



# **A Guide for Local Officials**

April 4, 2002



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Americans have acted with courage, compassion, and unity. To capture this spirit and to foster an American culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility, President George W. Bush has called upon all Americans to dedicate at least two years of their lives—the equivalent of 4,000 hours—in service to others. He launched the USA Freedom Corps initiative to inspire and enable all Americans to find ways to serve their community, their country, or the world.

Citizen Corps is the component of USA Freedom Corps that creates opportunities for individuals to volunteer to help their communities prepare for and respond to emergencies by bringing together local leaders, citizen volunteers and the network of first responder organizations, such as fire departments, police departments and emergency medical personnel. The goal is to have all citizens participate in making their communities safer, stronger, and better prepared for preventing and handling threats of terrorism, crime, and disasters of all kinds.

### **Citizen Corps Leadership**

The Citizen Corps effort will be coordinated at the local level by Citizen Corps Councils, or a similar coordinating body, which will bring together leaders from the relevant sectors of your community. The purpose of the council is to have all decision makers at the table to manage existing volunteer resources, to leverage mutually supportive endeavors among the represented groups, and to direct the overall local plans to implement Citizen Corps in the community.

At the state level, the governor will appoint a state coordinator for Citizen Corps to facilitate this locally driven initiative. The state coordinator will work closely with the local governments, other state organizations, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and other federal agencies to implement a successful Citizen Corps program for the state.

Key state responsibilities include: identifying needs and developing a statewide strategy for increasing the first responder and volunteer collaboration; developing statewide marketing strategies; matching Citizen Corps training needs with other major state training initiatives; reporting statewide accomplishments; and ensuring that Citizen Corps communities receive considerations for relevant grant funding administered by the state.

President Bush has requested more than \$230 million from Congress in Fiscal Year 2003 to support and expand Citizen Corps initiatives. This amount includes funds to support the five national Citizen Corps programs, including nationwide CERT training, and grants to communities through the State to support local activities that foster preparedness programs and partnerships between the first responder organizations and the volunteers. If Congress approves this budget, these funds would be available in October 2002.



## **Citizen Corps Programs**

Citizen Corps programs build on the successful efforts to prevent crime and respond to emergencies that are in place in many communities around the country. Programs that started through local innovation are the foundation for Citizen Corps and this national approach to citizen participation in community safety.

Currently three federal agencies, FEMA, DOJ, and HHS, administer five programs that are being promoted at the national level as part of Citizen Corps. Although each of these programs is in different stages of development, they will all be ready for nationwide implementation by August 2002. FEMA coordinates the overall effort of helping communities establish local Citizen Corps programs.

The five national Citizen Corps programs are:

- The **Neighborhood Watch Program**, funded by the Department of Justice (DOJ), has been expanded to incorporate terrorism prevention and education into its existing crime prevention mission. The goal is to double the number of groups participating in Neighborhood Watch by 2004. Additional information is available at the National Sheriffs Association website at [www.usaonwatch.org](http://www.usaonwatch.org).
- FEMA's **Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)** program provides training in emergency preparedness and in basic response techniques to local trainers who in turn train citizens, enabling them to take a more active role in personal and public safety. The goal is to triple the number of citizens who are CERT trained, increasing the number nationwide to 600,000 by 2004. Additional information on CERT is available at [www.training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/cert/](http://www.training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/cert/).
- **Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS)** is a program administered by DOJ. The program, which will be launched nationwide in spring 2002, provides training for volunteers to perform administrative and non-intervention policing activities to free up law enforcement professionals for frontline duty.
- HHS is developing guidance for a community-based **Medical Reserve Corps** that will be launched in summer 2002. Through this program, currently practicing and retired volunteers trained in medicine will be able to assist during large-scale emergencies and will augment the emergency medical response community. Medical Reserve Corps volunteers can also play a productive role in meeting pressing but non-emergency public health needs of the community throughout the year.
- **Terrorism Information and Prevention System (Operation TIPS)**, administered by DOJ, is scheduled to be launched in late summer 2002 as a pilot program in 10 cities before spreading across the country. This program will enlist the help of millions of American workers who, in the daily course of their work, are in a unique position to serve as extra eyes and ears for law enforcement. Operation TIPS will provide training for these workers from selected industries in how to look out for suspicious and potentially terrorist-related activity and then in how to report that information through a toll free number.



There are also many other opportunities for participating in Citizen Corps. There is a vast array of educational and volunteer activities already underway across the country that focus on making communities safer, stronger, and better prepared. These activities are also part of Citizen Corps.

### **Local Government Implementation**

Citizen Corps is designed to be tailored to each community and will be managed at the local level by Citizen Corps Councils, or a similar entity, comprised of leaders from: emergency management and the first responder community; volunteer, community service, faith- and community-based organizations; educational institutions; medical facilities; business and industry; and the community's neighborhood networks.

Each community that is implementing Citizen Corps should consider creating a Citizen Corps Council. This guide will help your community join the many others across the country that have already started Citizen Corps Councils in order to be prepared to fully implement the Citizen Corps programs in their communities.

The primary objectives of the councils are to:

- Match the needs of first responders with the skills and abilities of volunteers to make their families, their homes, and their communities safer from the threats of terrorism, crime, and disasters.
- Educate the public on safety, help citizens take an active role in protecting themselves from harm, and teach citizens what to do in the event of a crisis.
- Spearhead efforts to offer citizens new and existing volunteer opportunities, educational information, and training courses to address crime, terrorism, and natural disaster risks.
- Promote all Citizen Corps programs and activities across the community.
- Capture innovative practices and report accomplishments that can be replicated in other communities nationally.
- Survey the community to assess increased awareness and Citizen Corps participation.

Creating a new organization to start Citizen Corps is not required. If your community already has a strong team that brings together all sectors of your community, including first responders and volunteer groups, you may want to ask this group to take on the responsibility of promoting Citizen Corps and to acknowledge this group as affiliated with Citizen Corps. You are strongly encouraged to leverage existing resources and build on current successful programs whenever possible.



### **Benefits to the Community**

Major disasters in a community can overload the capability of first responders, especially during the first 12 to 72 hours of the response. Having citizens who are better prepared to take care of themselves and others during times of crisis will allow first responders to focus their efforts on the most critical, life-threatening situations.

In addition, there are many tasks that a well-trained and organized group of volunteers could perform on an ongoing basis that would free up sworn officers, licensed health professionals, and professional firefighters so that they could focus more on immediate emergency response needs and less on the routine or administrative aspects of their responsibilities. Successful models of such activity exist throughout the country and are primed to be taken nationwide.

Citizen Corps will help citizens take a more active role in crime prevention, risk reduction, and emergency preparedness. It will bring together all sectors of the community involved in first responder issues and will enable them to establish ongoing working relationships and to work together in times of crisis. As a component of President Bush's call to service, Citizen Corps will also help build a community's sense of pride and cohesion.