

South Carolina Department of Public Safety

Office of Highway Safety and Justice Programs

Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program

School Resource Officer (SRO)

APPLICATION TOOL

###### Foreword

This document is provided for law enforcement officials who are considering a community-based approach to addressing safety in schools: the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program. Those law enforcement agencies wanting to implement a SRO Program should revise the information on each subject area making it applicable to their particular jurisdiction. The School Resource Officer Program is a nationally-implemented program involving the assignment of specially trained law enforcement officers within the educational environment. The South Carolina Department of Public Safety, Office of Highway Safety and Justice Programs, supports placement of School Resource Officers in middle and high schools that demonstrate a need and recommends that any agency interested in pursuing this concept seek training opportunities. If implemented correctly, the law enforcement agency can play an important role in reducing juvenile delinquency through the SRO Program.

## *Purpose and Benefits of the School Resource Officer Program*

The School Resource Officer (SRO) Program, which has been implemented across the nation, involves the assignment of carefully selected and specially trained law enforcement officers to work directly in the schools within that particular law enforcement agency's jurisdiction. This is done in full cooperation with school administrators and faculty.

The SRO Program is a community policing approach practiced in a school environment. The one officer to one school concept is recommended for maximum benefit to the school. The officer is assigned to a middle school or high school (with a recommended school population from 800 to 1,600 students). Selection of the SRO—who is a certified law enforcement officer with some years of experience and an interest in helping children—is done by interviews with a panel composed of teachers, the principal, the guidance director, and the head of the law enforcement agency. The school is the officer's beat and community. This exclusive focus on the physical and social territory of the school is an important aspect of the SRO concept. Unlike police officers who respond to school problems as a result of a 911 call by the principal, the SRO knows the school's physical layout and is aware of who belongs on school property and who does not. Some SROs wear the police uniform and weapon while on duty in the school to reinforce his or her role as a police officer, while others dress more casually to strengthen relationships with the students. Grant-funded officers spend 100 percent of their time on grant-related activities and are not to be reassigned to other duties unless there is an emergency or special circumstance.

School Resource Officers have three main functions: *law enforcement officer, teacher, and counselor.* First, as a law enforcement officer, the SRO maintains a safe and secure environment on the school campus that will be conducive to an educationally stimulating atmosphere and serve as a means of preventing criminal activities and disturbances. Second, as a teacher, the SRO promotes positive attitudes regarding the police role in society and informs the students of their rights and responsibilities as lawful citizens. Third, as a counselor, the SRO establishes a more complete liaison with school personnel and students in a cooperative effort to prevent juvenile delinquency.

The most effective way an SRO can accomplish these goals is to be a positive role model. Students learn from every interaction they have with an SRO. It is essential for an SRO to be a positive role model who endorses high moral standards, uses good judgment and discretion, is consistent and fair, respects all students, and displays a sincere concern for the school community. School Resource Officers must maintain a professional appearance; be visible, accessible and willing to talk to the students; attend and participate in school activities both during the school year and the summer months; interact positively with the students and the community while taking their concerns seriously; maintain a relationship with the students' parents by attending PTA meetings and parent conferences; and maintain a relationship with the faculty and school administrators.

The SRO interacts with four different groups: the Police Department or Sheriff's Office, the school administrators and faculty, the student body, and the outside community. Although working in the school, the SRO is still an employee of the law enforcement agency and is responsible for identifying and resolving school safety problems. The SRO reports to both the principal and the head of the law enforcement agency. However, the SRO is not the disciplinarian for the school—which job remains with the principal and the faculty. As a resource for school administrators, the SRO serves as a means of establishing order and safety so learning can take place. The SRO shares information with faculty on gang activity and truants, provides expertise on crime prevention, and responds to and investigates criminal activity in the school. The SRO is also a teacher who provides law-related education to students. As a resource for the student body, the SRO's office within the school serves as a resource center and makes available to students information on topics ranging from date rape to drug abuse. The SRO also assists the school guidance department by counseling students; giving them the opportunity to talk about their problems and helping them find positive solutions. When necessary, the SRO refers students and family members to appropriate social agencies for additional assistance. Additionally, the SRO responds to requests from parents and the community regarding truants, drug activity, traffic problems, burglaries, thefts, and other school safety issues.

To clarify all of the previously discussed responsibilities of an SRO, an agreement is drawn between the law enforcement agency and the school system that states the SRO's responsibilities, the law enforcement agency's expectations from the SRO and the school system's expectations of the SRO. This agreement also includes the following: the program establishment date; the rights and duties of the law enforcement agency; the number of SROs assigned to the school and their work hours and responsibilities; the rights and duties of the school board; the financing source; the terms of appointment to the SRO position; terms of dismissal; and terms/dates for terminating the agreement. The agreement is signed by either the Chief of Police or the Sheriff and the chairman of the school board.

The SRO Program works to prevent juvenile delinquency and create a favorable student/police officer relationship. The court system, school administrators, teachers, parents and students are all beneficiaries of the SRO Program and, as stakeholders in the search for safer schools, must support the SRO and work with the SRO to reduce violence in schools.

***Training***

It is recommended that all grant-funded SROs be trained in a 40-hour basic School Resource Officer course prior to execution of the program. However, if a course is not immediately available, the SRO may begin in the school and restrict them from teaching law-related classes until the basic training has been completed. The South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy will evaluate SRO training curriculums and may award credit for law enforcement officer re-certification requirements.

The South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy, The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), the Institute of Police Technology (IPTM), and other state criminal justice academies offer the 40-hour basic course and advanced courses.

**Please note:** Should a SRO application be awarded for funding, the award notification and the grant effective date will not occur until after the start of the school year. Reallocating existing resources to assign a SRO to the school prior to the grant award is considered supplanting and will render the application void.

**Preface**

*The following pages can be used as the basis for filling out the grant application for School Resource Officer projects. The Problem Statement as written here gives an idea as to what information should be provided. The Project Purpose, Objectives, Indicators, and Evaluation Plan are standard for all SRO projects; however, additional items may be added to each of these sections depending on the particular situation of each applicant.*

**Sample Problem Statement**

* *Make this Problem Statement specific to your jurisdiction and fully explain why the grant is needed. Include violent crime rates, drug arrest rates, juvenile arrest rates, number of juvenile cases that have gone to the solicitor's office in recent years and school-related incident rates. Also discuss activities already underway that are working to help juveniles in and out of school.*

***PROBLEM STATEMENT:***

**Sample County** is a densely populated county with over 100,000 residents. The majority of these residents (75,000) live in **Sample City**, a community in which the major industry is textiles. Approximately 25% of the city residents live below the poverty level. Violence among youth, teen pregnancy rates, and incidents in schools that require a law enforcement response have risen dramatically in the last few years. In 2012, 10% of total law enforcement calls for service were in response to juvenile crimes; by 2013, the response rate had risen to 20%. In 2012, 50 juveniles were confined to DJJ facilities; in 2013, that number rose to 125. Teen pregnancies in 2012 were 11% of the total pregnancies in **Sample County**; in 2013, teen pregnancies accounted for 26% of total pregnancies.

School district crime incident reports reveal that in the 2012-13 school year, there were 250 incidents on or near school grounds that required a law enforcement response. In contrast, during the 2013-14 school year, over 500 incidents required this type of response for an increase of 50%. **Sample School**, with a population of 1,200 students, accounts for almost all of this increase. The school is overcrowded and has resorted to using trailers for some of their classes. School crime incidents have also risen dramatically. **Sample School** has experienced a change in the composition of the student body due to the influx of the new textile plant employees and their families, causing a decrease in the sense of school family. Property crimes increased significantly from 1,500 in 2010-11 to 1,700 in 2012-13, and reports of aggravated assault also showed an increase of 5 percent. Lack of school unity is also obvious in the 30 percent rise in offenses of threatening school officials; the number grew from 250 incidents in the 2010-11 school year to 325 in 2012-13. In addition to these alarming statistics, law enforcement officers and school district officials report that incidents involving conflicts between students are becoming more violent as students bring weapons to school and seem to have no capacity to settle disagreements through other, non-violent means. This is certain to be further aggravated by the appearance of gang activity among students. School officials are able to identify at least 60 students, 5 percent of the entire student body, who claim gang affiliation. This could be related to the number of drug violations on campus, which in 2010-11 increased 10 percent from the previous school year.

According to the *Department of Education School Crime Incident Report for South Carolina Public Schools for June 2012 through May 2013*, **Sample School District** in **Sample County** had a rate of 1.2 school-related incidents per 100 students, the third highest when compared to other school districts in South Carolina. The same report for the previous year indicated that the rate was 0.88, which shows that incidents are increasing and there is a definite need for the School Resource Officer Program. These problems have become more important to the **Sample County** residents with the murders of two people in schools in two neighboring counties within the past 14 months.

***EXISTING EFFORTS, CURRENT RESOURCES, AND PROGRAMS:***

There have been numerous meetings held with the **Sample County** law enforcement officials, the superintendent from **Sample School District**, the principals from **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ High Schools and a number of teachers in order to examine ways to resolve problems related to the student populations. Law enforcement personnel are often invited to the schools to give classroom and/or assembly presentations on the law and the consequences involved when they are broken. Additionally, they serve as mentors to the students, filling a big brother/big sister role and allowing students to be more open with them regarding what is happening in and around the schools. The Community Oriented Policing program has also been instrumental in obtaining and maintaining a good relationship with students of all grade levels. Many of the deputies along with county officials have worked closely with students this past summer in a youth employment program at which students from the high schools were placed in various county departments to perform work duties. This program also provided the students with information on dress attire for interviews, school and work, the teaching of survival skills, attitude adjustments, and self-discipline. There were a total of 45 students enrolled and employed by this program, which was requested by the **Sample County** Sheriff’s Office staff and funded by the **Sample County** Council. Because of the success of the program, county council has stated it will continue to be funded every summer for the same purpose and implemented by the Sheriff’s Office. The DARE program continues to be active within **Sample School District’s** elementary schools and is making a positive impact on the students.

**Project Purpose – Standard Example**

BROAD GOALS:

1. To maintain a safe and secure environment on the school campus, which will be conducive to an educationally stimulating atmosphere and serve as a means of preventing criminal activities and disturbances.
2. To promote positive attitudes regarding the police role in society and to inform the students of their rights and responsibilities as lawful citizens.
3. To establish a more complete liaison with school personnel and students in a cooperative effort to prevent juvenile delinquency.

4. To bridge the gap between police officers and adolescents in order to increase positive attitudes toward law enforcement and to reduce juvenile crime through counseling, teaching about the criminal justice system, and taking a personal interest in the students.

**SPECIFIC PLAN:**

A School Resource Officer will be assigned to ***state the name of each school, the grade levels in that school, and the student population*** (i.e. Central High School, grades 9 to 12, 1,200 students.) Each School Resource Officer will act as a liaison between the Police Department or Sheriff's Office, the school administrators and faculty, the student body, and the community. The SRO, although working in the school, is still an employee of a law enforcement agency. Therefore, the SRO is responsible for gathering intelligence on gang activity, burglaries, juvenile crimes, etc. As a resource for school administrators, the SRO is responsible for gathering information on gang activity and truants, acting as an ombudsman, and making himself available to other schools for guest lectures. The SRO must also make himself available as an educator serving as a resource to the school faculty. As a resource for the student body, the SRO's office within the school should serve as a resource center providing information on topics ranging from date rape to drug abuse. The SRO should also provide to the students the opportunity for them to talk about their problems and discuss possible solutions. Lastly, the SRO is responsible for responding to requests from the community regarding truants, drug activity, traffic problems, burglaries, thefts, etc. However, an SRO is mainly a liaison between the groups with which he interacts. The SRO is the communication link between the school system and the law enforcement agency, the student body and school faculty, the school system and the parent association, the students and their parents, and the student and the criminal justice system.

An agreement will be drawn between the law enforcement agency and the school system. This agreement will state the SRO's responsibilities, the law enforcement agency's expectations from the SRO, and the school system's expectations from the SRO. This agreement may also include: the program establishment date; the rights and duties of the law enforcement agency; the number of SROs needed, their work hours, and their responsibilities; the rights and duties of the school board; the financing source for the program; the employment status of the SRO; the terms of appointment to the SRO position; terms of dismissal; and the terms of terminating the agreement. The agreement will then be signed by either the Chief of Police or the Sheriff and the chairman of the school board. The SRO Program works toward preventing juvenile delinquency and toward the creation of a favorable student/police officer relationship. It is felt that with a better understanding of the laws and a positive attitude toward law enforcement officers, students will develop respect for the work of law enforcement officers and willfully obey the laws.

* *Attach a copy of the draft agreement (no signatures needed) between the school districts and the law enforcement agency (samples can be obtained from the Office of Highway Safety and Justice Programs). Also include letters of support from school officials and law enforcement to show coordination of this proposal.*

**Project Objectives – Standard Example**

1. Promote student understanding of the law and the criminal justice system.

1. Decrease the number of student conduct/criminal violations occurring during the school day and during extracurricular school functions.
2. Decrease gang activity and involvement in gangs by students.
3. Improve students’ attitudes and relationships with law enforcement personnel.
4. Increase access of students, parents, and families to community agencies which offer assistance to youths and their families for problems that require professional help.
5. Conduct crime prevention programs and improve school officials' response to criminal activity and violence.

**Performance Indicators – Standard Example**

1. Present law-related education to classes during the school year (limited to no more than two per day due to other SRO duties). The School Resource Officer will keep a record of all law-related courses that are taught including drug prevention presentations and other programs deemed necessary and appropriate by school administrators and police management.
2. The number of student conduct/criminal violations for the school year will be compared to the number from previous school years to determine any increase or decrease. The SRO will attend extracurricular school functions such as sporting events and dances for the purpose of community relations, crowd control, and offense prevention.
3. The SRO will keep a record of all gang activity on or near campus, attempt to identify the individuals involved, and relay this information to the law enforcement agency. This information will be compared to records from previous years to determine changes in activity. If necessary, the SRO will present gang awareness and prevention training to the student body, faculty, and parent organizations.
4. The SRO will assess the students' attitudes towards law enforcement by interacting with them during the school day and during extracurricular activities and through the use of student surveys at the beginning and end of each school year. The relationship between the SRO and the student body will also be assessed through surveys completed by parents, faculty members, and administrators to gauge the effectiveness of the SRO program.
5. The SRO will research and document all municipal, county, and state agencies available to provide services to students and their families. A directory of such agencies including points of contact will be developed or obtained. The SRO will hold conferences with students, parents, and school faculty when appropriate and keep a log of this activity. The SRO will also maintain a record of all referral services rendered and follow-up the referrals to determine if they were helpful or if other services are necessary.
6. The SRO will maintain a record of all crime prevention lectures or seminars given to the student body or public. The SRO will assist school administrators in surveying school facilities for areas that provide opportunities for commission of a crime and developing a plan to correct the problem. The SRO will also assist school violence prevention teams in developing strategic responses to incidents of violence within the school.

**Project Evaluation – Standard Example**

1. The Project Director will be responsible to collect and analyze data, prepare progress reports and write the annual evaluation report.

2. Data will be gathered on criminal incidents, law-related education course participation, parent and teacher survey results, and outcomes of conferences with students, parents and faculty members, as well as any other information that is explicitly mentioned in the project's performance indicators.

3. This information will be analyzed as follows:

a. A comparison of criminal incidents from prior years will be compared to the current year to determine increases or decreases since the implementation of the SRO project.

b. Law-related education course grades will be compiled to determine the extent of knowledge the student body possesses regarding the criminal justice system and, more specifically, law enforcement.

c. School and parent survey results will be compiled and analyzed to measure student attitudes toward law enforcement and whether they have changed since the implementation of the SRO project and to enable the SROs to improve their project.

d. Results of all student, parent, and faculty members' conferences and follow-up actions taken will be evaluated to determine the possible positive effects of the SRO's referral or resource services.

**Grant-Funded Personnel Training**

A formal training plan should be prepared for grant-funded personnel to provide qualification training necessary to adequately implement the first year of the grant project. For continuation grant projects, sustainment training needs are encouraged and expected. Cite the training plan and training courses.

*First Year*:

List at least two courses per SRO such as 40 hour Basic and 24 hour Advanced SRO Training. Use the Technical Assistance and Training List to get names, dates and sites of the courses, if the information is available.

*Second and Third Year:*

List at least two courses per SRO such as the NASRO Conference, Juvenile Procedures, Conflict Resolution Training, or Teaching Methods. Be as complete as possible, including dates and sites.

PROJECT CONTINUATION POTENTIAL:

Explain how the project activity will be continued after federal assistance is no longer available.

* Example:
  + School District and City Officials have agreed to continue this project through municipal/school budgets after grant-funding is complete.