

Volunteers in Policing



Volunteer Handbook

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Welcome to Volunteers in Policing

We hope that you will find the volunteer opportunities with the San Antonio Police Department an enjoyable and rewarding experience. You are now a member of one of the finest organizations in the nation.

Your attitude, dedication and commitment are what will make your experience rewarding. You will develop new friendships and learn many new things. You will find support for the program from the top of the ranks down to the units forming a unique partnership.

This handbook will provide you with vital information of what you can expect and includes the responsibilities we all have. This handbook will also provide an overview of the Volunteers in Policing Program or as many call it the “VIP Program”. You will receive an organizational chart of the Patrol Division and VIP Program as well as some of our other volunteer opportunities.

Commitment

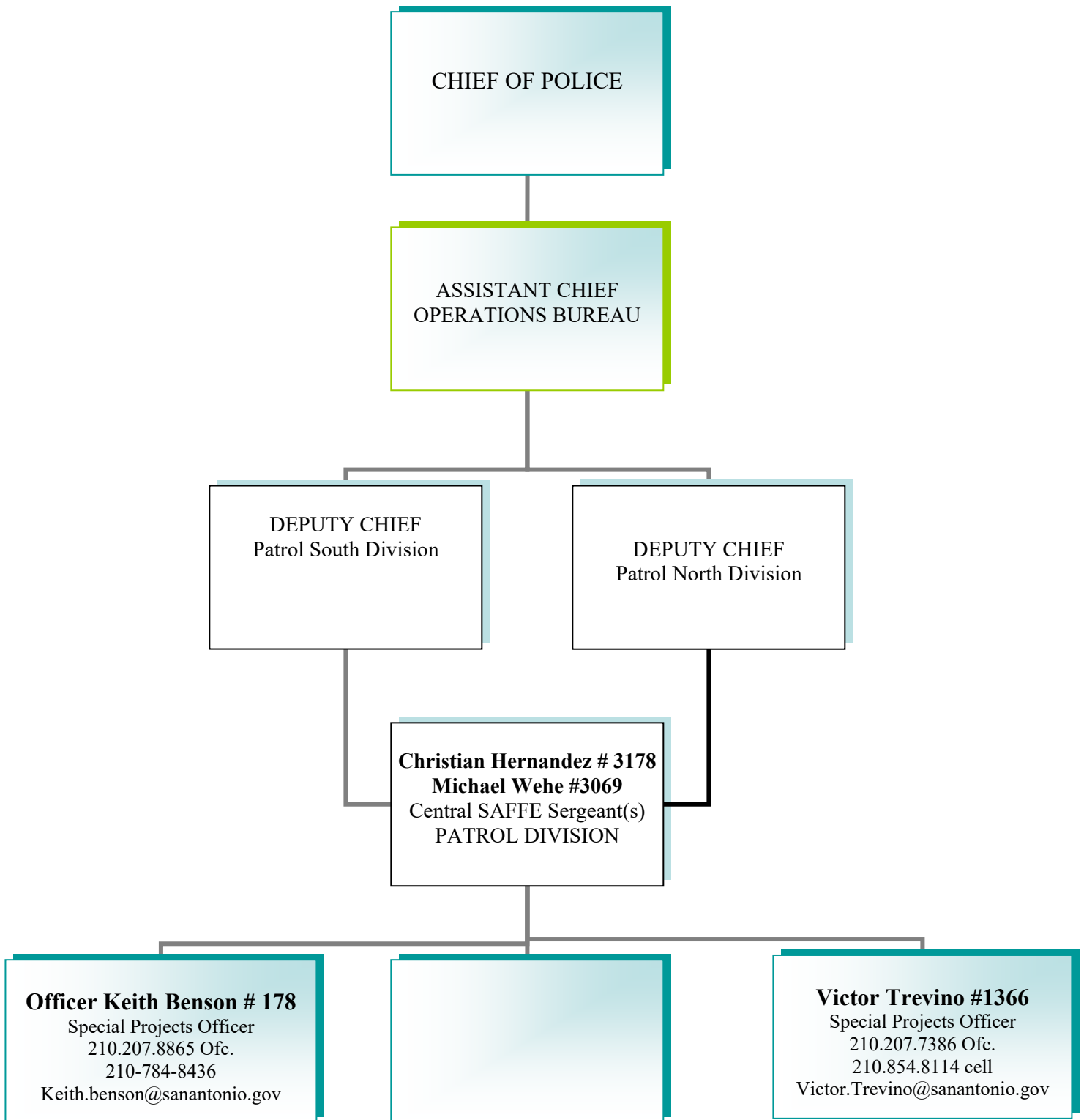
Our commitments to the citizens of San Antonio are founded on the basic principles of law enforcement. The principles of protection of human life, fairness, ethics, diversity, and active community partnerships are values that we strive to maintain and improve upon in the Volunteers in Policing program.

History

The San Antonio Police Department has become a leader in innovative approaches to partnering with the community. As you can see, the Volunteers in Policing (VIP) Program are a primary example of their commitment. The utilization of voluntary services provided by local citizens has resulted in the enhancement of existing police services. The results have been impressive! The outcome has been an improved efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. The VIP Program began in 1997 and quickly flourished into what it has become today.

Today, it continues to be a structured volunteer program based on a para-military hierarchy with a defined Chain of Command. The Chain of Command is the process in which our organization establishes power within its ranks. For a better understanding, the organizational chart below shows the structure on which the VIP Program is set.

Chain of Command



The San Antonio Police Department requires all volunteers to recognize and utilize the proper Chain of Command department wide. All other police related matters are organized under the remaining five divisions which are commanded by a deputy chief.

Program

The Volunteers in Policing (VIP) Program is part of the Patrol Division. The Volunteers in Policing Administrative staff is responsible for the day-to-day coordination, implementation and management which ensures the volunteers are managed in an organized process in which all human resources requirements are met to prevent civil liability issues in the areas of Labor law, indemnification, and personnel assignment of volunteers, basic resource management and acquisition. The staff maintains statistics, strategic planning development and public relations. The VIP Administrative staff provides the overall supervision for the VIP members and their on-going training development and evaluation.

The VIP Program has some established programs in place as you will see from the attached chart. However, the VIP Administrative staff is always looking for opportunities for volunteers to experience something new and exciting.

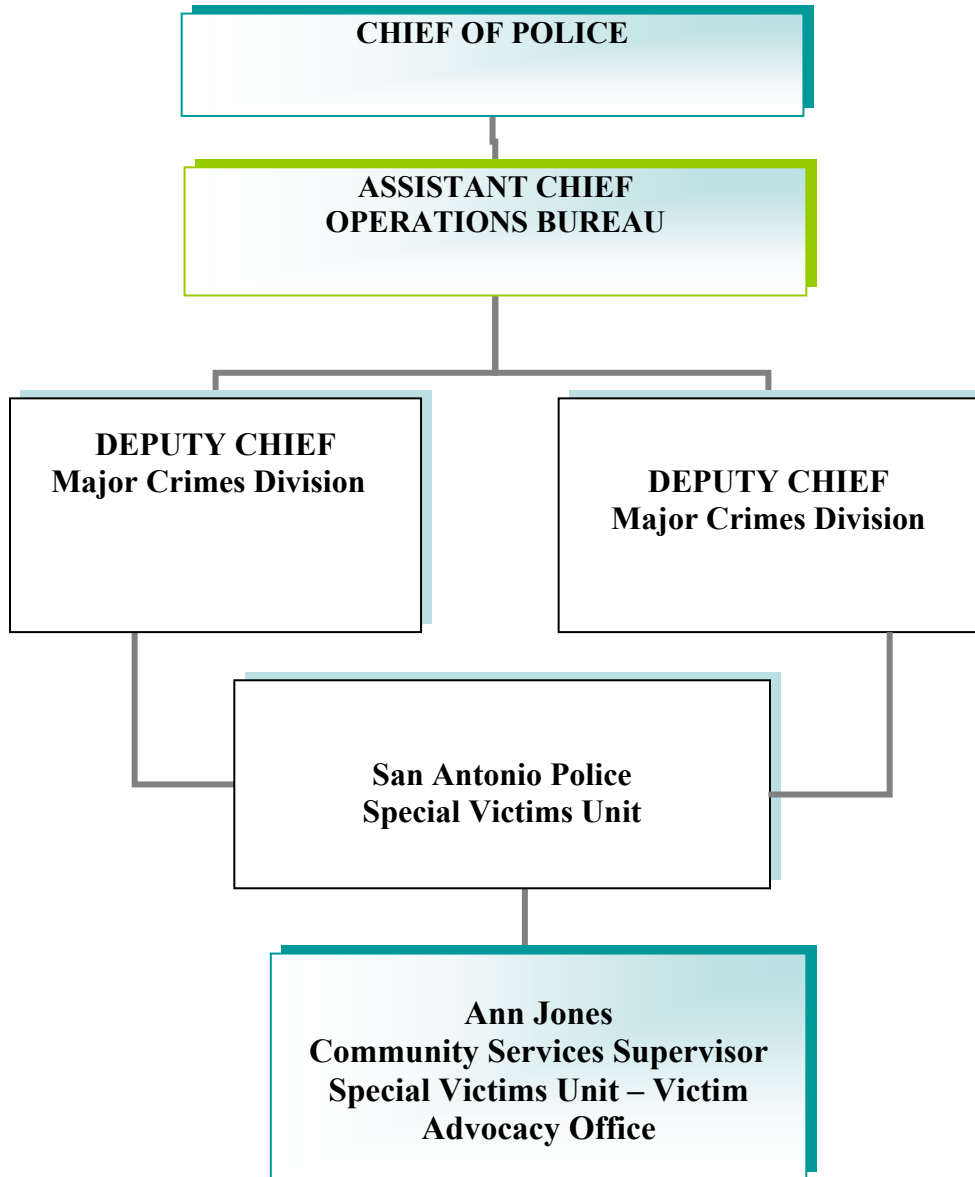
The VIP Administrative Staff will survey the Department to determine available positions and develop a recruitment process. It will establish program goals and operating procedures. The staff will make projections of staffing needs and act as the liaison with the public and private partners.

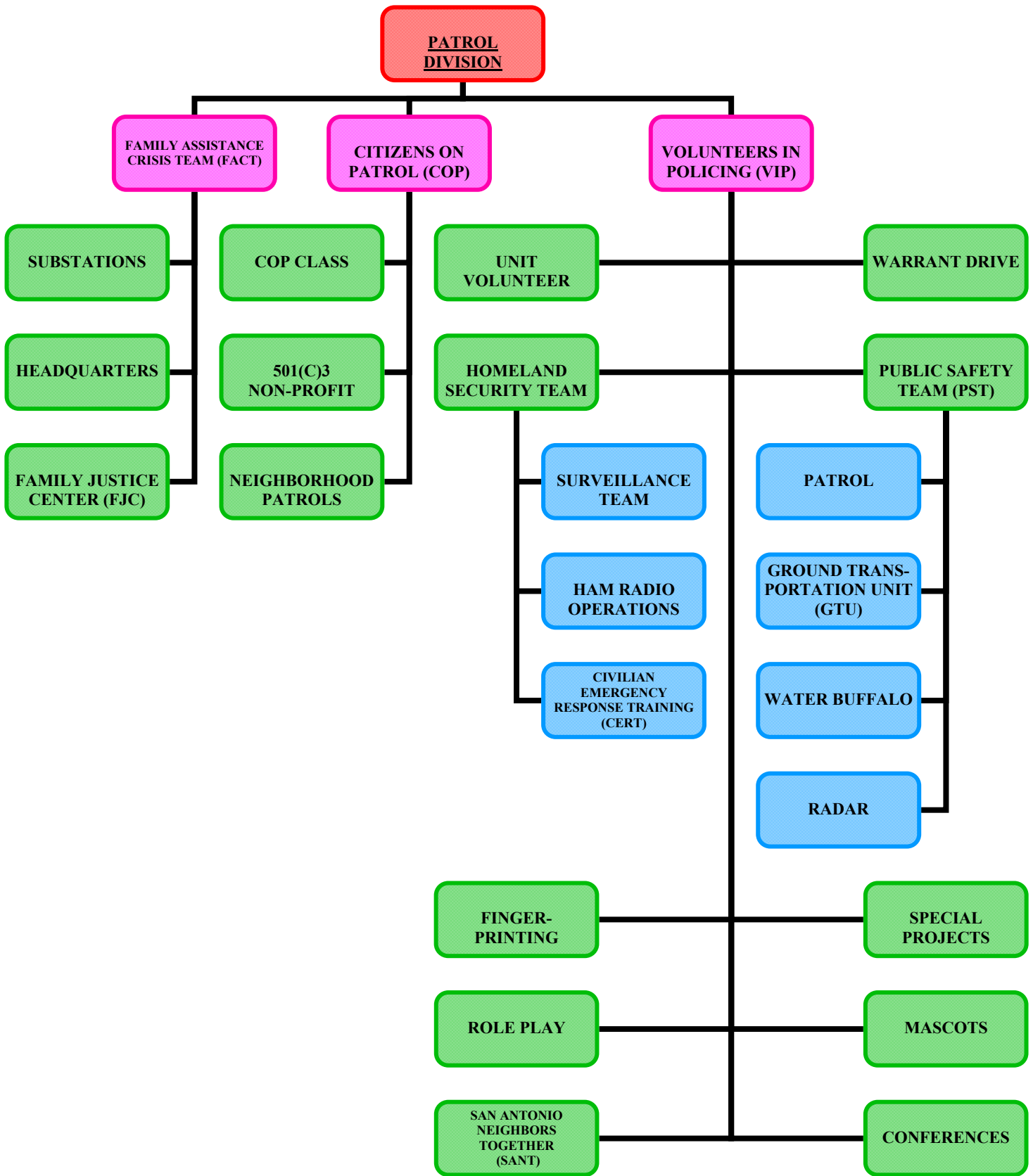
The individual units within the San Antonio Police Department will submit their requests for volunteer services to the VIP office. The Unit will identify a Special Projects Officer, who will monitor the activities of the assigned volunteer to ensure the assignments are specific and fulfillment. In addition, the Special Projects Officer will be responsible for providing the on-site training as well as the needed supplies.

The Special Projects Officer is required to attend a planning and training session in order to receive a comprehensive overview of the VIP Program. Questions and concerns will be addressed so that a strong line of communication can be established. Issues addressed include training, supervision, record-keeping reporting, evaluation, policies and the volunteer procedures.

FACT volunteers are processed through the FACT / VIP offices and are also 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 an additional 17 hours and an 8-hour ride-along which is separate from this Orientation. All questions regarding the FACT program should be addressed to Program Coordinator at. The Chain of Command for the FACT program can be seen in the chart below.

Chain of Command





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, for the safety of the citizens of San Antonio.

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 the freedom under the law.

Standards of Conduct

Volunteers are expected to be responsible for their attitudes and actions at all times. Volunteers will conduct themselves in a professional manner to bring harmony and cooperation among the various units of the department. Volunteers will always treat other members and volunteers of the department with dignity and respect. Volunteers will be courteous, civil and respectful to their supervisors and associates and will not use threatening or insulting language. Volunteers will cooperate, support and assist each other at every opportunity, and will not publicly criticize the work or the manner of performance duty of any other SAPD member or volunteer. Volunteers will abstain from performing any acts or making any statements, oral or written, which are directed at their co-workers with the intent to destroy the morale, good order, and working relationship with such workers.

Confidentiality

The daily businesses conducted within the San Antonio Police Department are strictly confidential and volunteers are required to exercise the utmost discretion in their conversations and communications regarding co-workers and San Antonio Police Department business. Volunteers should refer any requests for information received from the press, radio, or television to the supervisor or Public Information Office (PIO) at 210.207.7579.

Each volunteer will sign an “Agreement and Confidentiality Statement.”

Dress Code & Personal Hygiene

Volunteers are strongly encouraged to wear their Blue Volunteer in Policing polo shirt while performing public VIP duties. This attire provides immediate identification and recognition to sworn personnel and the public of the volunteers’ connection. The identification of a volunteer or Public Safety Team (PST) member also provides for additional safety measures in the event of an emergency. Volunteers shall maintain themselves in good physical and mental condition. All volunteers, by frequent bathing, shall exercise good bodily hygiene and cleanliness. No volunteer or Public Safety Team (PST) member shall become physically or mentally dependent upon alcohol or any controlled substance unless administered by a licensed physician. Dependence upon a prescribed drug is not an excuse for being unable to perform.

Volunteer Identification Badge

Every graduated volunteer is always issued an identification badge to be worn while the volunteer performs his/her 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 Volunteers in Policing Office no later than 30 days from the release date.

Volunteer Guidelines

To be a volunteer within the San Antonio Police Department, you had to submit a completed application packet to the San Antonio Police Department, Volunteer in Policing Office, Special Projects Coordinator. The application must be processed through the Volunteer in Policing Office to volunteer in a Police Department building, project or any sponsored activity.

Your application was reviewed, and your references were contacted. You were interviewed, where we learned about you and your interests. In addition, your fingerprints were done, and a background check was completed. Our VOLUNTEERS are truly very special individuals.

Volunteer Orientation

Additional training will be required for other specific areas such as: FACT, Public Safety Team (PST), and another Special Programs training. The initial comprehensive training is a requirement which must be completed before being assigned. Also, Texas CJIS system access training will be part of the Orientation.

Volunteer Hours

VIP Volunteers are required to fulfill six (6) hours per month. If you need to take a leave of absence (medical, school, family emergency or vacation) please notify the VIP Office so you can be placed on IN-ACTIVE status. You will continue to receive emails & newsletters about upcoming events but will not be held to the 6 hours a month requirement during your absence.

All volunteers are asked to sign in at all assignments, functions and events. Please contact the supervisor in charge for the sign-in list. It is important to have the date, event, name of the volunteer and hours volunteered. The hours generated by the program justify the budget monies we have received for the year in addition to assisting VIP Staff in requests for budget increases.

Volunteers may also enter their hours into our volunteer database on the VIP website at [Better Impact System](#) volunteers will be contacted by our Web technicians to get their User ID and password, so you can gain access to the system internally.

Each *Unit Volunteer* is responsible for reporting their hours to the Volunteer website Better Impact system. Timesheets can be picked up at the meetings or the VIP Office at 555 Academic Court Suite 206. They can be mailed to Special Projects Officer, 315 S Santa Rosa; San Antonio, Texas, 78207.

The hours a volunteer will perform will be established between the Special Projects Officer. A volunteer must contact the Special Projects Officer if they are unable to come in. Volunteers are asked to notify the

Special Projects Officer in the event they are unable to attend any function or event they previously signed up for. The notification will allow the Special Projects Officer to fill the empty slot, so the function is not left short-handed.

FACT volunteers are required to perform 7 to 10 hours per month. Any FACT volunteer who does not volunteer the minimum number of hours a month for a total of three months will be notified of their release from the program. Volunteers are asked to communicate with FACT staff in the event of an emergency.

Volunteer hours for other specific areas may vary.

Volunteer Opportunities

The Volunteers in Policing will have many opportunities to learn about the many facets of the San Antonio Police Department. The Special Projects Officer Coordinator will advise VIP members about unit positions needing to be filled. The requests will vary, and a task description will be forwarded to the Special Projects Officer Coordinator. Every effort will be made to fill the unit position as soon as possible. Requests will also be taken for special projects positions. These are some areas where volunteers can find new experiences. Volunteers can participate in one program or combination of all. The only limitation set is the one the volunteer sets on him or herself.

Homeland Security: (Ofc. Vic Trevino, Ofc. Keith Benson)

Volunteers have an opportunity to become one of our community leaders in disaster preparedness. A program is where volunteers can learn what it takes to instruct local communities to be self-sufficient until the proper authorities arrive and assist others in the event a disaster occurs. Training includes ham-radio operations, light search and rescue, cribbing, fire extinguishers, triage, weather threat assessments, etc.

Public Safety Team (PST): (Ofc. Vic Trevino, Ofc. Keith Benson)

Volunteers will be trained to issue Handicap Parking citations to the public and perform other non-hazardous duties for the Department. This position strongly encourages a minimum of 16 hours per month shift work, training and meetings.

Warrant Drive Enforcer: (Ofc. Vic Trevino, Ofc. Keith Benson)

This is an on-going special project. Volunteers will make courtesy calls to individuals, who have outstanding warrants.

Surveillance Team: (Ofc. Vic Trevino, Ofc. Keith Benson)

Volunteers will be trained to monitor specific locations from a distance to assist in the prevention of auto burglaries and thefts. Volunteers will work with a team of volunteers and a designated Police Officers' during all Fiesta events in April.

Family Assistance Crisis Team (FACT): (SVU)

Volunteers will work within a community Police Substation on Friday or Saturday nights from 7:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. Volunteers are available to victims of domestic violence for information and referrals. The FACT Coordinator assigns additional duties.

Fingerprint Technician "For the Love of Kids": (Ofc. Keith Benson)

Volunteers perform fingerprinting for children at the City Safety Fair events and upon request from other departments and community organizations. Fingerprinting is also available for seniors and handicapped persons. VIP Team Leader: Marylou Sanchez - msanchez370@hotmail.com

Special Projects: (Ofc. Vic Trevino, Ofc. Keith Benson)

Volunteers will assist with special departmental projects sponsored by the police department or projects that are approved by the Special Projects Officer. These include Cadet Role Play, Hostage Negotiation and Executive Protection Role Play, working SAPD conferences or seminars, Fiesta and other various events.

Mascots: (Ofc. Keith Benson)

Our volunteers assist as Ambassadors to the City of San Antonio as well as escort for SAPD mascots Blue Bear the Anti-Drug & Gang Bear. Our mascots are Yvonne Newton & Arvelene Amari.

Unit Volunteer: (Ofc. Vic Trevino)

Volunteers assist the units with general office duties to include basic filing, archiving old files, computer research assistance and answering telephones.

Committees:

Newsletter: (Ofc. Vic Trevino, Ofc. Keith Benson) Volunteers participate in the creation, publication and distribution of the Volunteer Focus newsletter every month. Opportunities include reporters, photographers and editors.

Recruiting: (Ofc. Vic Trevino, Ofc. Keith Benson) Volunteers assist in the recruitment of new members through various presentations, literature and publications. We conduct four VIP Orientations quarterly throughout the year.

Social: (Ofc. Vic Trevino, Ofc. Keith Benson): Volunteers assist Special Projects Officer with organizing, preparing and implementing all aspects of volunteer socials to include decorating, securing door prizes, scouting entertainment, and various other duties. (Graduations, Promotions, PIO events).

Public Relations: (Ofc. Vic Trevino Ofc. Keith Benson) Volunteers assist with promoting the VIP program through interviews, media relations, mall shows, recruiting details CPA classes, Homeowner associations, and various other forms of public relations.

Donation: Volunteers work towards obtaining donated items such as gift certificates from local businesses to give away as door prizes at various volunteer functions.

Volunteer's positions may change at any time and unit availability can change at any time. Please contact Special Projects Officer for more information regarding volunteer opportunities at the contact information posted earlier in this handbook or by calling 210.207.7386.

Assignments

The volunteers will notify the VIP Administration Staff of their interests. Upon completion of the Orientation Class, the volunteer will be assigned accordingly:

- A. *Unit Assignment*
- An interview will be arranged between the Special Projects Officer and the volunteer.
 - The Special Projects Officer will determine if the volunteer will be a good match for their unit. The Special Projects Officer will notify the VIP member of his/her decision.
 - Upon selection, a schedule will be established and a sign in log will be maintained.
 - The volunteer will be provided with established guidelines.
 - The Special Projects Officer will handle special issues, problems and concerns.
- B. *Special Projects*
- Each volunteer will be responsible for reviewing the monthly newsletter / emails, volunteer web page (Better Impact System) and contacting the Special Projects Officer in order to sign up.
- C. *Surveillance Team*
- Volunteers will be notified of surveillance dates and times.
 - Volunteers will be notified of meetings.
- D. *Public Safety Teams*
- Volunteers must undergo a separate application and interview process.

Volunteer Assignment

A volunteer is part of the team, who is entitled to certain expectations. Volunteers are non-paid, non-sworn personnel 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. Volunteers should expect the following from their Special Projects Officers:

- *Task Description* – this provides the volunteer with a definition of the duties to be performed.
- *Purpose* – this provides the volunteer with the organizational need and how it impacts the unit and department
- *Supervision* – this provides the volunteer with guidance and direction. It will be achieved by communication and the ability to ask questions.
- *Training* – this provides the volunteer with knowledge to perform the assigned tasks with confidence.
- *Feedback* – this provides the volunteer with information to help perform the task better and to ensure the task is being accomplished.

It is the policy and practice of the San Antonio Police Department to ensure equal employment opportunity and affirmative action for applicants, employees and volunteers without regard to race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, handicap, sexual orientation, or veteran status. An exception exists when, after reasonable accommodation has been made, age or handicap substantially limits the volunteer's ability to meet or perform legitimate service standards or poses a safety or security hazard.

Public Contact

All contact with the public should be conducted in a professional manner. The volunteer shall be governed by the ordinary and reasonable rules of good conduct and behavior. When acting in the capacity of a volunteer, you represent the San Antonio Police Department.

Volunteers who are project leaders or who work in a unit will be able to have printed volunteer cards. However, volunteers will not and cannot develop, print or distribute letterhead, business cards or other types of paraphernalia if it is not developed by the San Antonio Police Department, Volunteers in Policing Administrative Staff.

Rights

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,
- To have supervision, a written task description of services to be performed, and a place to work, and
- 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,
- Be proactive and seek out possible assignments,
- Discuss problems pertaining to the assignment/department,
- Request clarification of an assignment,
- Keep a record of hours and to enter their time into the computer data base.

Unit Supervisor Rights:

The Special Projects Officer 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,
- Be notified of absence or illness, and
- Be informed of any problems or concerns.

The Unit Supervisor has the right to expect from the VIP Administrative Staff:

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

Counseling:

A volunteer who has missed several assignments without notification will be brought in for counseling. If the issue is not resolved, the volunteer may be terminated.

Termination:

The termination of a volunteer can be done without a formal process. Volunteers work at the will of the Chief of Police and can be terminated at any time. The following are some of the grounds for termination:

- Release of confidential information,
- Theft,
- Misuse of information,
- Non-completion of an assigned project,
- Violation of volunteer guidelines,
- Non-compatibility,
- Chain of command violations,
- Disruption of the program, or
- Any other Automatic or Discretionary Disqualifiers.

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.
- Violations 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), 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.
- 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 Volunteers Program at any time.

- Non-Completion of step 3 in the application process, character references must be returned within thirty (30) days from the 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.
- Any act or behavior tending to bring reproach or discredit on themselves or the department.

Again, we thank you for your interest in our program and we look forward to working with you in supporting the San Antonio Police Department.

**"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 NY

Updated 02/28/2023