

## Abstract

Safe schools are the concern of every community. If a school is safe, and if it feels safe, children are better able to learn. But how do we make this happen? First, we need to understand the problem: What are the threats to school safety? These include crime-related behaviors that find their way to school each day, such as: alcohol and other drug use; aggressive and violent behavior; self-destructive behavior; and the impact of child abuse.

But we also need to understand the challenges that exist when it comes to law enforcement working in partnership with schools. Because law enforcement and school personnel differ in so many ways, they face challenges in the areas of communications, perception, roles, responsibilities, and data sharing.

After defining the challenges, we can build on the consensus that already exists—that safe schools are everyone's business. We can use evidence-based strategies to increase the likelihood of success. We can use a variety of strategies to overcome the challenges to law enforcement working effectively in schools by: identifying leadership that fosters mutual trust, defining complementary partner roles and responsibilities, choosing officers best suited for proactive work, and finding effective ways law enforcement and school personnel to work together.

*The featured information conveys the experience of the Federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative, which is supported by a joint effort of the U.S. Departments of Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services.*

## Understanding the Problem

### What Are the Crime-Related Behaviors That Enter Schools?

- Truancy
- Weapons carrying
- Loitering
- Alcohol, tobacco, and drug use
- Vandalism
- Self-destructive behavior
- Graffiti
- Child abuse
- Bullying
- Aggressive, violent behavior
- Gangs

### What Are the Challenges to Law Enforcement/School Partnerships?

- Law enforcement and schools are different. They:
  - Have different job responsibilities
  - Have different professional cultures
  - Have different perceptions of each other
  - Have different expectations
  - Have different rules (e.g., enforcing penal vs. school code)
- Communication
- Community perception of law enforcement
- Clarification—for whom the SRO works
- Jurisdiction issues
- Overlap in services
- Data sharing about young people

## The School Resource Officer (SRO) Triad Model

- Teacher
- Counselor
- Law enforcer

## Working Toward a Solution

### Building on the Consensus: Safe Schools Are Everyone's Business

- Everyone wants safe schools with positive climates.
- We need to do more than suppression of crime.
- Law enforcement is a key player.
- We need to figure out how law enforcement and schools can work together effectively.

### Building on Evidence-Based Strategies

- Community efforts that combine proven programs can be more effective.
- Efforts with broad support are more effective.
- Programs are sustained when there is high fidelity, board functioning, and knowledge of prevention.

## Steps Law Enforcement Can Take To Overcome Challenges of Safe Schools Partnership

### Provide Leadership By:

- Defining who participates in the safe schools process
- Appreciating different levels and styles of leadership
- Naming the shared vision among partners
- Using MOUs to define procedures and responsibilities
- Serving as experts in enforcement topics (such as legal issues, drugs of abuse, and crisis response)
- Developing mutual respect and trust

### Hire/Train/Evaluate the Right Officer By:

- Involving school administrators in the interview process
- Choosing the officer who has qualities important in schools
- Providing training opportunities to enhance skills
- Evaluating the law enforcement officers on their full duties, including prevention, intervention, and enforcement activities

### Carry Out Partnership Activities By:

- Adopting the various roles of the School Resource Officer Triad Model
- Engaging in proactive activities such as: meetings, consultations, mediation, referrals, followup, in-service and other presentations, teaching, and patrols
- Educating students/staff about law-related topics
- Being a counselor/tutor/mentor
- Sharing information with schools and across law enforcement jurisdictions
- Listening to observations about warning signs
- Making referrals to mental health partners
- Communicating about students re-entering school from juvenile programs
- Knowing/sharing State laws on sharing information about adjudicated youth
- Identifying where the officer's roles intersect with mental health and school staff
- Deterring problems through presence
- Assisting in background checks on staff and volunteers
- Sharing observations about the communities from which the students come
- Conducting joint training with other partners
- Enforcing the law, when necessary

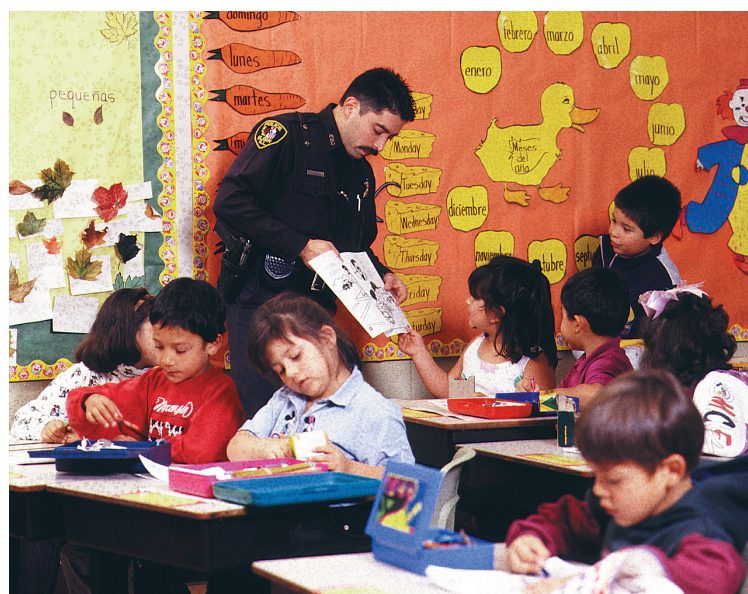


Photo courtesy of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, *Guide To Developing, Maintaining, and Succeeding With Your School Resource Officer Program*



## Developing Safe Schools Partnerships: Spotlight on Law Enforcement

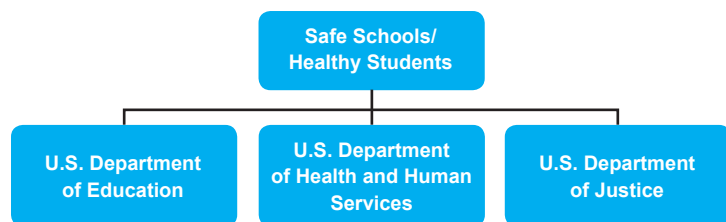
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### The Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative

- The Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative provides schools and communities with Federal funding to implement an integrated, comprehensive community-wide plan of activities, programs, and services that focus on promoting healthy childhood development and preventing violence and substance abuse.
- The U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice have collaborated in funding the initiative since 1999 (249 grants).

#### The Federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative



#### Elements of Safe Schools/Healthy Students

1. Safe school environments and violence prevention activities
2. Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention activities
3. Student behavioral, social, and emotional supports
4. Mental health services
5. Early childhood social and emotional learning programs

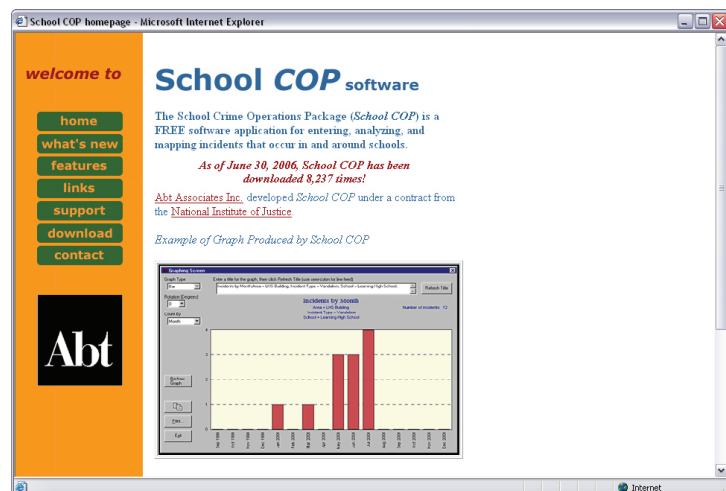
### What Law Enforcement Can Do in Schools

#### Define Law Enforcement Roles in Schools

- School resource officer (SRO) triad model: teacher, counselor, law enforcer
- Law-related education
- Communications/data sharing/knowing laws
- Problem solver/diffuser/resource liaison
- Public safety/security crime expert

#### School COP Database

[www.schoolcopsoftware.com](http://www.schoolcopsoftware.com)



#### Maintain SRO ProActive Log

(document positive activities and contacts)

- Meetings
- Consultations
- Mediation
- Followup
- Presentations
- Teaching
- Patrol

#### SRO ProActive Log

CATEGORY	Week 1					Week 2					Week 3				
	Elementary	Jr. High	Sr. High	Parents	Staff	Elementary	Jr. High	Sr. High	Parents	Staff	Elementary	Jr. High	Sr. High	Parents	Staff
No School															
MEETING WITH: STAFF															
SRO															
STAT															
Neighborhood															
Parent/Teacher Conferences															
Back to school night															
CONSULTATION: With Parent and Student															
With Teacher and Student															
With Parent/Teacher/Student															
With Student(s)															
MEDIATION :Student to Student															
Student to Staff															
Student/Parent/Staff															
Parent/Staff															
Busdriver/Parent															
Busdriver/Parent/Student															
Interrogate/Interview															
FOLLOW-UPS: Child Abuse															
Bike Theft															

Source: Fort Collins, CO Safe Schools/Healthy Students site, Project LINK (2000–2004)

### The Connections

#### The Safety-Learning Connection

*“Without safe schools, teachers cannot teach and students cannot learn. A safe school is foundational to the success of the academic mission.”*

— Ronald D. Stephens,  
Director of the National School Safety Center

“If our students feel safe in schools, they will learn better.”

— School police officer,  
SS/HS site, Springfield, MO

#### The Law Enforcement-School Connection

What does law enforcement do in schools?

- Handle dangerous or illegal behavior
- Plan and manage school crises
- Provide school security
- Develop safety policies
- Provide drug, crime, and violence prevention programs
- Engage in partnership activities
- Provide homeland security

### How Can We Prepare for Effective Law Enforcement-School Relations?

#### How Do School Staff Prepare for Law Enforcement To Work in Schools?

- Develop MOU
- Work with the chief/sheriff
- Interview the prospective SRO
- Participate in partnership efforts
- Learn roles of the law enforcement officer
- Use the LEO in proactive ways

#### How Do Law Enforcement Officers Prepare for Work in Schools?

- Develop MOU
- Recruit and hire for effective relations
- Train (NASRO, COPS, State agencies)
- Define policy, goals, and objectives for police department and school
- Develop the tools to document SRO activity

### Selected Resources

- Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence  
[www.colorado.edu/cspv](http://www.colorado.edu/cspv)
- Community Oriented Policing Services  
[www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov)
- Federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative  
[sshs.samhsa.gov](http://sshs.samhsa.gov)
- Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence  
[hamfish.org](http://hamfish.org)
- Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma  
[ivatcenters.org](http://ivatcenters.org)
- National Association of School Resource Officers  
[nasro.org](http://nasro.org)
- National Association of School and Law Enforcement Officers  
[nassleo.org](http://nassleo.org)
- National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention  
[promoteprevent.org](http://promoteprevent.org)
- National School Safety Center  
[schoolsafety.us](http://schoolsafety.us)
- National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center  
[safeyouth.org](http://safeyouth.org)
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention  
[ojjdp.ncjrs.gov](http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov)
- Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools  
[ed.gov](http://ed.gov)
- The Safety Zone (for list of State school safety centers)  
[safetyzone.org](http://safetyzone.org)
- School Violence Resource Center  
[www.svrc.net](http://www.svrc.net)
- Secret Service Safe School Initiative at the National Threat Assessment Center  
[ustreas.gov/usss/ntac](http://ustreas.gov/usss/ntac)