



## Writing a Press Release to Promote your VIPS Program

### Press Release Tips:

- Talk to your agency's Public Information Officer for ideas, media contacts, and information on your agency's media policies and procedures.
- Reference specific community safety concerns that have come up in local news or local government meetings and how your volunteers will help address those issues.
- Tie in seasonally appropriate contributions of volunteers, i.e. summer vacation home checks or holiday mall patrols.
- Include quotes from volunteers to give your program a personal touch.
- Include quotes from your chief or sheriff to show top level buy-in for the program.
- Keep press releases short and concise.
- Use photographs to tell your story. If possible, send high resolution photos, as these are better for printing. Include photographer credits.
- Make the most of your agency's social media outlets – post and share articles for the public through Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms used by your department.
- Search the web to access a variety of press release samples and templates.
- Visit the VIPS in the News stories archive, [www.policevolunteers.org/stories](http://www.policevolunteers.org/stories), to see news stories from and about local VIPS programs. If you would like to add a story, email [info@policevolunteers.org](mailto:info@policevolunteers.org)

### Press Release Format:

**When to release** – generally “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE”, but can indicate before or after a certain date

**Today's Date**

**Press Release Contact** – Public Information Officer or whomever responds to media inquiries

**Press Release Headline**

**Subhead** – (Optional) One common approach is to use an attention getting headline and then follow up with a more descriptive subheading.

**Press release lead** – brief paragraph with the main facts – who, what, where, when, how

**Body of press release**

- What the volunteers will be doing.
- How the activities will help the community and the department.
- What the application and vetting process entails.
- How to apply.

**Boilerplate** – (Optional) info about the agency

**###** - Indicates the end of the press release

## ***Sample Press Release***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

***[Date]***

**CONTACT:**

***[Public Information Officer John Doe]***

***Blank Police Department***

***Phone***

***Email***

### ***Blank Police/Sheriff's Department Launches Volunteers in Police Service Program***

*(Blank, ST) Blank Police Chief [Ed Jones] announced the creation of a new Volunteers in Police Service Program.*

Thousands of law enforcement agencies around the country and internationally are using volunteers to supplement public safety and crime prevention efforts. Volunteers never replace officers. Rather, they offer support to allow agencies to provide additional services, maintain positive relationships with the public, free up officers' time for higher level duties, and maximize impact in the community.

The national Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program was established in 2002 by the International Association of Chiefs of Police in partnership with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U. S. Department of Justice. To date, there are more than 2,260 registered VIPS programs with more than 256,000 volunteers representing all 50 states.

*Blank Police Department volunteers will [perform administrative work, eyes and ears community patrols, victim call backs, etc.]*

*[Insert quote from Chief/Sheriff or Volunteer Coordinator about importance of volunteer program.]*

Volunteers working in the police department will be required to *[pass a criminal background check, be at least 18 years of age, and be able to commit to a minimum of eight hours a month].*

Applications *[can be picked up at Blank Police Department or downloaded from the city website.]* For more information, contact *[Volunteer Coordinator Jane Smith at Phone or email.]*

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