

*Parent's Guide  
to  
Civil Air Patrol*



Prepared by  
Wisconsin Wing  
Civil Air Patrol

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Congratulations! If you're reading this pamphlet, it probably means that your son or daughter is either considering membership in or has already joined Civil Air Patrol. From our perspective, we think joining CAP is one of the best decisions a young person can make.

Our Cadet program is one of the missions assigned to us by the U.S. Congress. In addition to inland search and rescue and aerospace education, Civil Air Patrol is tasked with helping America's young people develop character and leadership ability, learn about emerging technology and share quality time doing work that matters.

CAP's Cadet Program has more than 27,000 members, ages 12 to 21, throughout the nation. Parents of cadets credit our program with communicating to their children the importance of personal integrity, accountability, self-discipline and respect for others.

Because CAP includes both cadet and senior members, this can be an outstanding volunteer activity for your whole family. You can work together to serve your local community, learn new skills and share a common commitment to making our nation stronger and more secure.

We realize that you may not be familiar with the Civil Air Patrol, its mission and how your son or daughter actually participates in CAP. So, we've prepared the following list of answers to some of the most common questions parents and guardians may have. Of course, we also encourage you to meet with your child's unit Commander or Recruiting and Retention Officer to discuss any additional questions you may have.

Let's tackle the toughest question first ...

**Question #1: Will my son or daughter be obligated to join the military once they complete the CAP Cadet program?**

Answer: **No, absolutely not.** CAP is not a recruiting arm of any of the branches of the military. Period. That said, many of our Cadets do go on to enlist in the military after high school, or join ROTC in college. But, that is by their choice.

We might also add that many of our finest Cadets go on to attend one of the service academies, including the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs as well as West Point and Annapolis. Each year, at least 10 percent of the freshman class at the U.S. Air Force Academy is made up of former CAP cadets. Also, the leadership experience gained in becoming a senior CAP Cadet often is one of the deciding factors in college and academy admissions.

**Question #2: Why do CAP members wear military uniforms?**

**Answer:** Civil Air Patrol is the official Auxiliary of the United States Air Force. We have chosen to wear the Air force "blues" and camouflage utility uniform to signify our affiliation with the USAF. In addition to the uniform, CAP does follow a military model in our unit and command structure, as well as in Cadet and Senior (adult) ranks. We believe this model develops self-discipline and teaches pride in appearance.

**Question #3: Wait a minute ... you said my kid's not "in the military," but CAP's part of the Air Force. What's the connection?**

Answer: Congress made CAP the official auxiliary of the Air Force in 1948 because both organizations are affiliated with aviation and technology. This was a fairly natural fit. BUT, it is important that you understand Congress also prohibited CAP from serving in a combatant role, and instead mandated CAP to focus its energies in three areas or "missions":

- **Aerospace Education**
- **Cadet Programs**
- **Emergency Services**
  - > Inland search and rescue
  - > Disaster relief

**Question #4: Will my child get to fly?**

Answer: Yes. Cadets complete an orientation flight with a licensed pilot or certified flight instructor as part of their initial membership year. If they have an interest, Cadets can go on to complete formal flight training to become a glider or powered aircraft pilot.

**Question #5: What will my son or daughter learn in CAP?**

Answer: As we already mentioned in the introduction, the goal of the CAP Cadet program is to help young people develop character, leadership ability, personal integrity, accountability, self-discipline and respect for others.

As your son or daughter progresses through CAP's multi-level cadet training, they'll learn the principles of aviation and aerospace flight, and learn about rocketry and physics through hands-on experiments. Yes, they'll even get a taste of military life, and learn about military history, customs, drills and inspection. Your child could end up in one of the top squads in the nation if they advance to the elite competition for CAP cadets, National Cadet Competition.

CAP offers national cadet encampments with activities in emergency services, engineering, technology, physical fitness, teambuilding and flight training. They can even visit foreign countries through the International Air Cadet Exchange.

**Question #6: What are the phases of the "multi-level training"?**

Answer: The Cadet Program itself is divided into five phases – the Motivation Phase, and four primary phases (the Learning Phase, the Leadership Phase, the Command Phase, and the Executive Phase) – dedicated phases for learning and growth. The Motivation Phase introduces the prospective cadet to the requirements, procedures and goals of CAP.

After the Motivation Phase, the next four phases use aerospace education, leadership, physical fitness, and moral leadership to instill and develop qualities of leadership and responsibilities in the cadet members. The entire cadet program is oriented toward an activities program held within the individual squadron setting. Activities selected by a squadron for its program are designed to meet the individual member's need.

Throughout the cadet program, from the first achievement through to the completion of the program; emphasis is placed on individual and group study, instruction and attainment. Each of

the four phases emphasizes the four program areas mentioned above as well as individual unit activities, such as drill team, color guard, model rocketry, and emergency services training. As cadets progress, they earn ribbons, awards, and increased grade, rewarding their commitment and achievement in the program. Each phase becomes more challenging and builds on what the cadet has already learned.

**Phase I, the Learning Phase** is just that: cadets learn to function in a military-type environment. They learn to march, wear their uniform properly, learn the principles of followership, and begin to learn about the aerospace environment.

**In Phase II, the Leadership Phase**, cadets become more involved in the program. They may enter leadership roles in their squadron and attend a CAP encampment, which is designed to give cadets an introduction to the Air Force culture and hands on leadership and aerospace training in a team environment. It is at the conclusion of this phase that they receive the first major award for achievement in the Cadet Program, the General Billy Mitchell Award.

**In Phase III, the Command Phase**, the cadet is expected to take on greater responsibility for activities and training within their squadron. They must assume a leadership position and mentor younger cadets in a variety of areas. In addition, they must also become knowledgeable in different staff areas, learning from their senior member counterparts in areas such as public affairs. This is in addition to continuing the activities they began in Phases I and II. At the conclusion of this phase, the cadet may receive the Amelia Earhart Award and go on to the final phase of cadet training.

The achievements in **Phase IV, the Executive Phase**, are designed to provide high-level leadership experiences to the individual cadet. When the cadet has completed the requirements for Phase IV, they will receive the General Ira C. Eaker Award and become eligible to test for the highest award for achievement in the Cadet Program, the General Carl A. Spaatz (pronounced: “spots”) Award.

The Spaatz Award is a comprehensive evaluation of all aspects of the cadet program phases. This exam is passed by less than one percent of the total cadet population. Once a cadet has passed the Spaatz examination, they are promoted to the highest grade in the program, cadet colonel. Most attend college and pursue aerospace careers; many have earned a pilot certificate; and all are advisors to those involved with conducting the cadet program. Spaatz cadets continue to improve themselves through applying what they have learned throughout the cadet program and assisting other cadets to excel.

#### **Questions #7: Who oversees Cadet meetings and activities?**

Answer: Each Cadet unit must have a minimum of at least three (3) adult leaders involved. This “depth of leadership” serves as a check and balance to ensure regulations and procedures are followed. All adult members of CAP – including Cadet leaders – must submit to fingerprinting and an FBI background check to guard against lapses in security and potentials for abuse.

In addition, all members – both youth and adults – must go through initial AND refresher training on CAP’s Cadet Protection Program. CAP is committed to doing everything reasonably possible to combat the potential for child abuse within our organization and to discourage our cadets from illegal use of alcohol and other drugs. CAP members are expected to avoid even the appearance of impropriety involving cadets and report suspected abuse immediately.

The Civil Air Patrol has “zero tolerance” for all forms of child abuse and drug abuse within our program. The protection of CAP cadets is our highest priority and we have taken steps to do our best to eliminate both child abuse and drug abuse from all CAP activities.

**Question #8 – What does it cost to enroll my son or daughter in Civil Air Patrol?**

Answer: Initial dues vary between the wings (states) and units. Costs for participation also depend on the activities a cadet may desire to attend. All CAP units and activities attempt to keep costs to a minimum to allow for maximum participation. The U.S. Air Force also contributes significant funding to the cadet program for uniforms to allow for maximum participation. Most CAP parents would attest that costs are minimal for the benefit received by their cadets. Please contact your local unit commander to find out the dues for your specific Cadet unit.

**Question #9 – What can I do to support my son’s or daughter’s CAP career?**

Answer: CAP leaders frequently convey their gratitude to the parents of our Cadets. That’s because we know the critical role they play. First and foremost: transportation ... we appreciate parents and guardians who take the time to drive their Cadet to meetings, training exercises, encampments and other activities. Second: We encourage you to take an active interest in your child’s advancement within the program by staying up to speed on his or her progress. Finally, think about getting involved yourself ... read on ...

**Question #10 – How can I get involved in Civil Air Patrol?**

Answer: Civil Air Patrol has many families that participate as a group, and we encourage adults to become involved in serving their fellow citizens through CAP. There are two categories of adult membership:

**Senior Members** take an active part in CAP by attending unit meetings, performing specific staff and operational duty assignments, take part in the training programs and exercises and other unit activities. Many licensed pilots join CAP in order to lend their skills and experience to various air operations related to our mission, such as search and rescue and disaster relief.

**Cadet Sponsor Member** is a membership category established to allow parents, grandparents and guardians of current CAP cadets to assist their unit’s cadet program by providing adult supervision, transportation, overnight chaperons, and any other CADET related tasks deemed necessary and proper by the unit commander. A cadet sponsor member is a financial supporter who maintains current membership through payment of annual dues, but only participates in a limited capacity.