

Volunteers

337.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes the guidelines for Talbot County Sheriff's Office volunteers to supplement and assist office personnel in their duties. Trained volunteers are members who can augment office personnel and help complete various tasks.

337.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Active status - A volunteer who provides 144 hours or more of service each year.

Police auxiliary, reserve volunteer program, or program - The various activities using volunteers to assist the Talbot County Sheriff's Office by performing administrative or technical tasks, or other services in support of the duties or mission of the Office (COMAR 12.04.07.02.B(6)).

Volunteer - An individual who performs a service for the Office without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation for services rendered. This may include unpaid chaplains, unpaid reserve or auxiliary deputies, interns, persons providing administrative support, and youth involved in a law enforcement Explorer Post, among others.

337.2 POLICY

The Talbot County Sheriff's Office shall ensure that volunteers are properly appointed, trained and supervised to carry out specified tasks and duties in order to create an efficient office and improve services to the community.

The program supporting the use of volunteers shall meet all the requirements and have been approved as required by law (COMAR 12.04.07.03; COMAR 12.04.07.04).

337.3 ELIGIBILITY

Requirements for participation as a volunteer for the Office may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Residency in the County of Talbot.
- (b) Being at least 18 years of age for all positions other than Explorer.
- (c) Being at least 14 years of age for Explorer.
- (d) Possession of a valid driver's license if the position requires vehicle operation.
- (e) Possession of liability insurance for any personally owned equipment, vehicles or horses utilized during volunteer work.
- (f) No conviction of a felony, any crime of a sexual nature or against children, any crime related to assault or violence, any crime related to dishonesty, or any crime related to impersonating a law enforcement officer.

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- (g) No conviction of a misdemeanor or gross misdemeanor crime within the past 10 years, excluding petty misdemeanor traffic offenses.
- (h) No mental illness or chemical dependency condition that may adversely affect the person's ability to serve in the position.
- (i) Physical requirements reasonably appropriate to the assignment.
- (j) A personal background history and character suitable for a person representing the Office, as validated by a background investigation.

The Sheriff may apply exceptions for eligibility based on organizational needs and the qualifications of the individual.

337.4 RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT

The Talbot County Sheriff's Office shall endeavor to recruit and appoint only those applicants who meet the high ethical, moral and professional standards set forth by this office.

[Talbot County Sheriff's Office Procedures Manual: 310.2 Procedures](#)

337.4.1 RECRUITMENT

Volunteers should be recruited on a continuous and ongoing basis consistent with office policy on equal opportunity, nondiscriminatory employment. A primary qualification for participation in the application process should be an interest in and an ability to assist the Office in serving the public.

Requests for volunteers should be submitted in writing by interested office members to the volunteer coordinator through the requester's immediate supervisor. A complete description of the volunteer's duties and a requested time frame should be included in the request. All office members should understand that the recruitment of volunteers is enhanced by creative and interesting assignments. The volunteer coordinator may withhold assignment of any volunteer until such time as the requestor is prepared to make effective use of volunteer resources.

337.4.2 SELECTION

Volunteer candidates shall successfully complete the following process prior to appointment as a volunteer:

- (a) Submit the appropriate written application.
- (b) Interview with the volunteer coordinator.
- (c) Successfully complete an appropriate-level background investigation.

337.4.3 APPOINTMENT

Service as a volunteer with the Office shall begin with an official notice of acceptance or appointment by the Sheriff or the authorized designee. Notice may only be given by an authorized representative of the Office, who will normally be the volunteer coordinator.

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No volunteer should begin any assignment until he/she has been officially accepted for that position and has completed all required screening and paperwork. At the time of final acceptance, each volunteer should complete all required enrollment paperwork and will receive a copy of the position description and agreement of service with the Office.

All volunteers shall receive a copy of the volunteer orientation materials and shall be required to sign a volunteer agreement.

Volunteers should be placed only in assignments or programs that are consistent with their knowledge, skills, abilities and the needs of the Office.

Volunteers serve at the discretion of the Sheriff.

337.5 IDENTIFICATION AND UNIFORMS

As representatives of the Office, volunteers are responsible for presenting a professional image to the community. Volunteers shall dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties. Uniforms and necessary safety equipment will be provided for each volunteer. Identification symbols worn by volunteers shall be different and distinct from those worn by deputies or members of this office through the inclusion of "Volunteer," "Reserve" or "Auxiliary" on the uniform.

Volunteers will be issued Talbot County Sheriff's Office identification cards must be carried at all times while on-duty. The identification cards will be the standard Talbot County Sheriff's Office identification cards, with the exception that "Volunteer," "Reserve" or "Auxiliary" will be indicated on the cards.

337.6 PERSONNEL WORKING AS VOLUNTEERS

Qualified regular office personnel, when authorized, may also serve as volunteers. However, this office shall not utilize the services of volunteers in such a way that it would violate employment laws, collective bargaining agreements or memorandums of understanding (e.g., a detention deputy participating as a volunteer for reduced or no pay). Therefore, the volunteer coordinator should consult with the Administrative Services prior to allowing regular office personnel to serve in a volunteer capacity (29 CFR 553.30).

337.7 VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

The Sheriff shall delegate certain responsibilities to a volunteer coordinator. The coordinator shall be appointed by and directly responsible to the Administrative Services Commander or the authorized designee.

The volunteer coordinator shall serve as the liaison between the volunteers and the Sheriff. The function of the coordinator is to provide a central coordinating point for effective volunteer management within the Office, and to direct and assist efforts to jointly provide more productive volunteer services. Under the general direction of the Sheriff or the authorized designee, volunteers shall report to the volunteer coordinator and/or Shift Sergeant.

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The volunteer coordinator may appoint a senior volunteer or other designee to assist in the coordination of volunteers and their activities.

The responsibilities of the coordinator or the authorized designee include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Recruiting, selecting and training qualified volunteers.
- (b) Conducting volunteer meetings.
- (c) Establishing and maintaining a volunteer callout roster.
- (d) Maintaining records for each volunteer.
- (e) Tracking and evaluating the contribution of volunteers.
- (f) Maintaining a record of volunteer schedules and work hours.
- (g) Completing and disseminating, as appropriate, all necessary paperwork and information.
- (h) Planning periodic recognition events.
- (i) Maintaining liaison with other volunteer-utilizing programs in the community and assisting in community-wide efforts to recognize and promote volunteering.
- (j) Maintaining volunteer orientation and training materials, and outlining expectations, policies and responsibilities for all volunteers.

An evaluation of the overall use of volunteers will be conducted on an annual basis by the coordinator.

337.8 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Volunteers assist office personnel as needed. Assignments of volunteers will usually be to augment the Operations Division. Volunteers may be assigned to other areas within the Office as needed. Volunteers should be placed only in assignments or programs that are consistent with their knowledge, skills, abilities and the needs of the Office.

The Chief Deputy will serve as the primary person responsible for the management, review, and oversight of the VIPS activities in the office.

Periodic reports that capture the work efforts and volunteer hours of VIPS will be initiated to document their accomplishments and to conduct assessments of their total work hours and the value that these work hours add to our police operations.

337.8.1 COMPLIANCE

Volunteers shall be required to adhere to all office policies and procedures. A copy of the policies and procedures will be made available to each volunteer upon appointment. The volunteer shall become thoroughly familiar with these policies.

Whenever a rule, regulation or guideline in this Policy Manual refers to regular office personnel, it shall also apply to a volunteer, unless by its nature it is inapplicable.

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Volunteers are required by this office to meet office-approved training requirements as applicable to their assignments.

337.8.2 VOLUNTEER MEETINGS

All volunteers are required to attend scheduled meetings. Any absences must be satisfactorily explained to the volunteer coordinator.

337.9 TASK-SPECIFIC TRAINING

Task-specific training is intended to provide the required instruction and practice for volunteers to properly and safely perform their assigned duties. A volunteer's training should correspond to his/her assignment as determined by the volunteer coordinator.

Volunteers will be provided with an orientation program to acquaint them with the policies of the Office and law enforcement procedures applicable to their assignments.

Volunteers should receive position-specific training to ensure they have adequate knowledge and skills to complete the required tasks, and should receive ongoing training as deemed appropriate by their supervisors or the volunteer coordinator.

Training should reinforce to volunteers that they shall not intentionally represent themselves as, or by omission infer that they are deputies or other full-time members of the Office. They shall always represent themselves as volunteers.

All volunteers shall comply with the rules of conduct and with all orders and directives, either oral or written, issued by the Office.

337.9.1 VOLUNTEER TRAINING MATERIALS

Each new volunteer will be issued volunteer training materials. The materials outline the subject matter and skills necessary to properly function as a volunteer with the Talbot County Sheriff's Office. The volunteer shall become knowledgeable of the subject matter and proficient with the skills as set forth in the training materials.

337.10 SUPERVISION

Each volunteer must have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for direct management of that volunteer. This supervisor will be responsible for day-to-day management and guidance of the work of the volunteer and should be available to the volunteer for consultation and assistance.

Functional supervision of volunteers is the responsibility of the supervisor in charge of the volunteer's assigned duties. The following are some considerations that supervisors should keep in mind while supervising volunteers:

- (a) Take the time to introduce volunteers to members on all levels.
- (b) Ensure volunteers have work space and necessary office supplies.
- (c) Make sure the work is challenging. Do not hesitate to give volunteers an assignment or task that will tap these valuable resources.

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A volunteer may be assigned as a supervisor of other volunteers, provided that the supervising volunteer is under the direct supervision of Talbot County Sheriff's Office personnel.

337.10.1 EVALUATIONS

While in training, volunteers should be continuously evaluated using standardized daily and weekly observation reports. A volunteer will be considered a trainee until he/she has satisfactorily completed training. Volunteers who have completed their training should be evaluated annually using performance dimensions applicable to the duties and authorities granted to that volunteer.

337.10.2 FITNESS FOR DUTY

No volunteer shall report for work or be at work when his/her judgment or physical condition has been impaired due to illness or injury, or by the use of alcohol or drugs, whether legal or illegal.

Volunteers shall report to their supervisors any change in status that may affect their ability to fulfill their duties. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- (a) Driver's license
- (b) Medical condition
- (c) Arrests
- (d) Criminal investigations
- (e) All law enforcement contacts

337.11 INFORMATION ACCESS

With appropriate security clearance, a volunteer may have access to or be in the vicinity of criminal histories, investigative files or information portals. Unless otherwise directed by a supervisor, the duties of the position or office policy, all such information shall be considered confidential. Only that information specifically identified and approved by authorized members shall be released. Confidential information shall be given only to persons who have a need and a right to know as determined by office policy and supervisory personnel.

A volunteer whose assignment requires the use of, or access to, confidential information will be required to have his/her fingerprints submitted to the Maryland Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) to obtain clearance. Volunteers working this type of assignment will receive training in data practices and be required to sign a nondisclosure agreement before being given an assignment with the Office. Subsequent unauthorized disclosure of any confidential information verbally, in writing or by any other means by the volunteer is grounds for immediate dismissal and possible criminal prosecution.

Volunteers shall not address public gatherings, appear on radio or television, prepare any article for publication, act as correspondents to newspapers or other periodicals, release or divulge any information concerning the activities of the Office, or maintain that they represent the Office in such matters without permission from the proper office personnel.

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337.11.1 RADIO AND MDT USAGE

Volunteers shall successfully complete state and federal database access training and radio procedures training prior to using the sheriff's radio or MDT and shall comply with all related provisions. The volunteer coordinator should ensure that radio and database access training is provided for volunteers whenever necessary.

337.12 EQUIPMENT

Any property or equipment issued by the Office shall be for official and authorized use only. Any property or equipment issued to a volunteer shall remain the property of the Office and shall be returned at the termination of service.

337.12.1 VEHICLE USE

Any volunteer who operates any vehicle while acting in the capacity of a volunteer shall receive training in safe driving and defensive driving. The specific training and course of study shall be determined by the volunteer coordinator.

Volunteers assigned to duties that require the use of a vehicle must first complete:

- (a) A driving safety briefing and office-approved driver safety course.
- (b) Verification that the volunteer possesses a valid driver's license.
- (c) Verification that the volunteer carries current vehicle insurance.

The coordinator should ensure that all volunteers receive safety briefing updates and license and insurance verification at least once a year.

When operating office vehicles, volunteers shall obey all rules of the road, including seat belt requirements.

Volunteers should not operate a marked law enforcement vehicle unless there is a prominently placed sign indicating that the vehicle is out of service.

Volunteers are not authorized to operate office vehicles under emergency conditions (lights and siren).

337.13 DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES/TERMINATION

If a volunteer has a personnel complaint made against him/her or becomes involved in an internal investigation, the matter shall be investigated in compliance with the Personnel Complaints Policy.

Volunteers are considered at-will and may be removed from service at the discretion of the Sheriff, with or without cause. Volunteers shall have no property interest in their continued appointments. However, if a volunteer is removed for alleged misconduct, the volunteer will be afforded an opportunity solely to clear his/her name through a liberty interest hearing, which shall be limited to a single appearance before the Sheriff or the authorized designee.

Volunteers may resign from volunteer service with the Office at any time. It is requested that volunteers who intend to resign provide advance notice and a reason for their decision.

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337.13.1 EXIT INTERVIEWS

The volunteer coordinator should conduct exit interviews, where possible. These interviews should ascertain why the volunteer is leaving the position and should solicit the volunteer's suggestions on improving the position. When appropriate, an exit interview should also include a discussion on the possibility of involvement in some other capacity with the Office.

337.14 REPORTING

The volunteer coordinator shall:

- (a) Maintain annual records on each volunteer, including (COMAR 12.04.07.07.A):
 1. Full name.
 2. Social Security number.
 3. The total itemized hours of service worked each month.
 4. Other information the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC) or the State Comptroller may require.
- (b) Provide to each active status volunteer, no later than February 15 of each year, a written report in the format specified by MPTSC, the volunteer's specific information, including:
 1. The identity of the volunteer
 2. Certification signed by an authorized office member stating that the volunteer is qualified to apply for the subtraction modification under Md. Code TG § 10-208(l)(2) on the basis that the individual has, between January 1 and December 31 of the preceding year:
 - (a) Participated in a MPTSC-approved program.
 - (b) Met the requirements of Md. Code TG § 10-208(l)(2) to be considered a qualifying police auxiliary or reserve volunteer.
 - (c) Met the minimum requirements for active status.
- (c) Submit an annual report to MPTSC and the State Comptroller by October 1, in the format specified, that includes the annual records for each volunteer collected under COMAR 12.04.07.07 from January 1 through December 31 of the preceding year that either (COMAR 12.04.07.07.C):
 - (a) Qualified to apply for the subtraction modification established under Md. Code TG § 10-208(l).
 - (b) Otherwise met minimum requirements for active status.
- (d) Report any change to the information submitted as part of the original application for MPTSC approval or the office program supporting volunteers to the Deputy MPTSC Director within 30 days of the effective date (COMAR 12.04.07.06.B).