

# FORT MYERS POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER 5.5

**TITLE:** Volunteers in Policing (VIP)

**INDEXING:** Volunteer in Policing Program

**ISSUED:** 08/26/10

**REVISED:** 4/29/2024

**RESCINDS:** 04/09/2018

**C.A.L.E.A. STANDARDS:** 45

**PAGES:** 8

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This general order contains the following sections:

- I. Definitions
- II. Procedures

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this general order is to establish a Volunteers in Policing program for the Fort Myers Police Department, define the volunteers' role and describe the scope of duties and responsibilities, limitations of authority, and guidelines for operation of the programs. **(CALEA 45.3.1)**

## SCOPE

These procedures shall apply to all Fort Myers Police Department personnel.

## DISCUSSION

The Fort Myers Police Department Volunteer in Policing Program is designed to enhance the department's service delivery by allowing enthusiastic, dependable, committed people to work alongside full time members of the department.

Volunteers in Policing perform several invaluable services: They act as "goodwill ambassadors" for the department, serve as additional "eyes and ears" for full time members and serve in clerical and support roles.

The Volunteers in Policing Program is staffed by persons who volunteer their time to work without compensation. The program allows for citizens who wish to serve their community to do so in the public safety arena and those citizens will be used to supplement and complement, but not replace paid staff.

In order to provide for continuity in the use of Volunteers in Policing to perform or enhance the services provided to the public, it is necessary to establish basic guidelines for Volunteers in Policing. All Volunteers in Policing are expected to abide by the rules and regulations of the Fort Myers Police Department.

## POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Fort Myers Police Department to prohibit the assignment of Volunteers in Policing to any duties requiring sworn officer status. **(CALEA 45.3.1 a)** Volunteers in Policing shall be utilized for day to day clerical and support functions, and to assist law enforcement related community service functions as needed.

## **SECTION 1: DEFINITIONS**

**CJSTC:** Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission. The official body that regulates criminal justice training and certification.

**Community Engagement Bureau:** The ***Community Engagement Bureau*** Captain shall serve as coordinator of the entire volunteer program. However, nothing shall prohibit the supervision of volunteer members from being diversified throughout the agency to better suit the needs of the agency and the citizens.

**Program Liaison:** A volunteer, appointed by the ***Community Engagement Bureau*** Captain or Chief of Police who is responsible for assisting with the coordination, scheduling and other duties of the program.

**Volunteer in Policing:** A volunteer in policing is a non-paid citizen of the United States who is willing to volunteer their time in a specific area of the police department. The volunteer in policing, while not an employee, is an agent of the police department and will be treated with respect and courtesy. Volunteers in policing must express a desire in a particular area of the police department function and the apparent ability to assist the department in that area. **(CALEA 45.3.1)**

## **SECTION II: PROCEDURES**

### **A. Volunteers in Policing Qualifications:**

1. All Volunteers in Policing must meet the following qualifications:
  - a. Applicants must be twenty-one (21) years of age or older.
  - b. Applicants must be of good moral character.
  - c. Possess a valid Florida driver's license.
  - d. Be a citizen of the United States.
  - e. Not have a significant history of prior unlawful or immoral conduct involving moral turpitude, perjury, a false statement, or have received a dishonorable or undesirable discharge from any of the Armed Forces of the United States. This does not include minor traffic infractions; however, the decision to approve or deny a Citizen Volunteer application shall rest with the Chief of Police.
  - f. Applicants must have on file a completed, processed application.
  - g. Applicants shall have the mental and physical capacities to perform the functional requirements of assigned duties.
2. Members of the Fort Myers Police Department are not eligible to participate in the Volunteers in Policing Program.

### **B. Volunteers in Policing Processing and Selection:**

1. Volunteers in Policing are appointed by the Chief of Police.
2. Applicants shall:
  - a. Obtain an application from the Human Resources Department or Fort Myers Police Department.
  - b. Be subject to a criminal history check as determined by the department.

3. If a criminal history check establishes the applicant has a significant history of prior unlawful or immoral conduct, the applicant will not be appointed. If the information comes to light after appointment, the volunteer shall be terminated.

C. Volunteer in Policing Organization:

1. The FMPD Volunteers in Policing Program is coordinated by the **Community Engagement** Bureau Captain, or designee.
2. All Volunteers in policing shall be subject to supervisory control and follow the designated chain of command the same as any regularly compensated employee. FMPD organization, command, and control are described in applicable FMPD Standard Operating Procedures.
3. The **Community Engagement** Bureau Captain may request a program volunteer to assist with coordination and other aspects of the Volunteers in Policing Program. This individual shall act as a liaison between the volunteers and the **Community Engagement** Bureau Captain or designee. The volunteer liaison shall handle the day-to-day program administration details such as scheduling, assignments, and other duties.
4. Volunteers in Policing shall not hold any rank.

E. Authority: (CALEA 45.3.1 b)

1. Civilian Volunteers in Policing may only act within their delineated authority and shall perform only those duties enumerated herein and for which they have received training.
2. Civilian Volunteers in Policing may be restricted from performing any function at any time by direct order of the Chief of Police, his designee, or the FMPD personnel under whom they are functioning under the direct span of control.
3. A Civilian Volunteer in Policing may perform traffic direction without immediate supervision, provided however, that supervisory control is exercised by a certified officer with a reasonable span of control and the Civilian Volunteer in Policing has received appropriate training in traffic control.

F. Duties: (CALEA 45.3.1 b)

1. The **Community Engagement** Bureau Captain or designee shall coordinate the allocation and distribution of volunteers. This duty may be delegated to the program liaison.
2. Volunteers in policing are expected to assist when called upon.
3. Volunteers in policing shall be assigned to positions that augment the Department's ability to provide services.
4. Volunteers in policing may be assigned to assist civilian members with clerical tasks without restriction. Clerical duties are described as data entry, routine typing, filing, copying and answering phones.
5. Volunteers in policing may be assigned to assist police officers with clerical duties within the following guidelines:

- a. Volunteers in policing may perform only those tasks they are specifically trained to perform.
  - b. The Volunteers in policing shall not carry or have access to personally owned or Department issued weapons or physical restraint devices.
  - c. Volunteers in policing shall not be involved in the physical movement or security of prisoners or suspects at any time.
- 6. A volunteer in policing may be assigned to assist in performing duties in other support functions, based on his/her skills, interests and specific training.
- 7. Volunteers in policing who have received training for specific services may be called out for searches for children, during disasters, and other support functions as needed.
- 8. Under no circumstances shall a volunteer in policing be knowingly placed or exposed to a dangerous or potentially dangerous situation.
- 9. Volunteers in policing shall not be assigned to work that is not meaningful and duties that do not need to be done.
- 10. While not all-inclusive, the following delineates some of the activities for which volunteers in policing may be utilized:
  - a. Victim Advocate: Call victims of non-violent misdemeanor crimes to provide assistance and referrals, computer data entry, filing, copying, shredding.
  - b. Administrative Assignments: Contact businesses to update emergency listings and other administrative duties as related to the Volunteer Program.
  - c. Clerical Duties: Assist with data entry, filing, typing, and answering of phones.
  - d. Fingerprinting: Perform non-criminal fingerprinting services.

G. Uniforms and Equipment: (CALEA 45.3.3)

- 1. Uniforms for all civilian volunteers in policing shall be clearly distinguishable from those of sworn personnel. Volunteers in policing shall not be equipped with, carry, or have access to weapons, handcuffs, or any other equipment owned by the Department, or by the volunteer in policing, which would place the volunteer in policing or the Department, in a position of potential danger or liability while performing duties.
- 2. Volunteers in policing are often in a position to represent the Department and are expected to present a neat, clean, and orderly appearance. Volunteers in policing are issued special uniform button down shirts and shall conform to the same appearance and dress regulations as civilian employees of the Department as provided in appropriate Standard Operating Procedures.
- 3. At no time, will Volunteers in policing wear any items which display the official badge of the Fort Myers Police Department, or any item or insignia which is vulgar, obscene, offensive or improper.
- 4. Volunteers in policing shall wear the prescribed uniform while on duty and are not permitted to work while in civilian attire, unless otherwise directed by the **Community Engagement** Commander, or designee.
- 5. Uniforms shall not be worn when a volunteer in policing is not on duty.

6. Uniform shirts, identification cards, security discs, traffic vests and other uniform apparel remain the property of FMPD.
  - a. Volunteers in policing shall return all uniforms and other property of the FMPD upon resignation or termination.

H. Rules of Conduct Volunteers in Policing:

1. Civilian Volunteers in policing are not commissioned sworn officers and do not have the same authority of a full-time sworn member. **(CALEA 45.3.1 a)**
  - a. Civilian Volunteers in policing shall have no police powers or authority outside of those of a Florida citizen. **(CALEA 45.3.1 a)**
2. Civilian Volunteers in policing are required to conduct themselves in a professional and appropriate manner while in service to the Department.
  - a. Volunteers represent the Fort Myers Police Department while acting in the capacity of a volunteer of the Volunteers in Policing Program. As representatives, volunteers in policing must conduct themselves in such a manner as to demonstrate the highest standards of professionalism so as to earn the public trust.
  - b. The Fort Myers Police Department reserves the right to dismiss any volunteer in policing for such reasons as poor performance, poor attendance, unwillingness to accept direction, disruptive behavior, sexual harassment, abusive and inflammatory language, or other reasons.
  - c. Civilian Volunteers in policing have no proprietary rights and may have their appointment withdrawn for failure to comply with the rules, regulations, policies, or procedures of the Fort Myers Police Department.
3. No Civilian Volunteer in policing will carry any firearm or police weapon when on official duty.
  - a. Civilian Volunteers in policing possessing a valid Florida Concealed Weapons Permit may carry a personally owned concealed weapon while off duty in accordance with Florida law.
  - b. Civilian Volunteers in policing may not under any circumstances carry any department weapon or firearm under the auspices of the Florida Concealed Weapons Permit.
4. Civilian Volunteers in policing shall not carry nor display emergency lights (blue or red lights) or siren in their private vehicles.
5. While on duty, volunteers in policing shall have in their possession, an official FMPD issued identification card.
  - a. Identification shall be displayed at all times while volunteers in policing are in Department facilities.
6. Volunteers in policing are not eligible for extra-duty (paid) details.

7. Volunteers in policing may not solicit business, clients, contracts, work or any other form of compensated employment, while on duty or off duty, as a result of contacts made during the course of their duties as a volunteer in policing.
8. No volunteer in policing shall represent themselves as a member of the Fort Myers Police Department in order to secure special privileges, favorable treatment, for personal gain or in furtherance of business endeavors.
  - a. At no time, will a volunteer in policing display their Department issued identification card to secure special privileges or personal gain. It shall not be used for general identification purposes such as check cashing or to gain favorable treatment or gratuities. Violation of this directive may result in immediate termination from the volunteer in policing program.
9. No volunteer in policing shall report for duty while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. No volunteer in policing shall consume alcohol or drugs likely to cause impairment while on duty or perform any duties for the Department while under the influence of alcoholic beverages or any substance which may adversely affect physical or mental capabilities.
10. Commission of a crime during the tenure as a volunteer in policing with the Fort Myers Police Department shall subject the volunteer to immediate dismissal.
11. Volunteers in policing shall be polite and courteous to the general public at all times.
12. A volunteer's in policing position within the Department may provide him/her access to confidential or sensitive information. Whatever information is gained in this manner shall not be divulged to anyone else.
13. If a volunteer in policing cannot fulfill a scheduled duty assignment, the volunteer in policing shall notify the Community Relations Lieutenant or program liaison as early as possible.
14. Volunteers in policing are not to become involved in pursuit, apprehension attempts, or any other physical contact with criminal suspects.

I. Discipline:

1. All volunteers in policing shall be familiar with and abide by the FMPD Standard Operating Procedures Manual.
  - a. A volunteer in policing may be reprimanded, suspended, or have his/her appointment withdrawn by the Chief of Police for violating established rules of conduct or FMPD General Orders applicable to regular police personnel.
2. Any member/employee having a complaint against a volunteer in policing shall bring it to the attention of the Community **Engagement** Section Lieutenant through the chain of command or designee for investigation and/or correction.

J. Training: (CALEA 45.3.2)

1. Volunteers in policing will receive training appropriate for the duties which they may be called upon to perform however, volunteers in policing will not perform specialized tasks, for example, dispatching. Volunteer in policing assistance shall be limited to clerical and support functions.

2. As soon as practical after appointment, volunteers in policing shall receive an orientation to the Fort Myers Police Department. Orientation shall include, but is not limited to the volunteer's in policing role, authority and latitude, rules and regulations, duties and assignments, record keeping, and other tasks expected of a volunteer in policing.
3. Training records shall be maintained by the Professional Standards **Bureau** Training Division.

K. Workers Compensation and Reporting of Injuries:

1. Injuries sustained by volunteers in policing while performing volunteer services on behalf of the City are covered per Florida's Worker's Compensation guidelines. The City participates in the state's Drug Free Workplace Program and will require that all volunteers seeking treatment under the Workers Compensation system submit to a post accident drug test, which includes testing for alcohol.
2. Injuries shall immediately be reported to the on-duty supervisor who shall complete an Incident Report describing the event and the circumstances which led to the injury.
3. The supervisor will also complete a Supervisor's Report. The City Risk Management Coordinator will complete a "Notice of Injury Report."
4. Copies of these reports will be forwarded to the Administrative **Services Bureau**.
5. Injuries that require immediate medical treatment or hospitalization shall be immediately reported to the Administrative **Services Bureau** and the City's Human Resource/Risk Management office.

L. Documentation of Activity:

1. Personnel and other records pertaining to the Volunteers in Policing Program shall be maintained by the **Community Engagement Bureau**, Captain or designee.
2. The program liaison shall maintain monthly statistical information.
3. Volunteers in policing shall properly record and forward their hours of service performed to the Community **Engagement** Lieutenant or program liaison on a monthly basis. The responsibility for this documentation rests with the volunteer in policing. The Community Engagement Lieutenant or designee shall submit a quarterly report to the Community Engagement Services and Administrative Services Bureau Commanders.

M. Recruiting:

1. All Department personnel are encouraged to actively participate in the recruitment of qualified Citizen volunteers in policing.
2. Applications shall be available to the public at the City of Fort Myers Human Resources Department and Fort Myers Police Department.

N. Relationship with Full Time Members:

1. All FMPD personnel shall demonstrate a congenial and cooperative working relationship with citizen volunteers in policing.
2. When a volunteer in policing reports an incident, FMPD personnel must be aware this body of volunteers is not law enforcement trained.

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**APPROVED:**

**[ Electronic Signature on File]**

**04/29/2024**

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**Jason Fields, Chief of Police  
Fort Myers Police Department**

**Date** 

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