



# SPONSOR FAMILY PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### I. About the Program

- A. Purpose
- B. Eligibility
- C. Application Process
- D. Matching Process
- E. Reassignment
- F. Role of a Sponsor Family/Parent
- G. Role of the Sponsor Family Program Coordinator

### II. About Cadet/Academy Life

- A. Cadet Appointment Process
- B. Cadet Corps Make-Up
- C. Cadet Ranking System & Insignia
- D. Cadet Responsibilities
- E. Academy Policies & Regulation
- F. Academy Honor Concept

### III. Frequently Asked Questions

### IV. Key Personnel & Points of Contact

# **I. About the Program**

## ***A. Purpose***

During the first year at the Academy, the Fourth Class cadets experience a drastic transition from a civilian to a military way of life. They are immediately subjected to the high standards and rigorous discipline program that is unique to the Academy. Some cadets adjust well, while others have a more difficult time. Many experience moments of depression, loneliness, homesickness (especially those away from home for the first time), and doubt. The Sponsor Family Program provides cadets with families who can help provide support, friendship, and learning beyond the Academy environment. The Program is structured to provide cadets a home away from home environment, exposure to the local area and when possible, to the unique military environment. This helps make the cadets' integration into the military community an easier and more effective process. Families can provide a unique and relaxed learning environment that the Academy cannot provide.

## ***B. Eligibility***

To be eligible for the Sponsor Family Program, applicants, both military and civilian, must live within 30 miles of the Coast Guard Academy (exceptions will be considered on a case by case basis).

Active duty military applicants must meet one of the following criteria:

- E6/Petty Officer First Class that are 28 years of age and above with supervisor endorsement
- E7/Chief Petty Officer
- O1/Ensign and O2/Lieutenant Junior Grade that are 28 years of age and above
- O3/Lieutenant and above

## ***C. Application Process***

To become an official sponsor family, you must undergo a two-prong process. First is to fill out our online application form that can be found on our official website or by clicking the following link: <https://www.uscga.edu/cadetsponsor/>. Please note that the application will ask you to provide two references. These references must be someone that is NOT related to you.

Following the application, you will then be prompted to complete a background check. Family members or someone living in your home that is 18 years or older must also complete the background check. For more instructions on the background check and specific designations, please click the following link:

<https://www.uscga.edu/background-check-process/>. Background checks and reference checks are done once every five years. Returning families who wish to sponsor a cadet from the incoming class will still need to fill out the application form in order for us to capture any new information regarding the family, and a background check if they haven't done so in five years. To ensure the safety of our cadets, the background check MUST be completed before a cadet is assigned to a family.

#### ***D. Matching Process***

Fourth Class cadets will receive a training regarding the program at the beginning of Swab Summer. During this training, we make sure to set clear expectations and discuss proper conduct when dealing with their sponsor families. We also have them fill out a form that tells us their preferences and needs. We use this information during the matching process to find the best cadet - sponsor family fit. We prioritize cadets that live further away during this process since we know that these are the cadets that need the family support the most. Sponsors who are single will be matched with the same gender cadet as per academy regulations [no exceptions]. In some cases, families will apply for the program with a cadet already in mind; such as family friends, friends of friends/family, acquaintances, etc. We ask that the sponsor family provide the name of the cadet on their application and to make sure that this was clearly discussed with the cadet; and also have that cadet put the family's name on the form when they sign up for the program.

This program is completely optional. Our training is primarily focused on making sure that the cadets only sign up if this is a program that fits their personality and personal needs. If they do not sign up for the program initially, they will still have the opportunity to request for a sponsor family later in the year or whenever the need arise. Similarly, a cadet who initially signed up for a sponsor family and was successfully matched to one can always opt out of the program or request for reassignment at any time.

Sponsor families need to understand that this program is designed to first and foremost support the cadets. Therefore, their preferences and needs will be considered first during this process. However, we always do our best to honor the requests and preferences of the sponsor families as well.

#### ***E. Reassignment***

We realize that our matching process is not perfect. Often times, what is written on paper may not translate perfectly in real life. We encourage both cadets and sponsor families to reach out if there is an issue regarding the match. If a cadet requests for reassignment or simply drops out of the program, we will notify the family and provide as much [appropriate] information as we can in order to stay transparent while preserving cadet

privacy. We ask sponsor families to be open minded and understanding when these situations arise, and not be discouraged or take offense. Often times, cadets will end up finding the right support elsewhere as they meet more people and immerse themselves in the academy life and community.

### ***F. Role of a Sponsor Family/Parent***

During the first year at the Academy, the Fourth Class cadets experience a drastic transition from a civilian to a military way of life. The Sponsor Program provides cadets with families who help provide support, friendship, mentorship, and learning beyond the Academy environment. The Program is designed for cadets to enjoy the comforts of a home away from home. It is structured to provide cadets with exposure to the local area and when possible, to the unique military environment. This helps make the cadets' integration into the military community an easier and more effective process. Families provide a unique and relaxed learning environment that the Academy cannot provide. The time commitment and contact between your family and the cadet are individual choices. To help facilitate better relations and prevent misunderstandings or uneasiness, inform your cadet of your rules and ensure that these rules are enforced. You should not tolerate any behavior you would not tolerate from your own family members. Do not be afraid to correct your cadet with regard to house rules. Also ensure proper respect is given and don't be afraid to inform them if it is not.

### ***G. Role of the Sponsor Family Program Coordinator***

The Sponsor Family Program Coordinator is available throughout the year to help counsel both sponsor families and cadets. They also serve as a mediator during conflicts and assist in conflict resolution. The coordinator is the primary point of contact for families who need assistance with the application process or for any matters regarding the program.

## **II. About Cadet/Academy Life**

### ***A. Cadet Appointment Process***

Cadets are tendered an appointment based on [but not limited to] the following standards:

- Basic eligibility requirements: US Citizenship, Age, No Dependents, etc.
- High school and/or post-secondary academic performance
- Standardized test scores (SAT or ACT).
- Leadership potential based on extracurricular activities (sports, volunteer work/community service, employment, etc.)
- CGA Physical Fitness Examination (PFE)
- DoD Medical Examination Review Board (DoDMERB)

International Cadets are appointed to attend the Coast Guard Academy by their respective governments. Shortly after graduation and commissioning, an international cadet will then return to his/her home country to serve in the military. The number of international cadets enrolled and countries represented vary each year.

### ***B. Cadet Corps Make-Up***





The academy appoints approximately 250-300 young men and women to each in-coming class. During the academic year, the average corps size is between 900 - 1000 cadets. The Corps of Cadets is organized as one regiment divided into eight companies, each of which is composed of about 130 cadets of all classes. Although the Corps of Cadets is supervised directly by the Commandant of Cadets (a Coast Guard officer with the rank of captain), the academy operates on the concept of "the Corps leading the Corps." The eight companies are named after the first eight letters of the NATO phonetic alphabet: Alfa, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Echo, Foxtrot, Golf, and Hotel. Each has a special focus in administering day-to-day affairs.

The Corps of Cadets is largely a self-directed organization that follows a standard military chain of command:

- 1st class cadets lead the Corps and serve as mentors to all underclass.
- 2nd class cadets are cadre and are primarily responsible for leading and developing 4/c cadets.
- 3rd class cadets are role models to 4th class cadets and serve as direct mentors to 4/c cadets.
- 4th class cadets are responsible for learning and applying Coast Guard core values such as leadership, teamwork, attention to detail, accountability, etc.

At the top of the cadet chain of command is the Regimental Commander, the highest ranking cadet. The highest-ranking cadet in each company is the Company Commander. Both are first-class cadets ("firstie"), equivalent to a senior. Every company commander reports to the Regimental Staff who plan and oversee all aspects of cadet life. Command positions, both in companies and on Regimental Staff, are highly competitive, and a cadet's overall class rank is often a deciding factor in who is awarded the position

***C. Cadet Ranking System & Insignia***

Year	Class	Description	Shoulder Board & Insignia
Freshman	Cadet Fourth Class 4/c	4/c Shoulder boards have a shield in the middle. The insignia is a green shield (not pictured) similar to the other class' insignia.	 <p>CADET FOURTH CLASS</p>
Sophomore	Cadet Third Class 3/c	3/c Shoulder boards have a shield and one gold diagonal stripe The insignia is a red shield.	 <p>CADET THIRD CLASS</p>
Junior	Cadet Second Class 2/c	2/c Shoulder boards have a shield and two gold diagonal stripes. The insignia is a white shield	 <p>CADET SECOND CLASS</p>
Senior	Cadet First Class 1/c	1/c Shoulder boards have a shield and a straight gold stripe. The insignia is a blue shield.	 <p>CADET FIRST CLASS</p>

## ***D. Cadet Responsibilities***

Fourth-class cadets have many demands on their time and have limited free time during their first year at the Academy due to training obligations. These trainings are fundamental to the development of their discipline. As a sponsor, part of your responsibility is to reinforce and support the Academy training period. Cadets are still subject to the Academy regulations and disciplinary system while visiting your home. The academy environment includes academics, military training, personal and professional development, athletics and other extracurricular activities.

- a. **ACADEMICS:** The academic year begins mid-August and ends mid-May. Cadets have a choice of nine majors: Government, Civil Engineering, Management, Electrical Engineering, Marine Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Marine Science, Operations Research, and Cyber Systems. Cadets will declare a major during the beginning of 4/c year and are formally accepted into their majors upon satisfying all major-specific prerequisites at the end of their 3/c year. Cadets are allowed to change majors during their first two years. Cadets are required to take 20 core courses in a wide variety of subjects in addition to those required by their majors. Most of these are in technical subjects such as computer science, basic naval architecture, and physics. They are also required to take career-related courses such as celestial and coastal navigation. The typical course load of each cadet is about 20 credit hours per semester. There are two semesters per year. Each semester lasts approximately 16 weeks. Classes at the Academy are varied in methods of instruction as well as size. The average class consists of 18-22 in core courses and as small as 10-12 in major courses. The normal periods last from 50 to 75 minutes, with labs lasting about 2- 3 hours. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, there are seven 50-minute periods, four in the morning and three in the afternoon. The remainder of the day is used for military training, personal development, drill, exams, and sports/activities period. Tuesdays and Thursdays are used primarily for testing and laboratory. Peer counselors and tutors are available for cadets who need assistance, as well as their professors and instructors who are typically available after hours for additional help. Cadets are highly encouraged to use these resources, especially when they are experiencing academic difficulty.
- b. **MILITARY:** Our military training is what distinguishes the Coast Guard Academy from other institutions of higher learning in the United States. Our goal is to prepare young men and women to serve as commissioned officers in the Coast Guard. To accomplish this, we indoctrinate the cadets into the military system by teaching them basic fundamentals during “Swab Summer”. The military training is further enhanced with instruction in drill, leadership, CG history, watch standing, etc. Most of the training for upper-class cadets is conducted during the summer when they embark on

CG cutters, attend various CG training facilities around the country, or civilian sector internships. Leadership training is embedded within the academy life as the regiment is primarily led and managed by upper class cadets.

- c. **ATHLETICS:** Physical strength, endurance, agility and competitive spirit are just as important to the Academy experience as academics and military development. All cadets are required to undergo physical training through their physical education classes in addition to participating in either intercollegiate, club, or intramural sports teams.
- Intercollegiate Sports:
    - Men: Baseball, Basketball, Football, Soccer, Tennis, Lacrosse, and Wrestling.
    - Women: Basketball, Softball, Soccer, Lacrosse, and Volleyball.
  - Co-ed Intercollegiate Sports: Crew, Cross Country, Pistol, Rifle, Indoor/Outdoor Track, Sailing and Swimming.
  - Club Sports:
    - Men: Rugby, Volleyball, Water Polo, & Hockey
    - Women: Rugby & Water Polo
  - Coed Club Sports: Hockey, Cheer/Spirit Squad, Triathlon, Martial Arts, CrossFit
- d. **CLUB ACTIVITIES:** Additional experiences are gained through participation in programs such as Cadet Musical Activities, Community Projects, Scoutmaster Council, Cadet Drill Team, Asian Pacific American Council (APAC), Companeros Club, Genesis Club, International Club, Spectrum Club, Women’s Leadership Club, Aviation Club, Dance Club, Ski/ Snowboarding Club, Officer Christian Fellowship, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Tide Rips (yearbook), as well as many Professional Clubs (SNAME, ASCE, IEEE).

### ***E. Academy Policies & Regulation***

- a. **ALCOHOL:** The Coast Guard Academy’s policy is simple: Cadets are not allowed to consume any alcohol unless they are at least 21 years of age. It is imperative that sponsors support the cadet-training program and Connecticut State law, which prohibits the consumption of intoxicating beverages in a private residence other than with the minor’s parents or legal guardians. In addition, there are some very specific rules in the Cadet Regulations for cadets who are 21 years of age. First, any cadet who introduces alcohol, causes alcohol to be introduced, possesses containers with alcohol residue, or consumes alcohol on the Academy or any other military



installation at unauthorized times or locations will be disenrolled. Second, any cadet of any age who introduces or consumes alcohol in the cadet barracks will be disenrolled. Third, alcohol shall not be consumed at a public place where such consumption would offend the general public. Fourth, cadets in uniform shall not visit a bar or taproom whose primary purpose is to serve liquor or other alcoholic beverages. Lastly, cadets who are 21 years of age shall not provide alcohol to underage cadets or condone any underage drinking. Legally they are allowed to drink, but the Academy expects them to act responsibly. Always provide and encourage non-alcoholic alternatives.

- b. **DRUG POLICY:** The academy has a **zero tolerance** when it comes to drugs/illegal substance use, including marijuana/cbd products. It is imperative that sponsor families ensure their cadets are not exposed to any activities involving any drugs or illegal substances while in their homes/care.
- c. **FRATERNIZATION (IMPROPER RELATIONSHIPS):** Social relationships of Academy grounds are permitted between members of adjacent classes except for the fourth class. Fourth Class cadet associations with any member of the three upper classes shall be strictly professional. In addition, third class cadets must maintain a professional relationship with First class cadets at all times. Dating is permitted between members of adjacent classes except Fourth Class cadets who may only date classmates. Sponsors should keep these policies in mind when planning or scheduling activities, particularly if the sponsor entertains members of different classes.
- d. **AUTOMOBILE USE:** All cadets may drive automobiles providing they have a valid driver's license and comply with the motor vehicle laws of the state or country in which the automobile is operated, within the following guidelines: Underclass cadets are prohibited from owning or maintaining an automobile, unless it's at their parents or legal guardian's actual home residence. 4<sup>th</sup> Class Cadets may not own and store a car at your home for any reason. All cadets may rent an automobile with the approval of their Company Officer, however, only 1<sup>st</sup> Class and 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Cadets may rent them in the New London area. Only 1<sup>st</sup> Class Cadets may bring rented automobiles onboard the Academy per current directives. All Cadets may not own or operate any motorcycles, trail bikes, mopeds, motor scooters, terrain vehicles or other two-wheeled motorized vehicles. It is your prerogative whether or not your cadet may use your vehicle(s). It is not expected and should be considered a privilege since they will be covered under your auto insurance.
- e. **CIVILIAN CLOTHES:** Fourth Class cadets are not authorized to wear civilian clothes within a specified radius of the Academy. During their Third Class year,

regulations are modified to include specific, Academy accepted attire. Cadets are allowed to wear civilian clothes while in your home, however, they must wear their uniforms once they leave your home for any reason (i.e. running an errand, returning to the Academy, going shopping, movies, out to dinner, etc.). If you plan on doing any activity outside your home that warrants more relaxed clothing (i.e. beach, hiking, biking, water activities, etc.), you should let your 4/c cadet know so they can request for a special to wear their academy issued gym gear.

- f. **LAUNDRY:** Adequate laundry facilities are provided for the cadets. Cadets should not be encouraged to bring their laundry to their sponsor family's home, and sponsor families should not do their cadet's laundry.
  
- g. **LIBERTY:** Liberty hours & schedules can change depending on military obligations during the week/weekend. The best way to find out your cadet's availability is by discussing it with them directly. Typically, 4/c cadets will have liberty on Saturday at 1pm which expires at 1am Sunday. They will then be granted liberty on Sunday from 8am – 6pm. If cadets are in good conduct and academic standing and have no weekend obligations, he or she can route a special request through their company officer to spend overnight at their sponsor family's house. Approval of such request are not guaranteed and are subject to the company officer's discretion. During "long weekends" or holiday weekends, cadet liberty will start after their last academic or military obligation.

### ***F. Academy Honor Concept***

"WHO LIVES HERE REVERES HONOR, HONORS DUTY." These words form the foundation of the honor code instilled in all cadets. This code is a fundamental value system to which the cadets must adhere to at all times. It is taught to each cadet the minute they enter the Academy. Cadets are taught not to lie, steal, cheat, or attempt to deceive. Violations of the honor code will result in disciplinary action or disenrollment depending on the severity of the case. The honor code teaches cadets the importance of responsibility, trust, and integrity.

## **III. Frequently Asked Questions**

### **✚ What should I do if my sponsor cadet becomes ill or gets injured during his/her visit?**

If the illness or injury is life threatening, call 911 or take the Cadet to a civilian hospital to receive appropriate medical attention as soon as possible. If the illness or injury is not life threatening, or if questions arise as to what is the appropriate procedure, contact the Academy Clinic at 860.444.8597 (there is a 24/7 watch stander available to assist). The Clinic can triage over the phone to give guidance as to whether or not they can provide

services. The Cadet may be directed to report to the Clinic or given other instructions regarding a time and place for further care. Cadets are covered under TriCare. Their military issued ID is their proof of health insurance. They are required to carry their military ID at all times.

#### **How can I contact my sponsor cadet?**

Most cadets have cell phones. To contact cadets who do not have cell phones, call the Cadet Watch Office at 860.444.8294 and ask to be connected to the cadet's company dayroom area or simply request to relay a message. Cadets may receive and make calls throughout the day. However, they are not allowed to use them during their class periods and prefer minimal use after 8:00 PM weekdays as that is their study period. Some areas on base, especially in Chase Hall, receive poor connectivity. It is always a good idea to follow up a call or txt with an email. If you allow cadets to use your phones, they should be expected to pay for all long distance calls. Every cadet has an email address and nearly every cadet has a cell phone. Cell phone and email addresses are the easiest and most reliable means of contact.

#### **What should I do if there is an issue with my sponsor cadet?**

We take pride in our Cadets and expect them to carry themselves in the upmost behavior. Cadets should not place any unreasonable demands upon their sponsor families. Common courtesy and proper etiquette are one of the major elements in cadet training. To help facilitate better relations and prevent misunderstandings or uneasiness, inform your cadet of your rules and ensure that these rules are enforced. You should not tolerate any behavior you would not tolerate from your own family members. Do not be afraid to correct your cadet with regard to house rules. Also ensure proper respect is given and don't be afraid to inform them if it is not. If there is an issue or concern with a cadet, please contact the Sponsor Family Program Coordinator right away and be explicit with regard to the problem.

#### **What activities should I anticipate participating in with my cadet?**

Cadets will sometimes invite their sponsor families to academy sporting and social events. Sponsors are encouraged but not required to attend any of these events. Sponsors are also not required to entertain their cadets or take them out to dinner or family events unless they choose to do so. Cadets should not expect or assume too much from their sponsor family since it is not a replacement for their own family.

#### **How do I find out what activities are happening at the Academy?**

There are many ways to get information about Academy events. The best information

source is your cadet(s). They will have the latest information on the events, particularly those that include them. If they don't know, they can easily find the information for you. As always, you can reach out to the Sponsor Family Coordinator for assistance in this matter. The coordinator will typically send out updated schedule of events as it becomes available to him/her. You can also visit the academy official website <https://www.uscga.edu/>.

#### **When can I expect my cadets to visit?**

Depending on the cadet's activities, cadets may visit frequently on the weekend. Fourth Class Liberty during the school year is: on normal Saturdays from 1200-0100 and on normal Sundays from 0800- 1800. A cadet may be available to stay overnight on holidays and long weekends from Friday afternoon to Sunday night.

#### **Do I sponsor cadet only through their 4th class year?**

The program is primarily designed for Fourth Class Cadets, however any cadet may be assigned a sponsor family if they request one. Many families continue their relationship with their cadet(s) until graduation and beyond.

#### **What are the rules regarding transportation of 4th class cadets?**

Sponsor families are only required to provide transportation to/from their homes during their cadets' visits. Any travel arrangements outside of that is subject to sponsor family discretion. The cadets know that the sponsor families are NOT their primary source of transportation.

#### **Can my cadet consume alcohol in my home?**

The Coast Guard Academy's policy is simple: Cadets are not allowed to consume any alcohol unless they are at least 21 years of age. It is imperative that sponsors support the cadet-training program and the Connecticut State law, which prohibits the consumption of intoxicating beverages in a private residence. If your cadet is at least 21 years of age, legally they are allowed to drink and should act responsibly. Always provide and encourage non-alcoholic alternatives.

#### **When is the deadline for my application?**

We accept applications throughout the year. However, we ask interested families to submit their applications by the end of June before Reporting-In Day (R-Day) which is typically scheduled on the first week of July when the new class arrives for their Swab Summer Training. Sponsor family assignments for the incoming class are usually finalized the third week of July, with the Meet & Greet Event scheduled at the end of the month.

**✚ What should I do if I want to give my cadet a care package?**

Sponsor families can either mail or drop off care packages and letters at the Cadet Watch Office. The Cadet Watch Office is located in Chase Hall Quarter Deck. The entrance to the watch office is along Bear Drive [immediate left after passing through the main gate] located between the flag poles and the parking lot. There are two canons posted on either side of the double doors. The door is open from 7am – 5 pm every day. Chase Hall is where the cadet corps lives and is a secured area. Visitors can call the Cadet Watch Office at 860.444.8294 ahead of time or use the call-in doorbell during afterhours or holiday periods to gain access to the watch office. Visitors are also welcome to ask the gate guards for directions and assistance.

Mailing format during swab summer:

Swab Name, company  
c/o Cadet Watch Office  
U.S. Coast Guard Academy  
29 Mohegan Ave  
New London, CT 06320

**✚ Can I ask my cadets to babysit or help around the house?**

Cadets will often times eagerly volunteer to help out at your house such as babysitting, lawn maintenance, etc. Please be mindful that some cadets may not have proper training in these areas. In cases involving academy staff/military members, there is always the issue of undue/unintended influence/pressure where a cadet may not want to decline out of fear of reprisal.

## IV. Key Personnel & Points of Contact

Please contact the Sponsor Family Program Coordinator or the Cadet Activities Funds Manager if you are in need of assistance with any matters concerning your sponsor cadet. You can call the Cadet Watch Office if you are unable to reach a staff member or your sponsor cadets.

- **Sponsor Family Program Coordinator:** Mrs. Lauren Pifer  
Email: [CadetFamilySponsorProgram@uscga.edu](mailto:CadetFamilySponsorProgram@uscga.edu)  
Phone: (860) 701-6119
- **Cadet Activities Funds Manager:** Mrs. Lara Schrage  
Email: [lara.j.schrage@uscga.edu](mailto:lara.j.schrage@uscga.edu)  
Phone: (860) 444-8281
- **Medical Emergency:** 860.444.8402
- **CGA Police:** 860.444.8597
- **Chase Hall Duty Officer (CHDO):** 860.701.6750
- **Cadet Watch Office:** 860.444.8294
- **Chaplain on Duty:** 860.444.8456

