

## Mentoring Skills and Program Development

**Lesson Objective:** Mentoring is a vital program for CAP. Group or wing level leaders, should not only focus on the need to develop their mentoring skills but also focus on mentoring programs.

### Desired Learning Outcomes (DLO):

1. Analyze member strengths and weaknesses to leverage available opportunities for growth.
2. Be able to analyze the needs of the unit (group or wing) and assist members in advancing so they can help meet the needs of the organization and sustain their interests.
3. Demonstrate thorough understanding of available tools required for effective mentoring for individuals and groups.
4. Understand why leaders need to advocate for mentoring programs.
5. Ensure mentoring programs are in place to grow and develop members for group and/or wing level service in CAP.

**Scheduled Lesson Time:** 60 minutes

### Introduction

Mentoring is a great way our members can share information and grow their relationships with one another. Just like planting a tree, it will take the right kind of environment, perseverance, and patience to grow over time. Mentoring covers a very broad swath of things that a person could be seeking out from their mentor. The list below is not all-inclusive.

- Candid information and advice
- Strategic view
- Guidance
- Honest appraisal of capabilities
- Developing a “vision”
- Assistance in making “good” choices
- Information on opportunities available/possible help in defining and reaching goals
- Benefit of Mentor’s experiences: what did and did not work
- Providing advice on requesting applying for future assignments
- Non-attribution, honest discussions about tough issues
- Assistance in formulating a cohesive plan
- Idea stimulation, insight to career

Mentoring is a tool that leaders implement to help their organizations thrive and succeed.

### 1. Analyze member strengths and weaknesses to leverage available opportunities for growth.

When mentoring an individual, the first thing you do upon engaging in and agreeing to be a mentor for another member is to assess them. This is to establish a baseline of where the member is at. It should be as holistic as possible. This allows you to establish where you and the member’s efforts should be directed on a specific area. You might recall a recommended tool for this is the CAP Form 40. This covers eight different areas and allows for additional comments if you want to expand on something not listed. It is important to compare your evaluation to what the member sees to ensure your vision and path aligns. Once you know what members would like to do and where they need to grow, you can offer them opportunities. Leaders often hear about opportunities others do not or may not see the value in. Opportunities

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are a great way to grow members. It should always be up to the member if he or she agrees to take an opportunity. We should never make a member feel guilty or “twist their arm” to take an opportunity. Leaders offer opportunities and members decide if those opportunities are a good fit at the time. We can encourage people, but we should not cross the line into pushing people. Forcing people into situations for growth often makes them resistant or overwhelms them. The member and the organization can lose in this situation.

### **2. Be able to analyze the needs of the unit (group or wing) and assist members in advancing so they can help meet the needs of the organization and sustain their interests.**

What do we do to analyze the needs of our organizations? We look to our goals and our strategic plan. When one looks at the goals or the plan, determine what members and what skills will be needed to accomplish the objectives. Goals without members are just words on a page. Members bring life to initiatives. Analyze the members and skills available in the unit. Your goal is to address the gap in members and skills between what you have and what you need to accomplish your goals. Depending on the results of your analysis, you will have some new goals. If you do not have members with the skills you need, you may need to recruit or grow a member with those skills. Consider telling the unit what the needs are in the future and why. Members like to understand why they should engage. Help them understand how they can help CAP. Make sure you take timelines into consideration. If it takes two years to earn a rating, then the goal may have to shift. Another option might be to recruit some help from another unit. Another unit may have members with the skills you seek. Regardless, the goal is to build the bench and ensure that the unit has the personnel needed to accomplish the mission and achieve the goals set out for it. As leaders, we can become very engaged in accomplishing the mission and not think about the future or building the bench. When we do this, we imperil the future because there is no guarantee members will be there to support the initiative, the unit, or the goal once the current members move on. It's a good idea to analyze how the unit is staffed and ensure there are members to cover when another volunteer is ill, working, or otherwise unavailable. Building the bench is an important duty for leaders. Mentoring will help you grow the members for the bench. No matter what the needs of the organization, we must consider the desires of members also. Forcing members to serve in positions they do not enjoy will not benefit the member nor the organization. Members must be motivated to serve and enjoy what they do!

Speaking of enjoying what you do, who is your mentor? If you do not have a mentor and are not growing your skillset, you need to find one. Leaders need mentors to help them just like new members need mentors. Mentors counsel us, advise us, and help us see things we cannot. What opportunities could a mentor help you identify? Are you growing weary in your current role? Have you prepared yourself for another role? Do you have a back up specialty? Are you prepared to apply for a command position or a higher level opportunity? Mentoring can help you in all these ways.

### **3. Demonstrate thorough understanding of available tools required for effective mentoring for individuals and groups.**

Once you have identified who needs mentored and who will do the mentoring, the next step is to ensure they have the necessary tools. The first tool is training. There are mentoring topics in each level of the Education and Training Program. In Level I, we discussed the importance of

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mentoring. In Level II, we focused on how to be mentored, the benefits, and what to do if working with a mentor didn't work out. In Level 3, we introduced mentoring programs. In Level IV, we focus on analyzing mentoring programs and leadership. In Level V, we focus on developing mentoring skills and programs. In Level V, we focus on mentoring program strategies. We also need skills that other members need. The skills depend on the level of the mentee and what you have to share. How well versed in eServices are you? Do you know how to enter a specialty track rating, Safety Incident, CI/SUI responses, new website address for a unit, check a cadet for promotion eligibility, or check a CAP drivers license? How about WIMRs? Do you know where to release a flight or log an aircraft as overdue? Can you show a new member how to successfully navigate [gocivilairpatrol.com](http://gocivilairpatrol.com)? If you answered yes to all the above, you are equipped to help any member on their path. If there are some missed areas, then link up with a fellow member to get up to speed in the area you need so you are better equipped to help your mentee.

What do we need other than training? In addition to training, we need guidance. CAP has several publications that cover mentoring. Each of the specialty track guides is well suited to mentoring, for example. We also have pamphlets that focus on mentoring and a section on the Education and Training webpage devoted to mentoring. The Director of Mentoring provides resources and opportunities for mentors and mentoring. Check out the tools available! You can also do a web search for mentoring programs and find good resources for your mentoring tool box. The group or wing you work with also needs a mentoring program. How do you connect mentors with mentees? When do you give them time to work? How do they meet? How do you follow up on program effectiveness? These are all parts of a good mentoring program.

### **4. Understand why leaders need to advocate for mentoring programs.**

The last element required for a successful mentoring program is command emphasis. Members do what leaders value. If leaders do not value mentoring, members will not value mentoring. If we don't provide time and resources, mentoring won't occur and our organization will suffer. There is nothing more heartbreaking for a leader than to reach the end of his or her term and to realize that a vision or an initiative we have championed may not live after us because we failed to build a succession plan or inspire our followers to carry it on. Great plans are abandoned when we do not inspire the next generation to pick up the mantle and follow in our footsteps. Do you want to see your efforts continue? If so, build the bench and ensure the next generation is ready to build on your success!

### **5. Ensure mentoring programs are in place to grow and develop members for group and/or wing level service in CAP.**

This is the hands-on portion of the lesson. You are now being tasked to understand, implement, assess, and improve a mentoring program at your echelon. If no program exists, congratulations as you get to build one. Make a plan. A good program cannot exist if it's not in writing. Document your program. Promote it.

If you have an existing mentoring program. Your task will be assess it for improvement. Do you have enough mentors available? Where could you find more? What topics do mentors need to be teaching members? How can you better guide their efforts? Do you give them goals and direction? Do you value them? Do you celebrate member successes? These are all questions that can help you build a better program. A good program builds the future of your unit and CAP.

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### **Lesson Summary and Closure**

Mentoring is critical for CAP. It develops the bench so we can accomplish our missions and plan for the future. We cannot accomplish our goals and our missions without well trained members. For the unit to find success long term, it needs to develop new members and mid-career members. We all have a next step in our leadership journey. We have to develop mentors in every program and every specialty. Depth in staff positions helps us have a stable, productive future when the unexpected happens. Mentoring as an individual is a duty for leaders. Having a function mentoring program is also important.

### **ASSIGNMENT:**

Assess your own situation as it relates to mentoring. Do you have a mentor? If yes, is the mentor effective? Are there skills you would like to grow? What skills? What opportunities would you like to have in CAP? What do you need to do today to be prepared for next year? The next five years? Do you need additional mentors? Where can you find them?

Next, analyze the mentoring program at the group or wing. Is there an organized program? Why or why not? Is mentoring being effectively implemented? Why or why not? What can you do to improve mentoring and build the bench? If you do not have a mentoring program, create a plan for a mentoring program. Share the plan with an appropriate leader.