
INTRODUCTION TO UNIT SERVICE

PURPOSE OF SCOUTING

Scouting's purpose for the youth of America is character development, citizenship training, and mental and physical fitness. The mission of the BSA is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.

CHARTER CONCEPT

The Scouting program reaches youth through many community organizations. They include religious institutions; PTAs; service clubs; civic organizations; farm groups; fraternal organizations; groups of citizens; schools; and business, industrial, trade, and professional organizations. The Boy Scouts of America enters into a unique working association with a community organization that adopts the program and is chartered to operate its Scouting units (packs, troops, teams, crews, and posts).

THE CHARTERED ORGANIZATION'S ROLE

Chartered organizations have three principal responsibilities:

- Provide an adequate, safe meeting place.
- Provide dedicated, capable adult leadership of good moral character.
- Adhere to the policies and guidelines of the Boy Scouts of America.

THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL

A council and its districts have four major functions; membership/relationships, finance, quality program, and unit service. The order in which the functions are listed is not meant to suggest the order of importance, but the natural interrelationship and flow of the functions. If one function suffers from lack of attention, all the work of the council suffers. Unit service, of course, is what commissioner service is all about. How a council operates is described in the booklet, *The Council*. <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/mission/pdf/33071.pdf>

TRADITIONAL UNIT ORGANIZATION

Unit organization begins with the chartered organization and extends the program of Scouting to youth in Cub Scout packs, Scouts BSA troops, Venturing crews, Explorer Posts and Sea Scout Ships.

The chartered organization appoints a chartered organization representative (COR) to coordinate all unit operations within it, represent the organization to the Scouting district, and

serve as a voting member of the local council. The organization selects a unit committee which screens, selects and supports unit leaders to work directly with youth.

DISTRICTS

To bring the Scouting program closer to each chartered organization and its units, the local council divides itself into smaller areas called “districts”. Every district has its own commissioner staff and district committee. How a district operates is described in the manual, *The District*. <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/mission/pdf/33070.pdf>

UNIT SERVICE

There is only one council service to a unit that is constant – and that is the friendly personal help given by the unit commissioner. This person must be available to offer advice, program suggestions, and to support unit leaders.

Commissioners are available to help units better serve more youth through Scouting. A unit is the basic structure operated by a chartered organization to deliver the programs of the Boy Scouts of America to youth members. The BSA works with and through the chartered organization to serve youth. It is important that the chartered organization and its units be served effectively with the guidance of a commissioner.

Unless Scouting units are strong and efficient, the program won’t attract or retain scouts or adult volunteers. No matter how well organized the council and the district, the program delivery system stalls or fails with the weak units.

CONCEPT OF UNIT SERVICE

The concept of unit service focuses on the unit. The commissioner’s specific mission is to keep units operating at maximum efficiency so that they can deliver a good program to a growing youth membership.

Today’s commissioners are results-oriented rather than procedures-oriented. They are successful in their mission when units continue to operate, units regularly accept new youth, and units effectively deliver the ideals of Scouting to their members.

Commissioners are involved with carrying programs to the unit, and their main concern is to develop strength within the unit operation. Encouraging unit leaders to attend Roundtables will give the adults resources and ideas for implementation in their unit.

In other words, the concept calls for commissioners to develop the program capability in a unit.

ADEQUATE NUMBER OF TRAINED COMMISSIONERS

Commissioners must be sufficient in number to fill the needs of the council and district. They must be trained and guided in their efforts.

Unit commissioners are accountable for the success and retention of their assigned units. There is no perfect formula for the numbers of commissioners or the frequency of unit contacts. Numbers and methods should be determined by the needs of the units to be served.

The commissioner structure of the district must also be dictated by the needs of the council and the district and the units to be served.

UNIT SERVICE 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.

UNIT SERVICE VISION

Every member of the BSA has a great Scouting experience.

UNIT SERVICE OBJECTIVES

Commissioners provide units with meaningful service that delivers Scouting ideals to youth, brings about membership growth, and ensures on-time charter renewal. Commissioners will focus on the following five primary areas:

- 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.

UNIT SERVICE GOALS

- Enable an increased number of units.
- Enable the retention rate of units.
- Enable implementation of a unit service plan through collaborative detailed assessments and an increased number of significant unit contacts.

UNIT SERVICE METHODS

- The *Unit Performance Guide* methodology
- New member coordinators
- Unit key 3
- The unit service plan
- Journey to excellence
- My.scouting tools (including commissioner tools)
- Continuous recruiting
- Assigning resources to greatest needs

ROLES THE COMMISSIONER PLAYS

A commissioner plays several roles. Including 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 himself or herself 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**” or a paramedic. 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 paramedic 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. Unhealthy units are categorized with priority needs and called *Units at Risk*.

Quick action is needed for units at risk:

- Unit not meeting
- Unit with no leader
- Unit with no committee

- Unit with no new members
- Unit conflict with the chartered organization
- New unit leader lacks training
- Unit with weak leadership

The commissioner is a **teacher**. Commissioners 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 roundtable commissioners have additional opportunities to teach in a “classroom” like setting at monthly roundtables.

The commissioner is a **coach**. As a Scouting coach, you will help guide units in solving their own problems. Coaching is the best role 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. Commissioners provide them with different “plays” that might be the right one for them to move ahead or succeed at solving a problem.

COMMISSIONER CONTACTS

There should be meaningful contact between a commissioner and the adult leadership of assigned unit(s) as often as necessary (but at least monthly). These contacts help build a relationship with the unit, help the commissioner know the condition of the unit(s) and to provide tangible help to the unit’s leadership. Contacts should be recorded in *Commissioner Tools*.

COMMISSIONER TOOLS

Commissioner Tools is one of the applications in the my.scouting suite of applications. Commissioner Tools has the functionality to capture the strengths and needs of a unit. Commissioners can schedule collaborative unit assessments and record the results of those meetings with the key 3 of units. A unit service plan can be created, and progress can be recorded. Roundtable attendance is recorded in Commissioner tools. For more information see the manual module entitled Technology for Commissioners. <https://www.scouting.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Technology-for-Commissioners-FINAL.pdf>

UNIT ASSESSMENT AND UNIT SERVICE PLAN

At least two times per year the commissioner should do a collaborative detailed assessment with the unit to determine its strengths and needs. Using the appropriate unit assessment form, the commissioner and the key 3 of the unit (unit leader, committee chair and the

chartered organization representative) complete the assessment form together. The form is divided into the components used in the Journey to Excellence scorecard. From this assessment, a Unit Service Plan can be developed. For more information see the manuals module entitled The Unit Service Plan.

<https://www.scouting.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/The-Unit-Service-Plan-FINAL.pdf>

DISTRICT COMMITTEE

The district committee is composed of several operating committees that will be called upon to provide specialized advancement or camping help for units, organize new units, train leaders, and conduct events such as camporees. A district has four main functions; Membership, Finance; Program and Unit Service. Effective unit service should include the specialized help of district operating committees. Providing service to specific units is the responsibility of all district volunteers and professionals. It is important that commissioners call on operating committee members to help whenever needed. This is referred to as *Linking District Resources*. How the district committee operates is outlined in the manual *The District*.

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/mission/pdf/33070.pdf>

CHARTER RENEWAL FOR UNITS / REVIEW JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE

On-time annual renewal for all packs, troops, crews, ships and posts is the goal of a good commissioner staff. Charter renewal is the process of renewing the membership in each unit. This can be done through *Internet Rechartering* or through the traditional paper method.

In preparing the charter renewal, the commissioner reviews the unit's Journey to Excellence progress using the JTE Scorecard tracking workbook, and the JTE Guidebook for the unit. This is an excellent time to do a collaborative detailed assessment. The charter review meeting and the charter presentation highlight a year of work with a pack, troop, crew, ship or post.

LEADER RECOGNITION

People who work directly with youth are the most important adults in Scouting. Find ways to frequently recognize them for their good work.

COMMISSIONER TRAINING

A commissioner will learn the best way to carry out their assignment is through commissioner training courses offered through the BSA Learn Center, personal coaching sessions, commissioner staff meetings, colleges of commissioner science, commissioner conferences, and National commissioner conferences.

Commissioners will create a learning plan in the BSA Learn Center. Based on their position, learning plans are suggested. This can be accessed by creating or using the commissioner's existing my.scouting.org account. Go to my.scouting.org and login. Select the BSA Learn Center, and select Commissioners. Once there, you will be presented with the Commissioner Basic Training for your job. This course will give you basic information on what the role of the unit commissioner is and how to carry out your responsibilities to better serve the unit(s) you have been assigned.

ORIENTATION OR ONBOARDING

Onboarding is a process that gets a commissioner up to speed quickly. Onboarding Progress Sheets are available when you complete the basic training. These should be completed as part of the training and are necessary to receive recognition awards.

SUMMARY

- Scouting works in cooperation with chartered organizations.
- Scouting has a program for Lion Scouts, Tiger Cubs, Cub Scouts, Webelos Scouts, Scouts BSA, Venturing Scouts, Sea Scouts, and Explorer clubs and posts.
- Chartered organizations provide leaders and meeting places.
- Commissioners provide constant service to units with meaningful contacts as a friend and as a helper.
- Commissioners link district and other resources to units when they need help.
- Commissioners act on priority unit needs.
- Commissioner help facilitate on-time charter renewal of units.
- Commissioners should encourage unit leaders to attend Roundtables.

RESOURCES

The Council - <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/mission/pdf/33071.pdf>

The District - <https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/mission/pdf/33070.pdf>

Social Media

[Commissioners of the Boy Scouts of America](#) "Official" Facebook page

[Commissioner Training – BSA](#) Facebook page

[BSA Roundtable Commissioners](#) Facebook page

[Commissioner Service \(Boy Scouts of America\)](#) Facebook page

[Commissioners of the Boy Scouts of America](#) LinkedIn page

[Scout Commissioner Corner](#) Yahoo! group

BSA Learn Center <https://my.scouting.org/>

Commissioner Website <https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/>

Commissioner Newsletter <https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/newsletter/>

Cub Scouting <https://www.scouting.org/programs/cub-scouts/>

Scouts BSA <https://www.scouting.org/programs/boy-scouts/>

Venturing <https://www.scouting.org/programs/venturing/>

Exploring <https://www.exploring.org/>

Sea Scouts <https://www.scouting.org/programs/sea-scouts/>