



# Mentor Guide

## US Coast Guard Auxiliary Boat Crew Program

### Introduction

Mentors are the backbone of the USCG Auxiliary Boat Crew Program. Mentors are more senior members with experience in the boat crew program as a certified coxswain, boat crew or PWC operator who assume the responsibility of providing training for another member. Knowledge and skill transfer is an important part of the process, but the mentor also communicates our organizational culture, policies, practices, wisdom and experience to the trainee.

What might the member gain as a mentor? Typically he/she will:

- Renew their enthusiasm as they assume the role of expert;
- Obtain a greater understanding of the barriers experienced by newer members in the Auxiliary;
- Enhance their skills in coaching, counseling, listening, and modeling;
- Develop and practice leadership and
- Demonstrate expertise and share knowledge.

As a result of this relationship, the trainee may:

- Make a smoother transition into the Auxiliary;
- Further his/her development as a boater;
- Identify some additional opportunities to contribute;
- Develop new and/or different perspectives;
- Get assistance with their ideas;
- Demonstrate their strengths and explore their potential, and;
- Broaden their Auxiliary network.

(adapted from United States Office of Personnel Management, Best Practices: Mentoring)

The mentor process is an integral component of the Auxiliary Boat Crew Training program. The program is administered at the district level and mentors are assigned by flotilla commanders. This document is designed to complement the existing structure and tools that Auxiliary leadership and mentors may use to improve training efforts.

## Summary

This document provides guidance for the use of mentors in the Auxiliary Boat Crew Qualification Program:

1. Provides guidelines for Auxiliary leadership in selecting and assigning Auxiliary Boat Crew mentors.
2. Suggests that the responsibility for training mentors be delegated to the Auxiliary Operations and Training Officer (OTO), Chief Qualification Examiner Coordinator (CQEC), Area Qualification Examiner Coordinator(s) (AQEC) and Qualification Examiners (QEs).
3. Suggests the use of QEs as mentors when possible and practical.
4. Provides a set of guidelines for each mentor to follow in the process of training and preparing an Auxiliary member to qualify in the Boat Crew Program.
5. Makes suggestions for training mentors in the Auxiliary Boat Crew Program.
6. Suggests the use of the SABOT Program as a comprehensive training tool to augment the standards in the Auxiliary Boat Crew Qualification Guides, COMDTINST M16794.52-54.

## Mentors

A primary goal of the USCG Auxiliary Boat Crew Program is to assist members to become qualified and participate in operational mission. The purpose of the training program is to enable members to learn and perform to the high standards prescribed by the US Coast Guard. It must be remembered that many join the Auxiliary to get a high level of seamanship training. It is the mentor's responsibility to guide the member through the training process.

A mentor is a subject matter expert, a coach and an advocate. The mentor helps the trainee learn the knowledge and skills required for each qualification task. Planning is a key element of the process. Working with the trainee, the mentor should plan the training program. The discussion could include topics such as

- goals of the trainee
- time constraints and other barriers
- duration of sessions
- order of performing the tasks
- logistics for providing underway time on facilities
- identification of references for study

The manner by which a task is reviewed will depend on many factors, including the knowledge and skill of the trainee, his/her prior experience and aptitude for the work. The degree of review and training will vary from minimal to extensive. Tasks should be completed multiple times before determining that it is mastered. Some tasks will have environmental or time limits to be met. Every task must be performed independently by the trainee to the standard's specifications.

When the trainee has mastered a task, the mentor signs the task to verify satisfactory completion. The mentor signs both the “Task” page and the “Mentor Tracking Form” in the Qualification Guide.

## Mastering a Task

Tasks are meant to be learned through constant practice under the mentor’s guidance. This is a suggested method for achieving mastery of the tasks.

1. Give the trainee the reading assignments. (Boat Crew Seamanship Manual (COMDTINST M16114.5), Auxiliary Operations Policy Manual, (COMDTINST M16798.3 (series)), and local/district policies and directives.
2. Confirm completion of reading assignment and clarify any issues that the trainee might have about the material.
3. Demonstrate the steps required to complete the task. During the demonstration, the mentor should narrate the procedures. If the task is one that does not require demonstration, proceed to the next step.
4. Walk the trainee through the task. In order to ensure that the trainee understands, the mentor may want to walk the trainee through the steps more than once. There is no limit to the number of times the mentor performs the walk-through, however, trainee understanding must be ensured before continuing.
5. Practice the skill. The trainee must practice the skill for consistent success at the task. The mentor should not sign off any task as complete until the trainee can consistently and correctly complete the task without assistance.
6. Monitor the trainee’s performance. Trainee performance should be monitored during both training and operations. Qualification does not end with the first successful completion of the task. It is an ongoing process that ends only when successful task completion can be met consistently.
7. Verify that the trainee’s performance meets the standards set in the relative Auxiliary Boat Crew Qualification Guide. This includes three parts:
  - a. The trainee must be able to perform the task subject to established conditions and standards delineated for the task. This standard is provided at the beginning of each task.
  - b. The trainee must be able to perform the task without assistance.
  - c. The trainee is expected to perform each task on a consistent basis in accordance with the established standards and conditions.
8. Sign off the task at the bottom of the task qualification page of the Qualification Guide when the mentor is confident that the trainee can perform the task consistently and unassisted. It is suggested that the mentor record the start and completion dates on each task. This would indicate the period over which the candidate repeatedly demonstrates the ability to perform the assigned task.
9. Keep an accurate record of the training. A record of the training accomplished shall be kept using Appendix B (Mentor Tacking Form) in the appropriate Boat Crew Qualification

Guide. It would be helpful for the certifying Officer (OTO) if the mentor also recorded the start and complete dates for each task in Appendix “B” of the appropriate Qualification Guide.

10. Once the trainee has mastered all of the tasks, the mentor should assess the candidate's readiness for the position of coxswain, crewman or PWO operator. Schedule the trainee for the dockside oral exam and underway check-ride using local procedures.
11. The QE will report to the OTO via the AQEC/CQEC on the trainee's performance during the dockside oral exam and underway check-ride and recommend or not recommend certification.

## **Choosing Mentors**

When assigning a member as a mentor, flotilla leaders must consider the member's experience and skill. Mentors should be thoroughly familiar with the Auxiliary Boat Crew Qualification Program including the contents of the Auxiliary Boat Crew Training Manual, COMDTINST M16794.51 (series).

Any member assigned to be a mentor must have impeccable integrity as they are, in a large part, responsible for the credibility of the US Coast Guard's Auxiliary Boat Crew Program. These mentors should be willing and able to put in the time and effort to train another member. It extremely important that mentors have a thorough understanding of and consistently demonstrated TCT principles on prior operational missions as they will be working with unqualified members where the potential for a mishap is higher than working with a certified crew.

## **Mentor Training**

OTOs, working through their CQEC, AQECs and QEs, are encouraged to provide annual mentor workshops for those members serving as mentors and potential mentor candidates. Training should strive to insure that the mentors are prepared to fulfill their responsibilities to the trainee, and by extrapolation, the Coast Guard and the public. Mentor workshops could address local issues, review the Boat Crew Training Manual and/or provide any additional training that would complement the knowledge and skills of the mentor. A review of the SABOT tool and its use in trainee development may be helpful. This training may be delegated to the CQEC, AQEC(s), or QE(s).

## **Other Mentors**

*Qualification Examiner* - QEs may and are encouraged to serve as mentors. QEs are often our most knowledgeable and skilled members in the Boat Crew Program. If a QE serves as a mentor for a trainee then that QE should not perform the QE check-ride for that trainee unless granted a waiver by the OTO. OTOs may consider granting such waivers in extenuating circumstances, as in remote areas where long distance travel is required or other difficult situations are encountered. Districts and regions may want to consider increasing the number of QEs if QEs are also used as mentors.

*USCG Qualified Boat Crew* - Any active duty or reserve USCG coxswain or crewmember may serve as a mentor for the Auxiliary Boat Crew Program up to the level of their certification. Active duty mentors must be familiar with the Auxiliary Boat Crew Qualification Program as described in the Auxiliary Boat Crew Training Manual, COMDTINST M16794.51 (series).

## **Assignment to Duty**

Flotilla Commanders, FSOs-MT or OP or the Flotilla Boat Crew Training Coordinator shall assign a mentor or mentors to each member wishing to qualify as a crew, coxswain, or PWO in the Auxiliary Boat Crew Program. If there isn't a member available in a flotilla to serve as a mentor, the flotilla may call on the division to assign the required mentor(s) or work with a near-by Coast Guard Station. Ideally, each flotilla should have at least one member trained to serve as a mentor.

## **Conclusion**

A successful mentor charts a course to a trainee's completion of their quest for qualification. The mentor is a coach, an advisor, a taskmaster, a knit-picker, a subject matter expert and often a friend. Identifying strong mentors and insuring that they have the knowledge, skills and support to do their job is the key to insuring that we have a highly qualified surface operations force.

## **References**

Auxiliary Boat Crew Training Manual, COMDTINST M16794.51 (series)  
Auxiliary Boat Crew Qualification Guide, CREW, COMDTINST M16794.52 (series)  
Auxiliary Boat Crew Qualification Guide, COXSWAIN, COMDTINST M16794.53 (series)  
Auxiliary Boat Crew Qualification Guide, PWO, COMDTINST M16794.54 (series)  
Boat Crew Seamanship Manual, COMDTINST M16114.5 (series)