

Parents & Families as Partners: Supporting Your Cadet Toward Success

Successful cadets are usually cadets who have regular and positive support from parents and family. At times, the child/parent relationship has been so stressful and negative that it seems communication has been permanently damaged. This is an opportunity to repair that relationship. Recognize your cadet is trying to make a positive change and take the initiative to support their goals.

Write your cadet regularly!

- Cadets will not have access to the internet, so they will have to learn a new way to communicate with people: writing letters.
- Preferably write your cadet at least once a week, if not every day.
- Encourage other friends and family members to write positive and uplifting letters to your cadet.
- Schedule letter writing with family and friends, so your cadet can receive a message from a loved one every day; especially during acclimation.

Keep all communication positive.

- Share a sibling's accomplishments, an amusing story about the family pet, or interesting news from the neighborhood.
- Do **NOT** share negative information with your cadet over the phone or in a letter. Remember, your cadet is here for a distraction-free learning environment. Before you share ask yourself, "Can my cadet do anything about this situation?" If not, then remember they will not be in a setting to request privacy so they can process the information.
- If you **must** share upsetting news, such as the death of a family member, please contact your cadet's counselor so you and the counselor can develop a plan of how to inform your cadet.

Be firm.

- As cadets experience the stress, homesickness, and loss of control in the beginning they will demand you removed them from the program.
- Do **not** begin this adventure by telling your cadet you will remove them from the Academy if they do not like the program. This only sets your cadet up for failure.
- Instead, tell your cadet to take it "one day at a time." As the class progresses, the cadet may realize this experience is valuable. If not, the Academy has other ideas to encourage the cadet to stay the course and we will discuss them with you at that time.
- Discuss how current challenges relate to "real world" experiences. Continue to encourage and motivate your cadet to learn from and face their challenges.

Celebrate your cadet's accomplishments when they share them with you.

- Let them know how proud you are of their accomplishments.
- Tell your cadet the changes you see in them.
- Ask your cadet questions about their experiences and plans for after graduation.

Be available when your cadet calls.

- At the same time, be aware cadets receive a limited number of phone calls and may choose to call other people.
- Also, keep in mind teenagers can sometimes exaggerate occurrences; especially when they do not feel in control of a situation. Should you receive a letter or call from a cadet with concerning news, contact your cadet's counselor. Please understand if a candidate does not want to initially be here, they may say or do extreme things to gain your sympathy.

Know all the important Academy dates!

- Your cadet **must** leave for home pass and will not be allowed to stay on campus. Be prepared by having transportation ready for home pass and graduation.
- Attend family day and invite as many positive friends and family members as possible. If you cannot attend family day, try your best to send other people so your cadet will not be alone when most cadets will be spending that day with loved ones.
- If no one can attend family day, let your cadet's counselor know as soon as possible so the Academy can keep your cadet engaged and occupied on that day. Cadets are very upset when family members are late or never show up at all, especially when they did not know this would be the case.

Help your child pick an appropriate mentor who is invested in their success.

- Evidence has continually shown people are more successful in their endeavors when they choose a positive mentor.
- While difficult to sometimes admit, teenagers are not always ready to share everything with their parents. A good mentor will be a person your cadet can talk to who will provide positive feedback.
- The mentor will be a resource for your cadet who provides advice and assists with locating resources.