Recruit Company Mentor Guide

Coast Guard Training Center Cape May

**Introduction**

Thank you for volunteering to mentor a recruit company. We hope that you will find this to be a very rewarding experience. Your assistance in guiding the recruits and serving as a positive role model is certainly going to help shape our enlisted workforce of the future. This guide was designed to answer some of the more common questions associated with the Recruit Company Mentor position.

There is one Lead Company Commander (LCC) and two or three Assistant Company Commanders (ACCs) guiding each company. They will already have been notified that you are the Company Mentor. Every company has a mentor so they are well versed in your role and are looking forward to talking with you.

The CCs are experts at what they do and you are encouraged to ask them questions about their jobs, responsibilities, and techniques. We hope that you will find them to be as professional, sharp, and articulate as we do.

You may become as involved as you like as the Company Mentor. If you would like to arrive a day early, or spend more time the day of your visit, there are opportunities to shadow your company or have lunch with the company. We can also arrange a tour of the TRACEN should you desire it.

Recruits arrive at Cape May every Tuesday evening (40 weeks per year), and graduate on Friday morning seven and a half weeks later. Arriving groups of recruits are organized into companies of approximately 50-120 recruits that are designated with a letter and a number (i.e., A190, then B190…until Z190, then A191, etc.). You may have Reservists in addition to the regular Active Duty recruits in your company, as well as recruits with prior military experience.

The Training Center Battalion Officer will notify you of the scheduled dates for your visits and the LCC will contact you in advance to confirm your visit dates and times. You will also receive a read-ahead which will provide background information on the company, suggested discussion topics, and information on the types of classes the company has attended prior to your visit.

**First Visit – Week Two**

Your first visit will be scheduled for Training Day 11, which is the Saturday at the end of the second week of training. This day is firm due to the tight fit of the Recruit Training Schedule. You can expect the recruits to still be a bit confused and tired but extremely motivated and respectful.

You may wear the uniform of your choice (dress or ODU) for your visits, but keep in mind Cape May gets quite cold and windy in the winter. Recruits wear the ODU year round, except at graduation ceremonies.

Your spouse / family members are welcome to accompany you on your visits to Cape May, and are specifically invited to participate in the Week 8 Pizza Party and Graduation Ceremony; however, the actual Week 2 and Week 5 sessions with recruits are for the official mentor(s) only.

There is a VIP Room in the Permanent Party UPH that is available for the company mentors. The Lead Company Commander will assist you in reserving the room for each of your visits. If you have any questions or problems with rooms you should contact the Battalion Officer at (609) 898-6715.

The Battalion Officer can provide other lodging recommendations if you prefer, or you can visit [www.capemay.com](http://www.capemay.com) for information on other hotels in the area. The Angel of the Sea Bed & Breakfast, La Mer Hotel, and The Grand Hotel offer per diem rates if you tell them that you are in the Coast Guard. We also have Temp Quarters available on a case-by-case basis. You can check the availability for that via the MWR Staff at 609-898-6922. Remember that Cape May is a resort town and books solid in the summer, so make your reservations early.

All of your talks will be held in a classroom or small auditorium for the larger companies. The CCs will not attend – it will be just you and the recruits for about 2 hours. What you choose to talk about is your decision, but your CCs will provide recommendations on suggested topics prior to your visit. More important than the topics you will cover is your appearance, demeanor, and mannerisms. They will notice everything that you do and say – what a great time for you to make a positive impression on the future of the Coast Guard!

Additionally, please do not bring snacks (i.e., candy, chips, cookies) or newspaper/magazines for distribution during your mentor visits. These items are prohibited by the Recruit rules and regulations and the Recruit Training SOP; offering these items puts the recruits in an uncomfortable situation where they do not want to break the rules, but also would like to have those items. Your intentions may be good, but we all need to be on the same team following the guidelines we set for the recruits.

**Suggested discussion topics**: The recruits will view your visit as a welcomed relief from the rigors of training, but at this point may be hesitant to ask a lot of questions. Suggested topics for discussion are: Your CG experiences, Future of the CG, Overcoming Challenges, CG Missions, Family/Work Life, or any other appropriate topic. A crucial part of this first visit is lifting the spirits of the recruits. Many of them will be questioning their decision to join and whether they still want to be here. Your guidance and motivation will certainly help them

After your first visit, you can communicate with the CCs as much as you like via email. Your visits are important to the training and the CCs will usually “build you up” to the recruits as they look forward to your next visit.

Currently there is a support network outside of the TRACEN staff that creates a Facebook page for each company (naming convention is “USCG company name”, e.g. “USCG Bravo 191”). Mentors are encouraged to join the company page and use this tool to communicate with the families and friends of recruits. Any questions about how to appropriately use social networking as a mentor should be addressed to the Battalion Officer.

**Second Visit – Week Five**

The second visit is scheduled for the Saturday at the end of Training Week 5. The recruits will have received their orders by then and completed many other milestones that will probably form the basis of their questions for you. Please make sure to confirm the date and time of your visit with the CCs.

Since your last visit, it is not uncommon for some recruits to have been discharged or rephrased/reverted to another company. Likewise, there may be a few recruits who just joined the company and may not have been present for your first visit.

You are also invited to observe/participate in the Confidence Course and eat lunch with the company prior to your mentor session. The Confidence Course is physically demanding, so we ask that you frankly assess your fitness level and use your best judgment when deciding whether to participate, especially if you have had a recent injury.

**Suggested discussion topics**: First unit reporting, how to succeed in your first assignment, career progression, Careers (Afloat, Aviation, Station, Sector etc.) or any other appropriate topic. Additionally, we ask that you discuss and emphasize the importance of following the Coast Guard’s HAZING policy. Again, the content of your discussions will be up to you and the recruits. They will likely be much more comfortable during this visit and usually more talkative. Many of the questions they ask will relate to the orders that they have just received; encourage the recruits to bring specific orders/travel questions to the attention of the Servicing Personnel Office/chain of command. Ask the CCs for an update on their performance and progress before you begin so that you can be in concert with the CCs.

At this point in their training, things have changed considerably. Recruits with irresolvable performance or discipline issues have departed the company and the remaining recruits should be focused and somewhat anxious about their first units.

**Third Visit – Week 8/Graduation**

The primary purpose of the third mentor visit is to participate in the graduation ceremony. Graduation is almost always held on Friday of Week 8, though the date may fluctuate if the graduation falls on or near a holiday. The uniform for graduation is either Service Dress Blue (01 Nov – 31 Mar) or Tropical Blue (01 Apr – 31 Oct) with Combination Cap. As before, your appearance should set a good example for the recruits. Be sure to confirm the graduation date and uniform in advance with the Battalion Officer or Company Commander.

The recruits have a Company Pizza Party on the evening before graduation beginning at 1700 at the Oceanside Club. They relax and sometimes perform skits about other recruits or the Company Commanders during this time. You and your family are invited to attend; contact the Lead Company Commander for details on this event. After the pizza party, you are welcome to attend the Recruit Family Meet and Greet held at the Harborview Club. This is a chance for the recruit families to meet each other and ask questions of the command, mentors, and Company Commanders.

The Commanding Officer requests that you pay a courtesy call at the front office between 0945-1000 on the day of Graduation (Contact Mrs. Tina (Celestine) Walker at (609) 898-6901).

After meeting with the CO, he will accompany you to a briefing for parents in the Ida Lewis Auditorium. The CO and CMC will address the parents and introduce you to the families. The CO will then escort you to Graduation.

The Battalion Officer will give you a short briefing about the ceremony before it begins. Basically, you should follow the Training Center Commanding Officer throughout the ceremony. Remember your customs and courtesies: when walking or standing shoulder-to-shoulder with a senior, the senior is always on the right. Key events are the entrance, presentation of awards, your speech, and the presentation of graduation certificates.

Although Senior Officers and VIPs sometimes attend graduations, the mentor is typically the guest speaker. Your speech should be short: 3 to 5 minutes is appropriate. What works well is a welcome to the families, congratulations to the graduates, and one key ‘take away.’

Mentor speeches typically begin with an opening line such as, “Captain <name, CO>, Commander <name, XO>, Commander <name, Training Officer>, distinguished guests, Coast Guard friends and families, and the men and women of recruit company <your company’s name>.”

After graduation you will have an opportunity to say good-bye to the recruits and CCs as the graduates meet with their guests. The graduation ceremony is your last commitment on board TRACEN.

Thank you for your contributions to this important training program. We ask for your assistance in spreading the word about the Company Mentor Program and helping us to identify and encourage sharp enlisted personnel, E-5 through E-7, to become Company Commanders.

**After Graduation**

We encourage you to continue to mentor your company following graduation. Their first unit, be it “A” School, or an active duty or reserve unit, is a very formative period where the new apprentices should have ample opportunities to reinforce what they learned in Recruit Training. You will be provided a roster of your company and their first units to assist you with keeping in touch.