



## Roanoke County's Policy for the Installation of

# "WATCH FOR CHILDREN" Signs

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- ◆ The 1997 Virginia General Assembly enacted an amendment to the 1950 Code of Virginia, adding Section 33.1-210.2 regarding the installation and maintenance of "Watch for Children" signs. The intent of these signs is to alert motorists that children may be at play nearby.
- ◆ In accordance with this law, which became effective July 1, 1997, counties may request that the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) install and maintain these signs.
- ◆ VDOT's process for handling such sign installation requests includes a required resolution from the local governing body identifying the source of funding for the cost of sign installation.
- ◆ Subsequently, Roanoke County has developed the following policies and procedures to comply with the VDOT guidelines, to minimize administrative burdens, and to assure uniform and consistent policies for the installation of these signs (see below).
- ◆ It must be noted that "Watch for Children" or "Slow, Children at Play" signs are not recognized by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as applicable warning signs and are not included in the recent Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD 2000). The signs can send an ambiguous message or give parents and children a false sense of security. Realistically, a case could be made to install the signs on every residential street in the County, but motorists would begin to ignore and disrespect the proliferation of signs. Therefore, VDOT staff will have the final say on the design and placement of these signs in Roanoke County. Motorists' behavior and speed reduction can not be expected to improve via sign installation. Rather, the roadway characteristics and environment determine motorists' behavior and vehicle speeds. Care must be taken by all involved to ensure the proper installation of this type of sign.



**What streets qualify for “Watch for Children” signs?**

- Street must be classified as a minor collector or local road. No signs of said type will be installed on a major collector or arterial highway. (check with VDOT or County staff to determine the functional classification of your road) Typically, these signs will be installed at transitions from major collectors to minor collectors and from minor collectors to local streets;
- Must have a minimum traffic count of 200 vehicles per day or serve twenty lots. The minimum distance between signs is 1,000 feet. Therefore, relatively short streets (i.e., dead ends) will not be considered. In general, a residential street with through traffic would be a high priority and a sign would be installed at the major points of ingress and egress;
- Other streets to be considered regardless of traffic counts would be streets adjacent to a public park, parallel streets in the vicinity of schools, and any other public facility where children frequent;
- Generally, these signs shall be installed only on secondary routes within residential areas. Any requests to install such signs on primary routes shall be forwarded to the State Traffic Engineer for review.

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**What steps do I follow?**

- To initiate the sign installation process, submit a petition that is signed by at least 75% of the property owners along the street (must include signature of owner of property that is adjacent to proposed sign location). For long streets, signatures shall be required within 1,000 feet of the location of request;
- The property owners must agree to pay 100% of the costs at the time of installation. The cost estimate to purchase and install the sign is approximately \$150 total. This figure may be adjusted periodically due to increased costs and inflation;
- County staff will present the submitted requests and resolution to the Board of Supervisors semi-annually, in December and July. The Community Development Department must receive all submittals at least thirty days in advance of these scheduled Board of Supervisors’ meetings;
- Upon receipt of the County’s resolution, VDOT’s Resident Engineer and/or the District Traffic Engineer will make the final determination if a “Watch for Children” sign is to be installed at the requested location. A written response shall be provided to the governing body of the County, usually within thirty days, granting or denying the request;

- All signs installed by VDOT under this policy shall be designed in accordance with their standards (Standards and specifications can be seen upon request at either Roanoke County or VDOT offices. An example of the sign in question can be seen at the top of this page.).

This information is intended to summarize, in the broadest possible terms, the eligibility factors and considerations made regarding the installation of signs to alert motorists that children may be at play nearby. There may be other issues not addressed in this brochure that may also apply.

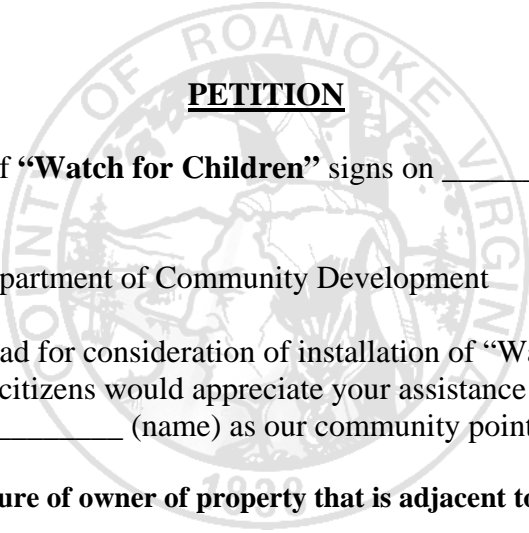
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Reference:

- Code of Virginia §33.1-210.2.

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For additional information, please contact:  
County of Roanoke  
Department of Community Development  
5204 Bernard Drive  
P.O. Box 29800  
Roanoke, Virginia 24018-0798  
(540) 772-2080  
email: [engineering@roanokecountyva.gov](mailto:engineering@roanokecountyva.gov)



**PETITION**

To request the installation of “**Watch for Children**” signs on \_\_\_\_\_

Attn: Roanoke County Department of Community Development

Please review the subject road for consideration of installation of “Watch for Children” signs. The undersigned taxpaying citizens would appreciate your assistance in this matter. We have designated \_\_\_\_\_ (name) as our community point of contact.

**\*\*Note: must include signature of owner of property that is adjacent to proposed sign location.**

**NAME**

**ADDRESS**

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