

**KENTUCKY CENTER FOR SCHOOL SAFETY
SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER (SRO) PROGRAM
ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT**

Rating **Management Issues**

- 3** 1. A written contract or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) should be developed collaboratively and include the goals of the program, the role of the SRO, the chain of command, and the duties and responsibilities of both the law enforcement agency and school district.

Rationale: Successful partnerships require that all partners be involved in planning a new initiative. Involvement of both law enforcement and school officials in the development of the MOU helps clarify expectations and avoid operational problems. In addition, KRS 158.441 requires a written contract between the school and the law enforcement agency.

- 2** 2. Schools should assign either private offices or private spaces to SROs so that they can advise students about legal issues, answer their questions, and provide resource material.

Rationale: Students and faculty need to be able to discuss issues with the officer in a confidential setting. The officer also needs a place to conduct interviews and investigations with dignity, propriety and respect to all concerned. In addition, students can access material about issues that are important to them and officers can maintain confidential records.

- 2** 3. School administrators should include SROs in a minimum of six faculty meetings and/or administrative meetings during the school year.

Rationale: Officers can help school officials solve problems in the schools and provide a different perspective that can improve decision-making. The presence of the officer in these meetings also sends a strong message that the officer is an integral part of the school community.

- 3** 4. The SRO and school administrator should collaborate on appropriate legal and administration sanctions for students who commit criminal acts for which the Board mandates required penalties.

Rationale: As virtually all criminal incidents are also student conduct violations, the SRO and school administrator should discuss sanctions that are appropriate to the offense. In exercising discretion, it is beneficial to have the input of both school and law enforcement officials. In addition, school officials should consult with the local prosecutor concerning appropriate charges.

Rating

Management Issues (Continued)

- 2 5. School administrators should provide for face-to-face introductions of the SRO to new students (all students in the case of newly established programs) and faculty at the beginning of the school year and explain the purpose of the program.

Rationale: It is important that students have a clear understanding of the role of SROs in order to dispel misconceptions and allow them to take advantage of the resources.

- 3 6. School officials should insure that non-criminal student disciplinary matters remain the responsibility of school staff and not the officer.

Rationale: Enforcement of the student code of conduct is the responsibility of teachers and administrators. If the SRO tries to enforce both the code of conduct and criminal code, students and faculty can become confused about roles.

- 3 7. School officials should notify the officer of any crime committed on or near school property or of any intelligence that a crime might be committed. The SRO should take the lead role in the investigation. SROs should also make school officials aware of any investigations they have initiated.

Rationale: It is important that the SRO begin an investigation immediately after the incident to increase the chances that the crime will be solved and to insure that the investigation conforms with legal procedures. Communication between school administrators and officers reflects the cooperative nature of the program.

- 2 8. The SRO, law enforcement supervisor, and school administrator should meet at least once per semester to discuss priorities and plans for the upcoming school year and determine if any changes are needed to the MOU.

Rationale: It is important that these parties meet twice a year so they can discuss problem areas and options for addressing the problems. This communication can help avoid conflicts and misunderstandings and help insure that they are all “on the same page.”

- 1 9. Officers need to be assigned primarily to only one school so as to develop meaningful relationships with students, faculty and administrators and to perform duties related to three roles: advisor, educator and law enforcer.

Rationale: Officers with multiple assignments do not have time to make classroom presentations or advise students. In addition, frequent contact with students is required to develop trusting relationships.

Rating

Management Issues (Continued)

1 10. If the officer is assigned to work in more than one school, the school district should designate an employee in the district office to serve as the primary contact with the SRO.

Rationale: Officers who must report to several schools can encounter problems with scheduling, priorities, and role definition that need to be resolved at the district level.

2 11. The law enforcement agency should have written procedures relating to the officer's involvement in the following activities: searches, criminal investigations, interviews/interrogations, arrests (use of force and dealing with trespassers), and transportation of students in official vehicles. SROs should follow the policies and school administrators should be made aware of the policies.

Rationale: As legal issues expose both the school district and local law enforcement agency to liability, it is important that written procedures address the SROs work in the schools. In addition, school officials need to be aware of the policies under which the officers must operate in order to better understand their roles and responsibilities under the procedures.

3 12. School administrators should involve officers in physical plant assessments and the development of safety and security plans and policies for the school.

Rationale: The expertise of a public safety officer strengthens safety and security plans and helps clarify the officer's role in emergency situations.

2 13. Officers should attend law enforcement department briefing sessions to promote the exchange of information between SROs and other law enforcement officers. In addition, law enforcement administrators should encourage officers in the agency to communicate and share information on a regular basis.

Rationale: As the liaison between the law enforcement agency and school, it is important that the SRO be aware of the current events in the agency. In addition, officers need an opportunity to exchange important intelligence information that can help in the prevention and/or investigation of crime. Officers should be kept advised of any cases that involve students in their assigned schools.

3 14. Law enforcement and school administrators should develop a strategy for continuing SRO programs that are funded with time limited grants.

Rationale: Too often, there is little attention paid to how costs will be assumed once grant funding terminates. A plan should be in place at least one year prior to the termination date about how the program will be continued.

Rating

School Activities

2 15. The SRO should prepare lesson plans for student presentations and conduct a minimum of twelve presentations on law-related topics during a school year. Officers who are inexperienced in making presentations should be assisted by Master teachers.

Rationale: As representatives of the law, SROs are in a particularly effective position to communicate with students about the value of the legal system and the consequences of unacceptable behavior. Such presentations allow SROs to have contact with a broad spectrum of students and increase student awareness and participation in crime prevention activities. Lastly, serving in the role of educator fulfills one of the three primary roles of a SRO. New officers should receive assistance from Master teachers in order to improve their instructional techniques.

1 16. A SRO should maintain an updated directory of community resources in order to make appropriate referrals for families and students in need of services and serve as a liaison to the community.

Rationale: Once trust is established, students and parents will seek out the SRO for guidance in day-to-day problems. A SRO knowledgeable about school and community resources is better equipped to direct those seeking assistance to the appropriate resources.

3 17. Officers should maintain records which track their activities including the number of counseling sessions with students and/or parents, the number of classroom presentations, arrests, investigations, searches, safety audits, and other major activities.

Rationale: Officers should be able to provide information to their law enforcement supervisor and school officials about their activities. The information improves accountability as well as the law enforcement supervisor's understanding of the duties the SRO performs. A format similar to that available on the COPS software should be followed.

2 18. A SRO should participate in extracurricular activities with students.

Rationale: The officer should interact with students in both formal and informal settings in order to provide opportunities for students to seek approval, direction and guidance. Frequent contact with students can help the officer form valuable and productive relationships. Lastly, these activities help build rapport with students and reduce stereotypical views of police officers.

Rating

School Activities (Continued)

2 19. A SRO should make presentations to parent organizations, community advisory committees, and professional educational organizations to promote a greater understanding of the program, to solicit their support, and to promote a greater awareness of the law enforcement function both in and out of school.

Rationale: Since the officer is a liaison between the community and school, it is important for the officer to be familiar with the concerns and priorities of different organizations as well as increase their understanding of the goals of the SRO program. In addition, it is important to have the support of these organizations when funding priorities are being determined.

2 20. The SRO should make every effort to get to know faculty members, custodial and food service staff and bus drivers.

Rationale: Officers should develop relationships with all school staff in order to establish trust and open lines of communications. These parties may be critical in helping the SRO solve safety and security problems.

3 21. The officer should meet at least weekly with the principal or designee to discuss problem areas and share information.

Rationale: Frequent exchanges of information between the officer and administrator help both parties perform their jobs more effectively and in a coordinated fashion.

Personnel Issues

3 22. A SRO should wear a regulation uniform or modified uniform while working in the school so as to be easily identifiable and highly visible.

Rationale: Students, faculty, administrators and emergency personnel need to be able to easily identify the SRO. As role models, officers must maintain a professional appearance and a standard uniform helps insure this. In addition, an officer in uniform can serve as deterrent to trespassers.

3 23. A SRO should attend specialized training provided by the Department of Criminal Justice Training or the National Association of School Resource Officer or U.S. Department of Justice within one year of assuming the position. Thereafter, the officer should continue to attend annual training courses related to the SRO duties.

Rationale: The SRO role is significantly different than that of a patrol officer and requires different skills that may not have been addressed in more traditional law

enforcement training. Specific SRO training prepares officers to work in a school setting. In addition, the SRO and school administrator should seek opportunities to attend training together.

Rating

Personnel Issues (Continued)

2 24. Notice of SRO position vacancies should be posted throughout the agency and only those officers who express an interest in the job and working with youth should be considered.

Rationale: Assignment to SRO duties should be voluntary as working with youth in an educational setting, rather than a traditional law enforcement setting, can be challenging.

3 25. The minimum requirements for a SRO position should include three years of law enforcement experience.

Rationale: SROs need to be able to draw upon their expertise about the law and their law enforcement experience in performing their duties. An experienced officer will have developed the discretion needed in a school environment. Working in a non-traditional setting and with juveniles can represent significant challenges for inexperienced officers.

2 26. The criteria used by the law enforcement agency to evaluate the job performance of the officer should include criteria specific to the SRO role.

Rationale: Since the duties of SROs differ from those of patrol officers, an evaluation of their performance should include criteria that directly relate to their duties at school.

2 27. The law enforcement agency should seek input from school administrators when evaluating the performance of the SRO.

Rationale: Since officers spend the majority of time in the school, the SRO supervisor should talk with administrators to determine if the officer is satisfactorily performing the duties outlined in the MOU.

3 28. School administrators should be included in the interview process and have input in the decision to hire a SRO.

Rationale: Since a close working relationship with school administrators is critical to the success of the SRO program, it is important the administrators have confidence in the person selected for the job.