



Start a COPP Group

Starting a Citizens on Patrol Program in your community

Community members play a crucial role in COPP. The program would not exist without their support and dedication.

Any individuals or groups who identify a safety concern in their community can consider establishing a local COPP group.

How to start and run a COPP group

Contact your local law enforcement office for direction and support.

After a community meeting and/or reading all the information, if the group decides to organize the program, they will need to:

- Receive approval from their local law enforcement agency to start the group
- Establish an executive
 - volunteers are needed to coordinate this program
 - the police liaison officer provides support, versus coordinating the program
- Establish policies and procedures
 - identify the patrol area
 - recruit additional volunteers
 - have volunteers complete an application form
 - volunteers must apply for a criminal record search through their local police agency.
 - the cleared criminal record search must be supplied to the group coordinator by the applicant
 - the coordinator advises the applicant if they have been accepted

- Arrange and participate in volunteer training
 - Obtain equipment (volunteer and group)
 - arrange for a central location with 24-hour access for storage of the group equipment, if possible. Examples - Police station, hospital, health centre, gas station/ convenience store
- Schedule volunteers
 - scheduling system needs to be discussed and arranged
- Patrol
 - go out and do your stuff!
 - submit monthly patrol hours and volunteer hours.

Other

- set up monthly/regular meetings with your group

Establish an Executive Committee

The following are suggested positions and duties that the groups may consider:
(Note: one person can hold more than one position, if required)

Police Liaison Officer

- Assist in the organization of the program along with the group coordinator;
- Liaise with other community groups, police agencies.
- Assist in the recruitment of volunteers;
- May arrange for criminal record searches for volunteers where appropriate;
- Responsible for all matters regarding the Law; and
- Review requests and suggestions received by group members, as well as the general public.

Program Coordinator

- Participate in recruitment and selection of volunteers;
- Assist in the overall organization of the program;
- Provide leadership and guidance to the program members;
- Liaise with the Police Liaison Officer and other members;
- Liaise with other community groups.
- Chair meetings;
- Maintain a list of all current members.
- Arrange member training, as per program policy and procedures;

- Respond to any media or public relations inquiries;
- Pass on information provided by the Police Liaison Officer or other members regarding areas for special consideration when patrolling;
- Maintain equipment inventory and order as necessary;
- Initiate/organize/implement group fundraising activities;
- Provide feedback and volunteer recognition to members

Secretary-Treasurer

Secretary Functions

- Co-ordinate and maintain schedules, phone lists, mailing lists;
- Arrange meetings and inform members of dates, times and locations;
- Attend all Executive and Membership meetings;
- Assist in agenda preparation and distribution;
- Prepare and distribute all correspondence as required;
- Take notes at meetings, prepare minutes, circulate minutes and other notices to members;
- Maintain the COPP volunteer membership list;
- Maintain filing system including:
 - Executive Committee membership list and duties
 - Volunteer membership list
 - Program Forms
 - General information
 - News clippings from local media
 - Public relations documents

Treasurer Functions

- Responsible for the group's financial transactions;
- Maintain a record of all money deposited into the account and payments made from the account including any invoices and vouchers;
- Receive and check bank statements to ensure the balance on the statement corresponds with the balance on the running record; and
- Prepare and submit regular financial reports to the Executive.

Scheduling Coordinator

- Responsible for scheduling volunteers;
- Ensure all volunteers are capable of and available to complete their shifts;
- Maintain scheduling records;

- Responsible for the coordination, distribution and collection of shift reports;
- Submit monthly reports to Executive, including Police Liaison Officer.

Volunteer Coordinator

- Recruit volunteers through various means such as radio, television, newspaper, posters, presentations, word of mouth and public service announcements;
- Review applications with the Coordinator and Police Liaison Officer;
- Maintain list of all trained volunteers and provide copies to the Executive members;
- Provide recognition to volunteers, along with other Executive members.

Executive Policy and Procedure

The following are suggestions on how to organize your COPP group:

General

- Executive Committee meetings should take place once a month (example: the third Thursday of each month)
- Membership meetings are held every three months (example: the second Thursday every third month)
- The quorum for a general membership and Executive Committee meetings should be 25% of the general membership including Executive Committee members.
- Each Executive Committee member provides a monthly activity report to the Executive Committee.
- For assistance in running a meeting, refer to Roberts Rules of Order.

Coordinator

- The Program Coordinator should sign official correspondence on behalf of the group.
- All media questions are to be referred to the Program Coordinator, the Police Liaison Officer.
- Day-to-day decisions on important aspects of the running of the program will be made by the Program Coordinator, in consultation with the Assistant Program Coordinator, Secretary-Treasurer and Police Liaison, and will be reported to the Executive Committee at subsequent meetings.

Treasurer

- All cheques must be signed by two of the three authorized bank signatories. No one can sign a cheque drawn in his/her own favour.
- All payments must be made by cheque. No cash payments of any kind are to be made.
- Records must be kept in a secure location.

Volunteer Recruitment Process

General steps

Each group should tailor its process to what would work best for the group. Not all steps may be required:

- Interested community members contact their local COPP representative, in response to recruitment activities, or after hearing about the program.
- The community members are provided with information about COPP, including program goals, policies and procedures, volunteer's role and how to join.
- If they are interested in joining, they are given a volunteer application form, which they complete and return to the appropriate COPP representative.
- Once their application is received, it is reviewed and either approved or declined, based on requirements.
- If they are approved, the member must apply for a criminal record search through their local law enforcement agency. (The fee for this is waived for COPP applicants).
- Once the search is complete, the results must be provided to the program coordinator.
- The applicant is advised if they have been approved or declined. If approved, the new member is welcomed to COPP and arrangements are made to train them and then complete the necessary paperwork to finalize their membership.

Training will be either:

- Formal local training.

Paperwork includes:

- Volunteer Letter of Agreement

Important - Approved members are required to adhere to all local and provincial standards and procedures. Failure to meet these responsibilities may result in a member's removal from the program.

Shift Procedures

Every COPP group should outline, in writing, the procedures for starting and ending a shift, so all members follow the same procedures to maintain consistency.

Qualifications:

- Minimum 18 years of age
- In good health
- Must pass Police background check
- Good interpersonal skills and communications skills
- Possess positive attitude and ability to work in a team environment
- Ability to work responsibly with minimal supervision
- Ability to work in a professional manner
- Willing to participate in training sessions

Tasks and Responsibilities:

- Be the "Eyes and Ears" of the community
- Patrol the community by vehicle
- Identify suspicious or concerning behaviour and report to Police Liaison Officer
- Maintain awareness of community crime deterrence activities and initiatives
- Assist in increasing awareness and providing crime prevention information to local citizens, businesses, and community organizations
- Keep and maintain proper records
- Follow COP policies and procedures
- Maintain a positive and respectful presence in the community
- Treat all people with courtesy and respect
- Maintain confidentiality at all times