

VOLUNTEERS OF THE CLOTH AND THE BADGE

Chaplains, whether paid or volunteer, provide support to officers and the department family in many law enforcement agencies. Chaplains serve in a nondenominational capacity regardless of their individual faith. Some agencies utilize chaplains to provide support and assistance to officers, while others extend the reach of the agency by chaplains assisting crime victims. Ultimately, law enforcement chaplaincy is a ministry of presence. The Pennsylvania State Police; Virginia Beach, Virginia, Police Department; and the York City, Pennsylvania Police Department all utilize chaplains, with each agency incorporating the chaplain program in a way that best fits their department.



on the 530 miles of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. PSP also provides contracted law enforcement to unincorporated areas of the state and serves all warrants. PSP has approximately 4,300 sworn troopers, 1,700 civilians, and 44 chaplains.

Program Beginnings

Chaplains first made a presence in the PSP in the mid 1990's with chaplains acting in a ceremonial capacity for promotion ceremonies, cadet graduations, and station openings. The Member Assistance Program¹ (MAP) was tasked with researching how chaplain programs operate in other agencies across the country. Once the concept was formed, the chaplain program was first assigned to the Bureau of Training and Education in 2001, and then switched to MAP in 2002, just prior to the first chaplain class. Chaplain duties have expanded to include ministering personnel, visiting stations, and attending to critical incidents if requested.

Pennsylvania State Police

The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) is headquartered in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with 67 stations covering 46,055 square miles. The main enforcement functions of PSP are statewide patrol and crime prevention, in addition to patrolling and crime prevention

Recruitment and Orientation

Chaplains are recruited through mailings to local places of worship and referrals from current chaplains and PSP personnel. Interested chaplains complete an application with references. Panel interviews are then held by the manager of the MAP and

¹The purpose of the Member Assistance Program (MAP) is to provide confidential assistance to all PSP personnel (members, enforcement officers, and civilian employees) and their immediate families who are experiencing personal, emotional, psychological, or related medical problems. When appropriate, personnel are referred to professional and/or community resources. The program also facilitates Critical Incident Stress Management for the Department. The MAP staff consists of a full-time program manager, a full-time assistant manager, five full-time regional peer coordinators, and numerous field peer contacts who are currently PSP employees.

chaplain programs, MAP program assistant manager, a regional peer coordinator, and the senior chaplain. A portion of the interview is dedicated to role-playing situations to determine what chaplains' initial responses would be to certain conversations or events. Once all interviews are completed, all names for consideration are given to the Commissioner of PSP for final approval. All new chaplains meet for a two-day orientation and training session at the PSP training academy. Chaplains receive a manual which reviews the program rules and regulations and highlights best practices. Chaplains also receive a windbreaker with reflective lettering on the back to identify them as PSP Chaplains and an ID card.



Regular Training

Chaplains receive annual training with guest speakers and training topics recommended by the program manager and the senior chaplain. Topics are usually generated by incidents or situations that chaplains have attended to in recent months, such as a trooper suicide. Since chaplains are spread out all over the state, if someone is unable to make the training, the regional peer coordinator will bring the materials to the chaplain. The regional peer coordinator also assists new chaplains by introducing them to the command staff and stations in their area. It is then up to each chaplain to visit the

stations and let the troopers and staff become comfortable with them. Each regional peer coordinator hosts quarterly meetings with the chaplains in their region, the MAP program manager checks in with chaplains through phone calls on a regular basis, and the senior chaplain is available to assist chaplains with becoming at ease with troopers. PSP Chaplains are not permitted to go on ride-alongs as PSP does not offer ride-alongs to any individual. Some chaplains have begun a tradition of bringing food to stations on a regular basis, and now even off-duty troopers stop by when the chaplain is there.

Getting Involved

In addition to an on-going ministry of presence, chaplains assist troopers at the MAP's request by attending to serious accidents, suicides, homicides and comforting victims and families. Chaplains visit sick troopers in the hospital or at home, and are sometimes present at funerals. Chaplains have also been asked to perform troopers' wedding ceremonies. PSP has always valued the work of the chaplains, evidenced by the continued growth of the program. Recently, when troopers from all over the area descended on the Amish community during an active school shooting, many of the chaplains were soon to follow and were of great benefit to the troopers and community members.

Virginia Beach, Virginia, Police Department

The City of Virginia Beach is a common vacation destination on the East Coast. However, as the nation's 42nd largest city, Virginia Beach is much larger than its 35

miles of oceanfront real estate. The city is 310 square miles and is home to more than 435,000 people. The Virginia Beach Police Department (VBPD) protects its citizens with 816 sworn officers and 165 civilians. The department is supported by 180 volunteers and 28 chaplains. While the force of VBPD remains constant, the city receives an influx of 3.1 million visitors each year and with a large military presence, if an aircraft carrier docks, that can add another five to six thousand people to the city.

Evolution of the Chaplain Program

The chaplain program has gone through many evolutions since the early 1960's to become the program it is today. The city has also changed considerably and the chaplain program has progressed to match the needs of the department. Chaplains are on-call 24 hours a day to respond to the needs of officers. Chaplains are most commonly called out to assist with death notifications, suicides and threats of suicides, and for extreme domestic violence situations. Chaplains may also be called to assist officers with crowd control at the oceanfront, at other special events, and when arrests are made.



Organization

The chaplain program is overseen by a precinct captain who assisted chaplains formalizing the program by instituting a training academy and professionalizing the application and screening processes. While most chaplains learn of this program from

their congregants or colleagues, VBPD also places ads in a local church guide magazine.

Interested individuals complete a preliminary application and a basic records and criminal history check is conducted. Then a full application is completed along with a complete background check. An interview is conducted by a committee of sworn, non-sworn, chaplains, and civilian personnel.

Training and Experience

Chaplain candidates then attend a 60-hour training academy that occurs primarily on Saturdays. VBPD allows lay persons, when commissioned by their house of faith, to be chaplains and the training academy will prepare them for this role. They also receive CPR/AED and defensive driving training. Chaplain candidates must also successfully complete one 10-hour ride-along with chaplain supervisors and two 10-hour shifts with a police field training officer. Chaplains must also attend VBPD's Citizen Police Academy within one year. Chaplains are organized into the chain of command beginning with the Chief of Police, to the captain liaison, to an administrative chaplain, to chaplain supervisors, and then chaplains. Chaplains receive ongoing training through quarterly meetings. Chaplains are also involved in VBPD's Every 15 Minutes² presentation that allows them to practice giving death notices.

Seeing What Officers' See

Chaplains are stationed out of each of VBPD's four precincts. This helps officers get to know the chaplains. VBPD provides

²The Every 15 Minutes Program offers real-life experience without the real-life risks. This emotionally charged program, entitled Every 15 Minutes, is an event designed to dramatically instill teenagers with the potentially dangerous consequences of drinking alcohol. This powerful program will challenge students to think about drinking, personal safety, and the responsibility of making mature decisions when lives are involved. For more information, visit <http://www.every15minutes.com/>.

uniforms to the chaplains, as well as vehicles with magnetic decals, both clearly identifying them as police chaplains. Chaplains make themselves available to officers to provide counseling or simply just to talk. Often these conversations begin during a ride-along and can continue in a neutral location. Chaplains do not have a minimum of hours they have to maintain per month. The department recognizes that depending on their role in their full-time ministry, minimum hours may be difficult for some chaplains to obtain.



Some chaplains, however, do have regular duties such as patrolling the oceanfront. At one time, Virginia Beach's oceanfront area needed every set of eyes and ears it could get to help keep it safe after the 1989 Greekfest riots. Today chaplains assist by bringing their keen eyes and training. They can often detect hostile situations, such as drunk or angry mobs, before the situation reaches a boiling point. Chaplains also direct traffic to keep pedestrians safe.

The Future of the Program

The police chaplains of the Virginia Beach Police Department are viewed as a benefit to the officers. They and command staff rely on chaplains' comforting voices and ability to listen in their time of need. The hardest call one chaplain has had to attend to was

notifying the wife of an officer that her husband was killed in the line of duty. The city recognizes the stress that being a police chaplain can bring and offers services to chaplains that will help them cope. Officers also want chaplains present during times of joy and they are often called to perform marriages and attend promotion ceremonies. The VBPD chaplain program continues to grow. It is the goal of the captain to have chaplains in every unit of this full service department.

York City, Pennsylvania, Police Department

The industrial City of York, Pennsylvania dates back to the American Revolutionary War. Situated in southeast Pennsylvania, York is 80 miles west of Philadelphia and 220 miles east of Pittsburgh. York is known as the factory tour capital of the world with Harley-Davidson, Snyder's of Hanover, and Hershey's all having factories in the area. The York City Police Department maintains a roster of 110 sworn officers to protect a city of 5.5 square miles and 42,000 residents.

Operations

The community service division of the York City, Pennsylvania, Police Department oversees the Chaplains Corps. However chaplains manage day-to-day operations themselves. The York City Chaplains Corps (the Corps) began in 1983, with 15 chaplains. Since its inception, the Corps has involved 59 ministers representing 10 different dominations. Currently, the Corps has 10 active members. The Corps is on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with chaplains taking 24-hour shifts. Chaplains help remove the burden of comforting victims during critical incidents as they have more time to give and

are able to direct all of their attention to a victim. Chaplains also can arrange for an individual's personal pastor to come if needed. In 2008, the Corps members dedicated 8,760 hours in service to the police department and the community.

Recruitment and Training

Chaplains must be ordained in their personal faith and have the permission of their place of worship to participate in the Corps. Chaplains are recruited primarily through word of mouth. Applications are reviewed by the internal affairs division of the police department. Annually, the Corps attends training sessions provided by the International Conference of Police Chaplains. The Corps meets quarterly to review and discuss any issues that arose during the previous months and to share information from the police department and community. A representative from the community service division attends the meeting and chaplains sign up for their shifts for the quarter.

Always On-call

Chaplains have a uniform provided by the department that identifies them as a police chaplain. The Corps, until recently, had a vehicle that is provided by a local car dealership. In June of 2009, the police department purchased a van specifically for the use of the chaplains. In addition, the city provides the fuel and maintenance for the vehicle. For a 24-hour shift, police dispatch can dial the on-call pager and a chaplain will contact dispatch to learn the nature of the situation and who to report to when they arrive on the scene of a critical incident. At the end of their shift, the chaplain meets the oncoming chaplain to hand over the pager and vehicle. Most times, nothing happens on a shift, but when the pager sounds, chaplains must respond. Chaplains are often called to assaults,

homicides, suicides, and delivering death notices. Chaplains keep a record of each incident they attend to. The Corps has recently switched to an electronic reporting system which has improved the reporting the process.



Value Added

In the winter months, the Corps is tapped to assist the homeless find shelter on an as needed basis. Chaplains, for their own safety, do not provide transportation but do provide information to officers on available shelters and how to contact them. Chaplains also are on hand if an officer needs assistance with personal or professional matters. To foster relationships, chaplains go on self-initiated ride-alongs and offer their counseling services to officers. The community looks to the police department as an overall agent of change in the city. The department recognizes that the Corps is one way to help translate those changes to the community.

For More Information

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VIPS Products and Resources

VIPS Program Directory

Law enforcement agencies can register their volunteer programs and search for others with the online VIPS program directory. Citizens also can locate volunteer opportunities with law enforcement agencies in their communities. The directory allows users to search by zip code, state, key word, and type of program.

VIPS Resource Library

Browse and download sample documents from law enforcement volunteer programs, such as chaplain program descriptions, position descriptions, and policy and procedures for chaplain programs.

VIPS to VIPS

VIPS to VIPS is a moderated discussion group that allows members to post questions and share information about their law enforcement volunteer program activities. The purpose of VIPS to VIPS is to provide agencies a forum for cross-site mentoring, the exchange of ideas, and to problem-solve challenges. Participation in VIPS to VIPS is limited to contacts from programs registered with the national VIPS programs.

All resources and products can be found at www.policevolunteers.org.

The Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program works to enhance the capacity of state and local law enforcement to utilize volunteers. VIPS serves as a gateway to resources and information for and about law enforcement volunteer programs. VIPS is a Program Partner of Citizen Corps, an initiative helping to make communities across America safer, stronger, and better prepared for emergencies of all kinds. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) manages and implements the VIPS Program in partnership with and on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice.



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