

# **Public Affairs Officer**

## **Specialty Track Study Guide**

CIVIL AIR PATROL NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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## Preface

This pamphlet describes the Public Affairs 201 Specialty Track. It will prepare members for the responsibilities of a Civil Air Patrol Public Affairs Officer (PAO). It also enables a candidate to learn more about CAP's public affairs programs, improve proficiency, and achieve the next rating. The specialty track is divided into three ratings: technician, senior, and master. The specific requirements for each are discussed in this pamphlet. Training in this specialty track may be ideally accomplished under the guidance of a higher-rated PAO mentor or completed independently.

If possible, the unit will assign an on-the-job supervisor to assist members. If the unit cannot assign an OJT supervisor, the member must learn the job through self-study and performance. The wing PAO should assist in the training of group and squadron PAOs.

The member and OJT supervisor will determine the level of competence at each level. When the member reaches the desired level of competence for the completion of a level, the unit commander will then certify proficiency in the member's personnel records and with National Headquarters through eServices. Completion of each rating is a requirement for promotion. Complete promotion criteria are listed in CAPR 35-5, *CAP Officer and Noncommissioned Officer Appointments and Promotions*, and CAPR 40-1, *CAP Senior Member Education & Training Program*.

Feedback on the contents of this study guide should be directed to CAP National Headquarters Public Affairs (NHQ/PA).

### ***Prerequisites Required Before Entry into the Track***

The candidate must have completed Level 1 before entering this specialty track.

### **Training Objectives**

The objectives for the Public Affairs Officer specialty track are to:

- Develop a highly motivated and trained public affairs officer who will conduct and promote an effective program.
- Perform the duties and tasks associated with squadron, group, wing, and region PAO positions.
- Possess a comprehensive knowledge of Civil Air Patrol and the PAO program.

To progress in the specialty track, members must demonstrate certain knowledge, skills, and abilities comprising the following requirements:

- Knowledge Requirements are objectives describing what each candidate is expected to know to attain the rating. An online or paper test is the primary method by which candidates demonstrate their knowledge of the material. The exams are open book with no time limit and the passing score is 80%.
- Training Requirements are objectives that require the candidate to learn systems and processes.
- Performance Requirements are objectives describing what each candidate is expected to complete through active participation to attain the rating.
- Service Requirements require that candidates serve in a certain area for a specified amount of time to receive the rating.

## **Guidance for On-the-Job Training (OJT) Supervisors and Unit Commanders**

The OJT supervisor plays an important role in the success of the PAO in training. These senior member officers, in partnership with the unit's commander, guide the candidate through the knowledge, training, performance, and service requirements for the rating the candidate is pursuing.

Once the OJT supervisor is satisfied that the candidate has met all the requirements for the rating, they and the candidate notify the unit commander.

When the commander is satisfied that the candidate can perform to the level applied for and has met the service requirements, they record completion of the rating in eServices.

### ***Awards, Badges, & Ribbons***

Upon earning a PAO technician rating, a member qualifies to wear the Leadership ribbon as well as the basic PAO specialty badge. At the completion of the senior rating, a bronze star is added to the ribbon and the PAO badge with star is awarded, and at the master rating the bronze star is replaced by a silver star on the ribbon, and the PAO badge with wreath and star is awarded.

## Achieving the Technician Rating

The technician rating is the entry level into the CAP Public Affairs program. It is designed to encourage those assigned to the PAO track to seek to develop the basic professional skills necessary to implement a beginning program of community relations, media relations, and internal information activities.

### ***Position Description***

The public affairs officer trainee (PAO) at the technician level is expected to:

- Act as the advisor to the commander on public affairs matters.
- Implement and manage the public affairs program.
- Conduct internal and external public affairs activities, including, but not limited to news releases (with photos), event promotions, and response to media requests.
- Write pertinent, interesting, and timely articles about unit activities and people, which reflect CAP locally and nationally in a positive light.

### ***Knowledge, Training and Performance Requirements***

PAOs at all levels should review regularly and become familiar with:

- [CAP Brand Portal](#): For properly using CAP brand elements and style guidelines.
- [Public Affairs Resources](#): A regularly updated list of publications, templates, fact sheets, and other information for use by PAOs.

Complete the items in the following checklist.

## Technician Level Training Checklist

<b>Knowledge, Training and Performance Requirements</b>	<b>OJT Initials and Date</b>
Participate in at least one public affairs planning session quarterly with the unit commander and/or command staff.	
Contact the next higher echelon PAO to introduce yourself; review procedures, policies, and training opportunities; and be assigned a mentor.	
Describe through specific examples how you successfully fulfilled the duties listed in the position description in the technician section of this pamphlet.	
Attend a minimum of one public affairs workshop/seminar/academy or two (2) non-CAP public affairs training activities.	
Serve as lead PAO for two of the following CAP activities: (including, but not limited to an encampment, a change of command ceremony, dining out, open house, promotion/award ceremony, fundraising activity, training exercise, color guard competition or event, and Spaatz, Earhart, Mitchell or Wright Brothers Award ceremony, etc.)	
Reference the National Headquarters Public Affairs Resources and the Brand Portal contents monthly for updated materials.	
Demonstrate the ability to write a properly formatted news release using Associated Press style, CAP house style, and accepted industry practices.	
Demonstrate the ability to write a short news story suitable for publication at the wing, region, or national level, using Associated Press style, CAP house style, and accepted journalistic practices.	
Successfully serve for a minimum of 6 months as an assistant or primary public affairs officer. Service may combine assistant or primary experience.	
Successfully complete the online <a href="#">CAPP 201</a> test for technician rating.	

Candidate's Name \_\_\_\_\_

(Last, First, M.I.)

CAP Grade \_\_\_\_\_ CAPID \_\_\_\_\_ Unit Charter No. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Commander's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Achieving the Senior Rating**

The senior rating is the intermediate progressive level of the CAP public affairs program. It is designed to build on previously learned skills and to continue to expand personal and quality performance as a public affairs officer as they relate to community relations, media relations, internal relations, internet communications, online presence management, and mission participation, and as liaison with other organizations and agencies.

### ***Position Description***

The Public Affairs Officer (PAO) at the senior level is expected to:

- Perform the duties of a lead public affairs officer.
- Design public affairs programs and strategies.
- Work with wing, region, and national PA to develop communications strategies to share key messages with targeted internal and external audiences.

### ***Knowledge, Training, and Performance Requirements***

To complete the senior level of this specialty track, the member must demonstrate knowledge of CAP's PAO functions. As a minimum, a senior rated Public Affairs Officer should complete the items in the attached checklist.

## Senior Level Training Checklist

Knowledge, Training, and Performance Requirements	OJT Initials and Date
Complete Level II of the CAP Education & Training Program.	
Demonstrate ability to keep current in knowledge, policies, procedures, and requirements within the PAO specialty, including photography, social media, documentation and brand usage.	
Describe through specific examples how they successfully fulfilled the duties listed in the position description located in the senior section of this pamphlet.	
If assigned to an echelon above the squadron, contact subordinate unit PAOs to offer assistance and review procedures, policies, training opportunities, and mentoring.	
Maintain contact with higher-echelon PAO and keep current with NHQ, region, and wing procedures, policies, training opportunities, and mentoring.	
Follow established guidelines published on the CAP Brand Portal.	
Participate in at least one public affairs planning session quarterly with the unit commander and/or command staff (since being awarded the technician level).	
Give a minimum of two CAP presentations to non-CAP groups or organizations.	
Reference the National Headquarters Public Affairs Resources and the Brand Portal contents monthly for updated materials.	
Produce four additional short news stories suitable for publication at the wing, region, or national level, using Associated Press style, CAP house style, and accepted journalistic practices. Stories may be published on the wing website, a submitted news release, a submission to CAP.news, or social media channel content.	
Arrange and assist in coordination and implementation of two open houses or other Civil Air Patrol special events.	
Manage the online presence of the PA section of the unit's website and authorize social media accounts that are publicly accessible.	
Successfully serve for a minimum of 12 months as a Public Affairs Officer at the technician level.	

Successfully complete the online [CAPP 201 test for senior rating](#).

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Candidate's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last, First, M.I.)

CAP Grade \_\_\_\_\_ CAPID \_\_\_\_\_ Unit Charter No. \_\_\_\_\_

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Commander's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Achieving the Master Rating**

The master rating is the highest level of achievement for the CAP Public Affairs Officer. This level is the culmination of the professional skills learned and demonstrated to maximize CAP's public relations strategies as they relate to community relations, media relations, internal relations, internet communications, and liaising with partner agencies.

### ***Position Description***

The Public Affairs Officer (PAO) at the master level is expected to:

- Implement PAO activities and duties at the wing, region, or national level.
- Act as the primary advisor to the commander with regard to public relations and crisis management communications.
- Develop high-quality messaging, such as articles for digital and/or print publications, news releases, and social media channel content, that adheres to published style and brand guidelines.
- Mentor junior public affairs officers in their primary training.
- Share their skills in the training environment.

### ***Knowledge, Training, and Performance Requirements***

To complete the master level of this specialty track, the member must have earned the 201 senior rating, demonstrated in-depth knowledge of CAP's PAO programs, and be prepared to recommend Public Affairs policy to commanders. It prepares PAOs for positions from the squadron to the region level. This master rating may fulfill one requirement for completing CAP Level IV, Senior Member Education & Training Program. Complete all the items in the attached checklist.

## Master Level Training Checklist

Knowledge, Training, and Performance Requirements	OJT Initials and Date
Complete Level III of the Education & Training Program.	
Act as PAO at a wing or region conference, OR provide public affairs training at a group or higher activity.	
If primarily assigned at an echelon above the squadron level, contact subordinate unit PAOs to offer assistance and review procedures, policies, training opportunities, and mentoring.	
Maintain contact with higher echelon PAO and keep current with NHQ, region and wing procedures, policies training opportunities, and mentoring.	
Demonstrate the ability to analyze current events and trends as it relates to CAP and advise the commander as to appropriate public relations actions.	
Lead at least two public affairs planning sessions with the commander and/or command staff (since being awarded the senior rating).	
Arrange and assist in coordination and implementation of two open houses or other Civil Air Patrol special event.	
Produce four additional short news stories suitable for publication at the wing, region, or national level, using Associated Press style, CAP house style, and accepted journalistic practices. Stories may be published on the wing website, a submitted news release, a submission to CAP.news, or social media channel content.	
Mentor a member through the technician or senior rating in the PAO specialty track.	
Successfully serve for a minimum of 18 months as a Public Affairs Officer at the senior level.	
Successfully complete the online <a href="#">CAPP 201 test for master rating</a> .	

Candidate's Name \_\_\_\_\_

(Last, First, M.I.)

CAP Grade \_\_\_\_\_ CAPID \_\_\_\_\_ Unit Charter No. \_\_\_\_\_

Commander's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_