

Standards and Best Practices for School Resource Officer Programs

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The Standards and Best Practices presented here are separated into two classifications: Mandatory (M) and Recommended (R) to identify the importance of each Standard and Best Practice.

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Forward

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE STANDARDS

1.1 General

This publication represents a standard for domestic and international agencies and departments. This *Standards and Best Practices for the School Resource Officer Programs* was developed and is maintained by the National Association of School Resource Officers, Inc., (NASRO) a section 501(c)(3) IRC membership association established pursuant to Chapter 617 of the laws of the State of Florida.

1.2 Applicability

This document contains professional standards and recommended best practices for law enforcement agencies both within and outside of the United States, regardless of size or level of government (federal/national, state/provincial or local).

NASRO has adopted this *Standards and Best Practices for the School Resource Officer Programs* and supports the need for the standards to be used as a guide for new and existing SRO units and for the best practices to be reviewed and adopted by all law enforcement, school safety agencies and school boards, as recommended.

NASRO has adopted these standards and best practices as the bases for future law enforcement certification or accreditation and supports the need for the standards to be used as a guide for all SRO law enforcement administrations and operations.

1.3 Intent

These standards and best practices are intended to provide a foundation of safe operating practices in the performance of the unit's mission and were formulated based on what has been identified as the two highest priorities of school-based law enforcement programs:

1. Safety first in all aspects of the operation.
2. Provide excellence in SRO services in support of the agency's mission.

1.4 Scope

The scope of this document is intended to encompass all aspects of SRO law enforcement and has been divided in four (4) major sections: Administration, Selection, Training and Collaboration. The subsections are intended to encompass the primary aspects of SRO law enforcement unit administration and operations.

2.0 THE MAJOR BENEFITS OF ADOPTING THESE STANDARDS

Agencies are strongly encouraged to adopt and implement the standards and best practices outlined in this publication. They have been designed as industry standards intended to foster a universal application of best practices throughout the SRO law enforcement community. Although adoption and implementation of these standards and best practices is strictly voluntary, agencies that choose to adhere to them set themselves apart from others, becoming exemplars of SRO safety and operational excellence.

2.1 Safe, Effective and Cost-Efficient SRO Law Enforcement Operations

Compliance with these standards and best practices provides agencies with a foundation upon which a culture of safe operating practices may be formulated and establishes a mark of excellence to further develop and enhance the SRO unit's professionalism, efficiency, and overall effectiveness.

2.2 Greater Accountability with the Agency

These standards and best practices provide the respective agency chief, sheriff, or department head sound training principles, personnel qualification requirements, clearly defined lines of authority, and examples of accepted industry standards that support informed decision-making and resource allocation.

2.3 Controlled Liability Insurance Costs

Compliance with these standards and best practices may allow for agencies to more easily purchase SRO law enforcement and liability insurance, increase the limit of their insurance coverage, and, in many cases, lower their insurance premiums and/or gain other financial incentives.

2.4 Stronger Support from Government Officials and the Community

By complying with these standards and best practices, agencies establish credibility as professional operations, which provide safe, cost-effective, and essential SRO support to law enforcement operations in a variety of missions.

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SECTION ONE | ADMINISTRATION

| 01.01.00 | Administrative Standards | Compliance |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 01.01.01 | <p style="text-align: center;">Definition</p> <p>A school resource officer (SRO) is a full-time law enforcement officer with sworn law enforcement authority, trained in school-based policing and crisis response, assigned by the employing law enforcement agency to work with the school using community-oriented policing concepts.</p> | (M) |
| 01.01.02 | <p style="text-align: center;">Purpose</p> <p>The purpose of a successful SRO program is to “bridge the gap” between law enforcement and youth. This purpose is best accomplished by using the TRIAD model: Law Enforcement (LEO), Teacher (Guest Speaker), and Informal Counselor (Mentor). Each element of the TRIAD will be further explained throughout this document.</p> | (R) |
| 01.01.03 | <p style="text-align: center;">Knowledge and Support from Agency Administration</p> <p>For the SRO program to be successful, the law enforcement agency head and the superintendent of the school district must understand and fully support the SRO program, including an understanding of the standards and best practices put forth in this document.</p> | (M) |

Memorandum of Understanding

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or a similar contractual document should be established between the operating law enforcement agency and the school district. This document will assist in developing program goals and evaluating the program to assess the success in meeting identified goals.

Example MOU topics include but are not limited to:

- **Defining the roles and responsibilities of formal school discipline (M)**
 - SROs should not be administering formal school discipline such as detentions, suspensions, or expulsions. These decisions are the sole responsibility of the school personnel.

- **SROs act in accordance with the recommended TRIAD roles (R)**
 - As a law enforcement officer, the SRO shall abide by federal, state, and local laws.
 - As an informal counselor/mentor, the SRO may address school violations in an effort to positively impact student behavior and character and may refer students to school personnel as necessary.
 - As a teacher/classroom presenter, the SRO may address school-related education law to positively impact student behavior and character to mitigate more serious behaviors.

- **Defining roles and expectations pertaining to decision to arrest (M)**
 - According to federal law, the responsibility and decision to arrest lies solely with the SRO, respective to state law, local ordinances, and the SRO's departmental standard operating procedures or standing order.
 - The SRO's continual collaboration with school personnel and his or her understanding of each student's needs may impact the decision to arrest but the responsibility is that of the SRO alone.

- **Chain of Command (M)**
 - The SRO shall abide by the law enforcement agency's policies pertaining to the chain of command.

- **Uniform Use (M)**
 - SROs must be clearly identified as law enforcement. The uniform apparel and law enforcement equipment shall be defined by the agency policy. If a “soft” uniform is agreed upon, the uniform should not detract from clearly identifying the SRO as law enforcement.

- **Weapons Storage (M)**
 - Normal duty gear is to be defined by the SRO’s agency policies.
 - In the event additional weapons or gear is to be utilized, the storage of these items shall be defined by the law enforcement agency

- **Use of Less Lethal Tools (R)**
 - The SRO should abide by agency policies pertaining to the use of less lethal devices.
 - If there is a desired deviation from the policies, the cost, storage, and use must be agreed upon.

- **Sharing of Information (M)**
 - SROs and school personnel shall share information in accordance with their respective state laws.
 - Access and use of school camera footage, body-worn cameras, student database information, and any other information sharing practices should be defined by the MOU.

- **Documentation and Reporting Requirements (M)**
 - The SRO shall be under the immediate supervision and direction of his or her law enforcement agency.
 - The agency policies shall identify the documentation and reporting procedures to be used.
 - Any documentation requested by the school personnel shall be addressed by the MOU or similar contractual document.

- **Expenses (M)**
 - The salary (including overtime), benefits, and equipment costs should be established in the MOU and/or in an agreed upon contract between the law enforcement agency and the school district.

- **Office Space and Office Supplies (R)**
 - A clearly defined location should be established for the SRO to conduct school and law enforcement business.
 - Due to the nature of law enforcement related to juveniles, a dedicated location with a closable door should be available.
 - Access to office supplies such as paper, a printer, computer, etc. should be addressed in the MOU.

- **Hours on Campus (M)**
 - Clearly defined expectations of the hours the SRO shall spend on campus should be agreed upon by the operating law enforcement agency and the school district.
 - Due to the nature of law enforcement, there may be a need for the SRO to be out of the building(s) for a period of time.
 - This should be understood and agreed upon by all parties involved.

- **Day-to-Day Duties (M)**
 - As formerly described, the SRO shall utilize the TRIAD model: Law Enforcement (LEO), Teacher (Guest Speaker) and Informal Counselor (Mentor).
 - Quality law enforcement practices should be assumed and agreed upon.
 - The SRO should not be assigned to specific locations or duties on a daily basis, but rather be available to assist teachers, administrators, and students when requested and as consistent with their roles as a law enforcement officer, informal counselor/mentor, and teacher/classroom presenter.
 - The expectations of the SRO's daily duties must be agreed upon by the law enforcement agency and the school district.

- **Extracurricular Activities (R)**
 - There is a demonstrated benefit to the SRO's involvement in extracurricular activities.
 - Expectations of attendance and compensation should be agreed upon by the law enforcement agency and the school district.

SECTION TWO | SELECTION

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| 02.01.00 | The SRO Selection Process | Compliance |
| 02.01.01 | <p style="text-align: center;">The SRO Selection Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There shall be a clearly defined process of selection for the SRO to be employed. • This selection process shall be agreed upon between the agency and the school administration. • The school administration shall be involved in the selection process, including but not limited to, the interviews of SRO candidates. | (M) |
| 02.01.02 | <p style="text-align: center;">Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended that the officer selected have at least three (3) years of law enforcement experience. • This level of experience will help the officer obtain credibility among the school faculty, students, and parents. • This level of experience will also allow the SRO to have a greater understanding of the local agency's policies and procedures. | (R) |
| 02.01.03 | <p style="text-align: center;">Number of SROs Selected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended that each school have at least one (1) SRO on campus. • It is recommended that the determination of the number of SROs needed for each school be based on but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School enrollment ○ Discipline history ○ Number of campus buildings ○ Campus acreage ○ Calls for service ○ Location in the community ○ Number of non-sworn safety personnel in the building | (R) |

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| 02.01.04 | <p style="text-align: center;">School Climate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several factors pertaining to school climate should be considered when considering the best SRO fit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student enrollment ○ School discipline history ○ Cultural and minority representation ○ Special Education programs ○ English as a Second Language programs | (R) |
| 02.01.05 | <p style="text-align: center;">Willingness in Developing Youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective SROs have a willingness to engage with youth. • This can be demonstrated in the candidate's previous participation in youth or community policing programs. | (M) |
| 02.01.06 | <p style="text-align: center;">Communication Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must have excellent verbal and written communication skills. | (M) |
| 02.01.07 | <p style="text-align: center;">Probationary Period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selected SRO should have a probationary period agreed upon by the operating law enforcement agency and the school district to allow all parties to best determine if the selected officer is a proper fit for the school community. | (R) |

SECTION THREE | TRAINING

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| 03.01.00 | Training Standards | Compliance |
| 03.01.01 | <p style="text-align: center;">Importance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SRO must be specially trained in school-based policing, as the duties and responsibilities of an SRO are inherently different than that of other law enforcement specialties. • At a minimum, the SRO should attend annual training related to school safety topics. These topics may include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Crisis Planning ○ Active Threat Response ○ Adolescent Mental Health • Such trainings enhance and maintain the relevancy of the SRO's skill set. • It is recommended that a school administrator also attend with his or her SRO to support ongoing collaboration. • Some opportunities for these training programs include SRO conferences such those offered by the National Association of School Resource Officers and its affiliated state associations. | (M) |

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| 03.02.00 | The Basic SRO Training Course | Compliance |
| 03.02.01 | <p style="text-align: center;">Basic SRO Course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SRO should complete a foundational school-based policing course, such as the NASRO Basic SRO Course, prior to being assigned. • If it is not practical for the new SRO to complete a foundational school-based policing course prior to the assignment, the new SRO shall complete a foundational school-based policing course within one (1) year of beginning the assignment. | (M) |

The TRIAD Approach**(M)**

- SROs must be trained to utilize a TRIAD approach to school-based policing.
- This concept includes understanding and applying the principles of each TRIAD component: Law Enforcement (LEO), Teacher (Guest Speaker) and Informal Counselor (Mentor).
- The specifics of each component include but are not limited to:
 - To be an effective law enforcement officer (LEO) in a school environment, the SRO should have a working knowledge of:
 - Constitutional and state law
 - Armed response
 - Crime prevention and mitigation
 - Interview and interrogation
 - Investigations
 - Crime Prevention Through Environmental School Design
 - Patrol operations (high visibility)
 - Advocacy within the juvenile justice system
 - Mandatory reporting
 - To be an effective teacher/guest speaker, the SRO should be capable of delivering law-related education lessons on topics such as:
 - Crime prevention
 - Social media
 - School safety
 - Victimization
 - Laws pertaining to students
 - Safe traffic stops
 - Driver safety
 - Decision making
 - Other topics requested by staff/parents
 - To be an effective informal counselor/mentor, the SRO should be properly trained in:
 - Mentoring
 - Crime prevention
 - Empowering youth
 - Resiliency and overall wellness
 - Adolescent brain development
 - Social and emotional development
 - Recognizing and supporting diversity
 - Improving youth decision-making skills
 - Trauma-informed practices

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| 03.02.03 | <p>School Administration Policies & Procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional school-related training topics in support of an effective SRO program should be ongoing. • Examples of these include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Structure of the school's discipline policy. ○ Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other school-related law issues. ○ Working with special needs students and the special education department within the school. ○ A school-utilized behavioral intervention program. | (R) |
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| 03.03.00 | The Advanced SRO Training Course | Compliance |
| 03.03.01 | <p>Advanced SRO Course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended that the SRO successfully complete an advanced level school-based policing course approximately one (1) year after successful completion of the basic foundational course. • This course will build on and further expand the SRO's foundational knowledge and skills. | (R) |

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| 03.04.00 | Single Officer Rapid Deployment Training | Compliance |
| 03.04.01 | <p>Single Officer Rapid Deployment Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SRO should successfully complete bi-annual training for single officer rapid deployment. • This training should provide appropriate methods for the SRO to be able to respond to active assailants or threats in the school. | (R) |

SECTION FOUR | COLLABORATION

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| 04.01.00 | Collaboration Between Law Enforcement and the School Community | Compliance |
| 04.01.01 | <p style="text-align: center;">Definition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A successful SRO program must have a strong collaboration between the law enforcement agency and the school community. • Although various elements of the job are defined by each party, it is important that these elements are clearly defined and communicated. | (M) |
| 04.01.02 | <p>Defining Roles of the School Administrator and the SRO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended that each party establish the role of the school administrator and the SRO in this partnership to ensure that all district policies, department policies, local laws, state laws, and federal laws are followed. • It is recommended that a school administrator who will be partnering with the SRO also complete Basic and other school-based policing courses with the SRO. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This strengthens the collaboration and the understanding of this partnership in support of an effective SRO program. • Effective partnerships can be supported through but are not limited to the following methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The MOU and its annual review for program improvements and updates. ○ Shared trainings to best understand school and law practices, policies and programs. ○ Regular meetings to review existing and potential school-related issues. ○ Teachers correctly following the school's chain of command and the SRO correctly following agency's chain of command. ○ Established sharing of information on policies and procedures. ○ Regular review of CPTED at the school. ○ Crisis management planning and practice. ○ Community education in school-related law concerns of parents. | (R) |

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| 04.01.03 | <p>The Administration’s Role in SRO Selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection process of the SRO must include both the law enforcement agency and the school administration. • Factors of selection should include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School enrollment ○ Discipline history ○ Number of campus buildings ○ Campus acreage ○ Calls for service ○ Location in the community ○ Number of non-sworn safety personnel in the building | |
| 04.01.04 | <p>The Administration’s Role in SRO Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effectiveness of the individual SRO must be based on the established performance goals agreed upon by the law enforcement agency and the school district. • An evaluation tool specific to the position of the SRO must be developed and utilized. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This will include evaluating the relationship between the SRO and the school administration and the effectiveness of the SRO related to the training and expectations. ○ This tool should include language specific to the law enforcement agency’s expectations as well as the school district’s expectations. | (M) |
| 04.01.05 | <p>The Administration’s Role During the SRO Probationary Period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school administration shall participate in the probationary review of the selected SRO as agreed upon by the agency and the school district to allow all parties to best determine if the selected officer is a proper fit for the school community. | (M) |