



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

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EVERY STATE NOW PARTICIPATES IN JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S VOLUNTEERS IN POLICE SERVICE PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, DC – The Justice Department's Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program is now active in every state and the District of Columbia, a more than five fold increase from just over a year ago when Attorney General Ashcroft launched the program in May 2002. Today, the 585 registered VIPS programs represent more than 27,000 civilian volunteers who are supporting law enforcement agencies, allowing police officers to concentrate on their enforcement and homeland security duties. VIPS is one of four Citizen Corps programs that are part of USA Freedom Corps, President Bush's initiative to encourage and provide opportunities for all Americans to engage in community service, and to participate directly in efforts to improve homeland security (www.usafreedomcorps.gov).

"It is encouraging to see so many Americans answering the President's call to service and contributing their time and skills to help protect our nation," said Attorney General John Ashcroft. "More and more police departments are recognizing the value of using volunteers to supplement their efforts, so that officers can spend more time out on the streets where they're most needed."

The goal of the VIPS Program is to enhance the capacity of state and local law enforcement agencies to use volunteers. The Justice Department administers the VIPS Program in partnership with the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the world's oldest and largest association of law enforcement executives, with more than 19,000 members in 90 countries.

VIPS volunteers can assist law enforcement agencies in a variety of ways, including answering phones, taking incident reports, participating in crime prevention programs such as Neighborhood Watch, sitting on citizen advisory boards and engaging in citizen patrols, and assisting with special events. They also help direct traffic, act as interpreters and donate their computer skills.

Freddie McBride, who volunteers with the Beaverton, Oregon Police Department, is a senior citizen who assists with clerical work in a detective unit, freeing up law enforcement officers to better perform their frontline duties. And a Louisville, Kentucky senior citizen, Ray Probus, volunteers 20 hours each week with the Jefferson County Police Department's VIPS program, often driving 130 miles

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each day to deliver mail and supplies to police precincts throughout the country. He's already well on his way to fulfilling the President's call for all American citizens to dedicate at least two years of their lives in volunteer service to their community.

"It's more important than ever to find innovative ways to assist law enforcement in protecting our communities," added Ashcroft. "VIPS is a creative solution that harnesses a very powerful resource – citizen volunteers."

The VIPS Program is the first to bring together law enforcement volunteer programs from around the country to share resources and support each other's activities. Prior to the launch of the national effort, there were only 76 programs in 27 states and the District of Columbia. The VIPS Web site (www.policevolunteers.org) serves as a gateway to information both for law enforcement agencies and for citizens interested in volunteering. It includes a searchable database of existing programs, a resource guide of downloadable sample documents and policies, a VIPS info e-mail list, and a "VIPS to VIPS" moderated discussion group. The Web site has been instrumental in helping communities establish new VIPS programs and in mobilizing citizen volunteers. It also provides a wealth of information for law enforcement agencies looking to enhance or establish a VIPS program. To date, the VIPS Web site has received more than 5.1 million "hits."

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist crime victims. OJP is headed by an Assistant Attorney General and comprises 5 component bureaus and 2 offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime, as well as the Executive Office for Weed and Seed, and the Office of the Police Corps and Law Enforcement Education. Information about OJP programs, publications, and conferences is available on the OJP Web site, www.ojp.usdoj.gov.

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