

CIVIL AIR PATROL

FIRST TALK

— GUIDE —



CAPP 60-14
May 2025



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SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This publication replaces CAPP 60-14, First Talk Guide, February 2018. Substantive changes made since previous edition, primarily in the transition to behavioral-based interview questions. A complete read is recommended prior to the use of the pamphlet.

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Part 1 INTRODUCTION

The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) First Talk Guide is a structured interview tool designed to assess adult applicants seeking to join as senior members, and it plays a fundamental role in the organization's abuse prevention strategy. By incorporating behavioral-based interview questions, the guide helps screen for attitudes, values, and past behaviors that align with Civil Air Patrol's commitment to safety and ethical conduct. Rather than focusing solely on qualifications, these questions probe how applicants have handled challenging situations, set boundaries, and demonstrated responsibility in youth-serving or similar roles. This consistent, values-driven interview approach helps identify individuals who are likely to create a safe, respectful environment and filters out those who may pose a risk. As a critical safeguard within the Cadet Protection Program, the First Talk Guide supports CAP's mission to maintain a culture of safety and trust, that prioritizes youth protection throughout the organization.

1.1 Briefing for the Unit Commander

Squadrons screen prospective senior members and cadet sponsor members via an interview process. Interviews are especially important for cadet protection purposes. This guide includes carefully designed questions to help you make an informed decision about newcomers' membership applications. When your unit membership board conduct interviews, you help ensure that you're "hiring" the people who bring positive attitudes and wholesome life experiences, which can only make CAP safer for cadets. The four steps for commanders take

- **Establish a Local Interview Procedure.** Unit commanders delegate the interview task to a unit membership board, outlined in CAPR 39-2, *Civil Air Patrol Membership*. Interviewers should not be related to the newcomer nor be that newcomer's recruiter.
- **Ensure the Interviews Operate Properly.** Ensure the membership board reads and understands this *First Talk Guide*, and CAPR 39-2. Interviews should be conducted on an as-needed basis, but not longer than 30 days after the applicant submits a completed CAPF 12 to the unit.
- **Receive the Interviewer's or Board's Recommendation.** Following the interview, the interviewer or board provides their recommendation, but the final decision on membership is the unit commander.
- **Act on the Application.** After the interview, decide whether to approve the newcomer's membership application or not. Either sign the completed CAPF 12 and match the newcomer with a mentor to help him or her get started in CAP or announce your decision to disapprove the application. When you endorse a membership application, NHQ processes it, and a criminal background check is conducted before membership is officially approved. See CAPR 39-2, *Civil Air Patrol Membership* for details.
 - If you disapprove of a membership application, it is recommended that you or a member of your staff communicate that decision to the applicant via email.

1.2 Briefing for the Membership Board

The goal of this in-person interview process is to select the best possible people for CAP service and to screen out individuals who have sexually abused youth or are at risk to abuse. This interview process is in place primarily because of our Cadet Program. While many adults join CAP with no desire to work with cadets, we screen all prospective senior members because they can nevertheless encounter cadets,

and because their CAP interests may grow to include frequent interactions with cadets. A suggested process is featured below.

- **Use a Trial Period.** Prospective senior members and cadet sponsor members attend a few meetings before formally applying for membership. As an important note, these prospective applicants may not be left alone or supervise cadets – they are to be treated as guests or visitors and escorted by a current member the entirety of their visit.
- **Allow the Prospective Member to Apply.** Have applicants submit their completed CAPF 12 application to a designated individual such as the personnel officer.
- **Explain the Process.** The personnel officer should then explain to the applicant that CAP conducts a brief, in-person interview.
 - Inform the applicant of the date of the interview.
 - Provide the applicant with the “CAP Core Values for Adult Member Applicants” (Attachment 2) and ask them to read it before the interview.
 - Provide the Unit Membership Board chair with the completed application.
- **Interview the Applicant.** Conduct the interview in a quiet, private setting, preferably in an office behind closed doors. With the CAPF 12 in-hand, work through this guide’s interview questions. The applicant may have already answered some of those questions via the CAPF 12; if so, rephrase the prepared questions and simply discuss the information on the form (e.g.: “I see you’re employed at Acme. What do you do there? . . .”)
- **Make a Recommendation.** After the applicant departs from the interview, consider his or her responses, in light of the “positive answers” and “warning signs” listed throughout this guide, and then make your recommendation to the commander.

Part 2 **INTERVIEW PROCESS**

This guide is presented in a script-like format, but the actual interview should be cordial and conversational in tone. Interviewers should use only these interview questions, which have been vetted by legal counsel. Interviewers are especially cautioned not to ask about nor make membership recommendations based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or disability. For an easy to use reference sheet with questions only, please see Attachment 1.

2.1. Opening Remarks

The following remarks introduce the applicant to the membership process, in addition to providing a short introduction to CAP as a whole.

Question/Statement

Hello! Thank you for your interest in joining CAP. As part of our membership process, all prospective adult members go through an interview process, paired with an FBI criminal background screening. As a volunteer-led organization serving communities across the nation, it is imperative that our volunteers are of the highest quality to lead our aviation, aerospace, STEM, emergency services, and cadet programs. This is an opportunity for us to get to know you, your values, priorities, and relevant experiences, and for you to get to know our organization, so all parties’ expectations can be met. As a youth-serving organization, protecting and prioritizing cadets’ (youth from 12 to 21) safety is a duty we

take very seriously, so there will be several opportunities to share your experience and interest in working with youth. Our discussion should take about 15 minutes.

2.2. Respect for Privacy

As an organization, CAP is committed to a fair and confidential membership screening process.

Question/Statement

What is discussed during this membership application interview is confidential. We do not share this information with the other members, only with our unit commander (name) and National Headquarters. We do reserve the right to contact your references.

2.3. Scope

This statement introduces the focus of the interview and helps to keep the conversation short but impactful – with other mission-specific questions asked at a later time. The goal of this process is to hear directly from the applicant, not to provide detailed information about CAP.

Question/Statement

At a later time, the unit commander (or designee) will answer any program specific questions you may have as to how you personally can get involved in a mission area. You'll be paired with a mentor to help you get started and to complete the required training. For now, our purpose is limited to discussing your membership eligibility.

2.4. Questions

Rooted in best practices for youth-serving organizations, these interview questions (see Table 2.4) support local membership boards in evaluating the suitability of applicants to work in environments that prioritize youth safety.

The questions listed in the table have been thoughtfully revised to:

- Encourage open, conversational responses through behavioral and reflective prompts,
- Align with CAP's five-pillar Cadet Protection Strategy (screening, standards, monitoring, reporting, training),
- Identify both positive indicators and potential red flags in an applicant's background, motivation, and judgment.

Each row includes:

- A Question designed to elicit meaningful insights,
- Examples of Positive Answers that align with CAP's core values,
- Potential Red Flags to be mindful of, and
- Notes offering context on why the question is included and how it supports applicant screening.

This tool is not a checklist of pass/fail items but a **conversation framework** to help membership boards listen for relevant behavioral patterns, clarify inconsistencies, and make well-informed decisions about applicant suitability. After the interview, panel members should debrief and document key takeaways

(see Attachment 1 for a reference). Above all, the interview should feel respectful, thoughtful, and professional: setting the tone for the high standards and strong community that define Civil Air Patrol.

Table 2.4. Interview Questions

Question	Positive Answers	Potential Red Flags	Notes
<i>What interested you in joining CAP?</i>	Expresses an interest in public service, aviation, youth mentorship, leadership development, or emergency services.	Overly vague answers; answers focused primarily on access to youth or authority.	Helps assess motivation and alignment with CAP's values.
<i>CAP takes cadet/youth protection very seriously. Additionally, due to our close partnership with the Air Force, we must safeguard our assets and reputation. We require all active adult members to be screened, vetted, and trained. Our background screening requires an FBI-level fingerprint screening to check your criminal record for past arrests or convictions of record regarding any applicant. We require annual training regarding cadet protection.</i> <i>Individuals cannot join if they have any active criminal charges, or convictions that involve violence, sexual assault, or child abuse. Are you currently awaiting adjudication for any criminal charges?</i>	Clearly states no pending charges or relevant history; understands and supports the emphasis on youth protection.	Evasive responses; minimizing seriousness of charges; any admission of relevant convictions.	Serves as both a disclosure and educational moment about CAP's screening standards.
<i>Tell me more about your hobbies or personal interests. What about when you were a child, what did you enjoy doing?</i>	Answers openly; shares hobbies that suggest healthy social behavior and self-awareness; reflects comfortably on childhood.	Avoids sharing; shares interests that raise concern (e.g., violent or inappropriate content); overly fixated on youth-oriented activities.	Opens rapport and encourages storytelling, creating opportunities for deeper insight.
<i>Moving on from personal interests...I'm interested in learning more about your job. How long have you been employed there? What did you do before that?</i>	Provides clear, continuous employment history; speaks respectfully about previous roles.	Spotty or inconsistent work history; evasiveness about gaps; negative talk about employers.	Can reveal stability and patterns of responsibility or instability.

<i>Describe your experience with CAP, or another civic (volunteer) organization. Could another organization give you a reference?</i>	Speaks positively about civic involvement; references available; demonstrates commitment to service.	Can't name references; has left prior orgs under unclear or negative circumstances.	Looks for patterns of service and ability to work in structured environments.
<i>If no prior CAP experience: Our national headquarters keeps extensive records... You aren't a former member, or applied before, even in another state?</i>	Confirms no prior application or explains clearly any past involvement.	Denies prior application or involvement despite records; avoids question.	Useful to identify any applicants trying to rejoin under questionable pretenses.
<i>Describe the kind of reference you would receive from [civic/volunteer organization]. Is there anyone who would not agree with this reference, particularly in working with youth? Why?</i>	Acknowledges past feedback constructively; shows insight and growth.	Defensive, blames others; avoids question.	Encourages self-reflection and honesty without being accusatory.
<i>Would you have concerns with us reaching out to speak to one of the leaders/officers at the [organization]?</i>	Open and supportive of contacting references; provides clear contact info.	Hesitant or resistant to reference checks.	Assesses openness and past conduct.
<i>Think of a time when you encountered a rule or policy that you disagreed with. How did you approach the situation?</i>	Describes respectful, professional disagreement; shows understanding of rules and process.	Describes breaking rules, manipulating situations, or retaliating.	Assesses ethical reasoning and ability to operate within structured systems.
<i>Tell me about your experience working with young people, especially if you've taught or mentored youth before.</i>	Demonstrates appropriate experience and boundaries; enjoys working with youth in a structured setting.	Minimal experience or shows poor understanding of adult/youth boundaries.	Offers insight into expectations and past behavior in youth environments.
<i>Now tell me about an adult mentor or teacher you had growing up. What made them so impactful to you?</i>	Describes a healthy, respectful relationship with clear boundaries.	Describes an inappropriate or boundary-blurring relationship.	Reveals internalized models for mentorship.
<i>I'm interested in learning more about which age/gender you worked with previously. How do you feel about</i>	Comfortable working with all youth; acknowledges	Expresses discomfort or shows bias toward working	Ensures emotional safety for diverse cadets.

<i>working with youth who are (older/younger, different gender)?</i>	differences and need for adaptation.	with certain age/gender groups.	
<i>If interested in Emergency Services or Aerospace Education: Please share some more details about why you want to assist in our [insert specific area] mission?</i>	Expresses desire to serve, help others, and contribute meaningfully.	Focuses only on personal gain or status.	Reinforces CAP's mission-driven culture.

2.5. Reflections

Hypothetical Scenarios have been replaced by behavioral questions focused on reflection and previous action, rather than intention.

Reflection #1: Interruptions

Research regarding abuse prevention in youth-serving organizations shows us that asking applicants to speak to their prior behavior, rather than future intentions, is a more accurate indicator of potential red-flags or warning signs.

- For applicants indicating experience with cadets/youth: Tell me about a time or situation when a cadet or youth felt like you were interfering or disrupting their activity/class and then responded rudely, using foul language. How did you handle the situation? What would you have done differently?
- For applicants not indicating experience with youth: Tell me about a time at your job when a member on your team felt like you were interfering or disrupting their work and responded rudely. How did you handle the situation? Now understanding cadets are teenagers, not adults, what would you do differently in a similar situation?

Reflection #2: Boundaries

Boundaries, and understanding of boundary violations are fundamental to preventing abuse in the cadet program. This is an opportunity to ask the applicant to reflect on their own ability to set appropriate boundaries in their previous roles or jobs.

- For applicants indicating experience with cadets/youth: Can you share an experience in which you had to establish or reemphasize boundaries with a cadet/youth? What boundaries do you think are important to prioritize when working in an organization like CAP?
- For applicants not indicating experience with youth: Can you share an experience in which you had to establish or reemphasize boundaries at work with a colleague or a client? What boundaries do you think are important to prioritize when working in an organization like CAP? With cadets?

Reflection #3: Social Media

Social media, and online forms of communication, offer innumerable ways for abusers to groom, seduce, coerce, and exploit young people. This reflection question asks applicants to consider what professional and appropriate social media usage looks like in the cadet program, and CAP at large.

- For applicants indicating experience with cadets/youth: Social media is a huge part of young people's lives, and therefore has an impact on our program, whether we want it to or not. Tell me more about challenges you've faced regarding social media or online communication when working with cadets/youth. How did you react?
- For applicants not indicating experience with youth: Social media and online communication has transformed the workplace. Can you share with me some of your experiences and challenges regarding social media/online communication at your job/other civic organization? How did you react? *How might you handle a similar situation, but involving cadets?*

ATTACHMENT 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Opening Remarks	
<p>Hello! Thank you for your interest in joining CAP. As part of our membership process, all prospective adult members go through an interview process, paired with an FBI criminal background screening. As a volunteer-led organization serving communities across the nation, it is imperative that our volunteers are of the highest quality to lead our aviation, aerospace, STEM, emergency services, and cadet programs. This is an opportunity for us to get to know you, your values, priorities, and relevant experiences, and for you to get to know our organization, so all parties' expectations can be met. As a youth-serving organization, protecting and prioritizing cadets'(youth from 12 to 21) safety is a duty we take very seriously, so there will be several opportunities to share your experience and interest in working with youth. Our discussion should take about 15 minutes.</p>	
Interview Questions	Notes from Unit Membership Board
<i>What interested you in joining CAP?</i>	
<i>CAP takes cadet/youth protection very seriously. Additionally, due to our close partnership with the Air Force, we must safeguard our assets and reputation. We require all active adult members to be screened, vetted, and trained. Our background screening requires an FBI-level fingerprint screening to check your criminal record for past arrests or convictions of record regarding any applicant. We require annual training regarding cadet protection. Individuals cannot join if they have any active criminal charges, or convictions that involve violence, sexual assault, or child abuse. Are you currently awaiting adjudication for any criminal charges?</i>	
<i>Tell me more about your hobbies or personal interests. What about when you were a child, what did you enjoy doing?</i>	
<i>Moving on from personal interests...I'm interested in learning more about your job. How long have you been employed there? What did you do before that?</i>	
<i>Describe your experience with CAP, or another civic (volunteer) organization. Could another organization give you a reference?</i>	
<i>If no prior CAP experience: Our national headquarters keeps extensive records... You aren't a former member, or applied before, even in another state?</i>	
<i>Describe the kind of reference you would receive from [civic/volunteer organization]. Is there anyone who would not agree with this reference, particularly in working with youth? Why?</i>	
<i>Would you have concerns with us reaching out to speak to one of the leaders/officers at the [organization]?</i>	

<i>Think of a time when you encountered a rule or policy that you disagreed with. How did you approach the situation?</i>	
<i>Tell me about your experience working with young people, especially if you've taught or mentored youth before.</i>	
<i>Now tell me about an adult mentor or teacher you had growing up. What made them so impactful to you?</i>	
<i>I'm interested in learning more about which age/gender you worked with previously. How do you feel about working with youth who are (older/younger, different gender)?</i>	
<i>If interested in Emergency Services or Aerospace Education: Please share some more details about why you want to assist in our [insert specific area] mission?</i>	
Reflections (replaced Scenarios)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>For applicants indicating experience with cadets/youth:</u> Tell me about a time or situation when a cadet or youth felt like you were interfering or disrupting their activity/class and then responded rudely, using foul language. How did you handle the situation? What would you have done differently? • <u>For applicants not indicating experience with youth:</u> Tell me about a time at your job when a member on your team felt like you were interfering or disrupting their work and responded rudely. How did you handle the situation? Now understanding cadets are teenagers, not adults, what would you do differently in a similar situation? 	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>For applicants indicating experience with cadets/youth:</u> Social media is a huge part of young people's lives, and therefore has an impact on our program, whether we want it to or not. Tell me more about challenges you've faced regarding social media or online communication when working with cadets/youth. How did you react? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>For applicants not indicating experience with youth:</u> Social media and online communication has transformed the workplace. Can you share with me some of your experiences and challenges regarding social media/online communication at your job/other civic organization? How did you react? <i>How might you handle a similar situation, but involving cadets?</i> 	
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ATTACHMENT 2

CAP CORE VALUES FOR ADULT MEMBER APPLICANTS

Thank you for applying for membership in Civil Air Patrol. Please take a few moments to read this brief statement about our missions, values, and expectations. The Unit Membership Board will meet with you soon to discuss your application, in light of the basic principles listed below.

CAP's Missions

Aerospace	Aviation, space, and technology are interests that CAP members hold in common. One of our missions is to provide opportunities for our members and the public at large to learn more about this exciting field.
Cadets	Today's cadets are tomorrow's aerospace leaders. Through our Cadet Program, CAP transforms youth aged 12 to 20 into responsible citizens.
Emergency Services	We perform humanitarian missions, serving our communities in disaster relief, search and rescue, organ transport, radio communications, and in numerous other ways.
Core Values	Our Core Values are moral signposts that we use to guide us in every decision; in every action we perform.
Integrity	Being honest and willing to abide by our regulations and safety protocols is the price of admission to CAP.
Volunteer Service	We are unpaid professionals who welcome newcomers willing to contribute their time and talents to our important work.
Excellence	Our organization and its individual members are open to new ideas because we want to find the best ways to serve the community.
Respect	There is something for everyone in CAP, so we welcome everyone, give one another the benefit of the doubt, put aside personal differences, and try hard to get along and have fun.

Youth Protection

Zero Tolerance	The Cadet Program provides opportunities for positive, age-appropriate challenge. We do not tolerate physical, sexual, or emotional abuse in CAP. All CAP adult members are expected to be positive role models, even if they rarely interact with cadets.
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Supervision	We use “two deep leadership.” Every cadet activity is supervised by at least two screened and trained adult members. We avoid unnecessary one-on-one conduct by not meeting with cadets behind closed doors, and if driving cadets (other than one’s own children), having a third person in the vehicle. Parents are always welcome to visit our activities; we have no “secret” meetings.
Professionalism	Fraternization between senior members and cadets is always prohibited, even if the cadet has reached the age of majority.
Training	You’ll learn more about these principles during the “Cadet Protection Basic Course,” shortly after you join.
Air Force Affiliation	CAP is both a private, non-profit corporation chartered by the U.S. Congress, and an auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, when performing missions tasked to us by them. Consequently, we have a special responsibility to honor the public’s trust in us. A seriousness of purpose guides our work in all mission areas.