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Paid Security Director vs. Volunteer Coordinator

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This is ONE guy's perspective that must be weighed against law, insurance, culture, etc.

Note: This is a leadership structure question, not a team size question. A large volunteer team with no paid leadership will plateau. A paid director with no volunteers will be overwhelmed. Most churches need to think about both roles over time.

At some point, a growing church faces a choice about who owns security. A volunteer coordinator can sustain a small, committed team — but they have limits on time, authority, and accountability. A paid security director changes the equation: it signals organizational commitment, creates clear ownership, and enables a professional security culture to develop. The decision about when to make that investment is one of the most important security decisions a growing church will make.

For the Pastors and Church Administrators that might be reading this, Church Security, Church Safety, and Medical Response responsibilities have to be managed 24x7x365. It has never been (just) a “service time” thing. My self-assessment (<https://askmccconnell.com/checklists/>) can quickly reveal where these gaps might be.

	Volunteer Security Coordinator	Part-Time Paid Security Role	Full-Time Paid Security Director
Pros	<p>Low cost — no salary line in the budget.</p> <p>Draws from within the congregation — high relational knowledge. Appropriate for smaller congregations with manageable security complexity.</p> <p>Can evolve into a paid role as the church grows.</p>	<p>Formalizes ownership without full salary commitment.</p> <p>Allows the church to build a security culture with consistent leadership.</p> <p>Can be filled by a retired law enforcement or military professional supplementing income.</p> <p>A bridge step between volunteer-only and full-time professional leadership.</p> <p>Seen onsite more often and consistently which helps leadership and lay leaders.</p>	<p>Clear, dedicated ownership — security is this person's primary responsibility.</p> <p>Safety and Medical can be integrated and governed by this role.</p> <p>Professional credibility — enables relationships with law enforcement, insurers, and city officials.</p> <p>Can build and sustain a comprehensive security program: training, policy, planning, exercises.</p>

			<p>Appropriate for large congregations, multi-campus operations, or elevated threat environments.</p>
Cons	<p>Limited time and bandwidth — this person has a job and a life outside of church security.</p> <p>They would never have the capacity to cover the 24x7x365 security needs of the church. So other staff have to cover the gaps in security, safety and medical response.</p> <p>They tend to be security or safety or medical trained, rarely all three</p> <p>Limited authority — a volunteer coordinator may not be able to enforce standards or remove team members.</p> <p>Accountability is informal — performance is hard to manage without a clear role definition.</p> <p>Succession is unpredictable — if they leave, the program leaves with them.</p> <p>You can't "escape" the incident response of "well that was one of our volunteers"</p>	<p>Part-time hours limit what the role can accomplish.</p> <p>They would never have the capacity to cover the 24x7x365 security needs of the church. So other staff have to cover the gaps in security, safety and medical response.</p> <p>Can create ambiguity about authority — is this a staff position or a volunteer with a stipend?</p> <p>Harder to recruit quality candidates for a part-time role in a specialized field.</p>	<p>Significant budget commitment — salary, benefits, and equipment.</p> <p>Requires the church to understand what a security professional should do — and hold them to it.</p> <p>If the role is not scoped and resourced correctly, a good hire will leave quickly.</p>
Also Consider	<p>Does your volunteer coordinator have the authority they need to do the job? If not, fix that first.</p>	<p>What is the expected weekly time commitment, and is it realistic for a part-time arrangement?</p>	<p>Before hiring, define what success looks like in the first 90 days and the first year.</p>

	<p>Build a written role description before you recruit anyone — volunteer or paid.</p> <p>Succession plan: what happens to the program if this person leaves tomorrow?</p> <p>Who on staff will cover the other areas and times of security, safety, and medical response that person doesn't have the time or capacity or authority to cover.</p>	<p>Consider a retired law enforcement or military professional — they bring training and credibility.</p> <p>Define the reporting structure: does this role report to the senior pastor, executive pastor, or facilities director? It matters.</p>	<p>Involve your insurance carrier and legal team in the conversation — a professional security director may reduce your premium.</p> <p>Connect the director with local law enforcement leadership early — that relationship has long-term value.</p>
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