

NEW UNIT-COMMISSIONER

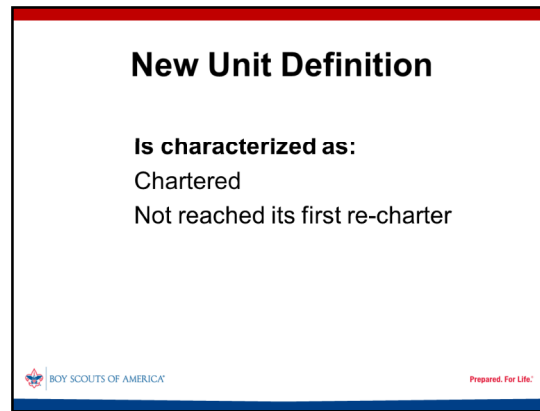


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Prepared For Unit

Objectives

- Why the extra emphasis on new units?
- Definition of "New Unit" - Commissioner
- Understand the role of a New Unit-Commissioner
- Learn how to combine the Annual Service Plan, the New Unit-Service Plan and the Charter Renewal service
- Recommended additional training



Traditionally a new unit is characterized as:

Chartered

Not reached its first re-charter

Additionally they can often be described as novice at the Scouting game

A unit that has been dropped and restarted can also be described as “new”

Cold Hard Facts

Nationally

In 2006 BSA chartered **13,833** new units
At the end of September 2009 only **4,817**
of those units were still chartered

As you can see only one out of every 3 new units makes it to their 3rd re-charter.

Imagine running water into a bathtub. We've got the facet turned on full, but we haven't put the stopper in the drain. Units are coming in, but they are also going out as fast if not faster that we can start them. So the plan is to:

Involve Commissioner Corps earlier in the process

Give New Units extra attention

“Flag” New Units as a new unit on reports



The new unit-commissioner holds a special place in the formation of a new unit. The new unit-commissioner's role begins at the very beginning of the new-unit organization process (step 1) by working closely with the district executive, supporting the new unit-organizer, and becoming a familiar and consistent liaison between the chartered organization representative and the district. At the beginning of the organizational process, the new unit-commissioner will need to put in place a functional succession plan of leadership while providing support to the newly recruited key leaders. The New Unit-Commissioner will be the go-to person serving as a coach, mentor, and consultant by laying a strong foundation around which the new unit can form and, it is hoped, continue for a long time. Being a new unit-commissioner is a worthwhile long-term volunteer commitment that will generally last at least three years. The new unit-commissioner will need to serve longer than most other volunteer district leaders (with at least two years' tenure). The reason is the new unit will need careful watching, support, guidance, mentoring, and assistance through several re-chartering cycles to ensure unit sustainability.

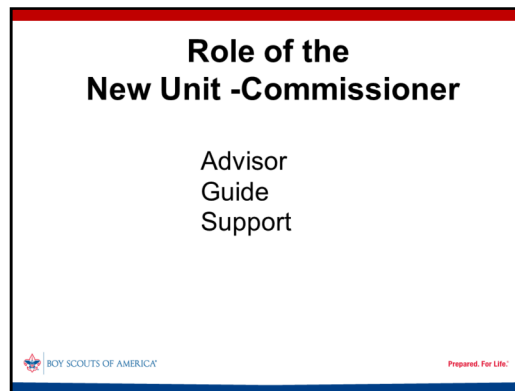


While it is typical and acceptable for most unit commissioners to be assigned several units and have a longer tenure, the length and intensity of service given by the new-unit commissioner adds to the importance of this position. **They are also asked to be assigned to only one unit.** With this in mind, what motivates a volunteer to become a new unit-commissioner and serve only one unit for two or three full years? Because they truly believe that when a new unit is organized, the BSA made a promise to those families that their sons (or daughters in Venturing) would have a real Scouting experience. It is a promise that really needs to be kept.

Experienced unit commissioners often say it would be much more exciting to “raise a unit in the way it should go” than to monitor an existing unit.

New unit-commissioners may derive even greater satisfaction from their new role than other unit commissioners simply because they can take pride in the creation process and watch the unit grow and be sustained over many years. Care should be taken to ensure that the unit leadership is making the decisions and running the unit while the New Unit-Commissioner is an advisor.

The best practice is to have one New Unit to one New Unit-Commissioner each year. When the New Unit-Commissioner’s first unit has reached 12 months tenure, he/she might be able to handle a second brand new unit. By the time the first New Unit reaches 24 months tenure, the New Unit-Commissioner is usually ready for a second unit.



The role of the unit commissioner with the unit Key 3 is to serve as an adviser. He/she serves as a representative of the district to the unit, linking district resources to the unit as needed. It is appropriate for the new unit-commissioner to begin meeting monthly with the unit Key 3. As the unit becomes more of a high-performing unit, the unit commissioner will attend as needed.

The role the new unit-commissioner plays is much like that of troop guide—not a member of the unit but a mentor who helps the unit leadership become a high-performing team. The new unit-commissioner will need to give this unit extra service in addition to the unit service plan.

Early Assignment

District Commissioner Assigned
Organizing committee member



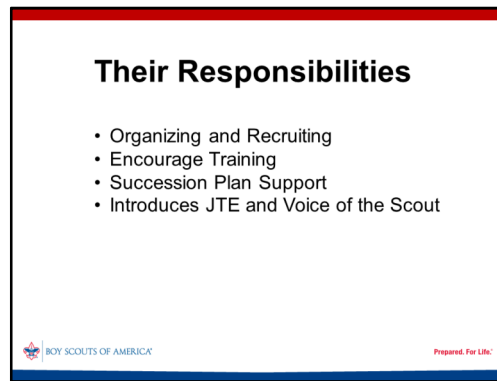
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During formation of a new unit, the new unit-commissioner's role is to support the new-unit organizer, become a familiar and consistent link between the chartered organization and the district, and provide support to the new key leaders. He or she can harness the resources of the entire district by being in communication with the subject-matter experts on the district committee (for example, calling on the advancement, training, camping, or finance chair when needed to support the unit). It really does take a district to serve a unit, not just a commissioner. In many cases, the new unit-commissioner will be the face of consistency and the strong foundation around which the new unit can form. New unit-commissioners likely derive even greater satisfaction from their role than other unit commissioners because they can take pride in the creation process.



The new-unit organizer works closely with the institutional head or executive officer of the chartered organization to put together an organizing team.

The new unit-commissioner supports that effort and strives to become a familiar face to that group, taking the lead in helping the team complete some aspects of its responsibilities.



The responsibilities of the new-unit organizer and the new unit-commissioner are as follows:

While organizing and running the recruitment effort is the membership team's responsibility, the new unit-commissioner will support the idea that at least 10 youth and five adults are recruited for membership in the unit.

The new unit-commissioner encourages the unit to participate in training both during this organization phase and into the future. The new-unit organizer will coordinate with the district training chair to provide initial training and Youth Protection training on an agreed-upon date. The new-unit leadership takes Youth Protection training, This Is Scouting, and position-specific training.

The new unit-commissioner supports a leadership succession plan to be in place prior to the first charter.

The new unit-commissioner introduces the organizing team to the Journey to Excellence and helps them write a vision statement and set goals for the unit. The new unit-commissioner will also introduce the organizing team to Voice of the Scout.

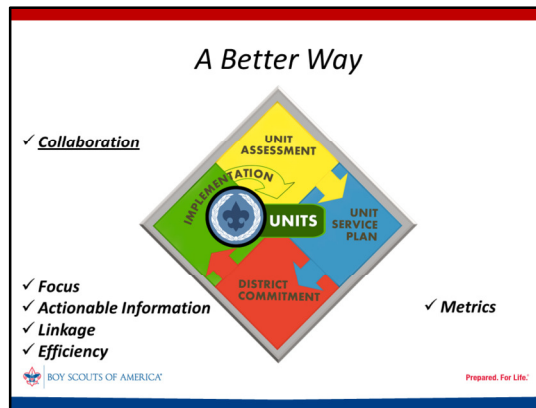
- The new-unit organizer helps them plan the details for their first meeting and introduces the team to the national first month meeting plan.
- The new unit-commissioner familiarizes the unit with the district/council calendar and encourages roundtable attendance.
- The new unit-commissioner schedules an annual program planning meeting led by an experienced district representative.
- Together, the new-unit organizer and new unit-commissioner will present the charter at a full meeting of the chartered organization.
- The new-unit organizer and the new unit-commissioner attend the first meeting. From this point on, the new unit-commissioner takes the leading role in mentoring the unit for the next 36 months.
- The new-unit organizer and the new unit-commissioner ensure that unit leaders and parents are added to council and district email lists so that they receive current event and training information.



The New Unit-Commissioner will need to contact the New Unit more than once a month. The Unit Key 3 meeting counts as one contact but the New Unit-Commissioner will need to contact at other times as well.

The combining of the New Unit Service Plan, and Charter Renewal schedule will help the New Unit-Commissioner provide good service to the New Unit as well as help him/her “lead the target”. The best practice is to take a calendar and mark significant dates like the unit’s re-charter deadline, JTE, etc. on it and fill in around it with the other activities outlined in all three of those documents. A calendar that is tailored for each unit served is needed.

Frequently a New Unit needs additional help. While “This is Scouting” is great training, in reality there is just too much information to take in at once. The New Unit-Commissioner may see that the leadership needs a refresher training in the area of Finance or Membership Growth (recruitment), Advancement or additional Leader Training. The New Unit-Commissioner should make these needs known to the District by contacting his/her ADC or DC who will pass it along to the District Committee. Remember, the New Unit-Commissioner is an advocate for that new unit with the district. While the New Unit-Commissioner could probably provide this training, it is important that the District fulfill those functions. The interaction between the unit and the district will strengthen both the unit and the district.



The Unit Service Plan enables new unit-commissioners to fulfill their mission to help the new unit better serve more youth through Scouting. And in the process, it will enable the retention of the unit and help it achieve its Journey to Excellence objectives.

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

The functions of all unit commissioners should be as simple as possible. This is particularly true for new unit-commissioners. While they specialize in developing and strengthening new units, their four primary areas of responsibility are the same as for all unit commissioners:

- Supporting unit growth in the Journey to Excellence criteria
- Linking district committee resources to the unit
- Visiting units and logging the visits into the Unit Visit Tracking System (UVTS)
- Supporting on-time charter renewal

Developing and executing a Unit Service Plan touches **every** metric we currently use to help New Unit-Service continually improve **and it also touches** every metric currently used to help New Units continually improve.

It truly is a better way to provide Unit Service to new units!



Journey to Excellence is the tool we use to continuously improve the quality of the program delivered to the youth we serve through Scouting. As a result, it's not surprising that the elements of Journey to Excellence is embedded in the designs of both the Unit Service Plan and Commissioner Tools.

New Unit-Commissioners need to encourage unit leaders to accept the *collaborative* assessment concept, and that participation in the Journey to Excellence is valuable. But new unit-commissioners who have established a good relationship with their unit's leaders will likely find agreement that providing a quality program helps attract and retain youth *and adults*; they'll likely find those leaders open to discussions of retention, recruiting, advancement, camping and so on, all of which are elements of our Journey to Excellence.

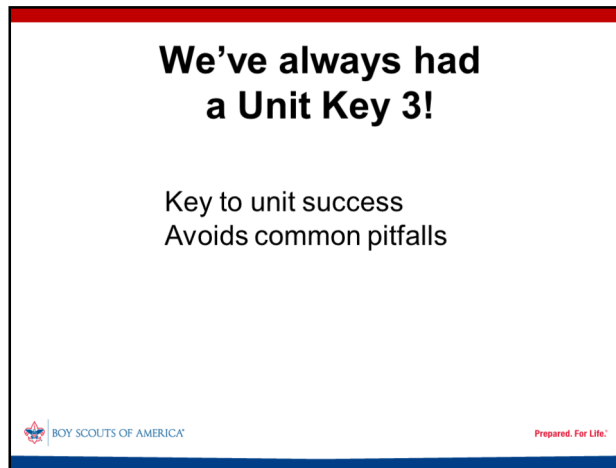
The focus of the Unit Service Plan and Commissioner Tools is *continuous improvement*. That is also the focus of our Journey to Excellence, and by limiting assessments and action plans to the elements of Scouting we hope to improve, rather than a score to be achieved, more leaders are likely to be attracted to assessing unit strengths and needs and developing action plans that will result in improving the quality of the program delivered to the youth the unit serves.

Unit Key 3

The Unit Key 3 consists of:

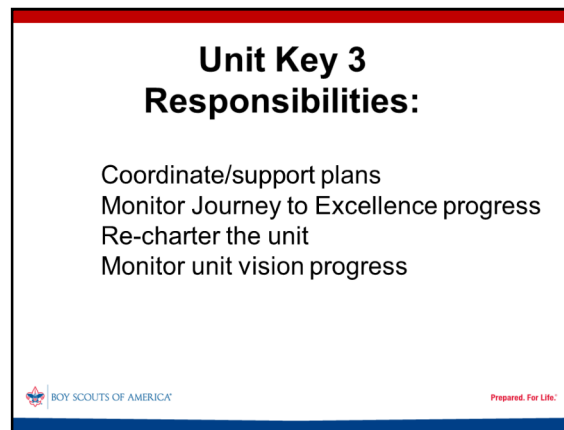
Chartered Organization Representative
Unit Leader
Unit Committee Chair

The Unit Key 3 is comprised of the Chartered Organization Representative, the Unit Leader and the Unit Committee Chair. They meet once a month just like a District or Council Key 3. The purpose is to strengthen the relationship between the Chartered Organization and the unit and to oversee the operation of the unit. They are concerned with being on target for Journey to Excellence goals, identifying trouble spots and anticipating what's next. The new unit-commissioner meets regularly with the Unit Key 3 to help keep them aware of what they need to prepare for the Leader's meetings and Committee meetings.



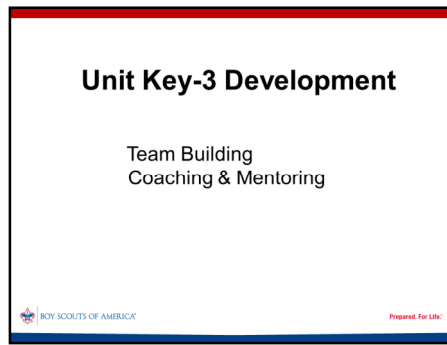
Key 3 is a new term when applied to a unit—but the truth is, we've had Key 3's at every level of Scouting. And just like it is successful at those levels, it will be a key to a unit's success as well.

A working key 3 can avoid common retention pitfalls such as boring meetings and disorganized leadership.



They have several specific responsibilities, most of them geared to long-term success of the unit.

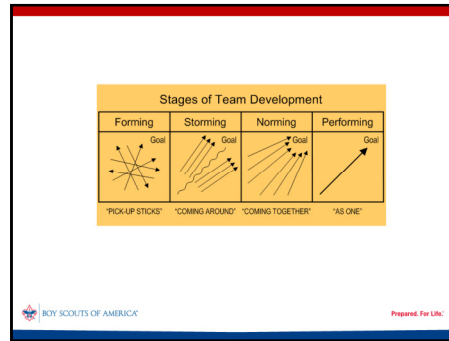
They insure that all the necessary coordination is done to support the plans of the unit. They share concerns, successes and failures and reviews them to find ways to improve. The unit key 3 keeps track of unit progress in the journey to excellence. The also insure that charter renewal is accomplished on time.



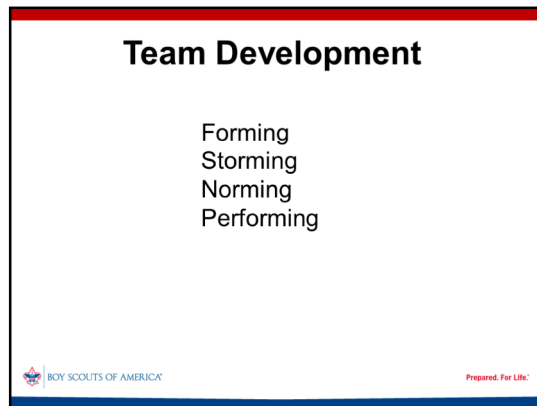
As a New Unit-Commissioner, you will be helping to develop the unit key 3 into a high performing team. You may recall from Wood badge, the session on team development and the 4 stages that a team goes through in Bruce Tuckerman's model. Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing.



The goal of the new unit-commissioner is for the New Unit to become an independent High Performing Unit. Just like any group or team, the New Unit will move through the four stages of development (Norming, Storming, Forming and Performing). While the unit may eventually become a High Performing Unit on its own, the work of the new unit-commissioner will assist and accelerate that process. The new unit-commissioner will need to constantly be aware of which stage of development the Unit Key 3 is in and adjust his/her leadership style accordingly.



This is a simple graphic representation of the 4 stages of team development

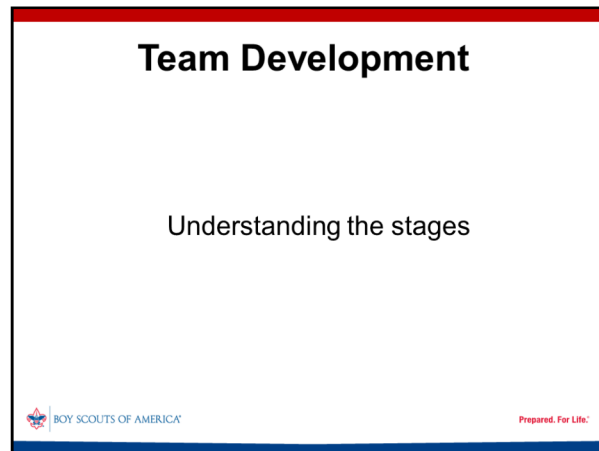


The First stage in a team's development is the **forming** stage. (pick up sticks). Team members come with high, unrealistic expectations. These expectations come with some anxiety about how they will fit in, how much they can trust others, and what demands will be placed on them. Team members are unclear about roles, goals, and timelines. In this stage there is high dependence on the leadership figure for purpose and direction. Behavior is usually tentative and polite. The major issues are personal well-being, acceptance and trust.

Stage 2 is **Storming**. (at odds) As the team gets some experience under it's belt, there is a dip in morale as team members experience a discrepancy between their initial expectations and reality. The difficulties in accomplishing the task and in working together lead to confusion and frustration, as well as a growing dissatisfaction with dependence on the leadership figure. Negative reactions to each other develop and subgroups form which polarize the team. The breakdown of communication and the inability to problem-solve result in lower trust. In some cases, a team member may leave the team rather than commit to resolving the conflict. The primary issues are power, control, and conflict.

The 3rd stage is **Norming**. (Coming Around). As the issues encountered in the 2nd stage are addresses and resolved, morale begins to rise. Task accomplishment and technical skills increase. There is increased clarity and commitment. Trust and cohesion grow. There is a willingness to share responsibility. The team starts thinking more in terms of "we" rather than "I". There is a tendency to avoid conflict for fear of losing the positive climate. This can slow progress and lead to less effective decisions.

The 4th stage is **Performing**. (as One). Productivity and morale is high. There is a sense of pride and excitement in being part of a high performing team. The focus is on performance. Purpose, roles, and goals are clear. Standards are high and there is a commitment to not only meet standards but to continuous improvement. Team members are proud of their work. Communication is open and leadership is shared.



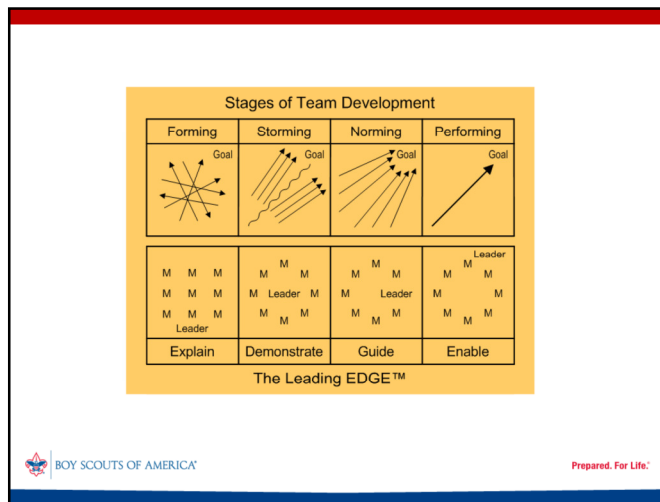
There are some real advantages to mastering the stages.

The stages enable us to anticipate what a team is likely to go through. This will help us as Commissioners prevent unit key 3 members from being surprised or depressed by various events such as disagreements during the “Storming” stage.

Our understanding of the stages enable us to use appropriate strategies to smooth the progress of a team as it evolves. For example, we can suggest a procedure for establishing ground rules for a team in the “Norming” stage.

Different teams proceed through the different stages at different speeds, a process that can be affected by the fact that team members may have varying rates of progress. Encourage team members to not make self-fulfilling prophecies about how long each stage may last. Also understand that sometimes a team can regress to an earlier stage. For example, team members may return to a previous stage if they discover that the team’s vision or membership has changed, such as when a significant number of new boys join the unit.

It is possible for a team to be in different stages with respect to different aspects of it’s vision. For example, the team may be in the storming stage with respect to implementing its final plan, even while it is in the performing stage with respect to efficiently generating ideas for the plan.



A team responds best to leadership tailored to the stage the team is experiencing at the moment. To provide an appropriate style of leadership, the leader must assess the level of enthusiasm and skill exhibited by the team with respect to a particular task.

Forming:

An effective leader of a team that is forming will do lots of careful **EXPLAINING** to help the team understand exactly what they are expected to do.

Storming:

Continue to make things clear by **DEMONSTRATING** to the team how to succeed.

Norming:

In the Norming stage you can help your team find success by giving team members lots of freedom to act on their own, but being ready to provide **GUIDANCE** (coaching) when a little help is needed.

Performing:

A leader **ENABLES** team members to make decisions on their own and to keep progressing toward completion of the task. To **enable** the team you must provide access to relevant information and necessary resources.

Regression: Teams don't always move smoothly from one stage to the next. It doesn't always move forward. It can find itself back at an earlier stage.

Identify the current stage of team development and select the appropriate leadership style.



We need to realize that when we accept the position of unit commissioner to a new unit, people will be looking up to us. We have the responsibility to listen to them, to pay attention to them, and to attempt to understand what it is they need and want. We also have a responsibility to convey our values through our actions. We must be willing to live by the standards that we are expecting others to uphold.

A key skill in this role is listening. Honest listening is at the heart of building a trusting relationship that can benefit all parties.

Sometimes you will feel the need to fill what you perceive as a leadership void – to jump in immediately and take charge of a situation before you understand what is really going on or what sort of leadership the people involved really need. To lead well, invest energy in listening so that you can assess the situation, figure out what is really missing, and then figure out how to fulfill that need. So, an important rule to remember might be: “Don’t just do something! Stand There”.



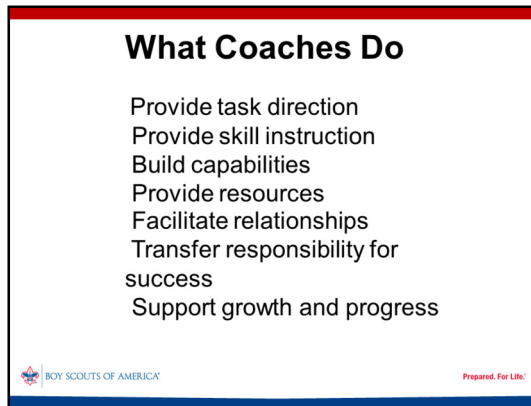
These terms are often used interchangeably, but in fact they have distinct differences.

Coach

A coach is someone who develops skills and capabilities in another person or in a group of people (a team). Coaching is a leadership behavior and a skill. It can take the form of discussion, lecture, critique, or guided practice. It's generally ongoing and is often a "formalized relationship" or a teaching/learning process. The key concept that separates coaching from other leadership styles is letting go and enabling success. As individual capabilities grow, a coach may become a mentor to facilitate growth in an individual, or in the Performing stage stand aside as a team resource.

Mentor

A mentor is an experienced Scouter who becomes a trusted guide and counselor of a less experienced Scouter. A mentor may be assigned as the new unit-commissioner is and it is hoped that you can build a relationship with your new team that is trusting and caring.



Provide Task direction.

Be familiar with the New Unit retention guide. Make sure the team knows what to do, when to do it, and how to do it.

Skill Instruction.

Your familiarity with how units operate will be a big asset to the new unit key 3. You can help with planning financing and recruiting both you and adults. Be versed in how units can build recruiting lists and communication tools.

Build capabilities.

Your assistance in program planning will help units put together a program that brings people back.

Provide resources

Know who the key players are on the district committee. These people will be valuable aids to the unit. Being able to explain JTE, on line advancement, recharter etc. enables you to make sure the unit gets to that 3rd recharter.

Facilitate Relationships.

During meetings, listen and guide, don't take over. Offer to help build the agenda. Don't appear to be a checker-upper. Commissioners are there to assist and guide, like good friends. First impressions are very important with a new unit.

Coaching Tips

Listen
Supply Energy
Influence; don't control
Recognize what is right and wrong
Recognize success and value differences
Evolve with the team's life cycle

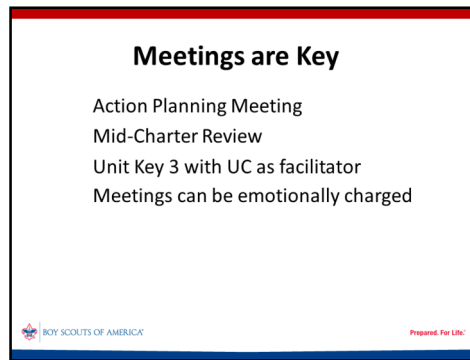
What Mentors Do

Advise, support, and provide guidance
Facilitate understanding of
environment and culture
Instill attitudes
Aid in retention
Provide trusted counsel

Mentoring Tips

- Provide a nonthreatening environment
- Build trust early
- Be a good listener
- Share personal experience
- Make suggestions.
 - Specific problems
 - Getting things accomplished

**It takes a District to
support a New Unit!**



Commissioner: The meetings are the Key to Success for the unit. They should be no stranger to the Unit commissioner. The Collaborative Assessment Meeting takes place around charter renewal time and the unit should also have another meeting six months before charter renewal to check progress toward JTE goals. Both meetings are very similar in nature and the Unit Commissioner has a critical role to play. This can be an emotionally charged meeting—be prepared.



The new unit-commissioner can arrange for additional supplemental training for the new unit leaders. Sessions should be topic-based and Cover topics that are not covered or covered in detail in position specific training.

This training should be delivered primarily at District level by members of District Committee and Commissioner Staff. As we said earlier “it takes a district!”

Deliver topics individually (30 minutes or less)

Presented on a rotating basis with unit program cycle in mind

Or all sections could be delivered at a District/Council training event

Additional Recommended Commissioner Training

Wood Badge

Latest training for type of unit served

District Operations training

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Wood Badge—particularly STAFFING Wood Badge as a Troop Guide will give the new unit-commissioner a real feel for his/her role as advisor to the unit. It also will provide information on characteristics of each stage of team development and appropriate leadership styles for that stage.

The New BSA is changing so fast that it is hard to keep up with all the program changes. A refresher course could be very helpful.

Unit Key 3 is a new concept in the BSA. By reviewing the information on District Key 3, the new unit-commissioner should be well prepared to assist the Unit Key 3.

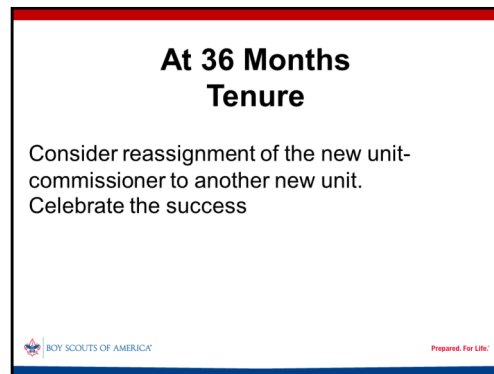
Resources

New Unit Retention Plan
Fieldbook for Commissioners
Administration of Commissioner
Service Manual
Council Commissioner Service Manual
District/Council Operations
Wood Badge



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These are resources that a new unit-commissioner can employ to provide the best service possible to the new unit.



At 36 months tenure, it's likely that the unit has become a High Performing Unit. It will be important for the Unit Key 3 and the new unit-commissioner to consider asking for a new commissioner who serves units with greater than 36 months tenure. If both agree they are ready for a change, the new unit-commissioner can be reassigned to a new unit and the unit could then benefit from a fresh perspective. The Unit Self-Assessment will help determine this. Occasionally there is an impending event that might delay the transference of the new unit-commissioner. For example, if the unit has not had a leadership change—and it looks like there might be one shortly, the new unit-commissioner might want to stay to be sure that baton is passed smoothly.

Celebrate the presentation of that charter marking 36 months tenure. The unit has accomplished what most units do not. This should be a district celebration

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