

Volunteer Handbook

Concord Police
Volunteer
Program

Program Mission

The V.I.P.S. (Volunteers In Police Services) Program is a volunteer organization committed to assisting the Concord Police Department in their goal of enhancing community safety, protecting life and property, and reducing crime and the fear of crime. We will assist in building better community relations by giving the public the opportunity to become more familiar with services provided by the Police Department as well as a better understanding of the inner working of the department.



Volume 1, Issue 1
September, 2005

Purpose of this Handbook

This Handbook has been prepared to inform you about Concord's V.I.P.S.'s (Volunteers in Police Services) history, philosophy, practices, and policies, as well as the bene-

fits provided to you as a valued volunteer and the conduct expected from you.

No volunteer handbook can answer every question, nor would we want to

restrict the normal question and answer interchange among us. It is in our person-to-person conversations that we can better know each other, express our views, and

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Purpose Con't.

volunteer together in a harmonious relationship.

We hope this handbook will help you feel comfortable with us. We depend on you - your success is our success. Please don't hesitate to ask questions. Your volunteer coordinator will gladly answer them. We believe you will enjoy your volunteer work and your fellow volunteers

here. We also believe you will find the Concord Police Department a good place to volunteer.

We ask that you read this handbook carefully, and refer to it whenever questions arise. We also suggest that you take it home so your family can become familiar with V.I.P.S. and our policies.

V.I.P.S.'s policies, benefits and rules, as explained in this Handbook, may be changed from time to time as business, volunteer legislation, and economic conditions dictate. If and when provisions are changed, you will be given replacement pages for those that have become outdated. A copy will also be placed on the bulletin board.

What V.I.P.S. Expects from You

Your first responsibility is to know your own duties and how to perform them promptly, correctly, and pleasantly. Secondly, you are expected to cooperate with management and your fellow volunteers to maintain a good team attitude. How you interact with fellow volunteers, staff, and those whom V.I.P.S. serves, and how you accept direction can affect the success of your department. In turn, the performance of one department can impact the entire service offered by V.I.P.S. Consequently, whatever your position, you have an important assignment: perform every

task to the best of your ability. The result will be a better performance for the organization and Police Department overall, and personal satisfaction for you.

You are encouraged to grasp opportunities for personal development that are offered to you. This handbook offers insight on how you can positively perform to the best of your ability to meet and exceed the V.I.P.S. expectations.

We strongly believe you should have the right to make your own choices in matters that concern and control your life. We believe in direct access to

management. We are dedicated to making V.I.P.S. an organization where you can approach your volunteer coordinator, or any member of management, to discuss any problem or question. We expect you to voice your opinions and contribute your suggestions to improve the quality of V.I.P.S. We're all human so please communicate with each other and with management.

Remember, you help create the healthful, pleasant and safe volunteering conditions that V.I.P.S. intends for you. Your dignity and that of fellow volunteers, as well as that of our clients, is important.

What You Can Expect from V.I.P.S.

V.I.P.S. needs your help in making each volunteering day enjoyable and rewarding.

1. Be assigned appropriate assignments according to skill, interests, availability, and training.
2. Be trusted with confidential information that will help carry out assignments.
3. Receive orientation, training, and supervision for the jobs you accept and know why you are being asked to do a particular task.
4. Expect that your time will not be wasted by lack of planning, coordination and cooperation within the agency.
5. Receive regular consultation for a review of job performance.
6. Expect that your individual rights will be respected, and that all volunteers will be treated with courtesy and consideration.
7. Have appropriately designed work space, including consideration for physical disabilities.
8. Current V.I.P.S. will be given first preference for vacancies whenever possible.
9. Discuss any problem with the Volunteer Coordinator or representative of the Police Department, receive prompt and fair adjustment of any complaints which may arise.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is mandatory! As a volunteer, you will be exposed to sensitive information. You must treat all information you see, hear, or become aware of while working for the Police Department as confidential. Volunteers may discuss or give official information only to

persons for whom the information is intended, as directed by superiors or as required by law. Such information includes personal addresses or phone numbers of Police Department staff, as well as all reports dealing with members of the public. The content of any criminal

record or investigation in the department shall be shown or divulged only to authorized persons. Do not share or reveal anything to anyone outside of the Department.

Any violation of confidentiality will result in immediate dismissal from the Volunteer Program, and exposes you to the possibility of civil and criminal charges.

Standards of Conduct

Whenever people gather together to achieve goals, some rules are needed to help everyone volunteer together efficiently, effectively, and harmoniously. Some people have problems with “rules” and “authority figures,” and past experience may have justified these thoughts and feelings; however, at V.I.P.S., we hold ourselves to a high standard of

quality where the rules and authority figures simply assure that quality is maintained.

By accepting volunteering with us, you have a responsibility to V.I.P.S. and to your fellow volunteers to adhere to certain rules of behavior and conduct. The purpose of these rules is not to restrict your rights, but rather to be

certain that you understand what conduct is expected and necessary. When each person is aware that he or she can fully depend upon other volunteers to follow the rules of conduct, then our organization will be a better place to volunteer for everyone.

Unacceptable Activities

Generally speaking, we expect each person to act in a mature and responsible way at all times. However, to avoid any questions concerning any volunteer or safety rule, or any of the unacceptable activities listed, please see your volunteer coordinator for an explanation.

Occurrences of any of the following violations, because of their seriousness, may result in immediate dismissal without warning:

- Willful violation of any agency rule; any deliberate action that is extreme in nature and is obviously detrimental to V.I.P.S.
- Willful violation of security or safety rules or failure to observe safety rules or V.I.P.S. safety practices; failure to wear required safety equipment; tampering with V.I.P.S. equipment or safety equipment.
- Negligence or any careless action which endangers the life or safety of another person.
- Being intoxicated or under the influence of controlled substance drugs while volunteering; use or possession or sale of controlled substance drugs in any quantity while on agency premises except medications prescribed by a physician which do not impair volunteer performance.
- Unauthorized possession of dangerous or illegal firearms, weapons, or explosives on agency property or while on duty.
- Engaging in criminal conduct or acts of violence, or making threats of violence toward anyone on agency premises or when representing V.I.P.S.; fighting, or horseplay or provoking a fight on agency property, or

Unacceptable Activities Con't.

- negligent damage of property.
- Insubordination or refusing to obey instructions properly issued by your volunteer coordinator.
- Threatening, intimidating or coercing fellow volunteers on or off the premises- at any time, for any purpose.
- Theft of agency property or the property of fellow volunteers; unauthorized possession or removal of any agency property, including documents,
- from the premises without prior permission from management; unauthorized use of agency equipment or property for personal reasons; using agency equipment for profit.
- Dishonesty; willful falsification or misrepresentation on your application for volunteering or other volunteer records; alteration of agency records or other agency documents.
- Breach of confidentiality of personnel information.
- Malicious gossip and/or spreading rumors; engaging in behavior designed to create discord and lack of harmony; interfering with another volunteer on the job; willfully restricting volunteer output or encouraging others to do the same.
- Immoral conduct or indecency on agency property.

Program History

In April of 1988, the Concord Police Department initiated a formal police volunteer program. Prior to that time there were a few private citizens that assisted the police department on a limited basis. The Police Department wanted to provide additional services to the public and improve internal operations beyond the level that staffing allowed and a

volunteer program was developed to increase overall effectiveness. Beyond improving operational effectiveness, a volunteer program, it was felt, would enhance the community's knowledge and support of it's police department. The formalized program was coordinated from the Community Relations/ Crime Prevention Unit under the direction of then sergeant Jim Alcorn.

Sgt. Alcorn's initial efforts to recruit volunteers focused on Mount Diablo Hospital, which already had an established volunteer program in place. Some of the hospital volunteers were offered the opportunity to become members of the Concord Volunteer Program, and several decided to form our first core volunteer group.

History Con't.

Once selected for the volunteer program, each of the volunteers underwent a background investigation and completed an orientation program. By 1989 the Volunteer Program had twelve members and they performed a variety of tasks and services that directly assisted police operations. One assisted with the monitoring of false burglar alarms, one inspected the patrol car fleet, another monitored residential burglaries and provided notification to residents. One screened court disposition records at the District Attorney's Office so that property records could be updated and weapons destroyed, another notified victims of violent crime about the Victim/Assistance Program, and another handled all the F.I. card computer data entry. The core group of volunteers did an exceptional job and set the foundation for further expansion.

An additional specialized component of the volunteer program was the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES). This unit was initially comprised of ten civilian licensed ham radio operators who have the capability of providing supplemental radio communication in the event that our regular police radio communication system fails or we are in need of enhanced radio capabilities.

Over the years the volunteer program continued to expand both in numbers and in the type of services provided.

Policies

- 1. ABSENCES-** If you will be unable to work your shift, please call your supervisor as early as possible. We may need to arrange for a replacement or adjust our work plans if you are absent. If you are going to be absent for an extended period of time, please notify the Volunteer Coordinator.
- 2. ACCIDENTS-** Tell your supervisor immediately about accidents and mishaps on the job, no matter how minor. Do not hesitate to tell your supervisor if you have been assigned a task that might endanger your health or safety.
- 3. APPEARANCE-** You are expected to dress and groom in accordance with accepted social and business standards, particularly if your job involves dealing with clients or visitors in person. A neat, tasteful appearance contributes to the positive impression you make on our clients. You are expected to be suitably attired and groomed during volunteering hours or when representing V.I.P.S. A good, clean appearance bolsters your own poise and self-confidence and greatly enhances our agency image. Personal appearance should be a matter of concern for each volunteer. If your Volunteer Coordinator feels your attire is out of place, you may be asked to leave your assignment until you are properly attired.

Policies Con't.

4. CHAIN OF COMMAND- Volunteers are expected to follow the established chain of command to resolve any problems. You should discuss your concerns with your supervisor first, and then contact the Volunteer Coordinator if the problem is not resolved. If something is bothering you, let's talk it over; don't remain silently frustrated.

5. COMMITMENT OF TIME- We ask all volunteers to work a minimum of four hours per week for at least six months. From time to time, we may ask also if you are available to help with special assignments.

6. COMPUTER SOFTWARE

(UNAUTHORIZED COPYING)-

V.I.P.S. does not condone the illegal duplication of software. The copyright law is clear. The copyright holder is given certain exclusive rights, including the right to make and distribute copies. Title 17 of the U.S. Code states that "it is illegal to make or distribute copies of copyrighted material without authorization" (Section 106). The only exception is the user's right to make a backup copy for archival purposes (Section 117). The law protects the exclusive rights of the copyright holder and does not give users the right to copy software unless a backup copy is not provided by the manufacturer. Unauthorized duplication of software is a Federal crime.

7. HARASSMENT- V.I.P.S. intends to provide a volunteer environment that is pleasant, healthful, comfortable, and free from intimidation, hostility or

other offenses which might interfere with volunteer performance. It is the policy of the City of Concord to provide a productive and pleasant working environment and to ensure that all employees and volunteers are treated with respect and dignity. To this end, the City shall not condone any form of sexual harassment in the workplace. Such conduct by a City employee or volunteer, or tolerance of sexual harassment by a supervisor shall not be permitted, and disciplinary action up to and including termination shall be taken against an employee or volunteer engaging in unlawful sexual harassment. Harassment can take several forms. It may be, but is not limited to: words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation, physical contact, or violence. Sexual harassment may include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature when such contact creates an intimidating environment, prevents an individual from effectively performing the duties of their position, or when such conduct is made a condition of volunteering, either implicitly or explicitly. As a V.I.P.S. volunteer, you are responsible for keeping our volunteer environment free of harassment. Any volunteer who becomes aware of an incident of harassment, whether by witnessing the incident or being told of it, must report it to your Volunteer Coordinator or any management staff with whom you feel comfortable. When V.I.P.S. becomes aware that harassment might exist, it is obligated by law to take prompt and appropriate action, whether or not the

Policies Con't.

of harassment, whether by witnessing the incident or being told of it, must report it to your Volunteer Coordinator or any management staff with whom you feel comfortable. When V.I.P.S. becomes aware that harassment might exist, it is obliged by law to take prompt and appropriate action, whether or not the victim wants the agency to do so.

8. IDENTIFICATION- Volunteers will be issued a photo identification and security access card authorizing you to enter the Concord Police Department. The ID access card is to be worn while you are in the department. It may not be used to obtain any favorable treatment, gratuity, or service. The ID is the property of the Concord Police Department and must be surrendered when service is terminated. Immediately report if your identification card is lost or misplaced.

9. LIABILITY- Volunteers should keep in mind the inherent liability placed upon the City of Concord whenever they are on duty. Even though V.I.P.S. are non-sworn, volunteer personnel must realize that your actions will be judged the same as any Police Department employee. You are reminded of the importance of conduct in the eyes and ears of the public.

10. MEDIA RELATIONS- The Department and the City have people designated to handle any situations involving the media. Volunteers should never offer any information or comments to media sources. Always refer

them to the on-duty operations commander or patrol sergeant.

11. MONTHLY MEETINGS- The V.I.P.S. meet regularly on the second Thursday of the month at 6:30 pm. Information on new policies, procedures, training, and general business is discussed at these meetings. These sessions benefit both the volunteers and the organization by maintaining good communication channels.

12. PARKING - You are encouraged to use the parking areas designated for our volunteers. Remember to lock your car every day and park within the specified areas. Courtesy and common sense in parking will avoid accidents, personal injuries, damage to your vehicle and to the vehicles of other volunteers and staff. If you should damage another car while parking or leaving, immediately report the incident, along with the license numbers of both vehicles and any other pertinent information you may have to your Volunteer Coordinator. V.I.P.S. does not assume any liability for any loss or damages you may sustain.

13. PERSONAL INFORMATION- Notify the Volunteer Coordinator if your address or phone numbers change. We need to be able to reach you.

Policies Con't.

- 14. PERSONAL TELEPHONE CALLS-** Personal telephone calls should be kept to a minimum and should not interfere with City business. No personal long-distance calls may be made unless charged to your home phone or credit card account.
- 15. PERSONAL USE OF PROPERTY-** In some instances volunteers may be allowed to borrow certain department tools or equipment for their own personal use while on our premises. In no instances may this be done off our premises, or without prior management approval.
- 16. REPORTING TO WORK-** Be punctual. If you must be more than a few minutes late, call your supervisor.
- 17. RESIGNATION-** If you need to resign your volunteer position, please notify your supervisor and the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible. Return your volunteer I.D. badge and any other Department property issued to you.
- 18. SAFETY AND INJURIES-** The Concord Police Department regards the personnel of this Department as its most valuable asset. It is the policy of this department to conduct all operations with the utmost concern for personnel, equipment, vehicles, and facilities. Therefore, the practice of safety and the prevention of accidents shall be the responsibility of all volunteers. However, *if you are injured, report the injury IMMEDIATELY to your supervisor.* The organization provides medical insurance for all volunteers in case they are injured while working at the department. It is in excess to any personal coverage the volunteer may have.
- 19. SECURITY-** Maintaining the security of the Concord Police Department building and vehicles is every volunteer's responsibility.
- Always keep cash properly stored.
 - Know the location of fire/safety equipment and be familiar with their proper use.
 - Make sure all entrances are properly locked and secured.
- 20. SMOKING-** There is no smoking permitted in any City of Concord building or vehicle. Smoking areas are located at each entrance of the Police Department.

Policies Con't.

21. SUBSTANCE ABUSE- V.I.P.S. has no desire to intrude into its volunteers personal lives. However, both on-the-job and off-the-job involvement with any mood altering substances can have an impact on our agency and on V.I.P.S.'s ability to achieve its objectives of safety and security. Therefore, you are expected to report to the agency with no mood-altering substances in your body. While you may make your own lifestyle choices, V.I.P.S. cannot accept the risk in the agency which substance use or abuse may cause. The possession, sale or use of mood-altering substances while volunteering, shall be a violation of safe volunteer practices and will be subject to disciplinary action, including possible dismissal.

22. TERMINATION- There are times when it becomes necessary for the Department to sever it's relationship with a volunteer. Violation of policies, insubordination, and other acts may result in immediate dismissal. There is no guarantee that volunteers will remain with the department indefinitely. As long as volunteers continue to contribute in a positive manner and support the department policies, their efforts will be welcomed.

23. THEFT- Theft is a serious problem. Theft of any type will not be tolerated by V.I.P.S. We consider theft to be the unauthorized use of agency services or facilities or the taking of

any agency property for personal use. The following list of examples is not all-inclusive, but provides illustrations of several activities which are unacceptable.

*Use of Agency copy machines for personal use. The office copiers are not provided as a free service to volunteers. If you wish to use an agency copier for personal needs, follow the established procedure for reimbursement.

*Use of Computers. Personal computers are to be used exclusively for business purposes unless you receive permission from your volunteer coordinator. Permission may be given for the use of personal computers during non-business hours so long as the volunteers request permission, and supply their own diskettes.

24. TIMESHEETS- Every time you work, record your hours on the timesheet. This timesheet should be turned in monthly to the Volunteer Coordinator. Records of volunteer hours are a measure of the effectiveness of the program and your own contribution to the community.

Policies Con't.

25. TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS- If you are authorized to operate an agency vehicle in the course of your assigned volunteer work, or if you operate your own vehicle in performing your job, you will be considered completely responsible for any accidents, fines, or traffic violations incurred.

26. TRAINING REQUIREMENTS- All volunteers are expected to participate in a formal training program to acquaint them with the Police Department and some procedures necessary for their role. In addition, they may be required to participate in additional training for specific assignments within the department.

27. UNIFORMS- Uniforms are required for some, but not all, positions within V.I.P.S. When required, they should be worn while on duty and to any other appropriate function. The uniform may consist of a light-blue polo shirt or vest and dark pants or a white uniform shirt and dark trousers, depending on the volunteer assignment.

28. USE OF AGENCY VEHICLE- You may use an agency vehicle to accomplish department business at the direction of a supervisor. If you are authorized to use a Police Department vehicle, you must be a licensed driver, obey all traffic laws (including parking regulations), and not allow unauthorized persons to operate or ride in an agency vehicle

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We're also on the Web
www.cityofconcord.org/safety/volnteer.htm