and help adult leaders in developing youth leadership (in troops and crews) or developing pack and den leadership in Packs, so adults can be comfortable in the role of guiding, counseling, teaching, reviewing, and recognizing.

- You will need to coach the least experienced leaders on the aims and methods of Scouting for their programs. They will need the *training materials appropriate to their program*.
- You will need to encourage new leaders to take both Fast Start training and Youth Protection training. At resident camps, these programs may be offered at scheduled times during the week; at Cub weekend camping, encourage leaders to use the on-line training at MyScouting.org.
- You will help them in developing and advancement plan, achieving their goals, minimizing stress and having FUN! Your cheerful service will be contagious and reflected in others.

**Individual Unit Needs**

You will need to get acquainted with the units in camp in order to evaluate and meet their individual needs for Commissioner support and service. You will note a wide variance in the needs of the units. This has a direct bearing on how best to serve the units.

Many units will have young Scouts who are in camp for the first time. A few units will have older, more experienced Scouts who have been in camp before and are self-motivated. Some leaders will be experienced and well trained. Frequently there is no key unit leader in the traditional sense. Instead, unit leaders in camp may be an available adult with no training or experience. Your evaluation will tell you where your guidance will be required most to aid adults in fulfilling their leadership positions of responsibility.

- Commissioners **DO NOT** assume unit leadership responsibility (nor does other camp staff officials).
- Commissioners **DO** provide advice and counsel, as needed, to the responsible unit leaders.
- Commissioner counseling is discussed further in a subsequent section of this guide.

**Unit Visitation**

Your most productive opportunities to provide service to the units and their leaders will come from you visits to them in their campsites or at meals. You should make the loop around the campsites at least twice a day.

- Your first visit in the morning will likely include your campsite visitation (site inspection) rating of assigned campsites.
Then **after lunch** or some other time in the afternoon you will need to walk the sites making the loop around the campsites to see if any units need help meeting the program and growth objectives of their camp plan. They may require your assistance in establishing or revising their camp plan.

**Before or after dinner,** touch base with the unit leadership and youth to see how their day went. Sometime after taps, you will want to carry a flashlight and walk the sites to see that all are settling down for the night. This is the time when competitive "night raids" or other such mischief is likely to occur, while exhausted unit leaders are already asleep.

Most counseling at Cub camping weekends will involve adults, many of whom will be on their first camping experience during their visit. Very few of the leaders in camp will be normal pack or den leaders, and most are parents attending with their sons. Make no assumptions concerning levels of experience or training, but remain open to questions and help leaders to understand how an why the camp works the way it does.

Also, on applicable evenings, you should indicate your interest by visiting unit campfires. YOUR presence will assure that the activities and fire stay within bounds. The job of Commissioner happens largely where the troops live. FUN! FUN! FUN!

**Site Visitation and Campsite Quality**

You will be involved with helping units become adjusted to their campsite facilities. You will help in showing leaders how to develop the teamwork and patrol spirit in cleaning and improving their campsite. You will be conducting site visitation (inspections), not to find things wrong but to assist the unit in making their camp better. You will be concerned about the condition, repair and maintenance of the facilities. Not only for those in camp currently but for those who will follow. Find room to make daily comments of encouragement, offer ideas for improvement, and give congratulations for achievement. Ideally, this should be done on the posted inspection sheets. Be careful not to hurt your credibility by appearing to be only an inspector. Use inspections as a chance to counsel and congratulate.

**Program Activities**

Less critical but often illuminating are your visits to the camp program areas. This is "where the rubber meets the road" in our resident camp programs for Boy Scouts, Venturers, and Webelos. You will be better able to advise the unit leaders with first-hand experience. The program director will appreciate your feedback and constructive comments. When possible, you should visit each area at least once during the week or weekend.

At Cub camping programs, while some activities will contribute to the completion of advancement requirements, that is not the primary purpose of the program. Cub camping programs are designed primarily to allow Cub Scouts to have FUN outdoors. While some advancement will take place, it is not reasonable for leaders to expect completion of Webelos activity badges or Wolf/Bear achievements as part of the program. You may wish to help leaders identify requirements for advancement or Academics and Sports loops and pins that are completed during the session.

**Youth Protection**

You are required to be currently trained and certified in youth protection, which is good for two years. You will help in implementing youth protection guidelines. You will monitor the units to assure that they are maintaining youth protection standards and you will assist the Camp Director in ensuring compliance with national standards for youth protection. You will help in seeing that boys and adults alike have their privacy. You will be concerned about the quality of their life in camp. You will be especially interested in their health and safety. Any possible youth protection problems must be reported immediately to the **Camp Director**. Share your concern and issues
about youth protection with the Camp Director or camp chaplain only. Youth protection training is offered weekly at camp.

**Leader Roundtables**

The Commissioners should attend all leader roundtables during the camp week or weekend and insure that all leaders attend. As the Commissioners are the troubleshooters and friend" to the unit, they should be at the meetings so as to focus on any complaints, problems, or concerns. The Commissioners may then forward necessary attention items to the Camp Director and leadership team as needed.

**Homesickness**

Some homesickness happens in every session of summer camp. A Scout seldom says he is homesick, but rather reports one or more of the following symptoms-- a stomach ache, can't eat, a headache, and asthma attack, fatigue, etc. It is important for him to be checked by a Health staff member. Altitude sickness can be a factor. Some time to adjust and rest can work wonders.

First-year campers are the most susceptible. When a boy first shows symptoms of homesickness, take fast action to involve him in activities that will be stimulating and exciting. *Comply with youth protection standards by having another adult observe this counseling at some distance.* Give him a chance to talk to you privately about the people at home - don't tell him to forget them. If available, you may decide to call on the camp chaplain to conduct counseling.

**Discipline Issues**

Most discipline problems must be managed within the unit. You will counsel the leaders to utilize the guidelines outlined in Youth Protection training and the camp leaders guide. It is NOT your role to deal directly with Scouts causing problems.

Scouts who do not respond to corrective action usually come from one of two extreme home environments. One is the situation where the boy is allowed no latitude at home to make decisions for himself and is used to extreme domination. The other extreme home situation is one that is completely permissive and all restrictions on behavior are avoided. When there is inadequate response to corrective action by a Scout, he may need to be removed from camp in consideration for his own safety and the safety of others. This decision would be made by the Camp Director with consultation from the unit leader and Commissioner. The camp environment is not the place to deal with extreme behavior dysfunctions.

**You Can't Win Them All**

You do not expect losses, but you should not become discouraged when a boy does not respond as you desire. As noted just above, a boy may bring a problem with him to camp, which can be effectively dealt with only in the home. We sometimes encounter homesickness, which is actually brought on by insecurity due to a tragic domestic situation at home. You may never really know why a troop leader is unsuccessful in turning around a Scout's camp problem. Be proud that you cared enough to try to help the boy have a good camping experience. Your reward comes from the many successes you are producing daily.
Commissioner as a Counselor

Undoubtedly, the most important and primary function you perform as a Camp Commissioner is that of counselor. You will have the opportunity to contribute according to several of the definitions found in Webster's for the words "counseling" and "counselor," such as "using various techniques of the personal interview," "advisor," and, of course, "one who has supervisory duties at a summer camp."

Happily, most of your counseling will not involve problems, but will instead be related to the enjoyable and FUN summer camp activities. Remember, though, that the Camp Director or designee must be informed immediately about unit leadership problems along with your recommendations. No one likes surprises. As part of the camp staff team, you must be able to provide feedback to the camp leadership.

Regardless of whether or not there is a problem involved, there are several counseling techniques that will apply to most situations you may encounter.

The primary requirement to be a successful counselor is to be an attentive listener.

Listen. Listen, and then listen some more. Interject questions that will draw out the other person. Interject your own opinions only after they have been specifically requested. After being allowed to express his own idea, a counselee will often answer his own questions with correct answers and with renewed self-confidence and self-esteem.

Each of us is different. An approach that works for one may not work for another because of many factors, including personality. Each leader that you work with and counsel is also different. To be effective, we must study and try to understand ourselves as well as the person we are counseling.

- Some persons are followers, doing their best when they are taking instructions from another. These people are looking for step-by-step guidance.
- Others must be a dominant leader, sometimes sensing as interference what they perceive as your attempt to govern their actions. Your own personality will affect how you come across to other people.

Problem Solving

Less frequent than routine counseling but always more time-consuming is counseling someone who has a problem. It is important to help the person understand and resolve his or her problem before it grows larger. A person with a problem can impact an entire group and possibly the entire camp.

Avoid the office, talking across a desk or table, or other "authority" settings. Aim for privacy and try to avoid distraction. As soon as you hear the person's problem, you will probably have all sorts of suggestions to help him or her out. Bite your tongue.

Give no advice! LISTEN! Let the person know you are willing to take time to hear him or her out.

Frequently a leader recognizes a problem situation and comes to you or another staff member or leader for help. Sometimes a leader may not be aware of a problem that you see or have heard about from others. When this occurs, the problem may go away just by making the leader aware of it.

When counseling a leader who has a problem that is likely to require one or more steps of corrective action, it is most effective to utilize the techniques discussed above.
LISTEN! Use leading questions like "Do you think he really meant to do that?" or "What do you think should be done?" or "Did you know?" Lead the person, by your questions, into finding his own solutions.

A key ingredient is being positive. Most people like to have encouragement and compliments.

- Try not to be negative, with expressions such as "You're wrong," "That's not how to do it," "I should have done it myself," or "You should have known better."
- Instead, try expressions such as "That is one way of doing it, but have you thought of other ways that might be more effective?" or "I can see your point; however, let's put our feet in the other guy's shoes and try to see how he feels about it," or "You have a great troop and most of what I see is superb, but I've spotted a couple of areas where your troop could do even better."
- Look for the good, and give praise when it is due.
- Try not to criticize unless it is constructive.
- Build a person up instead of tearing him down.
- Smile. Your Scout smile is contagious. Even the worst of situations has a bright side. Sometimes you have to hunt for it. And remember how many times in the past your have been able to look back and laugh over an incident that seemed so serious at the moment. But be careful: When the other person is serious, that is not the time to laugh. Be serious with him; show your equal concern with his concerns. Together, you and he can work even the most serious situations. Be on his side, as a helpmate. Laugh with a person, not at him. You're smiling, encouraging support and suggestions will go a long way.

Suggestions for Unit Visits at Camp

Visit the unit daily and observe the unit in action.

- **OBSERVE**: determine the degree to which the aims and methods of Scouting are being used by the unit in their summer camp program.
- **SUPPORT**: Only if called upon, participate or help in some of the regular activities of the unit.
- **RECORD**: Provide a record of your visit into the UVTS. Visit regularly with the unit leader and listen to what the unit leader has to say. Use EDGE (explain, demonstrate, guide, enable) but do not become a surrogate leader for the unit.
- **EXPLAIN**: Offer encouragement and support and help the leader see new opportunities for improvement; discuss training and program opportunities to enhance program delivery within the unit.
- **DEMONSTRATE**: Be selective where you might provide direct demonstration with support. Do not become a surrogate or go-for.
- **GUIDE**: Encourage unit participation in district and council program events and training opportunities available at camp.
- **ENABLE**:
  - Work to ensure effective and active unit leadership by youth and adults.
  - Help each unit earn the Journey to Excellence Award by asking if their summer camp program will assist them in meeting the goals set by the unit.
  - Bring them timely information on camp activities and special program opportunities.
- **FEEDBACK**: Help the camp director obtain timely inquiries and comments on camp operations. At the end of the camp, request thorough feedback from BOTH the adult and youth leaders.
Reporting Unit Visits at the End of the Camping Period.

Helping the District Commissioner staff with unit service can be accomplished at summer camp. A Unit Visitation Tracking report should be completed at the end of the camp using a tracking report form. Please provide a simple summary for each of the following questions:

- Was there effective unit leadership at an adult and youth level (for troops and crews) or effective adult leadership (for packs)?
- Did the unit plan their camp program or did they follow the camp program?
- Did the Scouts have fun?
- What was the general feedback on the camp program and services at the end of the session?

Send the report to the unit’s District Commissioner no later than 24 hours after close of camp session by email using UVTS form for each unit.
Unit Visit Tracking System (UVTS) Report

1) VISIT:
Unit: __________________________ Date of visit: ____________ # Youth: ____________ # Adults: ____________
Type of visit: □ unit activity □ unit meeting □ leader meeting □ other
Description of visit: __________________________

2) QUALITY INDICATORS:
Planning: Did the observed program reflect prior planning & adequate preparation? □ Yes □ No □ None
Program: Was the observed activity appropriate to the stated advancement and program objectives for this unit? □ Yes □ No □ None
Leadership: Was adult (& age-appropriate youth) leadership present during this activity? □ Yes □ No □ None
Tone: Did the Scouts appear to enjoy & be engaged with the program activity? □ Yes □ No □ None
Attendance: Was actual attendance at this activity at or near the # of enrolled youth? □ Yes □ No □ None

3) COMMENTS: __________________________