



Jeffrey R. Gahler,
Sheriff

HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE PERSONNEL POLICY

Volunteers in Police Support (VIPS)

Distribution:	All Employees			Policy Number:	PER 0405
Responsible Unit:	Human Resources			Rescinds:	
Original Issued Date:	12/15/16	Revision #:	1	Latest Revision Date:	08/13/25
Required 3-year review was completed:	08/01/26	Next Required 3-yr Review Due:		08/31/29	

1. Purpose

The Harford County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) may use volunteers to assist personnel with non-law enforcement functions.

2. Policy

The HCSO will encourage participation and partnership between the Harford County Sheriff's Office and the citizens of Harford County by using the services of citizens based upon their skills, training, and availability to perform volunteer tasks under the direct supervision of designated Agency employees.

3. Definitions

VOLUNTEER: Includes members of the Volunteers in Police Support (VIPS) Programs.

4. References

MD CODE, Courts and Judicial Proceedings, § 5-301
MD CODE, Labor and Employment, § 9-231.1

5. Procedures

A. Overview

- Volunteers are not employees and therefore not compensated for their service.
- Volunteers are not law enforcement or correctional deputies, and they have no law enforcement or correctional authority.
- Supervisors interested in using volunteers will submit a [Memorandum \(SO-212\)](#), outlining the need for volunteer resources, through appropriate channels to the Human Resources Director (HRD).

B. Volunteers in Police Support (VIPS) Program

- The HRD coordinates the VIPS Program and has the following responsibilities:
 - Manage recruitment, screening, background investigations and selection of volunteers;

- b. Post volunteer opportunity announcements on the HCSO website and other opportunities. Each post will include a description of the duties, responsibilities, requisite skills, educational level and other minimum qualifications or requirements;
 - c. Provide applications in print and online for volunteer positions;
 - d. When feasible, post volunteer opportunity announcements with community service organizations and/or seek cooperative assistance from key leaders within the community;
 - e. Advertise HCSO as an Equal Opportunity Employer on all applications;
 - f. Set official application filing deadlines;
 - g. Develop appropriate procedures necessary for effective integration of volunteer services within the HCSO; and
 - h. Review and maintain Volunteer Request Forms received from Commanders interested in utilizing volunteers.
2. The HRD will assess the volunteer's skills and attempt to place them in duties best suited to their abilities.
3. The Training Director will coordinate the required training for volunteers.

C. Job Descriptions

- 1. Job descriptions will be maintained for all volunteer positions identified within the HCSO.
- 2. The HRD will maintain a detailed listing of all approved volunteer positions.

D. Volunteer Application Process

- 1. Applications for volunteer opportunities will be made available primarily when a vacant volunteer position exists within the Agency.
- 2. VIPS applicants must be at least 18 years old. Citizens under the age of 18, wishing to volunteer, will be referred to the HCSO Public Safety Cadet Program.
- 3. Volunteers will be required to complete a [Volunteer/Internship Application \(SO-163\)](#).
- 4. The [Volunteer/Internship Application \(SO-163\)](#) will be forwarded to the HRD, who will screen the application and make the decision to accept or reject it.
- 5. Applications will not be rejected based solely on minor omissions or deficiencies, which can be corrected prior to any testing or interview process.
- 6. The HRD will notify the applicant in the event of rejection within 30 days of the receipt of the application.
- 7. Background Investigation

- a. Volunteers will be screened by the HRD prior to acceptance.
- b. The HRD will review the application and, if selected, assign a background investigator for additional screening.
- c. Screening will include a criminal records check, a Motor Vehicle Administration check, a prior drug use screening, and a social media check. A valid government issued photographic identification and birth certificate will be required from applicants.

E. Volunteer Selection Process

1. The decision to accept the services of a volunteer will be made by the HRD and the appropriate Division Commander.
2. All elements of the selection process will be administered, scored, evaluated, and interpreted in a uniform, impartial manner.
3. Supervisors of the appropriate division or unit will receive notification from the HRD when a volunteer is selected and assigned to fill a position.

F. Training

1. All volunteers will receive an orientation, including a general outline of the program, duties, and responsibilities.
2. Each volunteer will receive on-the-job training as directed by the commander they are assigned.
3. Training must include specific tasks to be performed.
4. Volunteers will be informed they are not sworn officers and can only act in the role they are assigned.

G. Conduct and Appearance

1. Depending on the assignment of the volunteer, the Division Commander will determine the proper attire for the volunteer. Most assignments will require business casual as the preferred appearance standard.
2. Volunteers will be given a copy of the HCSO [Code of Conduct \(PER 0101\)](#) policy and will be required to adhere to the applicable standards of conduct.

H. Supervision

1. A supervisor will be assigned to manage each volunteer.
2. The HRD will be notified of performance issues or concerns with a volunteer.
3. Any performance issue should be discussed with the appropriate Division Commander for resolution and documented via [Memorandum \(SO-212\)](#) to the HRD.

4. Volunteers will be issued a photographic identification card, and the supervisor will oversee the security of volunteer identification cards.
 - a. The card will be visible at all times when volunteering within an HCSO facility and when representing the HCSO.
 - b. Identification cards will be returned to the supervisor when the volunteer withdraws from the program or is otherwise dismissed.

I. Corrective Action

1. If a volunteer exhibits behavior that is inappropriate, his supervisor will immediately address the issue.
2. If the actions or behavior are correctable, the supervisor should interview the volunteer immediately, document the incident via memorandum, and forward his findings to the Division Commander and the HRD for review.
3. If the behavior continues or the behavior is such that separation may be appropriate, the volunteer will be interviewed by the commander to which he is assigned who may recommend to the HRD what action should be taken.
4. After consultation with the Sheriff, the HRD is authorized to dismiss a volunteer.

J. Reporting

1. Supervisors of volunteers will ensure a record of service hours is maintained for each volunteer under their supervision. These hours will be documented on a time sheet submitted to the appropriate division timekeeper.
2. At the end of each month, Division and Precinct Commanders will provide the HRD, the volunteer list, total volunteer hours for that month, and cumulative hours total for the calendar year.

K. Records

1. The HRD will retain records of volunteer activities.
2. The same policies and practices, as used for Civilian Personnel, relevant to security, confidentiality and retention of records, and selection process materials will apply to volunteers.

L. Insurance Protection for Volunteers

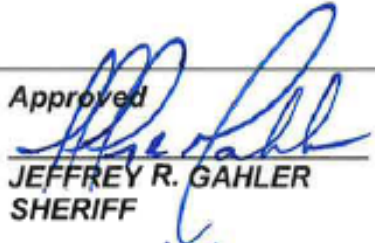
1. Liability coverage for volunteers against whom claims or suits are filed will be in accordance with the Local Government Tort Claims Act, if the volunteer was acting within the scope and authority of his duties.
2. Volunteers are covered on a limited basis through the Chesapeake Employers Insurance Company (CEIC) for injuries sustained during the course of volunteer activities. This coverage is for medical services and treatment only. The volunteer is not entitled to permanent or partial disability through CEIC and is not covered for lost time.

M. Recognition

1. Supervisors will prepare a list of volunteers eligible for formal recognition for their services.
2. Supervisors are encouraged to report superior and special services provided by a volunteer.
3. The Awards Review Committee will review the list and recommend appropriate awards.
4. Awards will be presented at the HCSO awards ceremony.
5. Formal recognition and awards criteria for volunteers include yearly service awards; and awards for 100, 250, 500 and 1,000 hours of service.
6. Interns will not be recognized in the same manner as a volunteer, as their duties were assigned as part of an academic requirement.

6. Summary of Changes

- A. On 08/01/25 the Explorer Program was replaced with the HCSO Public Safety Cadet Program.
- B. On 08/01/26 the Agency 3-year review was completed and no changes were made.

Approved

JEFFREY R. GAHLER
SHERIFF
DATE 8/13/25