Frequently Asked Questions

for adults considering the Gastonia Composite Squadron

Welcome to the Gastonia Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol/USAF Auxiliary. Civil Air Patrol (CAP) relies on adult volunteers—they are critical to smooth operation across many disciplines. As a Senior Member in CAP, in addition to supporting the squadron, you can participate in search and rescue, disaster relief, and other missions. You can choose to be involved in areas related to aerospace, emergency services, or cadet programs, or areas like personnel, communications, public affairs, finance, health services, safety, logistics, and technology.

Our squadron is a "composite" squadron, meaning it includes youth and adult members. Much of what we do is cadet-oriented, but many of the activities and events we participate in are of interest to and enjoyed by the adults.

In the next few pages you will find information to help to answer some questions you might have, and how to apply for membership. If you need more information or have any questions at all, please feel free to ask me or any of the senior members at any time.

1. What are the membership options?

Active Members regularly attend meetings, perform official CAP duties, meet training requirements, and participate in the unit's activities. An active member may wear the CAP uniform and compete for grade advancement/earn rank.

Cadet Sponsor Members are parents, grandparents, and guardians who join to participate in CAP activities with their cadet. Sponsor members can chaperone, provide transportation, and supervise cadets during squadron activities, and wear a CAP uniform if desired. They have no official duties and don't earn rank but must complete the same initial training (online) as active members. Compared to being an active member, there's no advantage to being a Sponsor member but there are some disadvantages—for example, cannot be aircrew.

Patron Members support CAP by paying annual dues but don't wear a CAP uniform or participate in CAP activities. They can attend meetings, CAP conferences, and squadron social functions.

2. What is the time commitment?

The squadron meets weekly, and we try to have at least one weekend activity per month. At the weekly meetings, besides directing or overseeing the cadet activities, the senior members plan activities and events, discuss squadron issues, etc. At the weekend activities, seniors supervise the cadets and run or participate in the activity. We'd like senior members to attend

and participate as often as possible, but we are all volunteers and have jobs, families, and other priorities. We are grateful for any time and effort members can contribute.

3. What "jobs" are available?

There are two types of CAP jobs—one is your duty assignment/job in the squadron—the other is any (or several) of *optional* Emergency Services specialties you might want to get involved in.

Duty Assignment: This is your job in the squadron. After completing Level I training, you and the commander will talk and decide on one of the duty positions listed below to be trained in, serve in, and earn rank. You will be either the Primary or Assistant. As members advance in training and rank, they become eligible to serve in these positions at higher levels in CAP (group, wing, HQ). Don't worry, you don't have to be stuck doing the same assignment throughout your career-- People and positions are periodically rotated as new members join and others move to other squadrons. Let's talk about what might be the right specialty track for you.

Administration Officer	Information Technology Officer
Aerospace Education Officer	Inspector General
Cadet Programs Officer	Legal Officer
Character Development Officer	Logistics Officer
Command Specialty Training Track	Operations Officer
Communications Officer	Personnel Officer
Education & Training Officer	Public Affairs Officer
Emergency Services Officer	Recruiting and Retention Officer
Finance Officer	Safety Officer
Health Services Officer	Standardization-Evaluation Officer
Historian	

Emergency Services Specialties: CAP performs emergency services for state/local agencies and the federal government. Missions include search and rescue (ground and air), disaster relief, reconnaissance, and others. Members who want to participate in these missions must complete specialized training and become "qualified" to perform the jobs (operational specialties). A member can get qualified in as many areas as they like. These specialties are in addition to the squadron job. For example, a squadron safety officer could also be qualified to serve as a search and rescue ground team leader. The most common operational specialties are listed below. Note that the Concord Senior Squadron is the only Charlotte-area squadron with a CAP airplane, so members generally have to go there for aircrew-related training.

Airborne Photographer (aircrew)	Mission Pilot (aircrew)
Air Ops Branch Director (mission base)	Mission Observer (aircrew)
Finance/Admin Chief (mission base)	Mission Safety Officer (on scene or at base)
Ground Branch Director (mission base)	Mission Scanner (aircrew)

Ground Team Leader (on scene)	Mission Staff Assistant (mission base)
Ground Team Member (on scene)	Operations Section Chief (mission base)
Incident Commander (mission base)	Planning Section Chief (mission base)
Liaison Officer (mission base)	Public Information Officer (on scene or at base)
Logistics Section Chief (mission base)	sUAS (drone) Pilot or Technician (on scene)

4. Initial Training

It will take about 8 hours to complete the initial orientation training and become a full senior member. The training is called Level I Onboarding and consists of 14 online lessons/modules.

Cadet Protection Basic Course	Introduction to the Chain of Command
Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Nondiscrimination	Introduction to the Civil Air Patrol Safety Program
Expectations of Volunteers	Introduction to the Core Values
Introduction to Civil Air Patrol's Missions	My Learning Path
Introduction to Customs and Courtesies	OPSEC and Cybersecurity
Introduction to eServices	The Squadron Meeting
Introduction to Mentoring in Civil Air Patrol	Uniforms and Where to Get Them

Beyond that, senior members are encouraged to train and develop along the specialty track corresponding to their squadron job, and there are optional education and training opportunities in technical, managerial, and leadership topics, and the operational specialties.

5. How to Join

We ask prospective new members to join us at a few meetings, see what we do, and meet the members. We'll talk with you about the program and opportunities and your areas of interest and, just like applying for a job, you will have an informal interview with our membership board to determine your eligibility and whether you are a good fit for the organization and vice-versa. They will ask questions about your background and interests, why you want to join, etc., and you can ask them questions. The board will make a recommendation to the commander whether to approve your application for membership.

If you are approved and decide to join, you must get fingerprinted and fill out a membership application. Bring the application to the squadron commander for signing. The commander will also need to see proof of your identity — a passport, or driver's license and social security card. You then mail the application, fingerprint card, and member dues to CAP HQ for processing. HQ will have the FBI conduct a background investigation, and in about a week you will know whether you've been approved.

You can get fingerprinted at the Gaston County Sheriff's Office on a walk-in basis for $10 cash only, or at some police departments and UPS stores. You can download the membership application from the CAP website.

6. Uniforms

Senior members most often wear the blue CAP polo shirt and gray slacks, which is suitable for many occasions. There is a white aviator shirt uniform for more formal occasions, and a blue utility uniform for working in the field. We have a separate document with detailed uniform information.

Figure 5.3 CAP Corporate Working Uniform.

