

BCS 105 – Early Warning Signals Matching Game – Instructor’s Discussion Points

Unit Commissioner Danger Signals Game Cards

Unit plans sporadically for activities and meetings.

When planning is inconsistent, meetings feel unorganized, and Scouts don’t know what to expect. This hurts engagement and makes it harder to build momentum. A strong unit has a calendar, clear roles, and prepares ahead.

No written program.

Without a written plan, leaders end up reacting instead of leading. A written program provides direction, supports communication, and ensures consistency—even when leadership changes.

Little advancement.

Low advancement may signal weak program delivery or a lack of Scout engagement. Advancement is a key motivator and measure of program success—when it stalls, it’s time to evaluate support, structure, and opportunities.

All Scouts work together on rank requirements.

When everyone works on the same requirements simultaneously, individual growth stalls. A successful unit uses the patrol method and encourages Scouts to advance at their own pace.

Parents are reluctant to become involved.

Limited parent involvement often results in weak support, fewer resources, and strained leadership. Encouraging even minor volunteer roles builds ownership, community, and program strength.

Little outdoor program, no camping.

Outdoor adventure is at the heart of Scouting. When camping and outdoor activities are missing, youth lose interest, and the program fails to deliver core experiences that build skills and character.

One active leader.

When only one leader is carrying the load, it leads to burnout and program instability. Healthy units have shared leadership to ensure continuity, variety, and sustainability.

Few trained leaders.

Leadership training is essential for delivering the Scouting program as intended. Untrained leaders may lack confidence, miss opportunities, and struggle to provide a quality experience.

Few new members recruited.

Without steady recruitment, a unit shrinks, energy drops, and leadership succession becomes difficult. Recruiting is a continuous effort—not just an annual task.

Little communication with chartered organization.

When the chartered organization is disengaged, the unit loses valuable support, oversight, and community presence. Strong communication builds trust, alignment, and mutual support.

Does not access district resources.

District resources—such as training, roundtables, and camping opportunities—help units succeed. When a unit is isolated, it often misses solutions and support that could strengthen its program.

Unit renewal is incomplete.

An incomplete recharter points to deeper issues—such as organizational, commitment, or leadership gaps. It may indicate the unit’s declining health and requires immediate attention from the commissioner.

Unit Leader Danger Signals Game Cards

Commissioners? What's a commissioner?

If a unit leader doesn't know what a commissioner is, it means the commissioner isn't visible or engaged. Commissioners should be known as helpful partners—not mystery titles.

I can't depend on my commissioner.

When leaders feel they can't rely on their commissioner, trust and support break down. A strong commissioner relationship is built on consistency, timely communication, and reliability.

Commissioners show up without notice.

Unannounced visits can feel disruptive or intrusive. Planned, purposeful visits build rapport, respect the unit's time, and allow for meaningful assistance.

I didn't know (fill in the blank) changed.

When unit leaders are unaware of updates—policies, forms, requirements—it signals a communication breakdown. Commissioners help keep units informed and connected to timely information.

I'm fresh out of ideas and don't know what to do.

Leaders feeling stuck or uninspired need support—not judgment. Commissioners can offer resources, share best practices, and encourage leaders to connect with others who have solved similar challenges.

During visits, our commissioner tends to take over our meeting.

A commissioner's role is to coach, not control. When commissioners dominate meetings, they undermine unit leadership and damage trust. Collaboration works better than a takeover.

"I wish that they would get off my back..."

This signals that the leader feels pressured or criticized. Commissioners must balance accountability with empathy—offering encouragement and coaching rather than policing.

I asked for information, and they never got back to me.

When a unit leader asks for help and doesn't get a response, frustration and distrust grow. Commissioners should follow through—responsiveness builds credibility.

I got an email about our Unit Metrics. What's that?

When leaders don't understand Unit Metrics, it could mean they need coaching on data tools or program health indicators. Metrics should be meaningful, not mysterious.

I don't know anything about district-council events.

This indicates isolation from the larger Scouting community. Commissioners help connect units to council resources, events, and networking opportunities—so leaders don't feel alone.

Roundtable...what's that?

If leaders don't know about Roundtable, they're missing a key support system. Roundtable offers ideas, training, and camaraderie—commissioners should encourage and guide leaders to attend.

Our den leaders don't know how/where to get training for their new position.

When new leaders aren't trained, it signals a gap in onboarding and commissioner support. Commissioners can help guide leaders to proper training and encourage a culture of learning.