CIVIL AIR PATROL

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE HANDBOOK

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Commander Quick Reference

Five Questions Before You Act

Before addressing a performance, conduct, or leadership concern, pause long enough to answer these five questions. They will help you determine whether to act directly, gather limited information, or stop and coordinate.

Is there an immediate Safety, Cadet Protection, or other reporting requirement?

First, determine whether anyone may be in danger. Always consider personnel safety first. Second, do CAP regulations require the concern to be reported? Complete required reporting before beginning routine corrective action. Do not delay the required report while attempting to resolve the matter yourself.

Is this a leadership issue or an investigative issue?

Commanders may clarify what was observed, identify the concern, and determine whether an immediate leadership response is appropriate. They should not conduct interviews, test competing accounts, or attempt to prove misconduct when the matter requires an authorized investigation or formal process. Know when fact-finding must stop and coordination must begin.

Have expectations been clearly communicated?

Before correcting someone for failing to meet a standard, determine whether the member reasonably understood what was expected. Consider whether the requirement was explained, whether the member had the training and resources to comply, and whether the standard has been applied consistently. If expectations were unclear, leadership may need to begin with instruction rather than discipline.

Have I talked to the member directly?

When appropriate, speak privately with the member before reaching conclusions or creating formal documentation. Explain the concern, listen to the member's perspective, clarify expectations, and identify what must change. Do not substitute secondhand reports, assumptions, or written correspondence for a leadership conversation. However, do not initiate that conversation when mandatory reporting, safety, Cadet Protection, or investigative requirements make direct engagement inappropriate.

Do I need to coordinate before proceeding?

Coordinate when the matter may involve mandatory reporting, protected activity, a complaint, retaliation concerns, legal issues, formal membership actions, or questions beyond your authority or experience. Seek advice early enough for it to shape the decision, not merely after an action has already been taken.

Authority & Scope

In This Section

- Why This Is Important
- Intent
- Scope
- Authority
- What This Handbook Does Not Do
- Regulatory Foundation and the Role of This Handbook
- Relationship with Other CAP Functions
- How to Use This Handbook
- Core Leadership Principles
- This Is Not a Linear Process
- Start With Leadership, Not Punishment
- Use Documentation to Support Fairness
- Know When Discretion Ends
- Use Professional Judgment

Why This Is Important

General Kenneth S. Wilsbach, the 24th Chief of Staff of the Air Force, wrote in his initial letter to the force:

> *"Our warrior culture is built on standards, technical excellence, accountability, and pride in our profession. Doing hard things together builds toughness and strengthens culture. Encourage your formations to lead boldly and take smart risks at all echelons. Whether in combat or in training, we will hold ourselves and each other to the highest expectations. Pride in your craft and in the team beside you is the foundation of our strength."*

While Civil Air Patrol is not a warfighting organization, his message carries real wisdom for the Air Force Auxiliary. We, too, must be ready to serve the nation with a dynamic cadet program, a strong aerospace education mission, and a fleet and force prepared for emergency services when called. Our Core Values of Integrity, Volunteer Service, Excellence, and Respect demand that we uphold standards, develop our people, and hold one another accountable. What we tolerate, we accept, and it becomes a new standard.

Progressive discipline supports a leader's responsibility to hold members accountable and uphold standards. It gives commanders a fair, consistent, and transparent way to correct behavior, reinforce expectations, and help members grow. It is not punitive by default; it is a leadership tool that protects our culture, our missions, our people, and our organization.

We also embrace “smart risk” by addressing concerning behavior before it creates greater risk, while taking pride in our service and in the teammates beside us. When we enforce standards with clarity and fairness, we strengthen the culture Gen. Wilsbach describes--one built on shared expectations, mutual trust, and pride in service. His words apply to us because excellence and accountability are as essential to CAP’s success as they are to the Total Force. Respect for one another requires holding others accountable.

Intent

This handbook aims to strengthen command leadership across Civil Air Patrol by helping commanders act earlier, more consistently, and with greater confidence when challenging situations arise.

Many leadership challenges fall into a gray area, too serious to ignore, but not yet appropriate for formal discipline. This handbook is designed to help commanders navigate that space, encouraging ethical, proportional intervention that corrects behavior, clarifies expectations, and preserves dignity whenever possible.

Scope

This handbook is a leadership guide for Civil Air Patrol commanders. It supports early, clear, professional intervention before challenges escalate into formal discipline, complaints, or adverse actions.

The guidance applies across Civil Air Patrol leadership environments, including senior member and cadet programs, and is relevant at the squadron, group, wing, and region levels. It can also be used at activities. It addresses both performance-related and conduct-related issues, within the limits established by our regulations.

Special attention is given throughout this handbook to cadet environments. Commanders operating within the Cadet Program must account for developmental considerations, power imbalance, parental involvement, heightened duty of care, and mandatory reporting requirements. While this handbook addresses leadership principles applicable to both senior members and cadets, commanders must apply those principles in accordance with CAPR 60-1, which covers cadet conduct, progressive discipline, parental involvement, and administrative actions unique to the Cadet Program.

Authority

This handbook does not create new authority, expand existing powers, or replace Civil Air Patrol regulations. Everything described here is grounded in the authority that commanders already possess under current CAP directives. Its purpose is to help commanders exercise that authority earlier, more consistently, and more effectively to address challenging situations within their units and at events.

Civil Air Patrol regulations entrust commanders with broad responsibility for their units' health, discipline, and functioning. That responsibility is not limited to taking formal action after problems have escalated. Commanders are expected to lead proactively by addressing concerns early, before misunderstandings harden into misconduct or minor issues become organizational risks. Correcting volunteers can be one of the more challenging tasks commanders must tackle; however, correcting

behavior is also essential. Small issues grow into bigger challenges when we do not address them proactively.

At its core, command authority includes the responsibility to lead people, not merely manage processes. Commanders are charged with maintaining good order and discipline, ensuring compliance with CAP regulations, and fostering an environment where expectations are clearly understood and consistently reinforced. Early conversations, clear guidance, and timely intervention are fundamental expressions of command authority.

Regulations also emphasize resolving issues at the lowest appropriate level whenever possible. This does not mean ignoring problems or minimizing concerns. It requires judgment to select responses that are proportional, effective, and appropriate to the situation. Many issues can be corrected through counseling, clarification, or informal corrective action long before administrative or membership actions are warranted. Most people want to do the right thing, but may need to better understand our expectations.

What This Handbook Does Not Do

This handbook is intentionally limited in scope. It does not create new disciplinary authority, replace or supersede Civil Air Patrol regulations, or mandate specific outcomes in individual situations.

It does not establish investigative processes, direct commanders to initiate suspension or termination, lower regulatory thresholds for administrative or membership action, or encourage punitive responses where leadership correction or counseling is appropriate. Member rights, due process requirements, and appeal protections remain fully intact and must be applied in accordance with governing directives.

This handbook does not replace the roles or responsibilities of higher headquarters, Legal Officers, Inspectors General, Cadet Programs personnel, or other functional authorities. When an issue requires legal review, investigative handling, or program-specific oversight, commanders should continue to coordinate through the appropriate channels.

Above all, this handbook is not a substitute for command judgment. It provides structure, perspective, and best practices, but commanders remain responsible for fair, thoughtful, and proportionate decision-making in each case.

Regulatory Foundation and the Role of This Handbook

Civil Air Patrol regulations establish the legal and procedural framework for command authority, corrective action, and membership accountability. They define the actions commanders may take and the safeguards that govern those actions.

Specifically, CAP regulations:

- Establish command authority and responsibility at every level of the organization
- Direct commanders and members to resolve conflicts and complaints at the lowest appropriate level when circumstances allow

- Provide administrative tools that allow commanders to correct behavior short of membership termination, with defined limits and safeguards; and
- Define standards, due process requirements, and appeal protections associated with membership termination, including recognition that repeated minor incidents may constitute cause

While these regulations clearly define what commanders may do, they are not designed to teach how commanders should lead through issues as they emerge. They do not provide standardized guidance on early intervention, expectation-setting, documentation of concerns, or determining when informal leadership action is no longer sufficient.

As a result, commanders often encounter a practical gap between recognizing a problem and knowing how to address it appropriately before formal processes become necessary. This gap can lead to delayed action, inconsistency, or avoidable escalation to formal complaints and investigations.

This handbook exists to address that gap by providing leadership-focused, prevention-oriented guidance that supports sound judgment, effective communication, and proportional responses, fully aligned with existing regulations.

Relationship with Other CAP Functions

Commanders remain the primary decision-makers responsible for leadership, correction, and action within their units. While CAP functions provide essential expertise and advice, command responsibility cannot be delegated or deferred simply by involving other personnel; however, experienced leaders know staff inputs can be invaluable when facing challenging situations.

Legal Officers advise commanders on regulatory interpretation, due process, and risk, but do not exercise command authority or direct disciplinary outcomes. Inspectors General provide independent oversight and complaint resolution, assessing compliance and procedural integrity rather than managing day-to-day leadership matters.

This handbook is designed to support coordination, not replace it, by helping commanders recognize when to seek advice, when to elevate concerns, and when informal action should yield to formal processes.

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook is intended as a reference and decision-support guide, not a checklist or step-by-step procedural guide. Leadership situations rarely unfold the same way twice, and no single sequence of actions will fit every circumstance. Commanders are expected to exercise judgment, discretion, and restraint, applying only those tools and concepts that are appropriate to the situation at hand.

The inclusion of a tool, example, or practice in this handbook does not imply that it should be used in every case. Rather, the guidance is meant to broaden a commander’s understanding of available leadership options and support thoughtful decision-making.

Core Leadership Principles

The following principles form the foundation of the progressive discipline philosophy presented throughout this handbook. Commanders should consider them collectively when evaluating conduct, performance, and corrective actions.

This Is Not a Linear Process

Issues involving performance or conduct do not progress through a fixed or predictable sequence. Some matters may be resolved through a single, well-timed conversation. Others may require follow-up discussions, documentation, or sustained leadership engagement. Still others may require immediate coordination or escalation, bypassing informal steps altogether due to safety concerns or mandatory reporting requirements.

Commanders should not attempt to work through stages simply because they appear in this handbook. Leadership is not a progression chart. The appropriate response depends on the nature of the issue, the risk involved, and the people affected.

Start With Leadership, Not Punishment

In most cases, a commander's first response should focus on leadership, not punishment. This often means clarifying expectations, addressing behavior promptly, communicating professionally and privately, and allowing the member an opportunity to correct the issue.

Corrective action is frequently sufficient and should not be delayed out of concern that "nothing formal has happened yet." Waiting too long to engage can allow misunderstandings to persist and spread, or behavior to worsen. Early, respectful intervention often prevents the need for more serious action later.

Informal leadership actions may still be documented when appropriate. Such documentation should be factual, limited in scope, and focused on clarity and continuity, not on creating leverage or signaling predetermined outcomes.

Use Documentation to Support Fairness

The documentation in this handbook supports fairness, consistency, and accountability. When used appropriately, it helps capture facts rather than opinions, ensures continuity when leadership changes, and protects both the member and the commander by creating a clear record of what occurred.

Never use documentation to punish, threaten, or build a case for a predetermined action. Its purpose is to support leadership, not replace it.

All documentation must be handled and retained in accordance with applicable CAP guidance and local command practices.

Know When Discretion Ends

Not every situation suits informal leadership action. Some matters require immediate action or mandatory coordination, regardless of prior steps. These include situations involving cadet protection concerns, allegations of abuse or criminal conduct, or circumstances presenting an immediate risk to members or the organization.

In such cases, commanders must follow applicable regulations and reporting requirements and should not attempt to resolve the matter informally. Exercising restraint in these moments is not leadership; it is noncompliance with regulations and applicable law. For mandatory reporting requirements, see the appropriate CAP regulation or CAPVA 160-200 *NOC Reporting Workflow*.

Use Professional Judgment

Ultimately, this handbook does not replace command responsibility, regulatory authority, due process, or professional judgment. It supports commanders in making timely, ethical, and proportionate decisions that uphold CAP standards and protect members, commanders, and the organization.

Section 1 – Purpose and Commander's Responsibility

In This Section

- Discipline as a Leadership Function
- Early Intervention vs. Formal Action
- Why Progressive Discipline Matters in CAP

Discipline as a Leadership Function

In Civil Air Patrol, enforcing standards and maintaining discipline are not separate functions reserved for moments of crisis or formal action. They are integral to leadership and a normal part of command responsibility. In this context, discipline includes informal leadership actions, such as setting expectations, providing feedback, and conducting corrective conversations, not solely administrative or membership measures.

Commanders are entrusted with authority over people, missions, and resources. With that trust comes an obligation to maintain standards, address issues that affect performance or conduct, and foster a professional and respectful environment. If we do not enforce standards, the behavior we allow becomes a new standard. This negatively impacts our culture, our members, and our organization. Discipline, when properly exercised, is an act of stewardship that protects the organization, supports members, and corrects issues before they grow into larger problems.

Effective commanders understand that discipline begins with presence and engagement. Setting expectations, noticing changes in behavior, addressing concerns promptly, and having direct but respectful conversations are all acts of leadership. These actions are often informal and quiet, but they are essential to maintaining good order, morale, and trust. Leaders also model the behavior they wish to see in others. People see what you do and compare it to what you say.

Leadership discipline requires balance. Avoiding issues out of discomfort or uncertainty can allow problems to grow. Reacting too quickly with formal measures can damage trust and undermine fairness or growth. Command responsibility lies in knowing when to intervene, how to communicate, and when to escalate.

Early Intervention vs. Formal Action

Most issues commanders encounter do not require immediate administrative or membership action. Many arise from misunderstandings, unclear expectations, stress, or momentary lapses in judgment. Early leadership intervention allows commanders to address these concerns promptly, often resolving them before they become patterns or escalate into complaints or formal processes.

Early intervention is a leadership function. It may involve a private conversation, clarification of expectations, feedback on behavior or performance, or a follow-up discussion to ensure understanding. These actions are corrective and supportive, intended to give the member an opportunity to adjust and succeed.

When commanders intervene early, they preserve flexibility, reinforce standards, and reduce the likelihood that more formal measures will be required later. Delaying leadership action carries its own risk: when issues are not addressed early, commanders may eventually find that only formal options remain available.

However, not all situations are appropriate for progressive discipline. Certain circumstances require immediate administrative action or mandatory reporting under existing CAP regulations. In these cases, leadership discretion is limited or eliminated, and commanders must act in accordance with regulatory requirements rather than attempting informal resolution.

Formal administrative and membership actions exist for a reason. They are intentionally structured with safeguards, documentation requirements, and due process protections to protect members, commanders, and the organization. These tools are not replacements for leadership engagement, nor should they be used as shortcuts when early intervention is appropriate.

The commander's responsibility is to recognize which path applies, act promptly, and apply the appropriate tools with judgment, restraint, and fidelity to CAP policy.

Why Progressive Discipline Matters in CAP

Civil Air Patrol recognizes that behavior and performance are often best understood over time rather than through isolated incidents. Repeated minor issues, none of which may independently warrant formal action, can collectively indicate a problem that requires attention. Progressive discipline reflects this reality by providing a leadership approach for addressing concerns proportionally and responsibly.

When applied thoughtfully, progressive discipline promotes consistency and fairness, provides notice and opportunity for correction, encourages clear communication, supports appropriate documentation, and reinforces due process and transparency. It helps maintain trust within units while reducing avoidable escalation to complaints, investigations, or adverse actions.

Progressive discipline is not a rigid sequence or a mandatory ladder of steps. It is a leadership mindset grounded in judgment, proportionality, and responsibility. Commanders retain discretion to determine what action is appropriate based on the circumstances, the individuals involved, and applicable regulatory requirements.

By intervening early, communicating clearly, and documenting appropriately, commanders strengthen their units, support their members, and uphold the standards expected of Civil Air Patrol leaders.

Section 2 – Progressive Discipline Framework

In This Section

- Informal Correction and Routine Leadership Action
- Written Counseling and Documentation
- Administrative Actions
- Limits and Scope of Administrative Actions
- Membership Actions
- Common Mistakes Commanders Make
- Applying the Framework

Progressive discipline in Civil Air Patrol is best understood as a range of leadership tools, not a required sequence of steps. Commanders are expected to exercise judgment in selecting the most appropriate response based on the circumstances, the individuals involved, and applicable regulatory requirements.

Not every issue begins with informal correction, and not every issue progresses through multiple levels. Some concerns are resolved quickly through conversation. Others require clearer articulation of expectations, documentation, coordination, or formal action. This framework exists to help commanders understand what options exist, what each option is designed to accomplish, and when escalation may be appropriate.

The categories described below reflect common leadership practices used to manage performance and conduct. They do not create new document types, filing requirements, or regulatory authorities.

Informal Correction and Routine Leadership Action

Informal correction is the most common, and often most effective, form of leadership intervention. It consists of timely, direct, and respectful engagement with a member to address a concern before it becomes a larger issue.

In practice, informal correction may involve a private conversation to clarify expectations, immediate feedback on behavior or performance, addressing misunderstandings, or calmly reinforcing standards. These interactions are part of normal leadership and should not be viewed as disciplinary action. In many cases, a single conversation is sufficient to resolve the issue and prevent recurrence. Most members want to follow our rules.

Effective informal correction is prompt, professional, and proportionate. It focuses on observable behavior or performance, not personal character. While informal corrections are typically undocumented, commanders may keep limited personal notes for continuity, provided they are factual, restrained, and appropriately maintained. Informal correction does not require documentation to be effective, and the absence of documentation does not indicate inaction.

When addressing cadet conduct, handle informal correction with particular care. CAPR 60-1 emphasizes soft, private interventions for low-level cadet misconduct, designed to correct behavior discreetly, avoid unnecessary embarrassment, and reinforce expectations in a manner consistent with adolescent development.

Written Counseling and Documentation

Documented counseling becomes appropriate when an issue persists after informal correction, requires clearer articulation of expectations, affects performance, morale, or mission effectiveness, or warrants continuity across leadership changes.

Documentation may take several forms depending on the circumstances and the level of formality required. These may include leadership notes summarizing a conversation, email follow-up to clarify expectations, memoranda for record, or formal letters of counseling delivered to the member. Regardless of format, the intent remains the same: to clearly communicate the concern, reinforce expectations, and provide the member an opportunity to correct the issue.

Effective documented counseling focuses on observable behaviors or concerns without speculation, labels, or assumptions. It clearly states expectations, remains limited to the issue at hand, and avoids unnecessary breadth. When done properly, documented counseling demonstrates fairness, consistency, and good-faith leadership. It should never be used to threaten, pressure, or predetermine future action.

In most cases, documented counseling should follow a direct leadership conversation rather than replace one. Commanders and leaders should ensure the member understands the concern, the expectations moving forward, and the opportunity for improvement before delivering written documentation. Written communication is most effective when it reinforces a discussion that has already taken place.

Examples of commonly used documents are included later in this handbook for reference and learning purposes to illustrate tone, structure, and intent. These examples are not prescriptive and should be adapted to the specific facts, context, and leadership judgment of each situation.

Administrative Actions

Administrative actions are distinct from leadership correction and involve authorities established by CAP regulations. These actions manage risk, protect members, or stabilize situations when leadership engagement alone is insufficient or when regulatory requirements mandate action.

Commanders exercise these authorities as part of their responsibility to lead and manage their units. CAPR 30-1 establishes commanders' command authority and responsibility for members assigned to their units, while CAPR 35-1 authorizes commanders to assign, reassign, or remove members from duty positions and to take certain duty-status actions when circumstances require.

Administrative actions may include:

- Reassignment or removal from duty positions;

- Temporary limitations or restrictions when specifically authorized by applicable CAP regulations; or
- Temporary suspension of membership privileges when authorized by regulation.

These measures are not intended as coaching tools or substitutes for leadership engagement. Instead, they are administrative or protective steps used to manage risk, maintain order within the unit, and/or ensure compliance with CAP policies and regulations.

Specific regulatory authorities govern administrative actions and may require documentation, coordination with higher headquarters, or defined time limits. Commanders must ensure full compliance with applicable CAP regulations and should coordinate with their chain of command, inspector general, or legal advisor as well as related staff leaders when circumstances warrant.

Whenever possible, commanders should engage members directly before taking formal administrative action. Clear communication and leadership engagement often resolve issues before escalation becomes necessary.

Limits and Scope of Administrative Actions

Commanders may take administrative action only within the authority of the echelon they command and as permitted by applicable CAP regulations. A Squadron or Flight Commander exercises command authority within that unit; a Group Commander within the group and its subordinate units; a Wing Commander within the wing; and a Region Commander within the region.

As the echelon of command increases, the organizational scope of that authority generally broadens. However, commanders should not attempt to extend a local administrative decision beyond their authority or create restrictions that CAP has no established mechanism to record, monitor, or enforce.

For example, a commander may remove or reassign a member from a duty position within that commander's authority or make decisions about participation in activities for which that commander is responsible. A commander should not independently direct that a member may never again serve at an encampment or in a Safety, Cadet Programs, Finance, or other duty position throughout CAP when that decision rests with another commander or appointing authority. These types of actions are also impossible to enforce.

When an administrative action needs to extend beyond the commander's authority, the matter should be elevated through the chain of command to the commander or other authority empowered to act. Coordination with a higher commander does not itself expand the subordinate commander's authority; the appropriate authority must make or approve the action when required.

Administrative decisions also should not be written to unnecessarily bind future commanders. A successor commander assumes the authority and responsibility of that command and may review, continue, modify, or rescind discretionary command decisions within that authority. Actions specifically established by CAP regulation remain governed by the applicable regulation.

Membership Actions

Membership actions represent the most serious level of escalation and are governed entirely by CAP regulations, primarily CAPR 35-3.

These actions may include termination of membership, voluntary resignation in lieu of termination, or other regulatory outcomes affecting a member's continued participation in Civil Air Patrol.

Membership actions carry significant consequences and include formal notification procedures, documentation requirements, and due process protections, including appeal rights. For this reason, they are not leadership tools and should not be approached as corrective measures.

Instead, membership actions exist to protect the organization when continued membership is no longer appropriate under CAP regulatory standards.

Commanders should understand that membership actions are not a goal of progressive discipline but rather a potential end state when other leadership tools, administrative measures, or regulatory requirements make continued membership incompatible with CAP standards. In these situations, commanders must decide whether a member can, or is willing to, change their behavior to align with our standards.

Common Mistakes Commanders Make

Commanders rarely mishandle corrective action because they intend to be unfair. More often, problems develop because they wait too long, act before sufficiently understanding the situation, confuse leadership with investigation, or use an approach that makes the concern harder to resolve. Recognizing these common mistakes can help commanders act earlier, remain within their proper role, and preserve both accountability and trust.

Waiting Too Long to Address the Concern

Commanders sometimes postpone a difficult conversation because they hope the problem will resolve itself, do not want to discourage a volunteer, or are uncertain how the member will respond. Delay often allows the conduct to continue and may lead other members to believe that the standard is unimportant or will not be enforced.

Address concerns once the relevant facts and expectations are sufficiently clear. An early conversation can often remain informal, focused, and corrective. If a commander waits until frustration has accumulated or several incidents have occurred, the eventual response may appear sudden or disproportionate, even when the underlying concern is legitimate.

Attempting to Investigate

A commander may ask limited questions to understand what was observed, identify the immediate concern, determine whether anyone is at risk, and decide whether routine leadership action is appropriate. That initial clarification must not become an unauthorized investigation.

Warning signs include conducting interviews, comparing accounts to decide who is truthful, or collecting evidence to prove misconduct. These actions may cross the line from limited leadership fact-finding into an investigative process. When that line is unclear, commanders should stop and coordinate. Section 3 explains this distinction and the appropriate coordination requirements in greater detail.

Documenting Before Talking

Drafting a counseling memorandum before speaking with the member can cause the commander to reach conclusions before hearing the member's perspective. It can also make the conversation appear predetermined and turn what might have been a constructive exchange into a response to a written accusation.

When circumstances permit, begin with a private conversation rather than a completed counseling memorandum. Explain the concern, listen to the member's perspective, and determine whether documentation is necessary after the discussion. Mandatory reporting, Safety, Cadet Protection, or investigative requirements may require a different approach. Sections 4 and 6 provide additional guidance on leadership conversations and appropriate documentation.

Over-Documenting

Documentation should be proportionate to the concern and useful to the leadership process. Commanders do not need to preserve every minor disagreement, characterize every conversation as formal counseling, or create a lengthy memorandum when a brief factual record suffices.

Excessive documentation can obscure the central issue, discourage honest communication, and create the appearance that the commander is building a case rather than attempting to improve performance or conduct. Documentation should serve a clear leadership purpose and be proportionate to the matter being addressed. Section 6 provides detailed guidance on deciding what to document and creating a fair, factual, and useful record.

Treating Every Concern as an Inspector General Matter

The Inspector General system is not a substitute for routine leadership, supervision, or the chain of command. Performance concerns, interpersonal friction, unclear expectations, and many conduct issues can ordinarily be addressed through direct leadership when no reporting, complaint, retaliation, or investigative requirement applies.

Commanders should not refer matters to the Inspector General merely to avoid an uncomfortable leadership decision. At the same time, they must recognize when a concern may involve a complaint, protected activity, retaliation, abuse of authority, fraud, waste, mismanagement, or another matter requiring coordination. Section 3 explains when Inspector General involvement or other formal coordination may be appropriate.

Acting After Protected Activity Without Coordination

A member's complaint, report, participation in an investigation, or other protected activity does not prevent a commander from addressing legitimate performance or conduct concerns. It does, however,

require careful judgment. Corrective action taken shortly after protected activity may appear retaliatory, even when the underlying concern existed beforehand.

Before proceeding, commanders should pause and coordinate with the appropriate advisor. They should be prepared to show that the concern, supporting facts, timing, and proposed response are independent of the protected activity. Section 3 provides additional guidance on protected activities, retaliation concerns, and appropriate coordination.

Writing While Angry, Frustrated, or Defensive

Emotion can cause a commander to exaggerate, assign motives, use absolute language, combine unrelated concerns, or write more than the situation requires. Once sent, an emotional message may become the focus of the dispute and weaken an otherwise legitimate leadership concern.

Pause before sending corrective correspondence. Remove sarcasm, threats, character judgments, and statements about what the member "always," "never," or "obviously" intended. Describe the observable conduct, explain why it matters, identify the applicable expectation, and state what must change. When practical, ask a trusted advisor to review significant written counseling for tone and clarity before it is delivered.

Correcting Publicly When Privacy Is Appropriate

Public correction may sometimes be necessary to stop unsafe conduct, protect a cadet or member, maintain immediate control of an activity, or prevent mission harm. Even then, the commander should address only what must be stopped immediately and move the fuller conversation to a private setting as soon as practical.

When immediate intervention is not required, correction should ordinarily occur privately. Public criticism can embarrass the member, invite defensiveness, damage trust, and shift attention from the conduct to the way the commander responded. Address the concern privately, clarify expectations directly, and recognize improvement appropriately.

Applying the Framework

This framework supports deliberate leadership decision-making rather than imposing a rigid sequence of actions.

Depending on the circumstances, commanders may:

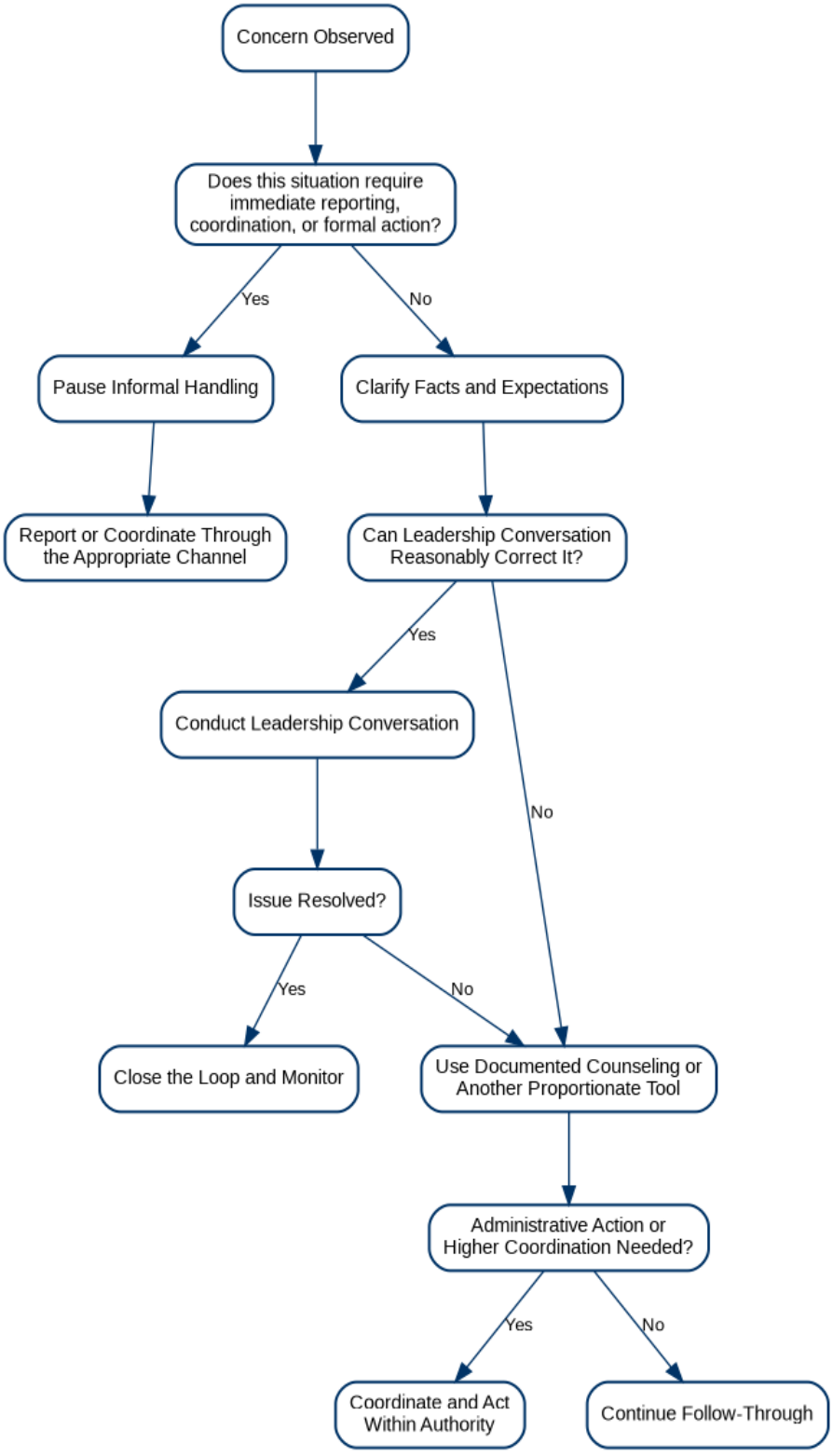
- Address an issue through a single leadership conversation;
- Apply administrative measures to manage risk or stabilize a situation;
- Escalate directly when required by regulation or the severity of the issue; and
- De-escalate when concerns are resolved through leadership engagement.

Progressive discipline in Civil Air Patrol is ultimately about leadership judgment, fairness, and responsibility. By understanding the purpose and limits of each tool, commanders can respond appropriately, protect members, maintain trust within their units, and uphold CAP standards.

Nothing in this framework limits a member's ability to raise concerns through appropriate channels, including the chain of command, inspector general system, or other processes established by CAP regulations.

Figure 1. Commander Decision-Making Framework

This figure provides a simplified visual representation of the progressive discipline framework discussed in this section. It highlights key leadership decision points and coordination thresholds. The figure is illustrative and does not create mandatory procedures, replace commander judgment, or supersede CAP regulations.



Note. Not every situation follows this sequence. Commanders retain discretion to select the most appropriate response based on the circumstances, applicable regulations, and the nature of the concern. Some situations require immediate reporting, coordination, or formal action without prior informal intervention.

Section 3 – Roles and Coordination

In This Section

- Commander Responsibilities
- Coordination With Legal Officers
- Coordination With the Inspector General
- Indicators Requiring Inspector General or Other CAP Coordination
- Commander's Inquiry (CIQ)
- Due Diligence Versus a CIQ
- Once an IG Complaint Is Filed
- Cadet Programs Considerations
- Applying Coordination Effectively
- Protected Activities

Effective discipline in Civil Air Patrol depends not only on leadership judgment, but also on proper coordination. Commanders do not operate in isolation. Legal Officers, Inspectors General, and Offices of Primary Responsibility (OPRs) each play distinct and essential roles in supporting commanders, protecting members, and safeguarding the organization.

This section explains who is responsible for what, when coordination is appropriate, and how commanders can engage supporting functions without surrendering command responsibility.

Commander Responsibilities

Commanders are the primary decision-makers responsible for leadership, correction, and action within their units. This includes setting and enforcing standards, addressing performance and conduct issues, and determining when leadership action is sufficient or when coordination or escalation is required.

While commanders may seek advice and assistance, responsibility for decisions and outcomes remains with command. Delegating tasks or consulting with staff does not transfer accountability. Command authority carries with it an obligation to make timely decisions and take appropriate action.

Coordination With Legal Officers

Legal Officers serve as advisors to commanders, not decision-makers. Their role is to support lawful, fair, and defensible command action, not to direct outcomes or exercise command authority.

Commanders should consider involving a Legal Officer when regulatory interpretation is complex, when documentation may support future administrative or membership action, when due process requirements are unclear, or when an action may significantly affect a member's status or privileges. Legal coordination is also appropriate when the organization faces potential legal exposure.

Legal Officers provide interpretation of applicable regulations, guidance on documentation and process, and advice on fairness, consistency, and due process. They do not conduct investigations on behalf of commanders or impose discipline. Commanders always retain full command authority.

Importantly, Legal Officers represent Civil Air Patrol as an organization. Although Legal Officers work closely with commanders and routinely advise them on personnel, disciplinary, and organizational matters, their client is CAP itself, not an individual commander, member, or unit. Any confidentiality obligation, attorney-client privilege, or other professional duty owed by a Legal Officer is ultimately to Civil Air Patrol as an organization.

Coordination With the Inspector General

The Inspector General (IG) system is an independent resolution process established to protect members, ensure regulatory compliance, and safeguard the integrity of Civil Air Patrol. Access to the IG is not controlled by command discretion. Members may file IG complaints directly, without prior command approval, and commanders may not restrict, delay, or discourage a member from doing so.

When no IG complaint exists, commanders remain responsible for managing performance and conduct matters through command leadership within their authority, consistent with applicable regulations.

Any corrective action taken in close proximity to protected activity requires heightened scrutiny and appropriate coordination to ensure the action is fair, defensible, and not perceived as retaliatory.

Indicators Requiring Inspector General or Other CAP Coordination

While most performance and conduct concerns can be addressed through command leadership, certain indicators signal that an issue has moved beyond routine corrective action and requires coordination with the Inspector General or other appropriate CAP programs or oversight office. These indicators are not exhaustive, nor do they require a commander to conclude intent or fault. Their presence simply reflects that the matter implicates protections, neutrality, or systemic risk that exceed the scope of informal leadership correction.

Coordination is required when credible allegations involve abuse of authority, discrimination, retaliation for protected communication, fraud, waste, or abuse of CAP resources, or conduct that may reasonably be perceived as harassment or coercion. Matters involving cadet protection concerns, boundary violations, or suspected abuse always require reporting in accordance with applicable regulations.

Commanders should also pause and coordinate when facts are disputed, when a complaint has been raised through any protected channel, or when the commander’s role may shift from leader to potential witness. In these situations, continued informal action can unintentionally compromise neutrality or create the appearance of impropriety, even when intentions are sound.

Finally, patterns of behavior suggesting systemic or organizational breakdown, such as repeated complaints involving similar issues, multiple members raising related concerns, or failures that extend beyond a single individual, are appropriate for Inspector General awareness. Early coordination in these

cases allows leadership correction and oversight to proceed in parallel, protecting members, commanders, and the organization while preserving the independence of the IG process.

Situations requiring coordination with the Inspector General are summarized in **Appendix A**. The appendix is intended as a quick reference for identifying coordination thresholds and does not replace the leadership guidance, judgment considerations, or regulatory requirements discussed throughout this handbook.

Commander's Inquiry (CIQ)

In some situations, commanders may need additional clarity before determining whether an issue requires formal Inspector General involvement. The Commander's Inquiry (CIQ) supports this decision-making, but commanders must clearly understand who may initiate a CIQ and how the process works.

A CIQ is a formal fact-finding process based on a commander's inherent authority to examine matters within their command. Under CAP regulations, only wing, region, and national commanders (and the Board Chair) may initiate a CIQ. Squadron and group commanders do not have authority to initiate a CIQ themselves. While the commander has the authority to initiate a CIQ, the inquiry is conducted through the Inspector General system to ensure neutrality, procedural integrity, and proper documentation.

This limitation is intentional. A CIQ involves structured fact-finding activity, including formal interviews, evidence collection, case file management, and reporting requirements.

As a result, early coordination with higher headquarters is critical when an issue cannot be resolved through routine leadership action and may require formal fact-finding. Higher echelons cannot act on matters they are unaware of. Delayed elevation can limit available options and increase risk to members and the organization.

Due Diligence Versus a CIQ

All commanders retain authority to conduct due diligence within their command. Due diligence is limited information gathering intended to determine whether an issue exists and to understand its basic nature. This may include confirming whether an incident occurred, identifying involved personnel, establishing basic facts, and determining whether a regulation may have been violated. Sometimes a member simply admits they did something wrong. In those instances, action is easy to take.

Due diligence does not include formal investigative interviews, sworn statements, credibility determinations, or evidence collection for the record. When due diligence is insufficient to resolve uncertainty, the matter must be elevated so that wing, region, or national leadership can determine whether a CIQ is warranted.

A practical indicator is intent: when a commander's questions shift from clarifying whether an issue exists to resolving disputed facts or assessing credibility, due diligence should pause, and coordination should occur.

Once initiated, the Inspector General Corps conducts a CIQ. Investigators are appointed from outside the affected wing or region to preserve independence, and the process includes formal interviews, evidence analysis, confidentiality safeguards, and structured reporting.

Once an IG Complaint Is Filed

Once an IG complaint is filed, the commander's role changes. Commanders must follow applicable complaint-handling rules, avoid actions that could be perceived as undue influence or reprisal, and coordinate with the IG as required.

When an IG process is underway, commanders must not conduct parallel investigations or gather statements for the record. Independent fact-finding outside the IG process can compromise neutrality, create conflicting records, and interfere with the integrity of the complaint resolution process.

However, IG involvement does not prevent commanders from exercising their normal leadership responsibilities. Commanders may still take appropriate administrative or leadership actions necessary to maintain good order, protect members, or manage operational risk. Examples may include adjusting duty assignments, separating involved members, addressing immediate safety concerns, or documenting observed conduct.

When such actions could directly affect the subject of an IG complaint or the underlying issue being reviewed, commanders should coordinate with appropriate authorities to ensure their actions do not unintentionally interfere with the IG process. The IG establishes facts; commanders determine appropriate action within their authority when the process permits.

Nothing in this handbook limits a member's right to access the IG system at any time.

Cadet Programs Considerations

Commanders should coordinate with their Cadet Programs staff and others when addressing matters beyond routine correction, navigating parental involvement, determining appropriate developmental responses, or clarifying program-specific requirements.

Cadets serving in leadership positions may mentor peers, provide coaching, and elevate concerns through the appropriate chain of command because cadets do not investigate misconduct. Additional guidance on leadership conversations and corrective approaches involving cadets is discussed in Section 5 of this handbook.

Applying Coordination Effectively

Effective coordination is proactive, not reactive. Commanders who engage supporting functions early preserve options, reduce risk, and improve outcomes.

View coordination as a leadership strength, not a loss of authority or a weakness. Good leaders seek advice from trusted subject matter experts. When roles are respected, and responsibilities are clear,

commanders are better positioned to address issues decisively and in alignment with Civil Air Patrol standards.

Protected Activities

Progressive discipline, or any other kind of discipline, must never be used as a response to a protected activity. Any corrective action taken in close proximity to protected activity requires heightened scrutiny and appropriate coordination to ensure the action is fair, defensible, and not perceived as retaliatory.

Protected activities include, but are not limited to, filing or preparing to file an Inspector General complaint, making a protected communication, reporting safety concerns, raising Equal Opportunity concerns, reporting suspected misconduct, or participating in authorized complaint or investigative processes. For detailed guidance regarding protected communications, reprisal, and member protections, commanders should consult CAPR 20-2.

Section 4 – Sample Commander Conversations

In This Section

- Informal Counseling as Routine Leadership
- Transitioning to Documented Counseling
- Using CAP Form 40 for Performance Feedback
- Corrective Language Versus Punitive Language
- Common Communication Pitfalls
- Applying These Examples Thoughtfully

Commanders are often confident in recognizing performance or conduct concerns, yet less confident in how to begin the conversation. Uncertainty about wording, tone, or perceived consequences can lead to delayed action, unnecessary escalation, or communication that unintentionally feels punitive. When this happens, issues that could have been resolved early may instead progress toward formal processes or complaints.

This section provides illustrative examples of effective leadership conversations. **These are not scripts** and are not intended to be quoted verbatim. Their purpose is to demonstrate how corrective leadership language sounds in practice, how it differs from punitive language, and how commanders can address concerns clearly while preserving trust, fairness, and due process.

Informal Counseling as Routine Leadership

Informal counseling is a normal and expected part of command leadership. Most performance and conduct issues encountered at the unit level can be addressed through timely, professional conversation without formal documentation. These conversations are most effective when they occur privately, focus on observable behavior or performance, maintain a calm and professional tone, and orient the discussion toward clarity and improvement rather than fault.

A common example involves clarifying performance expectations:

> *"I want to take a few minutes to talk about how we're handling mission tasking timelines. I've noticed a few delays recently, and I want to make sure expectations are clear. Timely responses are important to keeping the team running smoothly. Is there something getting in the way that I should be aware of?"*

This approach works because it focuses on observable behavior rather than assumptions about intent, invites dialogue rather than defensiveness, and clearly reinforces expectations while preserving proportionality.

Low-level conduct issues can be addressed in a similar manner:

> *"I want to talk briefly about how the discussion went during last night's meeting. Some of the comments came across as dismissive, and that can affect how others engage. I don't think that was your intent, but I want to make sure we're maintaining a respectful environment."*

Here, the commander identifies the concern clearly, assumes good intent, and reinforces standards without escalation.

There are also situations where immediate, on-the-spot correction is necessary to stop inappropriate behavior or maintain order:

> *"I'm going to pause us for a moment. That comment isn't appropriate for this setting. Let's reset and keep the discussion professional."*

When handled briefly and without emotion, this type of correction limits disruption, avoids public shaming, and preserves the opportunity for a more complete private conversation later if needed.

Transitioning to Documented Counseling

When concerns persist, affect the broader unit, or require clearer expectations, commanders may move from informal counseling to documented counseling. The conversation should still reflect leadership rather than discipline. The difference is not severity or tone, but clarity, structure, and follow-through.

A transparent transition helps prevent surprise or fear:

"We've talked a few times about meeting deadlines, and I'm still seeing the same issues. To avoid misunderstandings and make sure expectations are clear going forward, I'm going to document what we discussed today. This isn't disciplinary; it's about clarity and follow-through."

This conversation happens before anything is written and clearly explains the purpose of documentation.

The written record itself should be neutral and narrowly focused:

"This memorandum documents our discussion on [date] regarding missed suspenses over the past month, the impact on the team, and expectations moving forward. The intent is to support improvement and ensure shared understanding."

The document is a reference point, not the conversation. Its purpose is clarity and continuity, not leverage or threat.

Using CAP Form 40 for Performance Feedback

Civil Air Patrol provides CAP Form 40 as a structured performance feedback tool. When used correctly, it supports early leadership engagement by documenting duty performance expectations and encouraging professional development. CAP Form 40 is not a disciplinary document. Its purpose is developmental.

The form may be appropriate when the issue involves duty performance rather than misconduct, when the member is a senior member, and when the commander seeks to provide structured written feedback focused on growth and improvement. Although the form's historical language references officers, its intent supports performance feedback for senior members and may be used for both officers and NCOs with appropriate judgment.

When introducing CAP Form 40, commanders should frame its use clearly:

"I'm using this form to clearly document performance expectations and feedback so we both have a shared understanding moving forward. This is about development and clarity, not discipline."

Clear framing prevents misunderstanding and reinforces the form's intended role.

CAP Form 40 should not be used to document misconduct, address matters that may lead to administrative or membership action, replace documented counseling when addressing behavioral concerns, or serve as evidence for adverse action. CAP Form 40 is also not applicable to cadet discipline or corrective actions. Cadet leadership development, performance feedback, and corrective interventions should instead utilize the developmental tools and processes established by Cadet Programs, including the CAPF 60-90 series and other Cadet Programs resources, as appropriate.

The form should complement leadership conversations, not replace them. Commanders should discuss concerns verbally before completing the form, use factual and neutral language, and focus on expectations and improvement rather than speculation or character judgments. Performance feedback should also allow the member an opportunity to identify challenges or request support needed to succeed in their role. When approached as a two-way conversation, CAP Form 40 becomes a leadership tool that strengthens performance, clarity, and professional development.

Corrective Language Versus Punitive Language

The words commanders choose can either resolve issues or unintentionally escalate them. Corrective language is forward-looking, behavior-focused, neutral in tone, and oriented toward improvement. It reinforces standards while preserving dignity and due process.

Examples of corrective language include statements such as:
“Here’s what needs to change moving forward,”
“This is the standard we need to meet,” or
“Let’s talk about how to prevent this from happening again.”

By contrast, punitive language often relies on absolutes, threats, or character judgments. Statements such as “This is your last warning,” “You always do this,” or “If this happens again, we’ll take action” pre-judge outcomes and undermine due process, even when escalation may eventually be required.

Common Communication Pitfalls

Even well-intentioned commanders can make leadership conversations harder by how they approach them. One common mistake is entering the conversation with a conclusion already formed. When commanders assume they know what happened, why the member acted, or how the matter must end, they may listen only to information that confirms that conclusion. Beginning with the observable concern, explain why it matters, and allow the member an opportunity to provide relevant context.

Commanders should also avoid debating a member’s intent. A member may disagree with how others interpreted a statement or action, but the conversation does not need to become an argument over what the member “really meant.” Acknowledge the member’s explanation, then return to the observable conduct, its effect, and the expectation moving forward.

Another pitfall is allowing the conversation to become unfocused. Combining unrelated concerns, revisiting old disagreements, or using broad terms such as “attitude” or “professionalism” can leave the member unsure what must change. Address the specific concern at hand, describe the expected standard, and confirm that the member understands the next step.

Finally, commanders should not dominate the conversation or allow it to become an argument. Listening does not surrender authority or require agreement; it helps the commander understand

relevant circumstances and determine whether the original concern remains accurate. If the discussion becomes defensive or unproductive, restate the expectation, identify any necessary follow-up, and conclude the conversation professionally.

Applying These Examples Thoughtfully

These examples illustrate tone, structure, and intent. Commanders should adapt them to their own voice and circumstances while preserving fairness, proportionality, and respect. Warning signs that a conversation is becoming unproductive include assumptions about intent, vague or accusatory language, repeated arguments over the same point, or a shift from expectations to blame. When these signals appear, it is often time to pause, reassess, and consider a different approach.

Most complaints and escalations do not arise from malice or gross misconduct. They stem from miscommunication, timing errors, or mismatched language. By approaching conversations thoughtfully and avoiding common pitfalls, commanders preserve trust, protect due process, and increase the likelihood that issues are resolved constructively.

Section 5 – Leadership Conversations with Cadets

In This Section

- Leading Developmental Conversations with Cadets
- Why Early Cadet Conversations Matter
- Developmental Nature of Cadet Discipline
- Privacy, Dignity, and Cadet Protection
- Starting the Conversation with a Cadet
- Addressing Low-Level Conduct or Performance Issues
- On-the-Spot Corrections
- When Issues Persist
- Involving Parents and Guardians
- Common Cadet-Specific Pitfalls
- Speaking with Someone Else's Child
- Why This Approach Matters

Leading Developmental Conversations with Cadets

Leadership conversations with cadets require a fundamentally different approach than conversations with adult members. Cadets are participating in a leadership laboratory. They are not employees. Commanders must balance accountability with mentorship, structure with care, and correction with education.

This section provides guidance and examples to help commanders engage cadets effectively when performance or conduct concerns arise. The goal is not simply to stop undesirable behavior, but to teach self-control, reinforce standards, and support the cadet's growth as a leader and citizen.

Throughout this section, commanders should remain mindful that cadet leadership actions are viewed not only through a command lens, but also through the eyes of parents, schools, and the broader community. How a conversation is handled often matters as much as the outcome.

Cadet Programs has established a progressive intervention framework through CAPR 60-1 and associated training materials. Commanders should apply the leadership principles discussed throughout this handbook within that framework, recognizing that cadet corrective actions carry additional requirements and considerations, including parent notification, documentation, activity restrictions, and other measures authorized by regulation. This handbook complements, but does not replace, the tools established for the Cadet Program.

Why Early Cadet Conversations Matter

Early leadership conversations with cadets are not simply about correcting behavior; they shape how cadets understand authority, accountability, and trust. Because cadets are still developing emotionally and cognitively, their perception of leadership interactions is often more lasting and more personal than it is for adults.

When commanders intervene early, calmly, and clearly, cadets are more likely to remain receptive and engaged. Early conversations reduce anxiety, clarify expectations before frustration sets in, and reinforce the idea that correction is part of learning rather than punishment. Delayed or abrupt intervention, by contrast, can leave cadets feeling blindsided or defensive, even when the underlying concern is valid.

Effective early cadet conversations focus on course correction, not consequence. The objective is to help the cadet understand expectations, recognize the impact, and adjust behavior while maintaining trust and openness. When handled well, these moments become formative leadership experiences that reinforce responsibility, self-control, and respect for authority.

Early engagement, however, does not replace formal responsibility. Because cadet matters may involve youth protection obligations and mandatory reporting requirements, commanders should err on the side of early coordination rather than prolonged informal handling.

Developmental Nature of Cadet Discipline

Cadet discipline is inherently instructional. Adolescents are still developing judgment, emotional regulation, and social awareness, and many behaviors that require correction reflect immaturity or inexperience rather than willful misconduct.

Leadership conversations should therefore emphasize understanding expectations, learning from mistakes, and developing self-control rather than simply imposing consequences. Corrective actions should remain proportional, age-appropriate, and focused on helping the cadet succeed within the program.

Privacy, Dignity, and Cadet Protection

Whenever possible, leadership conversations with cadets should be private, calm, and without an audience. Privacy protects the cadet's dignity and reduces embarrassment, which can otherwise harden resistance or create shame instead of promoting improvement.

Conversations should be private enough to preserve dignity but conducted in a manner consistent with CAP's Cadet Protection Program. Commanders should avoid isolated discussions and ensure interactions remain observable or within the awareness of other senior members.

A useful guiding principle is this: conversations should be private enough to preserve dignity, but transparent enough to protect both the cadet and the commander.

Starting the Conversation with a Cadet

Many issues can be addressed through early, informal leadership conversations. When initiating a conversation with a cadet, commanders should clearly state the purpose, focus on observable behavior, and set a respectful tone from the outset.

Illustrative Example – Expectation Clarification

"I want to talk with you briefly about what I observed during the last activity. This isn't about getting you in trouble. It's about helping you understand the expectations and making sure you're set up to succeed moving forward."

This approach establishes intent, reduces anxiety, and frames the discussion as developmental rather than punitive.

Addressing Low-Level Conduct or Performance Issues

Low-level issues, such as minor disrespect, failure to follow instructions, or lapses in professionalism, are often best addressed through calm, direct conversation.

Illustrative Example – Low-Level Conduct Correction

“During the briefing, I noticed some side conversations while others were speaking. That can come across as disrespectful and distract the team. The expectation is that we give our full attention. I want to make sure you understand that standard.”

This language focuses on behavior, reinforces expectations, and avoids assumptions about intent or character.

On-the-Spot Corrections

There are occasions when immediate correction is necessary to stop inappropriate behavior or maintain safety. In these moments, the correction should be brief, limited, and followed by a private conversation when practicable.

Illustrative Example – Immediate Correction

“Stop for a moment. That behavior isn’t acceptable here. We’ll talk privately after this activity.”

The public correction is minimal and functional; the real leadership conversation occurs later, away from peers.

When Issues Persist

If a cadet’s behavior continues despite prior conversations, commanders should clearly acknowledge the pattern and explain that the approach is changing, not as punishment, but to ensure clarity and accountability.

Illustrative Example – Escalating the Conversation

“We’ve talked a few times about this behavior, and I’m still seeing the same issue. At this point, we need to be more deliberate to ensure expectations are clear and followed. This conversation is about helping you correct course and continue in the program successfully.”

This framing avoids surprise and reinforces that escalation is tied to behavior, not emotion.

Involving Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians are essential partners in the Cadet Program. As issues move beyond routine correction, commanders should communicate appropriately and respectfully with parents or guardians, ensuring they understand the concern, the intent of corrective action, and how they can support improvement. CAPR 60-1 establishes specific parent notification requirements associated with certain levels of cadet intervention, and commanders should ensure those requirements are met when applicable.

Parent involvement should be factual, measured, and focused on solutions rather than blaming. Conversations should reinforce that the shared goal is the cadet's growth, safety, and continued success.

Common Cadet-Specific Pitfalls

Because cadets are still developing emotionally and socially, language that may feel routine when used with adults can feel threatening or discouraging to youth. Commanders should avoid absolutist or predictive statements and instead emphasize learning, expectations, and growth.

Even well-intentioned commanders can unintentionally escalate cadet issues through missteps in tone, timing, or approach. One of the most common pitfalls is correcting a cadet publicly when a private conversation would have been sufficient. Public correction can embarrass or alienate a cadet and may damage trust or morale, particularly in a peer-focused youth environment. The Cadet Program grows leaders, and it is natural for growing leaders to make mistakes. We shape the future when we help cadets grow and learn how to lead.

Another frequent misstep is speaking to cadets using language or framing intended for adult disciplinary contexts. Cadets are still developing emotionally and cognitively, and adult-style disciplinary language can feel threatening, discouraging, or disproportionate, even when no harm is intended. Commanders should adapt both tone and phrasing to reflect the instructional nature of the Cadet Program.

Frustration can also quietly influence how conversations unfold. When a commander's tone becomes sharp, impatient, or emotionally charged, the focus often shifts from teaching expectations to expressing displeasure. Cadets may respond with defensiveness or withdrawal rather than understanding. Taking a moment to reset before engaging can significantly improve outcomes.

Commanders should also avoid turning leadership conversations into inadvertent investigations. Asking a series of probing questions to establish fault or gather information can create anxiety, blur roles, and interfere with required processes. Leadership conversations should remain focused on observable behavior, expectations, and improvement, not on determining blame or collecting evidence.

Finally, commanders must recognize when informal resolution is no longer appropriate. Some matters require mandatory reporting or coordination, regardless of intent or prior conversations. Attempting to handle such issues quietly or informally can create significant risk for the cadet, the commander, and the organization.

Many of these missteps stem from a single underlying challenge: leading youth without defaulting to adult or parental assumptions.

Speaking with Someone Else's Child

Many Civil Air Patrol commanders come from professional, technical, military, or volunteer backgrounds that do not include formal experience working with children or adolescents. Leading cadets is not the same as supervising adult members, nor is it the same as parenting one's own child. Commanders must consciously adjust their approach to reflect this distinction.

When speaking with a cadet, commanders are addressing someone else's child in a structured youth program. The authority exercised is organizational, not parental. Cadets do not share the same relationship, history, or emotional context that exists within a family, and assumptions that might feel natural in a parental setting can be inappropriate or harmful in a command environment.

Effective leadership conversations with cadets require greater deliberateness in tone, language, and demeanor. What may feel like firm or efficient communication with an adult can feel intimidating or overwhelming to a youth. Commanders should therefore prioritize calm delivery, clear explanations, and measured pacing, allowing the cadet time to process what is being said and to respond.

Whenever possible, conversations with cadets should occur in observable settings consistent with CAP's Cadet Protection Program principles. Commanders should avoid private, isolated discussions and instead ensure that another senior member is present or that the interaction remains within sight and hearing of others. This protects both the cadet and the adult leader and reinforces transparency and trust within the program.

Commanders should also remain aware of the inherent power imbalance present in any adult–youth interaction. Rank, authority, uniform, and setting can amplify a commander's words and actions. Maintaining professionalism, emotional control, and restraint is essential to preserving trust and ensuring that conversations remain instructional rather than coercive.

Above all, commanders should approach cadet conversations with humility and care. The objective is not to assert authority, but to guide, teach, and protect.

Why This Approach Matters

Most cadet discipline issues do not stem from defiance or malice. They arise from immaturity, confusion, or situational stress. How commanders respond in these moments shapes not only behavior but the cadet's perception of leadership, authority, and fairness.

Handled well, leadership conversations become teachable moments that strengthen trust and reinforce values. Handled poorly, they can alienate cadets, alarm parents, and unnecessarily escalate issues.

By approaching cadet conversations with care, clarity, and restraint, commanders protect cadets, preserve program integrity, and uphold the responsibility entrusted to them.

Section 6 – Leadership Documentation: Purpose and Practice

In This Section

- Purpose and Context
- The Role of Documentation in Progressive Discipline
- Cadet-Specific Boundaries and Restraint in Written Communication
- Cadet Reset Agreement (CAPF 60-97): Leadership Role and Intent
- Methods for Maintaining Informal Leadership Notes
- Examples of Vague and Factual Documentation
- Written Corrective Communication
- CAP Form 2A and Administrative Documentation
- Final Perspective on Documentation

Purpose and Context

Written documentation can clarify expectations, preserve fairness, and support continuity when leadership conversations alone are no longer sufficient. Used poorly or prematurely, however, it can escalate minor concerns, undermine trust, and create unnecessary risk for the member, the commander, and the organization.

This section explains when documentation may be appropriate, and the principles commanders should apply when creating and maintaining it. Documentation should be purposeful, factual, proportionate to the concern, and limited to what is reasonably necessary.

Illustrative examples are provided in Appendix B to demonstrate these principles. They are not mandatory formats, prescribed language, or substitutes for reviewing the applicable CAP publication and the facts of the individual situation.

The Role of Documentation in Progressive Discipline

Within a progressive discipline framework, documentation should serve a defined leadership purpose. It can confirm what concern was addressed, what expectations were communicated, and what follow-up was established, helping the commander and member maintain a common understanding moving forward.

Documentation also supports continuity. Commanders rotate, staff turnover occurs, and recollections may differ. A brief, factual record helps future leaders understand what was addressed and what followed without relying on assumptions or informal narratives.

Used appropriately, documentation supports fairness and consistent leadership by providing a neutral reference point. It should not be created merely to “have a paper trail.” If a commander cannot explain why a written record is reasonably necessary beyond frustration, leverage, or fear of appearing inactive, that often signals a need to pause, reassess, and seek guidance before writing.

Cadet-Specific Boundaries and Restraint in Written Communication

The documentation examples addressed in this section are designed primarily for senior member leadership situations but may apply to cadets as well. Use the tools, forms, and procedures established within the Cadet Program for cadet corrective actions, when applicable. These include the CAPF 60-90 series and the Cadet Reset Agreement (CAPF 60-97), which support mentoring, feedback, accountability, and growth consistent with the Cadet Program's developmental objectives.

Written communication can carry greater weight in a youth environment. What may seem routine or neutral to an adult leader can feel permanent or final to a cadet. Cadets may interpret written remarks as judgments about who they are rather than feedback about what they did. Documentation should therefore remain limited, factual, instructional in tone, and focused on expectations, support, and the cadet's successful development.

In some circumstances, written communication is necessary, such as communicating with parents or guardians, recording action taken in coordination with Cadet Programs or Legal, or meeting an established reporting or procedural requirement. CAPR 60-1, paragraph 3.5, identifies some cadet disciplinary actions that require written communication with cadets and parents or guardians.

Effective cadet leadership should remain grounded first in timely conversation, guided reflection, appropriate parental involvement, and Cadet Program tools.

Cadet Reset Agreement (CAPF 60-97): Leadership Role and Intent

The Cadet Reset Agreement is a voluntary, developmental tool used when challenges between a cadet and the unit have not been resolved through routine leadership engagement. It provides a structured opportunity for the cadet to pause participation, reflect on personal goals and responsibilities, and prepare for a successful return. Although the form operates within the Cadet Program's progressive-discipline framework, its immediate purpose is restoration and renewed participation, not punishment.

Section B records adult leadership's commitment to the cadet's success. It provides encouragement, identifies the behavioral requirements necessary for a successful reset, and responds to the cadet's ideas about personal responsibility and needed support. The entries should address conduct and expectations without judging the cadet's character.

Commanders should complete Section B in an age-appropriate, instructional, and forward-looking manner. Expectations should be specific enough for the cadet, parent or guardian, and adult leaders to understand what success requires. The language should reinforce belonging, responsibility, accountability, and the possibility of a fresh start without unnecessarily restating allegations or implying that further action is inevitable.

The agreement should reflect the individual cadet and circumstances. Adult leaders may help the cadet understand the form and think through the issues, but they should not dictate or rewrite the cadet's reflections. The value of the process lies in honest exchange, shared commitments, and meaningful follow-up, not standardized language.

Commanders should remember that they are working with a minor in a structured youth-development program. Words, phrasing, and demeanor carry amplified weight. The process should preserve the cadet's dignity while clearly communicating the expectations and responsibilities necessary for successful reintegration.

An illustrative completed CAPF 60-97 is provided in Appendix B. It demonstrates the principles discussed here but is not prescribed language or a template. When commanders are unsure whether the agreement is appropriate or how to complete it, they should coordinate with Cadet Programs and other staff leaders.

Methods for Maintaining Informal Leadership Notes

Commanders may use paper or electronic methods to maintain brief, contemporaneous notes following leadership conversations. Common practices include sending a dated email to oneself using an official CAP email account when available, maintaining a command journal or bound notebook, preparing a memorandum for record, keeping secured paper note sheets, or using a password-protected electronic document or follow-up log. Calendar or task reminders may also be used to prompt future follow-up, but they should contain minimal sensitive information because calendars and task lists may be shared or synchronized across devices.

The method selected should match the leadership purpose. A brief email or journal entry may be sufficient to record a routine conversation. A memorandum for record may be more appropriate when the circumstances require a complete account of a significant decision or interaction. When a CAP publication requires a particular form, notification, filing location, or reporting process, a personal leadership note is not a substitute.

Regardless of format, commanders should:

- Date the entry and make it as soon as practicable after the conversation or event.
- Distinguish personal observations from information reported by someone else.
- Record the member's explanation or perspective when relevant.
- Document the expectation communicated, support offered and agreed follow-up.
- Include only information that is reasonably necessary for leadership purposes.
- Avoid conclusions about attitude, motives, credibility, mental health, or character.
- Safeguard paper records in a locked location.
- Protect electronic records with appropriate passwords and access controls.
- Avoid storing sensitive CAP information in publicly shared folders, family-accessible devices, or unsecured personal cloud accounts.
- Limit access and distribution to individuals with a legitimate need to know.
- Review working notes periodically and retain them only while they serve a legitimate purpose or an applicable requirement directs otherwise.

Regardless of the method used, informal leadership notes should describe observable conduct or performance, not conclusions about attitude, motives, or character. The following examples illustrate the difference between vague conclusions and specific, factual documentation.

Examples of Vague and Factual Documentation

Situation	Vague documentation	Specific, Factual documentation
Concern about a member's conduct	The member has a bad attitude and is difficult to work with.	During the 12 July staff meeting, the member sighed repeatedly while assignments were discussed, stated that the plan was "a waste of time," and declined to accept the assigned task after the commander clarified the expectation.
Reported disrespect toward a flight sergeant	A cadet was disrespectful to the flight sergeant.	When the flight sergeant directed the cadet to return to formation, the cadet replied, "You cannot tell me what to do," walked away, and returned only after a senior member repeated the direction.
Repeated interruptions during a meeting	The member was disruptive and rude throughout the meeting.	During the 18 July unit meeting, the member interrupted three speakers before they completed their remarks. After being asked to allow others to finish, the member interrupted another speaker approximately five minutes later.

Include direct quotations, numbers, and other precise details only when the commander is confident they are accurate. When the exact words are uncertain, the commander should summarize the substance of the statement rather than present a paraphrase as a direct quotation. Identify information received from another person as reported information rather than recording it as the commander's personal observation.

A commander's notebook, electronic journal, or email folder should not become an unofficial personnel file or a collection of adverse information maintained for possible future use. Informal notes should not be created to build a case, anticipate adverse action, or justify a decision already made.

Different types of information may be subject to different reporting, filing, access, safeguarding, retention, and disposition requirements. If a matter develops into suspected misconduct, an administrative action, an IG matter, a cadet protection concern, or another regulated process, the commander should obtain guidance concerning what must be preserved, reported, transferred, or maintained in an authorized system or file. Personnel actions, complaints, investigative information, cadet protection matters, and records containing personally identifiable information must be handled through the appropriate CAP process. When uncertain, commanders should review the current governing publications and seek guidance rather than transferring personal leadership notes into an official record or retaining regulated information in an informal working file.

Written Corrective Communication

When a concern requires clearer documentation than an informal leadership note, a commander may address it through written corrective communication. Depending on its purpose and seriousness, the

document may be called a counseling memorandum, Letter of Concern, or Letter of Reprimand. These titles do not represent required steps in a prescribed CAP process. The document's substance, purpose, and intended use matter more than its title.

Written corrective communication should describe the conduct or performance at issue, explain why it matters, and state what is expected moving forward. When relevant, it should also reflect the member's perspective, prior discussions, support offered, and planned follow-up. The language should remain factual, measured, and focused on correction rather than punishment.

A counseling memorandum generally confirms a professional leadership conversation and provides a reference point for improvement. A written Letter of Concern may be appropriate when a concern continues or involves a pattern affecting the unit. Neither document should threaten future action or suggest that a decision has already been made.

A Letter of Reprimand carries greater weight because it communicates formal disapproval and is likely to be perceived as disciplinary. Do not treat it as the routine next step after counseling. Before issuing one, the commander should ensure that the relevant facts have been established, the member has had an opportunity to respond, and appropriate coordination has occurred. Many commanders may never need to issue a Letter of Reprimand; its inclusion here reflects completeness, not expectation.

Written corrective communication does not replace any notice, review, coordination, or appeal process required for an administrative or membership action.

CAP Form 2A and Administrative Documentation

CAP Form 2A is used to request or document personnel actions when required by the applicable CAP process. It is not a counseling document, a general-purpose disciplinary form, or a substitute for leadership communication.

The form should contain the factual information required for the particular action. Keep informal notes, written corrective communications, and supporting materials separate unless the governing process requires submission or filing with the action.

Final Perspective on Documentation

Documentation should create clarity, support improvement, and preserve an accurate record. It should not become punishment by paperwork.

Commanders should write knowing that someone who was not present may later review the document. Clear facts, fair context, and measured language therefore matter. When documentation is necessary, it should serve a defined leadership purpose and preserve the member's dignity. Legal Officers can often help with the wording on documentation.

Appendix B provides illustrative documentation and completed-form examples demonstrating the principles in this handbook. They are not prescribed language, mandatory formats, or substitutes for current governing requirements.

Section 7 – Case Studies and Leadership Decision Points

In This Section

- Case Study 1 – Leadership Issue Resolved Through Command Action
- Case Study 2 – When High-Performance Masks Harmful Conduct
- Case Study 3 – When a Pattern Indicates a Potential IG Issue
- Case Study 4 – Protected Communication and Potential Reprisal
- Case Study 5 – Cadet Protection Violation Requiring Immediate Escalation
- Case Study 6 – "I'm Going to File an IG Complaint"
- Case Study 7 – When Leadership Questions Become an Investigation
- Case Study 8 – Communication Before Documentation
- Case Study 9 – Early Intervention and Cadet Growth

The following case studies illustrate leadership situations commanders may encounter when addressing performance, conduct, or organizational concerns.

These examples demonstrate how some issues can be resolved through routine leadership engagement, while others may require coordination with the Inspector General or other CAP oversight channels.

The case studies are intended to encourage leadership judgment and discussion. They are illustrative in nature and are not intended to prescribe specific outcomes or establish mandatory procedures. Every situation is unique, and commanders must evaluate the facts and circumstances of each case, apply sound judgment, consult applicable CAP regulations, and coordinate with appropriate CAP staff or oversight offices when necessary.

The examples below support leader development by highlighting decision points, leadership considerations, and the principles that guide effective command action.

Case Study 1 – Leadership Issue Resolved Through Command Action

Scenario

A senior member assigned as the squadron operations officer becomes frustrated during several staff meetings and openly criticizes the commander's tasking priorities. Other staff members begin to complain that the officer's tone is dismissive and disruptive.

One member suggests filing an Inspector General complaint, believing the commander is allowing an unhealthy environment to develop.

Commander Action

The commander meets privately with the operations officer and discusses the observed behavior and its impact on the team. The commander clarifies expectations for professional communication during meetings and reinforces the importance of maintaining respect within the unit.

The officer acknowledges the concern and agrees to adjust his approach. The commander sends a short follow-up email summarizing the expectations discussed.

Outcome

The officer's behavior improves, and no further issues arise.

Leadership Takeaway

This situation remains within the command leadership lane. The concern involved professional conduct and communication, which commanders are expected to address through routine leadership engagement.

Although a member suggested contacting the IG, no allegation of regulatory violation, abuse of authority, or protected communication was present. Command leadership resolved the issue early and appropriately.

Key Principle

Not every interpersonal conflict or leadership concern requires IG involvement. Most unit-level issues are best addressed through timely leadership conversations and expectation-setting.

Case Study 2 – When High-Performance Masks Harmful Conduct

Scenario

A highly experienced pilot consistently performs well during missions and is considered one of the unit's most capable and dependable members. Commanders frequently rely on the pilot for difficult assignments and value the member's technical expertise.

Over time, however, the pilot becomes dismissive of less-experienced members, reacts harshly when teammates make mistakes, and belittles members who question decisions. During mission planning and debriefings, other members become increasingly quiet and reluctant to offer suggestions or raise concerns.

No one makes a formal complaint. Some members believe the pilot's mission performance makes the behavior unlikely to be addressed, while others fear that speaking up could affect future assignments.

Commander Action

The commander does not wait for a formal complaint. After observing the conduct and its effect on the team, the commander meets privately with the pilot and describes specific examples of the behavior. The commander acknowledges the pilot's skill and contributions but explains that mission excellence also requires professionalism, respect, and an environment in which members can communicate openly.

The commander establishes clear expectations for future interactions and schedules a follow-up conversation. The pilot is given an opportunity to respond, improve, and rebuild trust with the team.

Outcome

The pilot initially focuses on mission results and does not recognize the effect of the behavior. Through follow-up conversations and continued feedback, the pilot begins responding more constructively to questions and mistakes.

Other members gradually become more willing to contribute during planning and debriefings. The pilot remains a valued member of the mission team, and the commander continues to monitor both technical performance and conduct.

Leadership Takeaway

High performance in one area does not excuse behavior that damages trust, suppresses communication, or discourages others from contributing. When members remain silent, commanders must pay attention to observable conduct and changes in team participation rather than assuming that the absence of a complaint means no problem exists.

Addressing the concern does not diminish the member's achievements. It establishes that how the mission is accomplished matters alongside the result.

Key Principle

Mission excellence includes technical performance, professional conduct, and respect for the team.

Case Study 3 – When a Pattern Indicates a Potential IG Issue

Scenario

Over several months, multiple senior members approach the group commander with concerns about a squadron commander's leadership style. They report that the commander routinely assigns undesirable duties to members who question decisions and has removed several members from staff positions following disagreements.

Individually, each complaint appears minor and could be interpreted as routine leadership decisions.

However, the group commander notices that the concerns are similar and involve multiple members.

Commander Action

The group commander conducts limited due diligence to understand the basic situation. After recognizing that multiple members are reporting similar concerns involving possible abuse of authority, the commander pauses further inquiry and coordinates with wing leadership.

Wing leadership consults with the Inspector General to determine whether the matter should be reviewed through the complaint system.

Outcome

An IG complaint consultation is submitted and evaluated to determine whether an investigation or further action is warranted.

Leadership Takeaway

This situation illustrates when an issue moves beyond routine leadership correction. While any single concern might remain a command matter, a pattern involving multiple members can indicate a broader organizational problem.

Early coordination protects the commander, the members involved, and the integrity of the process. Commanders retain authority to assign duty positions.

Key Principle

Repeated concerns involving similar allegations may signal a systemic issue that requires IG awareness.

Case Study 4 – Protected Communication and Potential Reprisal

Scenario

A senior member files an Inspector General complaint alleging that a unit vehicle is being used improperly for non-mission purposes.

Two weeks later, the commander removes the member from a staff position, citing concerns about performance and “unit cohesion.”

The member believes the removal is retaliation for filing the IG complaint.

Commander Action

Because a protected communication has occurred, the commander coordinates with the Inspector General before taking any additional action related to the member.

The commander provides documentation showing that performance concerns existed prior to the complaint and that the decision was based on operational considerations.

The Inspector General reviews the circumstances to determine whether reprisal may have occurred.

Outcome

The IG evaluates the complaint under the applicable reprisal framework.

Regardless of the outcome, coordination ensures the matter is reviewed independently and protects both the member and the commander.

Leadership Takeaway

Commanders retain authority to manage duty assignments and performance issues. However, when adverse actions occur near the time of a protected communication, the situation requires careful coordination to ensure actions are not perceived as retaliation.

Key Principle

Actions affecting a member after a protected disclosure require heightened awareness and coordination.

Case Study 5 – Cadet Protection Violation Requiring Immediate Escalation

Scenario

A cadet reports to a squadron commander that a senior member has been sending the cadet private messages late at night discussing personal topics unrelated to CAP activities.

The cadet states the conversations make them uncomfortable.

The commander asks the senior member if they did this, and they affirm they did.

Commander Action

Recognizing that the situation involves a cadet protection violation, the commander does not attempt informal resolution.

Instead, the commander immediately follows CAPR 60-2 reporting requirements to report a cadet protection violation.

The matter is elevated for appropriate review.

Outcome

The situation is addressed through the appropriate cadet protection and oversight processes.

Leadership Takeaway

Some situations must bypass informal leadership correction. When cadet protection concerns are present, commanders must immediately follow mandatory reporting procedures rather than attempting to resolve the issue privately.

Key Principle

When cadet protection thresholds are met, commander discretion ends, and mandatory reporting begins.

Case Study 6 – "I'm Going to File an IG Complaint"

Scenario

During a leadership counseling conversation, a senior member becomes frustrated with feedback regarding missed suspenses and incomplete administrative tasks. The member responds by stating:

"If you continue down this path, I'm going to file an IG complaint."

The commander briefly considers ending the conversation, concerned that continuing the discussion could be interpreted as retaliation or discouraging IG access.

Commander Action

The commander calmly acknowledges the member's statement and reinforces that members always have the right to contact the Inspector General if they believe it is appropriate.

The commander then refocuses the conversation on the performance concern that prompted the discussion.

Example response:

"You can always contact the IG if you believe that's appropriate. My responsibility as your commander, however, is to address performance expectations within the unit. Let's return to the issue we're discussing and make sure expectations are clear moving forward."

The commander documents the counseling discussion in a brief memorandum summarizing the expectations and leadership conversation.

Outcome

The member later decides not to file an IG complaint and improves performance.

Even if the member filed a complaint, the commander's calm, professional response would demonstrate appropriate leadership engagement.

Leadership Takeaway

The possibility of an IG complaint does not prevent commanders from exercising normal leadership responsibilities. Commanders should never discourage IG access, but they should also not abandon legitimate leadership discussions simply because a complaint is mentioned.

Key Principle

Members always retain access to the IG system. Commanders remain responsible for leading and addressing performance concerns appropriately.

Case Study 7 – When Leadership Questions Become an Investigation

Scenario

A squadron commander receives reports that a senior member may have improperly used CAP equipment during a weekend activity.

Wanting to resolve the matter quickly, the commander begins asking several members detailed questions about what occurred. The commander also asks members to write statements describing the incident and begins reviewing emails and activity logs.

As the commander gathers information, conflicting accounts emerge regarding who authorized the equipment use and whether regulations were followed.

Commander Action

At this point, the commander recognizes that the effort has shifted from clarifying what occurred to determining responsibility and evaluating conflicting accounts.

The commander stops collecting statements and coordinates with wing leadership to determine whether the matter should be reviewed through the Inspector General system.

Outcome

The issue is referred appropriately for further review.

By pausing early, the commander preserves neutrality and avoids creating the perception of conducting an unauthorized investigation.

Leadership Takeaway

Commanders may conduct limited due diligence to determine whether an issue exists. However, when fact-finding involves conflicting testimony, credibility judgments, or formal statements, the commander risks unintentionally conducting an investigation.

Stopping early and coordinating protects the commander and the process's integrity.

Key Principle

Leadership clarification is appropriate. Investigations require proper authority and process.

Case Study 8 – Communication Before Documentation

Scenario

A wing commander was notified by the Director of Operations that an aircraft had experienced a hard landing resulting in a blown tire. Because the incident involved damage to the aircraft, it qualified as a Safety Significant Occurrence under CAPR 70-1. In accordance with CAP aviation regulations, the pilot's flying privileges were temporarily suspended pending commander review of the circumstances surrounding the event.

Commander Action

After discussing the incident with the Director of Operations, the commander initiated the suspension of the pilot's flying privileges. In accordance with CAPR 70-1, the commander prepared written notification informing the pilot of the suspension and the reason for the action.

However, before the commander could speak directly with the pilot about the incident, the written notification was issued. The pilot had not yet had an opportunity to discuss the circumstances of the event with the commander.

Outcome

When the commander and pilot eventually spoke, the pilot had already received the written notification and felt blindsided by the suspension of flight privileges. The pilot became upset, and the conversation quickly became heated on both sides. The situation nearly escalated into formal disciplinary action.

Upon reflection, the commander recognized that the lack of an early leadership conversation had contributed to the situation escalating. A direct conversation earlier in the process likely would have clarified the situation, preserved trust, and prevented the tension that followed.

Leadership Takeaway

When operational or safety policies require administrative action, commanders should still prioritize timely leadership conversations with the members involved. Early dialogue helps members understand the circumstances, maintains transparency, and reinforces trust between commanders and their teams.

Even when written documentation is required, direct communication remains an essential leadership responsibility.

Key Principle

Leadership conversation first whenever possible.

Administrative documentation may be required by our regulations, but timely leadership communication helps prevent misunderstandings, preserves trust, and supports accountability and professional development.

Case Study 9 – Early Intervention and Cadet Growth

Scenario

A cadet staff sergeant has recently become impatient with newer cadets during drill and leadership activities. While the cadet consistently performs well and demonstrates strong technical knowledge, several junior cadets have expressed concerns about being corrected dismissively.

The commander observes the behavior firsthand and notices that newer cadets appear reluctant to ask questions or seek assistance from the cadet leader.

Commander Action

Rather than immediately imposing restrictions or formal corrective measures, the Deputy Commander for Cadets meets privately with the cadet with the chaplain present to discuss the observed behavior and its impact on the team.

The DCP explains that effective leadership involves more than technical proficiency and discusses the difference between directing people and developing them. During the conversation, the DCP provides specific examples, listens to the cadet's perspective, and establishes clear expectations for future interactions with junior cadets.

The DCP also encourages the cadet to seek opportunities to mentor newer members and models constructive feedback techniques.

Outcome

Over the following weeks, the cadet's interactions with junior members improved significantly. Newer cadets became more engaged, morale improved, and the cadet leader began taking a more active role in mentoring and coaching others.

No formal disciplinary action, activity restrictions, or administrative intervention was required.

Leadership Takeaway

Many cadet issues are best addressed through timely leadership conversations that focus on growth, accountability, and skill development. Early intervention often prevents minor concerns from becoming larger problems while reinforcing the Cadet Program's educational mission.

Key Principle

The goal of progressive discipline is not simply to correct behavior; it is to develop better leaders.

Section 8 – Leadership Judgment, Escalation, and Responsibility

In This Section

- A Candid Leadership Reality
- Command Courage: The First Conversation
- Progressive Discipline as an Act of Stewardship
- Understanding the Moment When Leadership Must Yield
- Renewing Relationships After Corrective Action
- Judgment and the Responsibility That Remains

A Candid Leadership Reality

Progressive discipline is rarely difficult because commanders lack authority, tools, or guidance. It is difficult because it requires interacting with people and rendering judgment in situations that are incomplete, emotionally charged, and often personal. Commanders are asked to intervene early, before certainty exists, while also preserving fairness, dignity, and trust.

Many leadership challenges do not present themselves as clear violations or obvious misconduct. They emerge gradually, through patterns, tension, or subtle erosion of standards. Commanders may sense that something is wrong long before they can articulate it cleanly. Acting too slowly risks allowing the issue to harden. Acting too forcefully risks escalation, loss of trust, or unintended harm.

This tension is inherent in command. Guidance, templates, or perfect phrasing cannot eliminate it. It must be managed through experience, restraint, and an understanding that leadership decisions are often made in gray space.

This handbook does not promise certainty. It is intended to help commanders navigate that uncertainty with confidence, not avoidance.

Command Courage: The First Conversation

A leadership account published by the U.S. Naval Safety Command describes a Chief Petty Officer whose performance had fallen below expectations. He appeared satisfied with meeting only minimum requirements and showed little interest in improving. His Senior Chief recognized that allowing the pattern to continue would compromise both the standard and the Chief's development.

The Senior Chief initiated a direct conversation about the Chief's performance, the expectations of his position, and the gap between the two. That first conversation began five months of persistent coaching. The Senior Chief would not lower the standard, but he also would not abandon the Chief to failure. The process was demanding, and sometimes the Chief wanted to quit.

Eighteen months later, the two met again at another assignment. The Senior Chief had been promoted to Master Chief, while the Chief had become a Senior Chief and was thriving. The younger leader

credited his former Senior Chief's candid intervention and sustained coaching with changing how he understood leadership, performance, and responsibility.

The courageous act was not imposing a consequence or delivering a forceful reprimand. It was starting the conversation and staying committed to the individual's development even when it became difficult. The Senior Chief accepted that the relationship might become strained and that the Chief might choose to leave, but he did not allow those possibilities to excuse inaction or justify lowering the standard.

Commanders have the authority to make decisions within the limits of their role, but that authority carries the responsibility to lead with courage. Often, the first test of that courage is the willingness to tell a valued member what must change. The conversation should be fair, respectful, and grounded in observable conduct, but it must still occur. Commanders cannot control every outcome. They are responsible for addressing the concern, communicating the standard, and providing a meaningful opportunity for improvement.

Command courage is not aggression, certainty, or acting alone. It includes seeking advice, coordinating when required, listening with an open mind, and exercising restraint when circumstances warrant it. It also means accepting responsibility for both action and inaction when leadership is needed. Section 4 provides additional guidance for conducting the first conversation fairly and effectively.

Source: U.S. Naval Safety Command, Team and Unit Self-Assessment Playbook, pp. 34–35.

Progressive Discipline as an Act of Stewardship

Civil Air Patrol commanders lead civilian volunteers, not employees or members of the armed forces. Members freely contribute their time, talents, and experience, and that voluntary service deserves thoughtful, respectful leadership. Voluntary service, however, does not remove accountability. When joining CAP, senior members affirm that membership is a privilege, agree to be guided by CAP's Core Values and governing publications, and accept the decisions of those in authority.

Commanders also accept a corresponding responsibility: CAP Form 12 requires that applicants be introduced to CAP's Core Values and key policies, have the Oath of Membership reviewed with them, and receive a mentor to assist with orientation and training. Accountability therefore begins with clear expectations, proper orientation, and meaningful leadership, not merely correction. The volunteer nature of CAP calls for greater care in how concerns are addressed, but it does not require commanders to lower standards or avoid necessary action.

Commanders are best served when they act deliberately rather than defensively. Leadership decisions made early and documented with restraint are easier to explain, easier to defend, and more likely to withstand review than decisions made under pressure after problems escalate.

The organization is best served when discipline is applied consistently and transparently. When commanders respond proportionately before concerns escalate, fewer issues may reach the level of formal complaint or investigation. Trust in command authority increases, and the system functions as intended.

Seen this way, progressive discipline joins clear standards with proportionate leadership and strengthens accountability across the organization.

Understanding the Moment When Leadership Must Yield

Informal leadership correction has limits on what it can and should accomplish. Some matters require mandatory reporting, neutrality, independence, or formal safeguards. Other concerns may begin as leadership issues but evolve as facts become disputed, a complaint is raised, risk increases, or the commander becomes a potential witness.

Recognizing that transition is one of the most consequential judgments a commander makes. Continuing informal action beyond that point can blur roles, compromise neutrality, or interfere with an established process. When circumstances change, commanders should pause, coordinate with the appropriate office, and allow the proper process to determine what follows.

Yielding to an established process is not abandoning leadership responsibility. It is an exercise of restraint that protects the member, the commander, and the process's integrity. Although the commander may no longer direct the inquiry or determine the outcome, the responsibility to maintain appropriate communication, protect against retaliation, and support the unit remains.

Renewing Relationships After Corrective Action

When a concern has been addressed through leadership action, the commander’s responsibility does not end with the conversation or corrective measure. Follow-up helps determine whether expectations are understood, improvement is occurring, and additional support is needed. When a member responds constructively, commanders should acknowledge meaningful progress rather than allowing the original mistake to define every future interaction.

When the conduct does not prohibit membership as an ongoing safety, cadet protection, legal, ethical, or mission risk, members should have a reasonable opportunity to recover and rebuild trust. That does not require erasing what occurred, overlooking recurrence, or restoring responsibilities before the member is ready. It means evaluating the member based on what follows as well as what happened.

Reintegration may be as simple as resuming normal communication, including the member appropriately in unit activities, or providing a reasonable opportunity to contribute. The commander sets the tone. A member who has accepted responsibility and demonstrated improvement should not remain indefinitely isolated, diminished, or treated as though correction has no endpoint.

Judgment and the Responsibility That Remains

Commanders will not always have perfect information or complete control over the outcome. Sound judgment is reflected in whether the commander acted reasonably, proportionately, and within the limits of authority based on what was known at the time. It remains visible in measured communication, factual documentation, thoughtful coordination, and a willingness to adjust as circumstances change.

Responsibility may take different forms. In one situation, it requires stepping back so an established process can proceed independently. In another, it requires remaining engaged after corrective action, recognizing improvement, and helping a member rebuild trust. Neither escalation nor reintegration should occur automatically; each requires attention to the seriousness of the conduct, continuing risk, the member's response, and the needs of the unit.

Progressive discipline does not remove difficult decisions from command. It calls commanders to address concerns, respect appropriate limits, and remain accountable for the leadership climate that follows. That responsibility continues after the first conversation, after corrective action, and when the matter passes to another process.

Appendix A – When to Coordinate With the IG

This appendix provides a concise reference for commanders to identify situations that require coordination with the Inspector General (IG). It does not replace CAPR 20-1 or CAPR 20-2, create new thresholds, or limit command authority where leadership action remains appropriate.

Coordination with the Inspector General does not automatically result in an IG investigation. Coordination ensures that concerns are reviewed through the appropriate process and preserves the independence of the IG system should formal complaint analysis or investigative action later become necessary.

Coordination with the IG is required or appropriate when **any** of the following conditions are present:

1. **A protected communication has been made**
   Including the filing of an IG complaint, safety report, EO concern, or other protected disclosure, particularly when corrective or administrative action is contemplated in close proximity.
2. **Allegations involve retaliation or restriction of protected communication**
   Including perceived or alleged reprisal, abuse of authority, coercion, or intimidation related to a member raising concerns.
3. **Credible allegations involve fraud, waste, abuse, or serious misconduct**
   Including misuse of CAP resources, systemic noncompliance, or conduct beyond routine performance or professionalism issues.
4. **Cadet protection concerns or mandatory reporting thresholds are met**
   Including suspected abuse, boundary violations, criminal conduct, or any matter requiring immediate reporting under Cadet Programs or safety regulations.
5. **Facts are disputed, or neutrality is required**
   Including situations where the commander's role may shift from leader to witness, or where continued involvement could compromise independence or credibility.
6. **Patterns suggest systemic or organizational issues**
   Including repeated complaints involving similar conduct, multiple members raising related concerns, or failures extending beyond a single individual or unit-level correction.

When any of these conditions exist, commanders should coordinate through appropriate channels before proceeding with further inquiry. Commanders may still take necessary administrative actions to protect members, maintain good order, or manage operational risk while coordination occurs.

Appendix B – Illustrative Documentation Examples

The examples in this appendix demonstrate how the documentation principles discussed in this handbook may be applied. All names, units, CAP identification numbers, dates, and circumstances are fictional.

These examples are not prescribed language, mandatory formats, or required steps in a progressive discipline process. The appropriate document depends on the circumstances and the leadership purpose. Commanders should adapt the content to the facts, use the current version of any required form, and follow the governing requirements applicable to the action being considered.

The examples should not be interpreted as an automatic sequence. A commander would not ordinarily create multiple documents addressing the same conversation merely to build a record. The email-to-self and memorandum-for-record examples, for instance, illustrate alternative ways to document an informal leadership matter.

B-1. Informal Leadership Note — Email to Self

This example shows how a commander might document a routine leadership conversation shortly after it occurs. The email is a personal leadership note and is not sent to the member.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE — NOT A REQUIRED FORMAT

Subject: Leadership follow-up — monthly report suspense — 7 August 2026

On 7 August 2026 at approximately 1930, I spoke with Capt Jamie Carter regarding the unit logistics report due on 5 August. I confirmed earlier that the report had not been submitted.

Capt Carter explained that competing work obligations and difficulty accessing the reporting system contributed to the delay. I clarified that the report is due by the fifth of each month and asked to be notified before the suspense if assistance or additional time may be needed.

I offered to arrange assistance with the reporting system. Capt Carter agreed to submit the report by 1700 on 8 August and to notify me if I am unable to meet that commitment. I will follow up on 9 August.

B-2. Memorandum for Record

This example shows how a commander might prepare a fuller contemporaneous account of a significant leadership conversation. It is an alternative to the email-to-self in B-1, not an additional step or a document provided to the member.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE — NOT A REQUIRED FORMAT

[UNIT LETTERHEAD]

7 August 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

FROM: XX-000/CC

SUBJECT: Leadership Discussion Regarding Monthly Logistics Report

1. On 7 August 2026 at approximately 1930, I met with Capt Jamie Carter regarding the monthly logistics report due on 5 August. Before the meeting, I confirmed that the report had not been submitted.

2. Capt Carter explained that competing work obligations and difficulty accessing the reporting system contributed to the delay. I restated the reporting suspense and asked Capt Carter to notify me before the deadline when assistance or additional time may be needed.

3. I offered assistance with the reporting system. Capt Carter agreed to submit the report by 1700 on 8 August and to contact me if unable to meet that commitment. I will follow up on 9 August 2026.

JORDAN LEE, Major, CAP
Commander

B-3. Written Counseling Memorandum

This example illustrates written corrective communication after a concern continues following an earlier leadership discussion. It is intended to clarify the concern and expectations moving forward, not to impose a personnel action.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE — NOT A REQUIRED FORMAT

[UNIT LETTERHEAD]

7 September 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR Capt Jamie Carter, CAP

FROM: XX-000/CC

SUBJECT: Written Counseling Regarding Logistics Reporting Requirements

1. On 7 August 2026, we discussed the unit's monthly logistics reporting requirements after the August report was submitted after the established suspense. During that discussion, I clarified the reporting expectations and offered assistance with the reporting system.

2. The September report was due on 5 September and had not been submitted as of 7 September. You explained that work obligations again affected your ability to complete the report. I understand that volunteer and personal obligations can affect availability; however, when you anticipate being unable to meet a suspense, I expect you to notify me before the deadline so we can make appropriate arrangements.

3. Going forward, please submit the monthly logistics report by the established suspense or contact me in advance if circumstances may prevent timely completion. I remain available to assist with the reporting system or to identify additional support if needed. We will review this at our next scheduled staff meeting.

JORDAN LEE, Major, CAP
Commander

B-4. Letter of Concern

This example illustrates a more deliberate written response to a continuing concern or pattern. It remains corrective in purpose and does not constitute a personnel action.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE — NOT A REQUIRED FORMAT

[UNIT LETTERHEAD]

7 October 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR Capt Jamie Carter, CAP

FROM: XX-000/CC

SUBJECT: Letter of Concern Regarding Logistics Reporting

1. I am writing to express concern regarding the continued late submission of the unit's monthly logistics reports. We discussed the August reporting suspense on 7 August, and I provided written counseling following another missed suspense in September. The October report, due 5 October, had not been submitted as of 7 October.

2. I recognize that CAP service must be balanced with work and personal responsibilities. At the same time, timely reporting is part of your responsibility as the unit logistics officer. When circumstances prevent you from meeting a suspense, I expect you to notify me in advance so that we can arrange assistance or ensure the requirement is completed.

3. Going forward, I expect the monthly report to be submitted by the established suspense or for you to contact me before the deadline if you anticipate difficulty meeting it. Please let me know if additional assistance or resources would help you meet this expectation.

JORDAN LEE, Major, CAP
Commander

B-5. Letter of Reprimand

This example illustrates a Letter of Reprimand addressing a continuing pattern after prior leadership intervention. It communicates formal disapproval but does not itself impose a personnel action.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE — NOT A REQUIRED FORMAT

[UNIT LETTERHEAD]

7 November 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR Capt Jamie Carter, CAP

FROM: XX-000/CC

SUBJECT: Letter of Reprimand Regarding Logistics Reporting

1. This letter addresses the continued failure to meet the unit's monthly logistics reporting requirements. We discussed missed reporting suspenses in August, September, and October, including the expectation that you notify me in advance when you anticipate being unable to meet a deadline. The November report, due 5 November, had not been submitted or discussed with me as of 7 November.

2. Repeatedly missing an established suspense without advance communication affects the unit's ability to meet its responsibilities and requires other members to address work that should already be complete. I recognize that CAP members balance volunteer service with personal and professional obligations; when those obligations interfere with an assigned responsibility, timely communication is essential.

3. I am formally reprimanding you for this continuing pattern. Going forward, I expect assigned reports to be completed by the established suspense or for you to contact me beforehand when circumstances may prevent timely completion. If you need assistance or believe your current responsibilities should be reevaluated, I expect you to discuss that with me.

JORDAN LEE, Major, CAP
Commander

B-6. CAPF 2A — Personnel Action

This example illustrates completion of CAP Form 2A for a fictional personnel action. It is provided for instructional purposes only.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE — NOT FOR SUBMISSION.

REQUEST FOR AND APPROVAL OF PERSONNEL ACTIONS

I. PERSONAL DATA

Last Name First Name Middle Initial	CAPSN	Grade	Charter Number
BROOKS, TAYLOR R	123456	1ST LT	XXX-XX-000
Duty Assignment	**Wing**	**Unit Name**	
Safety Officer	XXWG	Sample Composite Squadron	

II. DUTY ASSIGNMENT/STATUS CHANGE (CAPR 35-1)

FROM: Active Status (Duty Title/Status) **TO** Suspended Status (Duty Title/Status)

Officers changing duty assignments must complete information on reverse.

III. AWARD OF ACTIVITY AND SERVICE RIBBONS (CAPR 39-3)

☐ AWARD ACTIVITY AND SERVICE RIBBON CHECKED BELOW: ☐ AWARD OF CLASP (For additional award)

☐ Command Service Ribbon	☐ National Cadet Competition Ribbon	☐ Cadet Orientation Pilot Ribbon
☐ Red Service Ribbon	☐ National Color Guard Ribbon	☐ Counter drug Ribbon
☐ "Find" Ribbon	☐ Cadet Advisory Council Ribbon	☐ Encampment Ribbon
☐ Air Search and Rescue Ribbon	☐ Cadet Community Service Ribbon	☐ Recruiter Ribbon
☐ Disaster Relief Ribbon	☐ Cadet Special Activities Ribbon	☐ A. Scott Crossfield Award
☐ IACE Ribbon	Other (Specify) _____	

IV. TRANSFER (CAPM 39-2)

FROM: _____ (Charter Number) **TO** _____ (Charter Number)

NOTE: The gaining unit commander should initiate the transfer form. The losing unit commander has 60 days after the transfer action appears on the Monthly Membership Listing to notify HQ CAP/DP if he/she disapproves of the transfer for any reason. In such cases, the transfer will be voided and the member returned to the losing unit.

V. RETIREMENT (CAPR 39-1)

The above named individual is eligible for retirement from Civil Air Patrol in accordance with CAPR 35-1. His/her period of CAP service is indicated below (if this period of service is not continuous, please explain in the remarks section.

FROM: _____ (Date) **TO** _____ (Date)

VI. REMARKS (use reverse side of form if additional space is required)

On 14 November 2026, 1st Lt Taylor R. Brooks notified the unit commander of an arrest and misdemeanor charge for driving under the influence. Effective 14 November 2026, 1st Lt Brooks is suspended from active status for 60 days in accordance with CAPR 35-1, paragraph 2-2a(4), as modified by ICL 24-03.

I certify that all pertinent directives have been complied with and that this action is in the best interest of Civil Air Patrol.

Unit Charter No. XXX-XX-000	**Signature of Requester**	**Typed Name and Grade of Requester** JORDAN LEE, Maj, CAP	
APPROVED ☒	**Signature of Flight/Squadron Commander**	**Flight/Squadron** Sample Composite Squadron	**Date**
APPROVED ☐	**Signature of Group Commander**	**Group**	**Date**
APPROVED ☐	**Signature of Wing Commander**	**Wing**	**Date**
APPROVED ☐	**Signature of Region Commander**	**Region**	**Date**

CAP FORM 2A, OCT 08 **PREVIOUS EDITION WILL NOT BE USED** **OPR/ROUTING: DP**

B-7. CAPF 40 — Performance Feedback

This example illustrates balanced performance feedback for a senior member. It recognizes strengths, identifies a meaningful development area, and establishes practical expectations for improvement.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE — NOT FOR SUBMISSION

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CAP PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK FORM

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION

NAME	CAPID	GRADE	UNIT
Alex Rivera	123456	Capt	XXX-XX-000

II. TYPE. (A) ☐ INITIAL ☒ ANNUAL ☐ SPECIAL (B) ☐ SELF REVIEW ☒ SUPERVISOR FEEDBACK

III. DUTY TITLE

Deputy Commander for Seniors

IV. PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK (Note: blocks checked below indicate how well the officer receiving feedback meets officer giving feedback's performance expectations. Raters **MUST** provide qualitative comments for each rating.)
DOES NOT MEET = Significantly failed to meet expectations; requires immediate corrective action.
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT = Performance does not meet some expectations; deficiencies exist that need improvement.
MEETS = Meets expectations, satisfactory performance relatively free of deficiencies.
EXCEEDS = Exceeds expectations; performance carried out in a superior manner.
FAR EXCEEDS = Performance is carried out in a far superior manner and is consistently of exceptional merit.

1. Job Knowledge. Has knowledge required to perform duties effectively. Strives to improve knowledge. Applies knowledge to handle non-routine situations.

Comments: ☐ Does Not Meet ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Meets ☒ Exceeds ☐ Far Exceeds

Demonstrates strong knowledge of assigned duties and CAP requirements. Seeks guidance when needed and shares knowledge with the staff.

2. Leadership Skills. Sets and enforces standards. Works well with others. Fosters teamwork. Displays initiative. Self-confident. Motivates subordinates. Has respect and confidence of subordinates and superiors. Fair and consistent in evaluation of subordinates. Complies with safety directives and fosters environment of safety.

Comments: ☐ Does Not Meet ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Meets ☒ Exceeds ☐ Far Exceeds

Leads respectfully, supports newer members, and addresses routine problems calmly. Builds trust within the staff.

3. Professional Qualities. Exhibits loyalty, discipline, dedication, integrity, honesty, and officership. Adheres to CAP standards. Accepts personal responsibility. Is fair and objective.

Comments: ☐ Does Not Meet ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Meets ☒ Exceeds ☐ Far Exceeds

Consistently demonstrates professionalism, integrity, and respect. Accepts responsibility and responds constructively to feedback.

4. Organizational Skills. Plans, coordinates, schedules and uses resources effectively. Meets suspense dates. Schedules work for self and others equitably and effectively. Anticipates and solves problems. Delegates effectively.

Comments: ☐ Does Not Meet ☒ Needs Improvement ☐ Meets ☐ Exceeds ☐ Far Exceeds

Occasionally takes on too many tasks personally. Earlier delegation and better suspense tracking would improve staff effectiveness.

5. Judgment and Decisions. Makes timely and accurate decisions. Emphasizes logic and information input in decision-making. Retains composure in stressful situations. Recognizes opportunities. Adheres to safety requirements. Acts to take advantage of opportunities.

Comments ☐ Does Not Meet ☐ Needs Improvement ☒ Meets ☐ Exceeds ☐ Far Exceeds

Exercises sound judgment in routine matters and appropriately seeks commander guidance when an issue exceeds delegated authority.

6. Communications Skills. Listens, speaks, and writes effectively.

Comments: ☐ Does Not Meet ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Meets ☒ Exceeds ☐ Far Exceeds

Communicates clearly and professionally. Encourages questions, listens to differing viewpoints, and keeps appropriate staff members informed.

7. Equipment and Resource Management. Ensures accountability for all aircraft, vehicles, communications and computer equipment.

Comments: ☐ Does Not Meet ☐ Needs Improvement ☒ Meets ☐ Exceeds ☐ Far Exceeds

Supports established accountability procedures and coordinates appropriately with staff responsible for unit resources.

8. Financial Management. Has solid understanding of financial management. Ensures fiscal accountability over corporate funds and solvency. Maintains strong financial internal controls and compliance with regulations.

Comments: ☐ Does Not Meet ☐ Needs Improvement ☒ Meets ☐ Exceeds ☐ Far Exceeds

Understands basic unit financial controls and appropriately coordinates financial matters with the finance officer and commander.

CAP FORM 40, APR 13 CONTINUED ON REVERSE PREVIOUS EDITION WILL NOT BE USED OPR/ROUTING: PD

V. OTHER FEEDBACK (To be completed ONLY by officer receiving feedback)

Communication, Mentoring, and Guidance. The officer giving feedback provides necessary support, information, resources and guidance so duties can be performed effectively. Raters **MUST** provide qualitative comments for each rating.

Comments: ☐ Does Not Meet ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Meets ☒ Exceeds ☐ Far Exceeds

Maj Lee provides clear expectations and is available when guidance is needed. I have been encouraged to make decisions within my responsibilities and to bring forward concerns or recommendations when appropriate.

VI. NARRATIVE (since last review)

1. CIVIL AIR PATROL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Comments:

Capt Rivera continued professional development during the review period and participated in Wing-level training relevant to assigned responsibilities. Rivera has also actively supported the development and integration of newer members.

2. ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND SUCCESSES

Comments:

Capt Rivera improved coordination among the unit staff, helped orient newly assigned staff members, and established a more consistent staff-meeting process. Rivera also stepped in effectively when additional leadership coverage was needed.

3. STRENGTHS

Comments:

Capt Rivera's principal strengths are professionalism, communication, approachability, and commitment to member development. Rivera builds trust and contributes positively to the command team.

4. SUGGESTED GOALS OR AREAS FOR CONCENTRATION/IMPROVEMENT

Comments:

Over the next 90 days, Capt Rivera should focus on delegation and suspense management. Maintain a single staff suspense tracker, review it weekly, assign recurring requirements early enough to allow follow-up, and notify the commander before a suspense when completion is at risk. We will review progress in 90 days.

VII. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Comments:

Capt Rivera is a valued member of the command team whose overall performance is strong. Improved delegation and suspense management will allow Rivera to focus more effectively on leadership and staff development while strengthening the unit's overall performance.

(OFFICER RECEIVING FEEDBACK) SIGNATURE	(OFFICER GIVING FEEDBACK) GRADE/NAME *(PRINT)*
DATE OF IN-PERSON DISCUSSION	(OFFICER GIVING FEEDBACK) SIGNATURE

HIGHER ECHELON REVIEW (POSITION/INITIALS): 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

B-8. CAPF 60-92 — Phase II Cadet Leadership Feedback

This example illustrates positive, constructive, and specific developmental feedback for a Phase II cadet.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE — NOT FOR SUBMISSION

CADET LEADERSHIP FEEDBACK - PHASE II

CADET'S NAME: Morgan Ellis | CAP GRADE: C/TSgt | INCLUSIVE DATES OF REVIEW: 1 February 2026 to 31 July 2026

For instructions, see reverse

CATEGORY	PERFORMANCE GOALS	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	SATISFACTORY	VERY GOOD	EXCELLENT
1. ATTITUDE	Maintains a positive attitude and encourages good attitudes in others; does not flaunt rank or authority	☐	☐	☑	☐
2. CORE VALUES	Displays a commitment to the Core Values; promotes team spirit, professionalism, and good sportsmanship as a team leader	☐	☐	☐	☑
3. COMMUNICATION SKILLS	Proficient in informal public speaking (ie: in giving directions to and training junior cadets)	☐	☐	☑	☐
4. SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY	Enforces standards; trustworthy in supervising a small team and leading them in fulfillment of a series of simple tasks; given a plan, is able to carry it out	☐	☐	☐	☑
5. INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS	Guides and coaches junior cadets; recognizes when junior cadets need help; leads by example; is not a "boss"	☐	☐	☑	☐

CADET'S PERSPECTIVES

The cadet described why they are proud of the following successes in the Cadet Program:

I am proud of helping newer cadets learn drill and prepare for promotion. I have also become more confident leading small groups.

The cadet described how they plan to improve their leadership skills in the following areas:

I want to give clearer instructions and become more comfortable correcting mistakes respectfully when I am leading other cadets.

LEADER'S PERSPECTIVES

The leader described why they are proud of the cadet for the following successes in the Cadet Program:

Morgan is dependable, leads by example, and regularly helps newer cadets. Morgan demonstrates strong Core Values and follows through on assigned responsibilities.

The leader described how the cadet can improve their leadership skills in the following areas:

Continue developing command presence. Give clear directions, check for understanding, and address problems promptly and respectfully rather than waiting for another l eader to step in.

PROMOTION APPROVED ☑ **SUSTAINED IN GRADE** ☐ **DATE OF NEXT REVIEW, IF SUSTAINED IN GRADE (WITHIN 6 WEEKS):**

EVALUATOR'S SIGNATURE & TITLE

Capt Avery Thompson, CAP, Deputy Commander for Cadets

CADET'S SIGNATURE & DATE

CAPF 60-92 October 2025 Previous editions may be used

B-9. CAPF 60-97 — Cadet Reset Agreement

This example shows a voluntary reset that establishes clear expectations, shared commitments, adult support, and a path back to successful participation.

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE — NOT FOR SUBMISSION

CIVIL AIR PATROL

CADET RESET AGREEMENT

A CADET'S SECTION

A1. CADET'S REQUEST

I, C/SSgt Jamie Morgan ask to "reset" my relationship with CAP. There's been a lot of turmoil lately. I want to earn an opportunity to get right with CAP. To show that I'm serious about this, I will pause my CAP involvement for 1 weeks. During that time, I'll reflect on my duties as a cadet and prepare myself for success.

A2. GOALS. My goals in CAP for the coming year include:

1. Earn my C/TSgt promotion this fall
2. Improve my attendance and become more dependable.
3. Be a positive leader for junior cadets.

A3. SELF-HELP. I will take the following steps to support my own success:

1. Check the squadron schedule each week.
2. Arrive on time and prepared for meetings.
3. Accept correction respectfully and ask questions when I do not understand.
4. Tell my parents or squadron leadership early if I cannot attend.

A4. ADULT SUPPORT. I ask for local leaders to support me in these ways:

1. Give me clear expectations and direct feedback.
2. Let me know when I am improving.
3. Give me a chance to discuss concerns privately.
4. Help me stay involved in squadron activities.

B ADULT LEADERSHIP'S SECTION

B1. OUR COMMITMENT

We affirm that we're cheering for you to succeed as a cadet. As your squadron leadership, we want to help you achieve your long-term goals as a cadet and a young adult. Here is some helpful feedback about your goals:

Your goal of earning C/TSgt this fall is achievable. Improving your attendance and dependability will help you get there. Your desire to be a positive leader for junior cadets is a strong goal, and we will give you opportunities to practice those leadership skills.

B2. OUR REQUIREMENTS

For this reset to work, we need you to know that the following items are "must do's" regarding your behavior.

1. Attend scheduled meetings and arrive on time.
2. Notify leadership before the meeting if you will be absent or late.
3. Follow instructions and respond to correction respectfully.
4. Bring concerns to an adult leader or cadet supervisor appropriately.

Our requirements, continued . . .

B3. FEEDBACK ON YOUR IDEAS

We've read what you've said in Parts A3 and A4, and offer this feedback:

Your plan to check the schedule, arrive prepared, communicate early, and respond respectfully to correction is a strong start. We will support you with clear expectations, private feedback, and opportunities to rebuild trust and practice leadership.

C NEXT STEPS TOGETHER

C1. PAUSE TO REFLECT & RECOMMIT

I, C/SSgt Jamie Morgan will voluntarily take 1 weeks off from CAP, beginning on 8/7/26.

During this time, I won't contact CAP members, except friends and classmates. I'll use the time to reflect upon the commitments I've made in this Reset Agreement.

I plan to return to CAP on 8/14/26.

I acknowledge that I have promised to do certain things listed in sections A3 and/or B2 to make that return possible. If I have not accomplished those tasks, I'll need to extend my reset for another 1 weeks.

C2. PRIVILEGES DURING THE PAUSE

During this reset period, no promotions will be awarded. Cadet C/SSgt Jamie Morgan will be eligible for a promotion on 9/13/26 assuming he or she fulfills the usual requirements.

It is conceivable that Cadet C/SSgt Jamie Morgan will need tore-earn the trust of his or her leaders by completing a second version of this agreement lasting 1 weeks to show that he or she is indeed deserving of a promotion.

C3. FOLLOW-UP CONVERSATION

We (squadron leadership and the cadet) agree to meet again on 8/14/26 to consider how both sides have performed through this agreement.

Squadron leaders expect that Cadet C/SSgt Jamie Morgan will find that they've done their best to support him or her. Likewise, squadron leaders will find that the cadet has honored this agreement and earned a fresh start in CAP, at his or her current grade.

If that has not been the case, the squadron may extend this reset period, pursue another type of progressive discipline, such as a demotion. Although CAP is working hard to avoid imposing the worst possible punishment – terminating the cadet's membership – that option remains available as a last resort.

C4. NEXT DECISION POINT On 8/14/26 squadron leadership may declare the reset a success. Alternatively, they may negotiate a new version of this agreement, wherein they'll challenge Cadet C/SSgt Jamie Morgan to work on one or two expectations that can support his or her own goals as a cadet. If a second agreement, is needed, it would begin immediately, without need for a second week of reflection.

THIS SPACE IS AVAILABLE FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

C/SSgt Jamie Morgan has expressed a sincere desire to make a fresh start and continue progressing in the Cadet Program. Squadron leadership believes C/SSgt Morgan can be successful by improving attendance, communicating early when challenges arise, accepting correction professionally, and continuing to develop as a leader. We are committed to providing clear expectations, constructive feedback, and appropriate opportunities for C/SSgt Morgan to rebuild trust and demonstrate continued growth. The purpose of this agreement is to provide a clear path forward and support C/SSgt Morgan's successful return to full participation in the squadron.

CADET'S SIGNATURE	DATE	SQUADRON COMMANDER'S SIGNATURE	DATE
PARENT'S SIGNATURE	DATE	OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL SIGNATURE	DATE

References

This handbook supplements, does not replace, existing Civil Air Patrol regulations, policies, and mandatory reporting requirements. Commanders must comply with applicable directives and consult the appropriate authority when formal processes, investigations, or protected matters are implicated.

Core Governance and Command Authority

- **Constitution and Bylaws of the Civil Air Patrol** (21 May 2025)
- **CAPR 30-1**, *Organization of Civil Air Patrol (13 January 2020), with applicable Interim Change Letters, including ICL 24-07 (7 October 2024)*

Inspector General, Complaints, and Equal Opportunity

- **CAPR 20-1**, *Inspector General* (30 September 2025)
- **CAPR 20-2**, *Complaints* (7 November 2025)
- **CAPR 36-1**, *Civil Air Patrol Nondiscrimination Program* (4 August 2016)

Personnel Actions and Membership

- **CAPR 35-1**, *Assignment and Duty Status (4 June 2015), with ICL 24-03 (22 August 2024)*
- **CAPR 35-3**, *Membership Termination (27 December 2012), including Change 1 and applicable Interim Change Letters*
- **CAPR 35-8**, *Membership Action Review Panel* (13 July 2020)
- **CAPR 39-2**, *Civil Air Patrol Membership* (18 August 2025), ICL 26-05 incorporated

Cadet Programs and Protection

- **CAPR 60-1**, *Cadet Program Management* (18 August 2025)
- **CAPR 60-2**, *Cadet Protection Program* (18 August 2025)

Operations and Safety

- **CAPR 70-1**, *CAP Flight Management (31 March 2020), with ICL 25-03, ICL 24-01, and ICL 20-08 attached and incorporated*

Legal and Ethical Standards

- **CAPR 1-1**, *Ethics Policy* (15 March 2012)
- **CAP Pamphlet 10-3**, *Legal Resources for Command* (18 November 2019)
- **CAPVA 160-200,** *NOC Reporting Workflow*

Forms and Supporting Documents

- **CAP Form 12**, Application for Senior Membership (September 2025)
- **CAPF 2A**, Request for and Approval of Personnel Actions

- **CAP Form 40**, CAP Performance Feedback Form (April 2013)
- **CAPF 60-92**, Cadet Leadership Feedback, Phase II (October 2025)
- **CAPF 60-97**, Cadet Reset Agreement (October 2021)

External Research-Informed Guidance (Non-Directive)

- Wilsbach, Kenneth S., Gen, USAF. First Letter to the Force (10 December 2025)
- U.S. Naval Safety Command. *Team and Unit Self-Assessment Playbook* (December 2024), pp. 34-35
- **Johns Hopkins University**. *Desktop Guide: Identifying and Responding to Concerning Youth Behaviors*

Precedence Statement

Where conflicts exist between this handbook and governing regulations, the controlling directive takes precedence. External and internal guidance listed herein is provided for contextual understanding and does not supersede Civil Air Patrol regulations or mandatory reporting requirements.