

# POLICY

SOMERSET COUNTY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION

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## 1. PURPOSE

The School Resource Officer Program (SRO) is a service of local law enforcement agencies in Somerset County operating at the will and capacity of the agency in accordance with Board approved policy, procedures, and protocol. The goal of the SRO program and each SCPS principal is making schools safe and conducive to learning.

## 2. PROCEDURE

A. Rationale: The rationale for the establishment of a SRO program in Somerset County Public Schools is drawn from the work of the National School Safety Center. Somerset County Public Schools supports the SRO program because:

- 1) School Safety equals public safety.
- 2) The school is a part of the large community.
- 3) The school community presents an opportunity for positive interaction between youth and officers of the law.
- 4) School crises demand a trained law enforcement response.
- 5) Public safety is enhanced by student success.

### B. The School Resource Officer Program Components

The Somerset County Public Schools Board of Education endorses the School Resource Officer Program presented by the U.S. Department of Justice and National School Safety Center as the permanent placement of a certified law enforcement officer in one or more schools as a:

- Law enforcement officer,
- Law related counselor, and
- Law related educator/teacher

Procedures and county-wide protocol establish expectations and responsibilities for all stakeholders, articulate school environment needs, and describe the SRO program evaluation requirements.

C. Personnel Assignment

The selection of officers for a school site is the responsibility of the local law enforcement agency. Assignments or dismissals are the prerogative of the local law enforcement agency. The agency chief and the building principal will maintain on-going complimentary and critical dialogue regarding the performance of SRO's.

3. **FUNCTIONS OF A SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER**

A. SRO AS LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

School resource officers are sworn law enforcement officers whose central mission is to keep order on campus with the legal authority to arrest, if necessary. When incidents of conduct violation occur, school administrators/staff are expected to intervene to de-escalate/mediate the incident. The SRO may offer advice as requested. When staff intervention fails to resolve the incident and/or the incident escalates to a point of endangering the safety of others, or disrupting the school environment, the SRO may be called upon to intervene as a law enforcement officer. In all criminal violations the SRO will take the lead.

The SRO assumes primary responsibility for handling all calls for service from the school and coordinates the response of other police resources to the school. The SRO will immediately be expected to serve as a liaison between the school and the police and to provide information to students and school personnel about law enforcement matters. The SRO should be advised of all situations where other units within the law enforcement agency have provided services to the school. The SRO should provide information to the appropriate investigative units of crimes or leads that come to the attention of the SRO. Conversely, the SRO should be kept advised of all investigations that involve students from his/her assigned school.

B. SRO AS A POSTIVE ROLE MODEL

The SRO can best serve as a positive role model by:

- Setting limits – being clear about what is acceptable and what is not; letting them know the consequences of unacceptable behavior and the rewards of acceptable behavior.
- Setting an example – demonstrating how to handle stress, resolve conflicts, celebrate successes, and be a friend.
- Being honest – providing accurate information about risks and demonstrating how to express thoughts and feelings in a mature, straightforward manner.
- Being consistent – with students, staff, and parents in applying rules and regulations.

- Encouraging responsibility – helping youth think through options and consequences of decisions, set personal goals, and develop plans to make desired changes.
- Showing respect – treating students with respect; expressing high expectations for them.

It is essential for a SRO to be a positive role model at all times because students learn from every observation of or interaction with the SRO.

#### C. SRO AS AN EDUCATOR

##### **LAW-RELATED EDUCATION**

Law-Related Education (LRE) is an educational program for the development of citizenship in a constitutional democracy. It is designed to teach students the fundamental principles and skills needed to become responsible participants in a democracy. Programs are characterized by:

- relevant, interesting course materials;
- the extensive use of volunteers from the justice system;
- field experiences (community service projects, court tours, police ride-alongs, internships, etc.);
- participatory classroom teaching methods; and
- co-curricular activities (mock trials and other public performances).

As law-related educators, SROs draw on their expertise about the law and their law enforcement experiences. They provide an additional resource that can be drawn upon to teach young people about the law. Because they are representatives of the law, SROs are in a particularly effective position to communicate to students the consequences of unacceptable behavior.

#### D. SRO AS COMMUNITY LIASON/PROBLEM SOLVER

##### **ESTABLISHING LINKS**

The SRO will be expected to serve as a liaison between the school and the law enforcement agency and to provide information to students and school personnel about law enforcement matters. Additionally, the problem solving inherent in community policing requires the SRO to become knowledgeable about and use various school and community resources. In the school setting, problem solving to address identified concerns may involve coordinated efforts by administrators, teachers, students, parents, in-school student support services, and community-based resources.

4. **EXPECTED RESULTS**

A. Students

As a result of the School Resource Officer Program, students will:

- 1) Know law enforcement personnel and their objectives.
- 2) Know more about the law and the criminal justice system.
- 3) Decrease their involvement in disruptive or violent behaviors.
- 4) Improve their attitudes in the area of drug resistance, alcohol avoidance, and civic responsibilities.
- 5) Access law enforcement personnel for problem solving.
- 6) Perceive law enforcement personnel as positive role models.

B. School Personnel

As a result of the School Resource Officer Program, school personnel will:

- 1) Know law enforcement personnel and their objectives.
- 2) Access law enforcement personnel for problem solving in law enforcement problems.
- 3) Establish a collaborative working relationship with law enforcement personnel.

C. The Community

As a result of the School Resource Officer Program, the community will:

- 1) Know law enforcement personnel assigned to each school and their objectives.
- 2) Increases their confidence in the safety and security of the school setting.

5. **PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOL**

All developed procedures and protocol for the School Resource Officer Program are in accordance with COMAR regulations.