

ALERT Cadet™



Forming a New ALERT Cadet Unit

September 2011 Edition

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the ALERT Cadet program!

ALERT Cadet is a tool Christian fathers can use to win and keep the hearts of their 8 to 17-year-old sons.

This manual, *Forming a New ALERT Cadet Unit*, is designed to assist you, as a potential leader, to start, establish, charter, and build a successful ALERT Cadet unit. After chartering your unit, you will have access to other ALERT Cadet resources, including the ALERT Cadet *Leadership Manual*, which gives detailed instructions on administering your unit based on the years of experience of other ALERT Cadet fathers and sons.

We strongly urge you to read through this *Forming a New ALERT Cadet Unit* manual in its entirety before you start. You will gain a basic understanding of the responsibilities associated with being an ALERT Cadet unit leader, and the information you will need as you work with other fathers and their sons to start the unit. We have included step-by-step instructions and suggestions designed to enable you, as a busy father, to be successful. At the back of this manual you will find a glossary of terms and the forms necessary to get your unit started on the right foot.

Starting a new ALERT Cadet unit is not difficult; it just takes one Christian father and his son who are willing to put in the energy to get things going. Many fathers and their sons before you have succeeded at starting new units; you can do it as well! If you have questions along the way, know that we at ALERT Cadet Headquarters stand ready to assist you. Our goal is to make you successful in using the ALERT Cadet program to win and keep your sons' hearts.

Please be sure to contact us if you need assistance, at:

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The ALERT Cadet Vision, Mission, and Ministry

The ALERT Cadet program, started in 1996, is a companion to the ALERT program, the Air Land Emergency Resource Team, and both are ministries of the International ALERT Academy.

ALERT was initiated in 1994 in response to the needs expressed by mayors, governors, and national leaders for trained men of character who could be deployed to serve in disaster or humanitarian aid situations. ALERT's rigorous training and successful deployments around the world have won the admiration of many younger men. This positive response resulted in a program for younger sons and their fathers, the ALERT Cadet program.

ALERT Cadet provides the structure, motivation, spiritual insight, and prepared materials that busy fathers need to raise their 8 to 17-year-old sons to be godly men.

Vision of ALERT Cadet

The vision of any organization, or even a family, answers the questions of "Who?" "What?" and "Why?" The vision makes sure that everyone is on the same team and knows where the team is headed. Vision is so critical to any organization that Solomon put it this way in Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

The focus of the ALERT Cadet program is the father and son relationship, hence our vision is:

"Assisting fathers to win and keep the hearts of their 8 to 17-year-old sons."

Let's tear this vision statement apart so that you are firmly grounded as an ALERT Cadet leader.

Who?

ALERT Cadet exists to serve fathers and their 8 to 17-year-old sons. This is our target group and the focus of all our activity. This does not exclude the rest of the family; rather, it clarifies the focus so that we do not get off track in what we say and do.

What?

The key word here is "assisting." ALERT Cadet is a tool that fathers can use to assist them as they raise their sons. ALERT Cadet has as its core the relationship between a father and his sons. In no

way, shape, or form do we want to interfere with the proper development of the relationship between a father and his sons. God will hold the father accountable for the proper training of his sons. It is our job as ALERT Cadet leaders to assist the father in fulfilling his God-given responsibilities.

A second area is the “winning and the keeping of the heart.” By this we mean that a father must develop and maintain his God-given influence in the lives of his sons so that he is able to properly direct them as they grow and mature. In some cases the father may need to repair his relationship with one of his sons before he can begin to win that son’s heart.

The father is the central figure in the ALERT Cadet program. His involvement in the life of his son is critical to that son understanding his life purpose. He must become a man who is “...strong to overcome the evil one...” from 1 John 2:14, and who has a heart after God’s own heart, like King David. This involvement of the father, then, is a key distinctive of the ALERT Cadet program. You will see this in all of our materials. Fathers hold the sons accountable, and sons hold their fathers accountable, for the completion of handbook materials and the development of godly character.

Fathers need to ask themselves two key questions:

- “Who possesses my son’s heart?” and
- “After whom will my son pattern his life?”

The answers to these questions will help the wise father choose activities for himself and for his sons.

Why?

Implied in our vision statement is that a young man, properly trained by his father, will grow to be a godly young man with a heart of service.

As a young man develops he must have a purpose in life. Without purpose young men often pursue worldly pursuits. Engrained in the ALERT Cadet materials is the development of a sense of life purpose for a young man, and if necessary, in the life of his father.

The ALERT Cadet program is designed to lay the foundations of communication, accountability, responsibility, and personal discipleship while building a framework of character. The character

developed in a young man allows him to leave behind childish ways. The Apostle Paul said it this way in 1 Corinthians 13:11, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

The activities of the ALERT Cadet program follow God’s design for men and provide a means of building and strengthening the father and son relationship. The Scripture memory, Scripture meditation, life skills projects, character training, service opportunities, adventure projects, and physical training all assist fathers in the training of their sons. Group accountability, unit activities, camps, ribbons, awards, and the uniforms give fathers additional ways to motivate their sons to achieve personal goals.

Mission of ALERT Cadet

The mission of an organization answers the question of, “How will we accomplish the vision?” ALERT Cadet Headquarters staff seeks to do this in three ways, as we:

- Develop **tools and activities** (programs, activities, training, and materials) and provide a **structure** to accomplish the ALERT Cadet vision.
- Encourage and train a **network** of like-minded fathers who can and will assist other fathers.
- Give fathers **worthy goals** for their sons, including a heart for service to God, His people, and those in need.

Tools, Activities, and Structure

The first part of our mission is to create materials, sponsor activities, and build a program structure that supports fathers in raising their sons well. Our materials are only available to those actively involved in the ALERT Cadet program. The activities we sponsor, specifically camps and training opportunities, are all focused upon strengthening the father and son bond.

The ALERT Cadet program is centrally administered, but it is locally implemented. This structure allows for flexibility to meet the needs of fathers in various locations and to cover a wide range of ages amongst their young men. The central administration provides the framework whereby fathers can motivate their young men to “love and good deeds” by rewarding them for character development and completion of assignments.

Network

Our enemy, Satan, would have us as fathers believe that we are all isolated individuals without the support of a common bond in Christ. This is not true in the ALERT Cadet organization. These common bonds allow fathers from all walks of life to network together in the common struggle to raise our sons well.

Our goal through ALERT Cadet is to foster the development of this father support network as a means of assisting fathers. ALERT Cadet Headquarters maintains an extensive database of its members to facilitate this networking. Many fathers use the network of like-minded ALERT Cadet fathers to find opportunities for their older young men to have apprenticeship-type experiences. In this way they are able to find God's purpose and vocation for the sons.

Worthy Goals

Young men need both short and long term goals to accomplish, and they need encouragement and motivation to reach those goals. ALERT Cadet provides this in the structure of the program with its many awards. Awards are given for:

- Participation in certain activities,
- Accomplishment of handbook projects,
- Completion of certain training courses, and
- Service to others.

Character development and leadership skills are recognized within the rank structure for the sons, while the father's ranks are given for holding specific leadership positions.

The final goal, perhaps taking a lifetime to complete, is the development of a heart of service in both the fathers and the young men. Nothing will kill a selfish, "me-centered" spirit faster than serving others on a regular basis. Each of the ALERT Cadet handbooks require fathers and sons to complete service projects in the home, community, and church.

Ministry of ALERT Cadet

The ministry of ALERT Cadet is based upon the commands of Scripture to fathers and the universal need for sons to become young men of godly character. To this end, ALERT Cadet staff members in the field and at Headquarters continually consider the needs of fathers and

sons and seek to create materials, sponsor activities, and provide counseling as appropriate to strengthen father and son bonds.

ALERT Cadet is funded through the fees paid by fathers and sons upon joining the program and by receipts from ALERT Cadet-sponsored camps and activities. Uniforms, curriculum, and other ALERT Cadet logo items also provide limited income to offset the fixed costs of administering the program. Donations are welcome and are routinely used to provide scholarships for those fathers and sons who, at the time, may not be able to afford certain costs or fees.

ALERT Cadet relies heavily on volunteers to staff the Headquarters and field positions. Older ALERT Cadet sons and older sisters routinely volunteer their time to the ministry by assisting our field captains, majors, and headquarters staff with their organizational, creative writing, computer, photography, graphics, and public contact projects. We seek to keep ALERT Cadet a principle-based ministry. We do not want to confuse methods for principles. A simple rhyme helps to clarify the difference:

“Methods are many,
Principles are few.
Methods often change, but
Principles never do.”

We administer the ALERT Cadet program by the following principles, as we:

- **Evaluate** all decisions in light of Scriptural principles
- **Focus** on God changing people’s lives, not on administering/developing a program
- **Run** at the pace of God-provided resources (people, talents, and dollars)
- **Maintain** a 100% volunteer (self-supporting or donor-supported), distributed organization
- **Utilize** best-in-class and best available technology to get the job done efficiently
- **Plan** for the future and ask God to direct the individual steps and timing
- **Administer** centrally, but implement locally

These principles help to keep us focused on the ministry God has called us to and for which we exist. They also assist us in making day-to-day decisions regarding policy and the projects we undertake.

Familiarize Yourself with ALERT Cadet

The ALERT Cadet program is designed to be a tool that fathers and sons can use to build stronger relationships with each other, as they both grow closer to God. Sons desire to give their hearts to their fathers, and wise fathers seek to properly direct their sons as they mature into manhood.

Please read the *Welcome to ALERT Cadet* booklet, a quick reference guide to ALERT Cadet, to become familiar with the ALERT Cadet program. You can request a copy from ALERT Cadet Headquarters if you do not already have one; this publication is updated annually.

Involvement of the Father

Father involvement is critical to winning and keeping sons' hearts, and it is also a distinctive of the ALERT Cadet program. The fathers' involvement sets ALERT Cadet apart from other boys' programs. As a father, you are expected to participate with your son in all unit activities, as you are able. Most awards and all national activities are available to fathers as well as to sons. You may even find that the lessons taught in the ALERT Cadet materials are useful in teaching Biblical lessons, character, and life skills to your younger sons and to your daughters.

To begin a unit you will need two other Christian likeminded fathers who have the same desire of seeing their sons grow into men who love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and spirit. Together, the father and son family groups, and the local ALERT Cadet unit can share God's love at home, in the church, community, nation, and around the world. The fathers' sons will add the energy, determination, and fun!

Fathers are always responsible for, and in authority over, their individual sons. Never within the ALERT Cadet structure is a son directly responsible for, or in the chain of command, for other sons not in his family group. A son may be asked to lead an activity or teach a lesson, but he always does this under the specific instruction and with the approval of his father.

Father-son interaction is critical to success in the ALERT Cadet program. However, some sons do not have earthly fathers who are involved in their lives, either because their fathers have died or through abandonment. If this is the case for a young man in the unit you are forming, please consult ALERT Cadet Headquarters before

you welcome the young man into your unit. There are several possible solutions to this issue, which we will discuss with you.

Operational Structure of ALERT Cadet

The basic element of the ALERT Cadet program is the family group which is composed of a father and his sons. Each father is accountable to his sons and the sons are accountable to their father for their work in the ALERT Cadet program.

Three to five families in a geographic area form a unit. (Based on case by case needs, some two-family units are encouraged to start. Please contact ALERT Cadet Headquarters if you have questions concerning this.) One father serves as the unit leader, but the other fathers and older sons also take part of the workload and serve as "Service Project Coordinators," "Hymn Trainer," "Campout Planner," and so on, to aid the unit leader and meeting coordinator.

When a unit grows to six families, the unit leader should recommend, to the ALERT Cadet commanding officer, one or more fathers from the unit to serve in leadership with him as squad leaders. One father directs each squad, as squad leader. Each squad leader is then accountable to the unit leader.

Units are named for their country or state, the specific geographic location, and the order in which they were formed; thus, the Texas 4th Alpha unit is located in Texas, in the Dallas area, and was the first unit formed in that area. Squads are designated by numbers, as in "Squad 2 of the Texas 4th Alpha unit."

Right Tool, Right Time?

Due to the required involvement of the father, the ALERT Cadet program is not for everyone. Before beginning ALERT Cadet with your family, it is very important that you understand the program and determine if it is the right tool for your family and if this is the right time for this tool. You may be excited about the idea, but if your son is not, you may become frustrated and vice-versa. If you feel that ALERT Cadet is the right tool to assist you in raising your sons, then do not put off joining too long and risk losing their hearts!

We recommend that you plan to start a new ALERT Cadet unit during a time when there are no major disruptions in your family, such as the birth of a new child or a job change. Plan to involve the other fathers and sons in the process and look to the Lord for His timing.

Understanding the time commitment is very important. The ALERT Cadet program will require approximately one hour per week to complete the handbooks, excluding projects, in the recommended time. If you or other fathers are homeschooling your children, you may want to make ALERT Cadet a subject in their curriculum and schedule time during the school day to complete the activities and work in the handbooks. If your sons are in public or private schools, you will need to schedule time for them to work in their handbooks and do ALERT Cadet projects outside of school hours. Additionally, you will need to schedule time for bi-weekly ALERT Cadet meetings, quarterly service projects and campouts, and other unit and national activities.

Generate Interest In Your Community

We have seen several units start with the direct sponsorship from a local church. Your ALERT Cadet unit may be able to serve the church, and the church may also be a great source of encouragement to your unit. You may be able to help spread the word about the ALERT Cadet program to other fathers and sons in your church and in your surrounding area. With the support of your church, you may be able to use the church building as a meeting location.

While you are starting into the ALERT Cadet program, talk with your pastor, or elder board, about ALERT Cadet and explain the program and intent to him (them). The attached Letter of Introduction will assist you in explaining the program. An introductory brochure on ALERT Cadet and other informational materials are available from ALERT Cadet Headquarters.

After presenting the ALERT Cadet program to your pastor or elder board, you will want to find other fathers who share your vision for increasing their relationship with their sons. With your pastor's or elder board's approval, you can begin to generate interest for ALERT Cadet within your church. From there, branch out into your local homeschool or school support group. For sons involved in public or private schools, presenting the ALERT Cadet program to parent support groups is an effective way to get the word out to interested families.

Staff at ALERT Cadet Headquarters can put you in contact with other families in your area who have registered with ALERT Cadet and received the ALERT Cadet *Basic Training Manual*. The ALERT Cadet captain and/or major (area and regional coordinators), in your region may also be able to provide additional resources and contacts.

Hold Unit Formation Meetings

Once you have located other likeminded Christian fathers who are interested in forming a unit, you should begin holding formation meetings. We recommend that you hold a series of three meetings to get the unit started well. Familiarize yourself with the recommended meeting plans and schedules and then modify them to best fit your needs. This program is designed to be centrally administered, and locally implemented. Make it work for you!

The next chapters describe the recommended sequence of meetings to get your new unit up and running smoothly. The three recommended meetings are:

- 1st Formation Meeting – Plan with Fathers Alone
- 2nd Formation Meeting – Organizational Meeting with Fathers and Sons
- 3rd Formation Meeting – Your First Regular Unit Meeting

If you will follow this sequence and cover the items in each of the chapters thoroughly, you will be set up for good success!

1st Formation Meeting – Plan with the Fathers Alone

We have seen that the strength of successful ALERT Cadet units is the family fellowship. Thus we recommend you hold your first organizational meeting as a family potluck, and pull the interested fathers aside for a meeting during the fellowship. The initial meeting should be a small informal gathering around a table where you can work together to discuss the various aspects of the ALERT Cadet program and make plans for your specific unit. You should plan for the meeting to take approximately two hours.

The expected outcomes of this meeting are:

- Each father understands the basics of the ALERT Cadet program
- Each father understands why he is joining ALERT Cadet
- The group of fathers makes decisions on the mechanical details of starting and running an ALERT Cadet unit
- The fathers make a rough outline of what each father would like to learn/teach in the unit
- One father agrees to serve as the unit leader and completes the leadership application

The next sections of this chapter form the agenda for this first meeting.

Opening

Begin this, and every ALERT Cadet meeting, with prayer. Be sure to ask God for the wisdom you will require to lead your families well.

Let the men get to know each other, perhaps by asking, their names, occupation, and a question about their sons, such as, “What do you enjoy most about your sons?”

Gather Initial Information

In the new unit formation packet which you received with this manual, are three sets of forms, one set for each prospective family. Pass these out at this time. If you need additional copies of any form, you can make them from the blanks at the back of this manual.

Ask each father to write out his goals for each of his sons, using the Initial Planning Survey form. Next, have each father complete a Family Data Sheet form, which is a record of contact information for their family.

Discuss the ALERT Cadet Program

Be sure all of the fathers have a copy of the most recent edition of the *Welcome to ALERT Cadet* publication. Review the sections on:

- the organizational structure,
- the training material,
- activities, both ALERT Cadet sponsored and unit sponsored, and
- rank.

Point out the “Frequently Asked Questions” section and review any answers that are appropriate for your group of fathers and sons.

Discuss Unit Activities

Discuss the fathers’ goals for your ALERT Cadet unit and then decide upon activities the fathers would like to do with their sons. You may want to discuss particular character qualities, adventure projects, and life skills all of you want to see developed in the fathers as well as in the young men. Utilize the information in the Initial Planning Survey to do this.

Your objective with this portion of your time is to bring out the goals and dreams each father has for his sons in terms of:

- life skills,
- character development,
- service to others, and
- adventure outings (camping, biking, hiking, etc.).

Having a good understanding of what each father desires to accomplish with the ALERT Cadet program ensures that all fathers are actively engaged to make your unit a success.

Complete Advancement Applications

Review each family’s progress in the ALERT Cadet *Basic Training Manual (BTM)* and encourage each father to finish the *BTM* quickly.

At ALERT Cadet we have found that the father is usually the impediment to completing the *BTM* in a timely manner. Remind the fathers that while their sons are excited about the program and the prospect of spending quality time with their fathers, the fathers should honor that excitement and be diligent to push toward *BTM* completion and ALERT Cadet Advancement.

Take time to review the Advancement Application and New Uniform Order forms. Encourage fathers to complete the forms and promptly send them to ALERT Cadet Headquarters upon completing the *BTM*.

Discuss Financial Issues

There will be costs associated with operating your unit. While these are minimal, usually on the order of US \$300-500 per year, this can be a source of frustration or anxiety for some.

You will need to consider how you will pay for the following:
rent or utilities for the use of a meeting facility,

- ALERT Cadet ribbons, ribbon racks, and awards,
- a unit flag,
- campout supplies or materials,
- supplies for service projects, and
- scholarships to assist unit families in financial need.

Some units collect dues on a monthly or quarterly basis, while other units use a “pay as you go” approach. Discuss the financial issues before the needs arise so that everyone understands and is comfortable with the process.

Be sure to discuss the following questions and the ALERT Cadet suggested answers that follow in parenthesis.

- Who will handle the unit finances? (A designated treasurer and his son)
- What will we collect for dues or payments? (US\$ 10 per family per quarter will usually provide the money your unit will need)
- When will we collect the dues or payments? (At the beginning of each quarter)
- Where will we keep or deposit the dues or payments? (A cash box will work, with an Excel spreadsheet to keep track of income and disbursements. Some units open a checking account, but this is not required.)
- Why are we starting and growing a unit fund? (For the purchase of supplies, flags, and awards and to cover unit expenses)
- How will we decide what we should cover with the unit fund? (At a quarterly fathers’ meeting, so that all will have a say)

Discuss Leadership Roles

Discuss the leadership roles in the unit and ask each father to pray about his commitment.

If you believe that God is directing you to lead the new unit, share this with the other fathers. Pray as a group of fathers for wisdom; select one father to serve as unit leader.

Most units have, in addition to the unit leader, a meeting coordinator, a treasurer, and an activities coordinator. (The unit leader may take on the role of meeting coordinator as well in the beginning.) Older sons who are responsible, enthusiastic, and reliable should assist their fathers with these duties.

The **unit leader** serves as the interface with ALERT Cadet Headquarters, plans the meeting, leads the meetings, and leads the fathers' meetings.

The **meeting coordinator** assists the unit leader to oversee arrangements for unit meetings and finds appropriate teachers (usually fathers and sons from the unit) for the character and life skills sessions at unit meetings.

The **treasurer** takes care of dues, awards, and other financial responsibilities. This should NOT be the unit leader, to avoid any potential impropriety.

The **activities coordinator** plans the campouts, service projects, and other unit group activities.

Schedule the Next Planning Meeting

Decide on the location and time for the next planning meeting. This next meeting may be held in as little as a week's time, but it should be held within one month from your initial meeting.

As preparation for the next meeting, ask everyone to:

- bring their calendars, as you will be doing some initial activity planning.
- think about the best time to meet for the regular unit meetings. These meetings will be on an every-two week basis, or twice per month.
- think about any additional skill topics or character training they would like to teach. They may do this together with their older sons.

Dismiss

Remind everyone of the location and time of your next planning meeting and the homework.

Pray and thank God for His goodness to you and to the fathers in the raising of your sons!

2nd Formation Meeting – Hold an Organizational Meeting for Fathers and Sons

Plan to have the sons join with the fathers for this second ALERT Cadet unit formation meeting. The meeting should still be fairly informal. We suggest the following outline for this meeting:

Introduce Yourselfs

Open in prayer. Welcome any new fathers and sons who have joined you. Go around the room in sequential order and ask each father to introduce himself to the others present and to share what he enjoys doing with his sons. Ask each son to introduce himself as well and to share what he likes best about his father.

Complete Paperwork

Have any new families complete the Initial Planning Survey and Family Data Sheet forms. When everyone is finished, have each father share what he has written for goals on the Initial Planning Survey. Listen to the fathers and record their comments on the Summary and Decisions from Initial Planning form. Look for consensus amongst the fathers and record any decisions the group of fathers makes on the form.

Pass out copies of the following forms to all fathers and sons:

- General Liability and Model Release,
- Medical Information / Release - Father, one for each father, and
- Medical Information / Release - Son, one for each son.

These forms are in the new family form packet you passed out at the first formational meeting.

Ask the fathers to complete these forms so that you can have them on file and be prepared for future activities, in case of need. Keep the medical information forms with the unit leader as they will contain confidential personal information.

Discuss a Typical ALERT Cadet Unit Meeting

Review with the fathers and sons a sample ALERT Cadet unit meeting agenda. Your objective is to get everyone on the same page as to what a typical meeting looks and feels like, before you actually do it in your third formation meeting.

Use the Unit Meeting Agenda Planner form in this manual to guide your planning. You may want to make copies of a typical agenda for others to see and make comments on. The unit meeting should consist of the following elements (each of these elements is described in more detail in the 3rd Formation Meeting section of this manual):

- Meeting area set-up
- Unit formation
- Opening prayer and welcome
- Honor to the nation (flag ceremony)
- Uniform inspection
- Hymn history and singing
- Drill and ceremony or physical training
- Father and son accountability time
- Life skill or character training
- Awards presentation (if appropriate)
- Closing formation
- Closing prayer
- Tear-down
- Free activity or game time

Decide When and Where Your Unit Will Meet

Ask the fathers to check their calendars to determine the best time to hold regular unit meetings. Most units meet twice a month. Many have found meeting once a week to be too often for the fathers to compile lessons and once a month to be too long for the sons to wait, especially if the family has to miss an occasional meeting. We recommend that you set a specific schedule, such as “1st and 3rd Tuesdays, 7 PM, at the Civic Center activities room,” and keep to it. If you begin to move the meeting dates, times, or locations to accommodate individual family needs, the unit quickly becomes confused and energy and enthusiasm plummet.

Regarding a place to meet, you may initially start in someone’s home. However, we recommend that you quickly move to a neutral place such as a church, civic center, or other public location with sufficient room. You will want a room approximately the size of a basketball court to conduct your ALERT Cadet unit meetings.

Schedule Unit Activities

Ask the fathers and sons to suggest activities, potential service projects, and locations for campouts or other adventure activities. Use

this information and that from the Summary and Decisions from Initial Planning form to develop a schedule of events for the year.

Using the Quarterly Planning Overview form to record your decisions; mark on the form the dates of your ALERT Cadet meetings. Next, decide and schedule skills training and character lessons for the next six to twelve months. Develop these dates into a unit activities calendar and distribute copies to the unit families. Use the Teaching Topics Schedule form to schedule the unit activities.

We suggest the following timing for unit activities:

- Service project – once per quarter
- Adventure activity – once per quarter
- Unit meeting – every two weeks, or twice per month
- Physical fitness test – every six months
- Unit awards banquet – every six months

Finally, decide what topic, either character or skill, you want to teach at your third formation meeting. Be sure to assign this to a willing teacher who can then prepare to teach the lesson at the next meeting.

Schedule Award Ceremonies/Banquets

Unit leaders typically hand out awards at each unit meeting to fathers and sons who have earned them.

The purpose of an award ceremony or banquet is to recognize in a more formal way, and in front of all family members, the achievements of the fathers and sons. These are very encouraging times for all involved in ALERT Cadet.

Plan two ceremonies and/or banquets annually to recognize achievements and to share with the wives, mothers, daughters, and younger sons some of what the fathers and sons have been learning in ALERT Cadet. Awards ceremonies and banquets are great opportunities to invite guests to learn more about ALERT Cadet, honor mothers for their contributions, and thank church and civil authorities for their support.

Many units schedule award ceremonies and recognition banquets twice a year in the May/June and in the November/December time frames.

Assign Responsibilities

Assign the unit meeting responsibilities to fathers and their older sons. You will initially need someone for each of the following positions:

- Hymn trainer,
- Physical training leader, and
- Setup/teardown leader.

As you start out, the unit leader, meeting coordinator, treasurer, and activities coordinator may also assume some of these responsibilities. Use the Unit Meeting Agenda Planner and Quarterly Planning Overview forms to guide your thinking and planning.

Decide on Uniforms

Discuss ALERT Cadet uniforms (from the *Welcome to ALERT Cadet* publication) and decide on a uniform that everyone can wear at the next meeting. We recommend that new families wear the ALERT Cadet duty uniform (which you can order at any time during Basic Training and consists of a green ALERT Cadet T-shirt, khaki BDU pants, and the khaki marine-style cover) until the families complete their Advancement applications and receive their official ALERT Cadet chambrays. Thereafter we recommend that everyone wear the ALERT Cadet duty-dress uniform with ribbon awards to unit meetings.

Check on Progress

Review each family's progress through the ALERT Cadet *Basic Training Manual (BTM)*. Encourage progress and offer practical suggestions to enable all the fathers and sons to complete the *BTM* in an orderly and efficient manner.

Encourage fathers to complete the *BTM* and Advancement application process quickly in order to reinforce initial enthusiasm. Uniforms and handbooks are usually shipped from ALERT Cadet Headquarters within six weeks after submitting the Advancement application.

Conclude and Pray

Thank God for the fathers who want to win and keep their sons' hearts and for the sons who are excited to spend time with their fathers in ALERT Cadet.

Remind everyone of the date, time, and location of the next (the third) formation meeting and ask everyone to be in the agreed upon uniform. If they need to purchase uniform components, they can do so by contacting ALERT Cadet Headquarters at 903-636-9228.

3rd Formation Meeting – Your First Regular Unit Meeting

Your third ALERT Cadet formation meeting should be more formal and will set the tone for the meetings to follow. Both fathers and sons should attend. Be sure to welcome any new families, but do not go back over decisions made in your second formational meeting.

The goal of this third meeting is to demonstrate how an ALERT Cadet meeting is run, learn a new skill or gain insight into Christian character, allow time for fathers and sons to spend time together, and have fun.

Meeting Format

Follow the outline below to successfully conduct your very first ALERT Cadet unit meeting!

Be sure to stay on time, as the agenda is a full 90 minutes, not including set up, tear down, or game time. Keep things moving to keep the interest of all involved.

Set Up – (15 minutes)

Arrive early to make sure the meeting area is set up appropriately for the activities below.

Opening Formation – (10 minutes)

Give the command “Fall In” and instruct everyone to line up in two horizontal lines, with the sons in the first line and fathers behind their sons. The unit leader will face the formation approximately six feet in front of the sons. (Later you will “Fall In” in a slightly different manner, as directed in the ALERT Cadet Leadership Manual, but this simple formation is appropriate for the first meeting.) At this point, everyone should be at the position of attention, with arms straight down at the sides, feet shoulder-width apart, body erect, and eyes facing forward. Each person should direct his attention to the unit leader.

Open with prayer.

Designate one older son to hold your national flag, if one is available, at the front of the formation and recite your nation’s pledge of allegiance, if appropriate.

Sing your national anthem or another patriotic song.

Recite the ALERT Cadet Covenant in unison. The words to the ALERT Cadet Covenant are in the ALERT Cadet *Basic Training Manual*.

Take attendance, using the Squad Attendance Record, checking that each father and son has his Bible and Handbook, and is in proper uniform. Go from person to person, shaking hands, welcoming them, and recording their names on the attendance record.

Hymn Training Session – (10 minutes)

Give the command, “Parade Rest,” so that the fathers/sons relax, but remain in line with their hands clasped behind their backs and feet spread shoulder width apart.

Direct the hymn trainer to teach a hymn or to lead a song. The ALERT Cadet Theme Song, “The Battle is the Lord’s,” is a good place to start. The words to, and the sheet music for, the Theme Song are in the ALERT Cadet Basic Training Manual. You will also find the music accompaniment, available for download, on the ALERT Cadet website. After mastering the ALERT Cadet theme song, continue learning hymns of your choice.

Physical Training (PT) Session – (25 minutes)

When each family completes the ALERT Cadet Basic Training Manual and completes their Advancement Application, each father and son will receive a green ALERT Cadet uniform shirt, called a “chambray.” Instruct the fathers and sons to remove their chambrays before they begin the PT session and place them to the side, either on hangers or on the backs of chairs.

Have a father or older son designated as PT leader lead the unit in warm-ups, stretches, exercises, and a cool down. For details on how to lead a PT session, download the ALERT Cadet *Physical Fitness Training Instruction Manual* from www.alertcadet.org. Initially you may use the PT instruction sections from the ALERT Cadet *Basic Training Manual* as your guide.

Be sure the leader allows for adequate warm up and cool down time in order to avoid injuries. After finishing with the exercise time, instruct everyone to get a drink of water and put on their chambray uniform shirts, if they have them.

Accountability Session – (10 minutes)

Direct the fathers to review memorized Bible verses with their sons. They should hold each other accountable for progress in the ALERT Cadet *Basic Training Manual* or ALERT Cadet Handbooks. Use this time to set progress and completion goals for the next week or two.

Teaching Session – (30 minutes)

Ask the fathers and sons to sit in chairs in a large group arrangement, for the teaching time. Have one father or older son, who has prepared beforehand, teach a character lesson or a life skill session. We recommend that you alternate between a character lesson and a life skill for unit meetings. You will find resources for these teaching times on the ALERT Cadet website under “Leadership Resources” or simply develop your own.

Final Formation – (5 minutes)

Give the command, “Fall In,” and allow time for the fathers and sons to line up for the Final Formation in the same way as they did for Opening Formation. Encourage the fathers and sons who have made progress in their handbooks, recognize birthdays, present awards, make final announcements, and close in prayer. You can also use this time to present uniforms and handbooks to those who have completed their *Basic Training Manual*.

Game Session – (As appropriate until dismissed)

Direct a father and his sons to organize and oversee an active game with the fathers and sons in the unit. Make sure they select appropriate games that can be played by all ages without the potential for serious injury.

Fathers may want to actively participate in the game, if physically able, or gather with other fathers for fellowship, counsel, and encouragement.

Tear-Down – (15 minutes)

Return the room to order and leave it cleaner than when you arrived, as a good witness to Christ.

Chartering Your Unit

Continue with this unit meeting format until you have three families (as mentioned on page 14, possibly two families on an as needed basis) who have completed the *Basic Training Manual* and have completed their Advancement application. When you have the required three families, contact your ALERT Cadet captain and/or major (area and regional coordinator) and ALERT Cadet Headquarters informing them that your unit is ready for chartering. They will work with you and with the ALERT Cadet commanding officer to arrange a time for a special ceremony to officially charter your unit and commission the unit leader.

When you are ready to charter your unit, send a copy of the following completed forms to ALERT Cadet Headquarters:

- Family Data Sheet for each of the families in your unit,
- Unit Roster, and
- Unit Leader Commissioning Application.

Each family will also need to send their Advancement Application and Uniform Order forms with the required fee to ALERT Cadet Headquarters to receive their uniforms and handbooks.

ALERT Cadet Headquarters staff will process the paperwork and help arrange for the unit chartering ceremony. The unit leader will receive the ALERT Cadet *Leadership Manual* and have access to other ALERT Cadet resources on the website. The ALERT Cadet *Leadership Manual* has complete details, samples, and suggestions on everything related to serving as a unit leader.

Next Steps

After chartering your new unit, be sure to read the ALERT Cadet *Leadership Manual* in its entirety. The *Leadership Manual* contains the collective wisdom of many leaders over the years in the policies, practices, and procedures that make ALERT Cadet an effective tool for fathers to win and keep the hearts of their 8 to 17-year-old sons.

Be sure to hold quarterly fathers' meetings, as described in the *Leadership Manual*. These meetings are not too different from the second formation meeting you held in organizing your unit. At the fathers' meeting you will discuss what is going right in your unit and what is not. You will also decide on future teaching topics, schedule outings, and assign teachers and organizers for these decisions. Having a clear calendar of events, many months in advance, will assist

everyone in their planning and ensure a smooth running unit. Be sure to assign the various roles in running your unit to different fathers. In this way everyone is involved in the success of the unit. Do not try to do it all yourself. In the *Leadership Manual* you will find a list of leadership roles which require filling as your unit grows.

Conclusion

You have done it!

Congratulations! You have formed a new ALERT Cadet unit! Begin to contact other likeminded fathers and sons so that your new unit continues to grow. Ask God for wisdom and His strength to continue on this journey.

At any time during your journey as an ALERT Cadet, if we at ALERT Cadet Headquarters can assist you, please do not hesitate to contact us at 903-636-9228, or by e-mail at cadets@alertacademy.com.

Other Useful Information

ALERT Cadet Headquarters

The ALERT Cadet program is administered centrally but is implemented locally. This ensures consistency in the program while allowing flexibility to meet the needs of local fathers and sons. Staff members at ALERT Cadet Headquarters, all volunteers, produce curriculum materials, process Advancement applications, organize and host nation-wide camps, answer questions, and supply uniforms, awards, and other ALERT Cadet items. You can contact the ALERT Cadet Headquarters staff at 903-636-9228 during normal business hours, Monday to Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM, Central Time, in the US or by email: cadets@alertacademy.com.

The ALERT Cadet Website

The website www.alertcadet.org is a great source of information on the ALERT Cadet program. Many forms, samples, templates, and even this document, are available for download. You may wish to share information with other ALERT Cadet units, request resources for downloading, and contribute ideas, photos, and articles. You will also find lists of awards, order forms, and a complete listing of all items sold in the ALERT Cadet store.

You will need the password “alpha3” to access the members-only content.

Leadership Manual

The material contained in this *Forming a New ALERT Cadet Unit* manual is a sub-set of the larger, and more exhaustive, ALERT Cadet *Leadership Manual*. Upon chartering of your new unit a *Leadership Manual* and other resources are sent to or made available to the new leader. These resources are written with the busy father in mind, so you should find them immediately practical in the administration of your unit.

ALERT Cadet Captains and Majors

Area coordinators, called ALERT Cadet captains, and Regional coordinators, called ALERT Cadet majors, have many years of experience in leading ALERT Cadet units; they also have a good knowledge of the units and fathers and sons in their regions. Captains and majors are available to provide wisdom and advice to new unit leaders based upon their experience in ALERT Cadet. These captains and majors organize annual regional camps and regional service

projects and activities, as well as assist new and existing unit leaders in their geographic regions. ALERT Cadet Headquarters staff can give you up-to-date contact information for the ALERT Cadet captain and/or major in your region.

Uniforms, Handbooks, and Journals

At any time during Basic Training, fathers and sons have the option of purchasing a duty uniform (green ALERT Cadet t-shirt, khaki BDU pants, BDU belt, and khaki Marine-style cover). At Advancement, they will receive their green chambray, the *Novice Handbook* 2nd Ed., the ALERT Cadet *Journal*, and membership materials. Additional uniform components, future handbooks, *Journal* refills, and publication updates are available from ALERT Cadet Headquarters at 903-636-9228 or by email at cadets@alertacademy.com.

Monetary Donations

People may offer monetary donations to ALERT Cadet units as a “Thank you” for the services the members performed for those in need. Remember, and reinforce to unit members, to serve in such a way that others receive the credit, God receives the glory, and you receive the joy of having served. Then, if a donation is offered, you can receive it with great joy. The donation may be used for your unit’s general fund or for future scholarships. You may also send the donation to ALERT Cadet Headquarters, and we will send a receipt to the donor.

ALERT Cadet units may solicit donations of property in support of their service projects or for disaster deployment relief efforts. Please give any such requests adequate prayer and consideration before approaching a business. As a local unit you may not give a tax receipt for the purposes of verifying the donation; contact the ALERT Cadet commanding officer if this situation comes up.

Legal Issues

While we never intend for accidents or injuries to occur, they sometimes do. Therefore, each father should sign a General Liability and Model Release form before the family participates in your new unit. In this way, fathers are aware of the dangers involved in participating in planned activities, as well as releasing you, ALERT Cadet, the International ALERT Academy, and the Institute in Biblical Life Principles from liability. By signing the form, fathers are also giving their consent to allow their photos or likenesses to be used in ALERT Cadet materials and publications.

Require all fathers and sons in your unit to fill out a Medical Information / Release form. This provides you with necessary information should there be the need to seek professional medical assistance for any of your members during unit meetings or other unit activities.

The ALERT Cadet name, logo, and publications are copyrighted material. Should you desire to use any of the materials in a publication, please contact ALERT Cadet Headquarters for the appropriate conditions of use and consent form. You are expressly given permission to copy forms for use in the personal administration of your ALERT Cadet unit.

Glossary of Terms

Advancement - the point in time when you complete Basic Training, receive your Chambray, earn your rank, begin to work through your handbooks, and earn ribbons and awards

ALERT - the Air, Land, Emergency Resource Team, founded in 1994, to equip young men with skills necessary for a life-time of Christian service; their motto is "Strong to Serve"

ALERT Cadet - an organization designed to assist Christian fathers to win and keep the hearts of the 8 to 17-year-old sons; their motto is "Strong to Overcome" the evil one

BDUs - "battle dress uniform"; ALERT Cadet fathers and sons wear cotton-poly khaki BDU pants with multiple pockets, double knees and seats, adjustable waists, and blousing at the cuffs

BTM - the ALERT Cadet *Basic Training Manual*

Chambray - the green ALERT Cadet uniform shirt

Color Guard - a special group trained in the presentation and retiring of national, state, religious, ALERT Cadet, unit, and squad flags

Cover - a general term for head covering; ALERT Cadet issues the khaki Marine-style cover

Deployment - a service opportunity for ALERT Cadet fathers, sons, and often, ALERT men

Drill - training in, and demonstration of, proper marching and facing maneuvers

Gig line - alignment of shirtfront, belt buckle, and pants fly so that they are all in-line

Guidon - a green squad flag, proudly carried by a selected ALERT Cadet son, the guidon bearer

Handbook - the ALERT Cadet curriculum currently consisting of the Novice, Pilgrim, Craftsman, and Servant handbooks; each handbook consists of six phase booklets, and each handbook has curriculum for an entire year

Hash mark - a cloth stripe, burgundy or gold, that indicate sons' rank; they are sewn on to a chambray sleeve

International ALERT Academy - parent organization and headquarters of ALERT and ALERT Cadet; located in Big Sandy, in east Texas; formally a university campus and now home of the ALERT training program, frequent ALERT Cadet activities, and a good place for ALERT Cadet families to visit, serve, and relax. The website is www.alertacademy.com

Jodie - a song sung to keep in step while running or marching; ALERT and ALERT Cadet jodies are rated "G"

Journal - daily devotional journal, 365 consecutive entries earns a ribbon

LTC - Leadership Training Corps; for sons aged 13-17, as recommended by their fathers; designated by burgundy shoulder loops; a ceremony marks the transition from boyhood to manhood

Phase - one of the six booklets in an ALERT Cadet handbook; each phase booklet is designed to be completed in six weeks

PT - physical training

Rack - the metal ribbon holder that goes over the left pocket on a chambray; ALERT Cadet fathers and son must exchange their racks for larger ones for new ribbons earned

Ribbon - a small piece of fabric-covered metal that designates the participation in an event, achievement of a goal, or completion of a service with the ALERT Cadet organization

Rope - the extra threads on a chambray that are created in the sewing process; both BDUs and chambrays need to be "de-rope"

Service project - a God-given opportunity to serve others in the home, church, or community

Squad - a group of three to five fathers and their sons who have completed the BTM; led by a 2nd Lieutenant, as part of a larger unit

Strong to Overcome - the ALERT Cadet motto, taken from I John 2:14

Swordsman award - a braid awarded for memorizing and reciting all of the Scripture contained in a handbook (approximately 115 verses) at one sitting with few helps

Tuck - the two parallel pleats in the back of the chambray where the excess fabric is tucked in; tucks are firmly starched and ironed

Unit - one to five squads

Included Forms

The following forms should help you administer your ALERT Cadet unit effectively and efficiently, as well as organize your communication with ALERT Cadet Headquarters. The forms are arranged by category, and are filed in the same order as they are listed below. You will find blanks of every form listed here on the included CD.

Before you begin your formation meetings, make sure you have copies of the correct forms for all expected participants. You may freely copy the forms in this chapter for your use.

Forming a New ALERT Cadet Unit

Initial Planning Survey

This form assists you in surveying prospective ALERT Cadet fathers and asking two vital questions, “Why are you interested in ALERT Cadets?” and “What do you envision for our unit?” You will also make basic decisions regarding meeting times and location.

Summary and Decisions from Initial Planning

This form summarizes the two major topics covered in the Initial Planning Survey, the consensus goals, and the identified resources within the group.

Family Data Sheet

The Family Data Sheet is a record of contact information for the father, spiritual gifting for father and mother, and names, birthdates, and genders of all children, and church affiliation. The unit leader should keep a copy of this form and send the original to ALERT Cadet Headquarters.

Unit Roster

The roster includes the unit leader’s name, fathers’ names, sons’ names and birthdates, and meeting day and time for your new unit. The unit leader should keep a copy of this form and send the original to ALERT Cadet Headquarters.

Letter of Introduction

This letter is a generic overview of the ALERT Cadet program designed to quickly inform a pastor or elder board about the program and its benefits. Please tweak it for your own use and situation.

Medical/Liability/Model Release

You, as the unit leader, should have each father complete the following forms as soon as the family begins to participate in ALERT Cadet activities. Keep these release forms on file in your home, or with you during the actual event, in case of emergency.

Medical Information / Release – Son

This form gives personal information for a son and his father, medical history for the son, and the father's authorization and release for medical treatment of the son.

Medical Information / Release – Father

Similar to the preceding form, this form gives the father's personal information, emergency contact, medical history, and his authorization and release for medical treatment.

General Liability and Model Release

Releases the ALERT Cadet organization from liability and gives permission for ALERT Cadet staff to use photographic and electronic likenesses of ALERT Cadet members in ALERT Cadet print and digital publications.

Unit Organization and Administration

Teaching Topics Schedule

This schedule is a key to successful regular unit meetings. Make the assignments at the beginning of the year; write in the men's names and presentation topics next to the meeting dates. Make copies for each father to use as a reference and memory jogger.

Unit Meeting Agenda Planner

Use this form as you begin to lead your ALERT Cadet unit and carefully follow the planned schedule. You may modify the agenda as appropriate for a specific activity, and later you may create an electronic form, if that works best for you.

Quarterly Planning Overview

This form is very helpful to move the ideas and brainstorming items generated at the father meeting into an actual unit meeting schedule.

Squad Attendance Record

Every squad leader should complete this form at each squad and/or unit meeting.

Officer Promotion Application

This application is for new squad leaders under current unit leaders, new leaders of existing squads, or new unit leaders. When this form is received, ALERT Cadet Headquarters staff will prepare commissioning certificates for the new unit, if appropriate, and a promotion packet to recognize the new rank of the leader.

