

Volunteers in Policing San Antonio Police Department Volunteer Handbook

“Police officers alone cannot control or prevent crime... Their primary mission must be to help communities police themselves... These (the Communities) are America’s primary crime-fighters.”

Patrick Murphy N.Y.C.P.D.

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San Antonio Police Department

VISION

AN ORGANIZATION OF VALUE-ORIENTED PEOPLE, REFLECTIVE OF OUR DIVERSITY DEDICATED TO SERVING THE COMMUNITY WITH INTEGRITY, HONOR AND FAIRNESS THAT ALL MAY KNOW JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND FREEDOM UNDER THE LAW

COMMITMENT

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE SAN ANTONIO COMMUNITY IS FOUNDED ON BASIC PRINCIPLES OF LAW ENFORCEMENT. THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE, ETHICS, DIVERSITY, ACTIVE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND FAIRNESS ARE VALUES THAT WE STRIVE TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE UPON IN THE VOLUNTEERS IN POLICING PROGRAM

MISSION

OUR MISSION IS TO ENHANCE AND SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF POLICE SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGH A VARIETY OF VOLUNTEER SERVICES THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY OF THE CITIZENS OF SAN ANTONIO.

Program Description

The San Antonio Police Department utilizes the voluntary services of local citizens to enhance existing police services and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.

The Volunteers In Policing (VIP) Program is a highly structured volunteer program that falls under a para-military hierarchy. The VIP Program is for interested citizens who wish to volunteer their time as a non-sworn, non-paid member of the Department. Police Volunteers are not sworn members and do not have any authority or duties that would consider them a peace officer. The volunteer commitment for all volunteers (with the exception of FACT ONLY volunteers) lasts for a period of one year with a requirement of eight hours per month.

The program is divided into a number of volunteer positions that also fall under a two tiered system. The first being the daytime volunteer and the second the special project volunteers. The daytime volunteers are those individuals who are able to perform a minimum of two, four hour shifts between the hours of 7:45am to 4:30pm. The special project volunteers are traditional forty hour a week individuals who can work evenings and weekends. Volunteers are placed on an as needed basis.

Chain of Command

As a para-military organization, the San Antonio Police Department requires that all volunteers recognize and utilize the proper chain of command department wide. Chain of command is the process in which our organization establishes power within its ranks.

The department's structure is organized under the following:

Chief of Police

Assistant Chief

Deputy Chief

Captain

Lieutenant

Sergeant

Detective Investigator

Patrolman

For a better understanding the organizational chart attached shows the structure in which the VIP program is set. The program is administered through the Community Services Section under the Support Services Division. All other police related matters are organized under the other three divisions that are commanded by a deputy chief.

All volunteers are required to follow the chain of command for the VIP Program. Any and all information, questions, complaints and or concerns should be addressed with the Volunteer Coordinators. Please make an appointment or call the office at 207-3319.

Program Administration

Coordinator

The Volunteers In Policing (VIP) Coordinator will be responsible for implementation and day to day coordination and management of the program. The VIP Coordinator will survey the Department, determine available positions and develop the recruitment process. The VIP Coordinator will also select volunteers for placement. The VIP Coordinator will establish program goals, operating procedures, projection of staffing needs and will act as a liaison with public and private partners.

VIP Coordinator 207-3319

Supervision

Each unit that requests the services of a volunteer will be required to establish a Unit Supervisor who monitors the activities of a volunteer and ensures that the volunteer's assignments are specific and plentiful. The supervisors will be responsible for training and for providing the necessary supplies for the volunteer.

Unit Supervisors will be required to attend a planning/training session so that they can supervise a volunteer. Questions and concerns will be addressed so that a strong line of communication can be established. Training, supervision, record-keeping and reporting, evaluation, policies, and the Volunteer procedures will be discussed. This session will guide the orientation and training for the volunteers that align with the philosophy of the San Antonio Police Department.

Volunteers are deployed throughout the department and are utilized in a number of ways. A volunteer in policing may be a unit, substation, COP, community outreach, graffiti hotline, police media, FACT, special projects or a warrant drive enforcer volunteer. FACT volunteers are processed through the VIP office and are VIP but they are coordinated and scheduled through the Victim's Advocacy Unit. The operation and management of the FACT program has not changed, and all aspects of the program remain the same with exception of the application process. Training for the FACT program is separate from this orientation. Any and all questions regarding the FACT program should be addressed to Ms. Jane Shafer at 207-2136. The Chain of Command for the Fact Program can be seen in the organizational chart below.

VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

All volunteer positions are based on need by the department. Daytime positions will be filled as soon as possible and requests will be taken from units for the coordination of special projects. The following are the current available volunteer positions as of January 1, 2000.

Community Outreach Assistant – Volunteers seek out organizations, neighborhood associations and church groups to schedule tours of the Department.

Neighborhood Action Aide – Volunteers contact residents of neighborhood associations to provide assistance with community mobilization and community projects.

Special Projects Assistant – Volunteers assist with special departmental projects sponsored by the police department or projects that are approved by the volunteer group.

Unit Assistant – Volunteers assist a unit with general office work to include basic filing, light typing, and answering telephones.

Warrant Drive Enforcer – Volunteers will research and maintain the SAPD Warrant Tracking System. The process identifies municipal court warrants and enables the Department to remove old, cleared or insufficient warrants.

FACT Volunteer – Volunteers will work within a community substation on Friday or Saturday nights from 8:00pm to 3:00am to be available to victims of domestic violence for referral and other duties as assigned by the FACT Coordinator.

Public Safety Team – Volunteer will complete a Statement of Interest at the General Meeting. If accepted into VIP for this position, volunteer will be trained to issue Handicap Parking citations to the public and perform non-hazardous duties for the SAPD. This position requires a minimum of 16 hours per month and mandatory training and meetings.

COBRAT (Citizen Observers Reducing Auto Theft) – Volunteer will be trained to monitor specific locations from a distance to assist in the prevention of auto thefts. Volunteer will work with a team of volunteers and a designated police officer.

Fingerprint Technician “For the Love of Kids” – Volunteers perform non-criminal fingerprinting at the City Showcases and upon request from other City Departments and the community for children.

Police Information Assistant – Volunteers assist Police Media Services at Headquarters by answering telephones and assisting the officer required tasks.

Cellular On Patrol Assistant – Volunteers assist the Cellular On Patrol officers and trainers with COP class recruitment, preparation, registration, role-playing and other logistics.

Citizen Police Academy Assistant – Volunteer assist Coordinator with the preparation of classroom packets, files and classroom logistics.

Volunteer positions may change at any time and unit availability can change at any time. Please contact VIP Coordinator for more information regarding volunteer opportunities.

PLACEMENT

- Volunteers must review the monthly newsletter to determine what position they would like to be considered for. The volunteer must contact the VIP office at 207-3319 for placement.
- If the volunteer chooses a vacant daytime position an interview will be arranged between the Unit Supervisor and the Volunteer.
- The Unit Supervisor will determine whether they choose to accept the police volunteer within their unit. The Unit Supervisor will notify the VIP Coordinator of the decision.
- All scheduling and unit guidelines will be established and maintained between the Volunteer and the Unit Supervisor.
- Special issues, problems and concerns will be handled by the Unit Supervisor unless a request has been sent to the Volunteer Coordinator by either party.
- If the volunteer chooses a special project position, he/she will be responsible for reviewing the monthly newsletter and contacting the designated person in order to sign up. (Note: The Warrant Drive is an ongoing Special Project and can be worked at anytime.)

VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT

A police volunteer is part of the team and as such is entitled to certain minimum expectations. Volunteers are non-paid personnel within the Department. Volunteers should expect the following from their supervisor.

1. Task description
2. Purpose of assignment
3. Adequate Supervision plan
4. Training for the position
5. Feedback

The task description will coordinate the efforts of the supervisor, staff and volunteer coordinator. The task description will provide a basis for recruiting, screening and placement of volunteers. In addition, the description provides a definition of duties of the volunteer and lets them know that they have a purpose, and that the organization has a need and can use their time. This enables the supervisor, the staff, and the coordinator to have input into the task description.

A Volunteer must be informed about how their task duties benefit the unit and ultimately, the Department. Identifying the purpose of the assignment is critical to the quality of the completed tasks.

Volunteers are entitled to adequate supervision. This includes communication, the ability to ask questions and the formulation of a volunteer-supervisor relationship. A volunteer that does not regularly received direction from the assigned supervisor should contact the Volunteers In Policing Coordinator.

Volunteers are entitled to receive adequate training for the assigned tasks. A volunteer should feel confident in the duties that they perform. If they are not provided with any training, they should contact the VIP Coordinator.

Volunteers are NON-PAID staff and as such all local, state and federal guidelines must be followed and maintained. Volunteers are subject to all agreements that are included in this handbook.

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS

The Volunteer has the right to expect:

- To be treated as a co-worker
- To be given sufficient information, orientation and training for the assignment and how the program operates
- To be involved in a meaningful assignment which utilizes and develops his/her skills.
- Have supervision, a written activity description of services to be performed, and a place to work
- To work in a safe and secure environment

COORDINATOR RIGHTS

The Coordinator has the right to expect the volunteer to:

- Fulfill his or her commitment
- To be proactive and seek out possible assignments
- Discuss any problem pertaining to the department
- Request clarification of an assignment
- Keep a record of hours and activities and submit the monthly report

UNIT SUPERVISOR RIGHTS

The Unit Supervisor has the right to expect the volunteer to:

- Be amenable to the assignment
- Request clarification of the assignment
- Abide by his/her schedule
- Be punctual
- The volunteer to inform his/her supervisor of absence or illness
- Inform him/her of any problems or concerns

The Unit Supervisor has the right to expect to:

- To be provided with supervisor training
- To be kept informed of any program changes
- To be notified of any issues that affect a volunteer.

VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

To volunteer within the San Antonio Police Department, the individual must submit an application to the San Antonio Police Department Volunteers in Policing Office. Each applicant will complete an application and submit the package to the Volunteer Coordinator. An individual must be processed through the VIP Office to volunteer in a Police Department building, project or any sponsored activity.

Hours of Service

The hours that a volunteer will perform will be established between the Unit Supervisor and the volunteer. A volunteer must contact the Unit Supervisor if they are unable to come in.

Identification Badge

Identification badges must be worn at all times while the volunteer performs their assigned tasks. The identification badge is not to be worn or used outside the department unless on an assignment. The misuse of the badge is cause for dismissal. If a volunteer is released from the program, the identification badge must be returned to the Department at the Volunteer Officer no later than 30 days from the release date.

Tasks

Volunteers will have assigned tasks and they must not deviate from those tasks unless they are communicated to the volunteer by the Unit Supervisor. If issues arise in the absence of the Unit Supervisor, volunteer should contact Volunteer Coordinator. Do not guess and never assume, find out for sure. Volunteer satisfaction and safety are priorities.

Dress

Volunteers are required to wear their Volunteers In Policing shirt while performing VIP duties. This is intended to provide immediate recognition to sworn personnel. The identification of a volunteer or intern also provides for additional safety measures and is a requirement of the Accreditation process.

Volunteer Hours/Timesheets

Each volunteer is responsible for reporting hours to the Volunteer Coordinator. Timesheets must be submitted by the 5th day of the following month to the Volunteer Coordinator. Those volunteers who do not submit their timesheets for a total of three months will be sent the "last chance" letter prior to release. Timesheets can be picked up at the meetings or the VIP Office at 215 S. San Saba.

Volunteers are required to perform a minimum of eight hours per month. FACT members are required to perform 7 hours per month. Any volunteer who does not volunteer the

minimum eight hours a month for a total of three months will be notified of their release from the program.

Public Contact

All contact with the public should be conducted in a professional manner. When you are acting in the capacity of a Volunteer, you represent the San Antonio Police Department.

Volunteer Paraphernalia

Volunteers who are project leaders or who work in a unit will be able to have printed volunteer cards. Volunteers cannot develop, print, or distribute letterhead, business cards or other type of paraphernalia if it is not developed by SAPD Volunteer staff.

Termination

Termination of a volunteer can be done without a formal process. The release of confidential information, theft, the misuse of information, the non-completion of an assigned project, violation of volunteer guidelines, insufficient hours, non-compatibility, chain of command violation and the disruption of the program, or any other Automatic or Discretionary Disqualifiers are grounds for termination. A volunteer who is called, or asked to perform a task and agrees to perform the said task by deadline and does not offer the VIP staff advance notice to deadline will be written up and three occurrences will be reason for dismissal.

Volunteer Disqualifiers

The Department will strictly enforce the denial of an individual who cannot meet our minimum requirements.

Automatic

- Failure to properly complete and provide character references, employment information, and other information requested on the application.
- Violation of SAPD standard operating procedure or accreditation requirement
- Been convicted of a felony or any offense that would be a felony if committed in Texas
- Been convicted of a class A or class B misdemeanor
- Used (tried) or sold marijuana or used marijuana other than for experimentation
- Used (tried) sold any dangerous drugs or narcotics including cocaine, crack heroin, LSD, etc.
- Been dishonorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces
- Had a pattern of abusing prescription drugs
- Had excessive traffic violations within the past five years
- Been previously employed as a law enforcement officer and since has committed or violated federal, state, or city laws pertaining to criminal activity
- Lied during any stage of the volunteer acceptance process
- Falsified any portion of his or her questionnaire or application
- Current City Employee
- The possession, carrying or attempt to carry a firearm on city premises to include all city facilities, vehicles and any other applicable city property. This includes all individuals who possess a permit to carry a concealed handgun.
- Possession of any firearms or other objects considered to be an illegal weapon as defined by the Texas Penal Code. Examples of some of the items are an expandable baton (ASP), illegal knives, brass knuckles, etc.

Discretionary

The following disqualifiers may, upon review by the San Antonio Police Department, make you the applicant ineligible and will be used to release a member from the Volunteer Program at any time.

- Non-completion of step 3 in the application process, character references must be returned within thirty (30) days from date of mailing by VIP staff.
- A physical or mental disability that would substantially impair an individual's ability to perform his/her duties
- Alcohol misuse and/or abuse prior to and/or during the volunteer term

- Unlawful sexual conduct prior to and/or during the volunteer term
- Commission of a felony prior to and/or during the volunteer term
- Any other conduct or pattern of conduct that would tend to disrupt, diminish, or otherwise jeopardize public trust in the law enforcement profession
- Confidentiality
- The removal, copying, transmittal or release of any information considered confidential or non-confidential
- Verbal release of any confidential information
- Inappropriate behavior relating to sexual harassment or other types of racial slurs