

MESA POLICE Department Policy Manual	Volunteer in Police Service (VIPS)	DPM 2.9.55 Effective 01/04/2013 Revised 04/08/2026
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1. PURPOSE

This policy provides Mesa Police Department (MPD) members with guidelines for the Volunteer in Police Service (VIPS) Program, which includes both the Internship and Volunteer Programs.

2. DEFINITIONS

Intern: An individual who is enrolled in college courses and/or receiving college credit, if applicable. Interns typically are assisting for one to two semesters and are seeking to gain a certain set of skills to assist them upon graduation.

SkillBridge: A Department of Defense (DoD) program that provides an opportunity for active duty military service members to gain valuable civilian work experience through specific industry training, apprenticeships, or internships during the last 180 days of service. DoD SkillBridge connects transitioning service members with industry partners in real-world job experiences. Members of the SkillBridge program are paid by DoD and not directly by the City of Mesa (COM).

Volunteer: Individual who volunteers their time for MPD, unpaid and without expectation of compensation or benefit, to perform services.

Volunteer in Police Service (VIPS): Any person who performs a service for MPD without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation for services rendered. This includes volunteers, police chaplains, Interns, and SkillBridge.

3. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- A. The VIPS program is administered through the Community Relations Division of the Office of Strategic Initiatives.
- B. The VIPS Coordinator is responsible for the overall administration of the program and is the overall supervisor of both the Internship Program and the SkillBridge Internship Program.
- C. The VIPS will be the responsibility of the individual supervisor in the unit as assigned by the VIPS Coordinator. The chain of command is as follows:
 1. Chief of Police
 2. Assistant Chief
 3. Commander/Professional Staff Equivalent (PSE)
 4. Lieutenant/PSE
 5. Sergeant/PSE
 6. Assigned area supervisor

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7. VIPS

4. INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

4.1 General

- A. The Internship Program is intended to provide professional practical experience to students and active-duty military members who are interested in a career in law enforcement or the public sector.
 - 1. Students from colleges and universities may request to participate in the program.
 - a. Requests are evaluated on an individual basis.
 - b. If accepted, all requirements of this policy are coordinated through the respective educational institution.
- B. Active-duty military members interested in participating in an internship through the DoD SkillBridge Program must obtain approval from their unit command.
 - 1. See the DoD Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for more information and direct program guidelines. The VIPS Coordinator maintains the MOU.
- C. The goal of these programs is to provide students and active-duty military members, who are interested in a career in law enforcement or the public sector, a structured program that presents a practical look at a law enforcement agency.

4.2 Application & Selection

- A. Application requirements for students:
 - 1. Must be a college students in good standing.
 - 2. Interested students will submit an application and any other information deemed necessary by the Department to complete the selection process.
- B. Application requirements for Active-Duty Service members (SkillBridge Program):
 - 1. Are required to have completed at least 180 days on active duty.
 - 2. Are expected to be released from active duty within 180 days of starting the program with an honorable discharge, including general discharge under honorable conditions.
 - 3. Must have military command approval and provide proper documentation.
- C. All applicants should be interviewed by the affected supervisor and the area supervisor to which they will be assigned.
 - 1. The interview may be waived by the VIPS Coordinator if necessary.
- D. All applicants selected for an internship position must successfully complete a limited Department background investigation prior to being accepted into the Internship Program.

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1. The background investigation for internships is not as extensive as the investigation for MPD positions. If an intern subsequently applies for a position with MPD, the intern must undergo a more in-depth background investigation and if any disqualifying information is found, it may impact their eligibility for continued internship.
- E. Eligibility for selection as an intern does not necessarily indicate eligibility for a paid position within MPD.
- F. If the intern previously served as a VIPS with MPD, the intern will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and must be approved by the Chief of Police or designee to reapply.

4.3 Intern Responsibilities

- A. Upon acceptance into the Internship Program, the interns will be assigned to an area within the Department.
 1. Interns are provided a Department identification badge to be worn at all times while on duty or in police facilities.
 2. Interns will report to the assigned supervisor.
 3. Interns are to abide by the dress code located in [DPM 1.9.45A1 Professional Staff & Sworn Non-Uniform Dress Code Manual](#).
 4. Interns are responsible for completing the required amount of service agreed upon between the intern and the unit they apply to, if applicable.
 5. Interns are responsible for recording the number of hours worked through the Better Impact Portal.
 6. Prior to the conclusion of the internship, interns complete any required papers and submit them to be reviewed, if applicable.
 7. At the conclusion of the internship, interns will turn in their Department identification badge either to the supervisor they were assigned to or to the VIPS Coordinator.

4.4 Supervisor Responsibilities

- A. Supervisors desiring an intern will:
 1. Request an intern from the VIPS Coordinator through their chain of command.
 2. Meet with the VIPS Coordinator as required.
 3. Complete onboarding and offboarding forms provided by the VIPS Coordinator.
 4. Evaluate student interns as required and forward completed evaluations to the VIPS Coordinator.
 5. Collect Department identification badges upon completion of the Internship Program and forward them to the VIPS Coordinator.
 6. Immediately notify the VIPS Coordinator of any volunteer action or circumstance they believe qualifies for termination from the program.

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4.5 VIPS Coordinator Responsibilities

- A. Coordinates the intern selection process and program administration.
- B. Reviews all applications and schedules prospective interns for a virtual interview.
 - 1. Each applicant who is selected for an interview is notified either by phone or e-mail as to the results of their application.
- C. Processes necessary paperwork for background investigation.
- D. Schedules the intern for their onboarding orientation.
- E. Schedules computer and email clearance through **PDSecurity**.
- F. Schedules ride-alongs for interns as necessary. See [DPM 2.9.35 Department Ride-Alongs](#).
- G. Upon termination of a VIPS member, notifies **PDSecurity** and **PDIT** for termination of badges and computer access.

5. VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

5.1 Volunteer General Guidelines

- A. The MPD Volunteer Program is designed to support members in providing police service and to promote community partnership. [ALEAP 20.5]
- B. Volunteers within MPD have the opportunity to contribute to the overall quality of service to the community. It is important to be aware of the image of the Department when contacting the public. The citizens of our community have a right to expect only the best from our police force. [ALEAP 20.5]
- C. To accomplish this, sworn personnel, professional staff, and volunteers must work together in a team effort to uphold the high standards of the police profession.
- D. By doing so, our department will continue to maintain its reputation of competence, credibility & trust among the community.
- E. Eligibility for selection as a volunteer does not indicate eligibility for a paid position with the Department.

5.2 Eligibility

- A. To be eligible to participate in the Volunteer Program, individuals will:
 - 1. Be a high school graduate or have a GED or equivalent when necessary for the assignment.
 - 2. Have a valid driver license or identification card.
 - 3. Be a US Citizen or otherwise legally present in the US and provide proof.
 - 4. Be at least 18 years of age. NOTE: Some Department assignments may require a minimum of 21 years of age.
 - 5. Submit to a limited background investigation, including drug screening.

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- a. The background investigation for volunteers is not as extensive as the investigation for MPD positions. If a volunteer subsequently applies for a position with MPD, the volunteer must undergo a more in-depth background investigation and if any disqualifying information is found, it may impact their eligibility for continued participation in the volunteer program.
- 6. Be approved for selection by the Hiring Review Board.
- B. If the applicant was a previous member of the VIPS program, the applicant will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and must be approved by the Chief of Police or designee to reapply

5.3 Current Members Becoming Volunteers

- A. Members currently employed by MPD may volunteer for an area other than the unit for which they are employed.
- B. To become eligible, the member must be granted permission of their Division Commander/PSE and the supervisor of the area for which they volunteer.
- C. Members may perform volunteer work for the other unit **only when they are off-duty**.
- D. The volunteer work must not interfere with their regular duties or it will be terminated.

5.4 Separating Members Becoming Volunteers

- A. Members separating from MPD must meet the following conditions before being considered for the Volunteer Program:
 - 1. The individual must have separated from the Department in good standing. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. No active disciplinary investigations at the time of departure
 - b. No history of misconduct or violations
 - 2. Must wait a minimum of six (6) months following their official retirement or separation date before applying to volunteer with the Department.
 - a. If the member meets the criteria in **Section 5.4A(1)**, this condition may be waived by the Community Relations Division Administrator or designee on a case-by-case basis.
 - 3. Additionally, the application must be approved by the Commander/PSE of the last Division the individual worked in prior to their departure, confirming that the applicant left in good standing and that no known concerns exist regarding their return in a volunteer capacity.
 - a. If needed, the Commander/PSE will consult with Internal Affairs (IA) to confirm the member's history.
 - 4. All former employees must complete a new volunteer background process, regardless of their previous clearance or status with the

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Department. This requirement can be waived by the Community Relations Division Administrator on a case-by-case basis.

- B. Approval must also be obtained from the Commander of the area in which the former employee wishes to volunteer.
- C. The Department reserves the right to deny any volunteer application at its discretion if the individual's return is deemed a potential risk to operations, workplace culture, or the department's reputation.

5.5 Selection

- A. Volunteers are interviewed by an area supervisor for possible unit assignment during the selection process. Division Commander/PSE must approve selection of volunteer to assignment.
- B. Once selected for an assignment, the volunteer reports to their area supervisor for duties and any specialized training.

5.6 Training & Equipment

- A. Volunteers must complete orientation training within three months of selection date. The training includes a security briefing, with the remaining training depending on the volunteer's role.
- B. Only the VIPS Coordinator may waive orientation training.
- C. Volunteers are provided with any equipment (phone, radio, computer, etc.) needed for duties and/or specialized training by supervisors.

5.7 Assignments & Transfer Requests

- A. Volunteers may be assigned to multiple assignments/areas at the same time to complete duties.
- B. If a volunteer finds themselves in an assignment they are not comfortable completing, are having problems serving in the assigned position, or would like to try a new assignment, the volunteer must contact the VIPS Coordinator to request a new assignment.
- C. Volunteers are required to stay in their assignment for a minimum of 3 months or, if assigned a special project or detail, for the duration of the project or detail.
 - 1. This requirement can be waived by the VIPS Coordinator depending on the circumstances.
- D. The VIPS Coordinator approves transfers. The VIPS Coordinator contacts the transfer area and obtains approval from the area supervisor prior to transfer and notifies the volunteer.

5.8 Volunteer Requirements

- A. Volunteers must complete a minimum of 4 hours of service per month to be considered an active volunteer for most assignments.

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1. Some VIPS assignments may require less time depending on the needs of their unit.
2. Volunteers may request a leave of absence for up to 6 months for special circumstances or seasonal volunteer work. This will be approved by the VIPS Coordinator on a case-by-case basis.
3. If no leave of absence is granted, and there is no activity for 6 months, volunteer status is terminated and the individual must re-apply to the Volunteer Program.

6. INSURANCE & LIABILITY

- A. VIPS members are covered by both Worker's Compensation (WC) and Automobile Liability Insurance for any on-duty accident.
 1. If the VIPS member is unemployed or retired, only medical expenses are covered.
 2. If the VIPS member is currently employed, wage compensation loss of wages resulting from an injury occurred while on duty as a VIPS is addressed on a case-by-case basis.

7. BEHAVIOR & REMOVAL

- A. VIPS members must abide by [DPM 1.4.1 Code of Conduct](#) at all times while on-duty as well as all rules, regulations, and Department policies that pertain to them.
- B. MPD reserves the right to dismiss any person from the VIPS program at anytime at their sole discretion. VIPS members serve at-will and are not entitled to any protection or benefit that is granted to employed members of MPD or the City of Mesa (COM).
- C. The ultimate decision of whether or not to dismiss a person from the VIPS program rests on the Community Relations Division Administrator. However, if any person is dismissed from the VIPS program for disciplinary reasons, the Community Relations Division Administrator will notify the Deputy Director of the Office of Strategic Initiatives.
- D. If a person is dismissed from the VIPS program for disciplinary reasons, and they wish to return to the VIPS program in the future, they will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and approved by the Chief of Police or designee before being allowed to re-apply for the program.

REFERENCES

- [DPM 1.4.1 Code of Conduct](#)

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- [DPM 1.9.45A1 Professional Staff & Sworn Non-Uniform Dress Code Manual](#)
- [DPM 2.9.35 Department Ride-Alongs](#)