

Executive Summary

The demands on law enforcement have never been greater than they are today. In the post-September 11 world, agencies are struggling to protect their communities from the threat of global terrorism. Law enforcement faces increasingly sophisticated challenges from computer crime, identity theft, narcotics trafficking, and other crimes. All these efforts take place against a backdrop of shrinking budgets and limited resources.

Yet there is one thing law enforcement agencies can do to leverage existing resources and at the same time enhance public safety. Volunteer programs allow agencies and officers to focus on policing and enforcement functions by providing supplemental and/or support services. At the same time, such programs create valuable ties between law enforcement and members of the community.

Volunteer Programs: Enhancing Public Safety by Leveraging Resources is a resource guide for chiefs of police, sheriffs, and other executives of state or local law enforcement agencies interested in establishing or enhancing volunteer programs within their agencies. The guide is a product of the Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program, which is managed and implemented by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) in partnership with, and on behalf of, Serve.gov and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice. VIPS is one of five Citizen Corps programs. Information about Citizen Corps appears in section 9 of this guide.

The materials in this guide are based on information gathered through the VIPS program Web site, site visits, surveys, and numerous conversations with law enforcement executives, volunteer coordinators, and volunteers throughout the United States.

The guide is divided into two main parts.

Part I, Establishing or Enhancing a Volunteer Program, contains nine sections.

Section 1, Introduction, describes the benefits of using volunteers in law enforcement agencies and reviews the history and purpose of the VIPS Program.

Section 2, The Current State of Volunteerism, examines the state of volunteerism in the United States, the value of volunteer time, and the results of a VIPS analysis about volunteerism in law enforcement.

Section 3, Building Program Infrastructure, details the roles volunteers can perform within law enforcement agencies; the costs associated with establishing and maintaining a law enforcement volunteer program; budgeting, funding, and liability issues; and the development of relevant policies and procedures.

Section 4, Recruitment, outlines ways to attract volunteers, including internal and external recruitment, mass media, the Internet, and existing volunteer resources within the community.

Section 5, Selection and Management, provides information about volunteer screening, selection, and placement. This section also addresses volunteer supervision and management issues.

Section 6, Training, contains information about orienting and training new volunteers, providing ongoing training, and integrating volunteers into an agency.

Section 7, Recognition of Volunteers, addresses recognizing volunteer programs and individual volunteers. It contains information about federal, state, and local recognition opportunities.

Section 8, Assessment, outlines different approaches for assessing a volunteer program and the benefits of each. This section also contains information about evaluating volunteer performance.

Section 9, Organizations and Resources, profiles several organizations and programs referenced within the resource guide. It also contains a list of additional resources and a reading list.

Part II, Profiles of Volunteer Programs, describes the specific components of 18 separate law enforcement volunteer programs. Many of these programs are multifaceted; the highlighted information is only one component of many within the programs. For more information, contact the person listed or consult the agency's program description at www.policevolunteers.org.

Volunteer Programs: Enhancing Public Safety by Leveraging Resources provides practical information that can help law enforcement executives launch or expand volunteer programs. The key points of relevant sections are highlighted to provide quick reference points. It is hoped that this information will improve the ability of law enforcement agencies to meet future challenges while forging new alliances with the communities they serve.