

Salt Valley District, Cornhusker Council, Boy Scouts of America

District Action Resource Team

Formation, Composition, Training, and Activation



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District Action Resource Team

The Administration of Commissioner Service provides for a lifesaving team to serve high-priority units through crisis situations. However, few specific guidelines are given for the formation and development of the team. Implementation decisions are the responsibility of the individual districts.

Two types of lifesaving teams are listed in the *Administration of Commissioner Service* – the temporary team or the permanent team. The temporary team’s goal is “helping a high-priority unit over a life-threatening situation”. The permanent lifesaving team “works within the district to provide Scouting CPR and operate the district’s intensive care procedures.”

The permanent lifesaving team is the appropriate team concept for the Salt Valley District of the Cornhusker Council since not every unit is assigned a unit commissioner. The team will help the district meet the needs of the units within its boundaries due to the shortage of commissioners.

The goal of the Salt Valley District Action Resource Team (DART) will be to assist high-priority units through difficult situations by utilizing experienced scouts and their ability to mobilize district resources to assist in the process.

This paper will address the formation of such a team including team member characteristics and experience, team composition, training, and activation of the team.

Team Member Characteristics and Experience

It is vital that each DART member understand the various roles of a unit commissioner:

- Friend of the unit – has the attitude of “I am here to help you, what can I do for you?”
- Representative of the BSA – model the Scout Oath and Scout Law
- Unit doctor – observe to make sure that the unit models “healthy” practices and be ready to help if not
- Teacher – sharing experiences and knowledge with the unit leaders
- Coach/Counselor/Mentor – guide units to solve their own problems

The most important characteristic of a team member will be excellent communication skills. This includes listening in addition to good oral and written communication skills. They must be willing to listen to the concerns of the unit leaders and be able to ask probing questions to determine the root causes of the problems within the unit. They must be patient and not “jump in” with solutions before they have all the details and in some cases, both “sides” of the situation. They will then need to use their oral and written skills to guide the unit leaders to possible solutions to the situation.

It is also important that each team member be tactful, supportive, enthusiastic, and treat everyone with respect.

Each team member must have extensive experience within the scouting program with particular experience as a unit leader or as a unit commissioner. This experience gives the team member a better insight into the functions of an individual unit. Overall, the team should have members experienced in all the various programs – cub scouting, boy scouting, and venturing.

Team Composition

DART will work within the boundaries of the Salt Valley District of the Cornhusker Council. It will be composed of at least eight permanent members. It will be composed of:

1. The district commissioner
2. The assistant district commissioner for the DART team
3. The district executive
4. Other members appointed by the district commissioner with the advice of the district executive – two with cub scouting experience, two with boy scouting experience, at least one with venturing program experience, and at least one with charter organization representative experience

Additional members may be added for individual priority units, including the unit commissioner of that particular unit (if assigned). Others may include a person in the community with knowledge or special interest in the unit and/or its chartered organization or a leader of another unit who has experienced a similar situation.

Other members of the district committee will also be utilized if needed to offer specific resources or assistance with the situation. For example, the camping committee may assist a unit with little or no camping activities or the training committee may assist a unit with no trained leaders.

Training

Training will be essential to the effectiveness of the team. Training will be conducted in informal settings allowing for an easy exchange of ideas and suggestions amongst the team. Individual team members will be responsible for leading a particular topic/session. The following trainings should be completed (or reviewed if completed prior to joining the team):

- Youth Protection Training
- BCS 101 – The Commissioner Concept
- BCS 104 – Contacting Units – Provides participants with insights on effective unit visits, what to look for, and how to be a help, not a hindrance
- BCS 105 – Practical Solutions to Common Unit Needs – Helps commissioners understand how to respond to unit needs

Before a team member can lead a visit to a priority unit, he/she must be complete the following:

- BCS 112 – What Would You Do? – A group participation/discussion session on 10 situations that commissioners might encounter

- MCS 303 and MCS 304 – Commissioner Lifesaving I and Commissioner Lifesaving II –Reviews the basic unit life-saving steps
- MCM 306—Counseling Skills – Reviews many elements of good counseling
- MCS 308 – Venturing and the Commissioner – Provides an overview of the venturing program and how a commissioner can help the crew succeed
- MCS 321 – New Unit Service – Reviews specific commissioner actions to provide adequate care for new units
- MCS 317 – How to Remove a Volunteer – Provides practical guidelines on this sensitive situation

Activation of Team

The team can be activated by contacting any member of the team. This contact can be initiated by any unit commissioner, unit leader, charter organization representative or any other concerned scouter or interested person. After consultation with the district executive, it will be the responsibility of the assistant district commissioner for DART to form a team and to contact the unit leadership to schedule a meeting of the team with the unit leadership. It is recommended that the team be limited to four members at the first meeting to avoid the appearance of “taking over” the unit. After the first meeting, other team members may be contacted to share their knowledge or expertise and/or district committee members may be contacted to share their resources.

Reasons to activate the team include, but are not limited to:

- No youth recruiting or poor recruiting methods
- No adult leaders / adult leaders not trained
- No planned program
- Unit stops meeting
- Charter lapse
- Problems between unit and chartered organization
- No parent involvement
- Adult conflicts / poor communication

The team works with the unit until the crisis is over. The unit is then reassigned to a regular unit commissioner.

The formation of the District Action Resource Team (DART) will improve the ability of the commissioner staff of the Salt Valley District to provide quality commissioner service to high-priority units in the Salt Valley District. Service that is currently not offered to many units due to the lack of unit commissioners. Service that is needed to provide a quality scout program to youth in the district. Service that will ensure that the commissioner staff is “helping units succeed”!

Bibliography:

1. Administration of Commissioner Service, Boy Scouts of America, 2011 Printing
2. Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service, Boy Scouts of America, 2012 Printing
3. Boy Scouts of America website, www.scouting.org/home/commissioners