An Investigation of School Resource and Safety Programs Policy and Practice in Virginia

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Overview

- Well-structured School Resource Officer (SRO) and School Security Officer (SSO) programs with clear policies, procedures, roles, and responsibilities seem more likely to achieve positive outcomes (Cray & Weiler, 2011), but there is limited empirical support for this assertion. This study explores variables related to Virginia SRO and SSO training, policy, and procedures.
Quantitative Data

- New Surveys
  - 265 SROs (of ≈ 700 invited)
  - 60 SRO Law Enforcement Supervisors (of 136 invited)
  - 45 SRO School-Based Liaisons (of 93 invited)
  - 163 SSOs (of ≈ 600 invited)
  - 9 SSO Supervisors (of 57 invited)

- 2017 School Safety Audit
  - ≈ 2000 schools
  - ≈ 1000 schools had BOTH an SRO and/or an SSO
SRO Demographics

- Age range 24 – 70 with an average age of 43 years
- 83% Male, 17% Female
- 84% White, 7% Black, 4% Hispanic, 2% American Indian or Alaska Native, 2% Asian, 1% Multiracial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earned GED or Equivalent</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned a High School Diploma</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed Some College</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earned an Associate's Degree</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earned a Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed some Graduate School</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earned a Master's Degree</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
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</table>
**SSO Demographics**

- Age range 27 – 71 with an average age of 52 years
- 63% Male, 37% Female
- 53% Black, 47% White, 3% Hispanic, 2% Multiracial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed Some High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earned a High School Diploma</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed Some College</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earned an Associate's Degree</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earned a Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed Some Graduate School</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Earned a Master's Degree</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
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</table>
SRO and SSO Duties & Training

- How are SROs and SSOs trained to operate in K-12 public schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia?
- On what topics do they receive training?
- How does their training compare to their actual duties?
**SRO Duties**

What percentage of your time do you spend on each of the followings tasks? (Total must sum to 100)

- **SRO**
  - Role Model or Mentor: 35.2%
  - Community Liaison: 24.0%
  - Law–Related Educator: 14.6%
  - Law Enforcement Officer: 22.6%
  - Other: 3.8%

- **SRO Supervisor**
  - Role Model or Mentor: 28.5%
  - Law Enforcement Officer: 30.0%
  - Law–Related Educator: 15.6%
  - Community Liaison: 24.3%
  - Other: 1.7%

- **SRO Liason**
  - Role Model or Mentor: 36.6%
  - Law Enforcement Officer: 22.9%
  - Law–Related Educator: 14.3%
  - Community Liaison: 19.7%
  - Other: 6.5%
**SROs: Duties**

- 65% of SROs said school employees request assistance related to bullying, including social media or technology-related bullying hourly, daily, or weekly.

![Bar chart showing the frequency of assistance requests related to bullying](chart_image)

Lawson & Welfare, 2018
SROs: More Training is Needed

1. Working with Students with Special Needs
2. Mental Health Issues in Childhood and Adolescence
3. Dangerous/Threatening Students
4. Bullying
5. Establishing Effective Working Relationships with Parents
Would SROs benefit from more training on the following topics?

- Implicit Bias
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Search and Seizure Procedures
- Mentoring Youth
- Communicating with Children and Adolescents
- De-escalation Techniques
- Working with Students with Special Needs
- Mental Health Issues in Childhood and Adolescence
- Bullying
- Establishing Effective Working Relationships with Parents
- Dangerous/Threatening Students
- Evaluation of the Safety/Security Programs
- Counseling/Helping Skills and Techniques
- Crisis and Emergency Management Planning
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Drugs, Alcohol, and Addictions
- Youth Gangs
- Child or Adolescent Development
- Cultural Diversity
- Victims’ Rights
- Roles and responsibilities of the SRO job
- Teaching children and adolescents

Proportion Selected
SSOs: Duties

Percentage of SSO Time

- Patrolling school areas in order to prevent crime and ensure safety (43%)
- Detaining students who are violating the law or school board policies (17%)
- Investigating violations of school board policies (17%)
- Assisting with disciplinary incidents (12%)
- Other (11%)
SSOs: Duties

On average, how often are you requested to intervene in physical altercations between students?
SSOs: More Training is Needed

1. Dangerous/Threatening Students
2. Mental Health Issues in Childhood and Adolescence
3. De-escalation Techniques
4. Working with Students with Special Needs
5. Bullying
6. Evaluation of the Safety/Security Programs
7. Communicating with Children and Adolescents
8. Youth Gangs
9. Counseling/Helping Skills and Techniques
10. Search and Seizure Procedures
SSOs: Other Findings about Training

- 41% of SSO respondents reported previous experience as law enforcement officers (sheriff or police)
- 57% of SSO respondents reported training in de-escalation techniques such as Mandt or Handle With Care
- 78% of SSO respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SSOs need more training in the role of an SSO.
How are SROs and SSOs operating in schools supervised by their own department and/or by the school(s) in which they operate?
SROs: Supervision with Ranking LEO

How often do you have the following types of contact?

**Individual meeting**
- Never: SRO 0%, SRO Supervisor 0%
- Once a year: SRO 10%, SRO Supervisor 5%
- Once a month: SRO 15%, SRO Supervisor 10%
- Once a week: SRO 20%, SRO Supervisor 15%
- Once a day: SRO 25%, SRO Supervisor 20%
- Hourly: SRO 30%, SRO Supervisor 25%

**Group meeting**
- Never: SRO 0%, SRO Supervisor 0%
- Once a year: SRO 5%, SRO Supervisor 10%
- Once a month: SRO 10%, SRO Supervisor 15%
- Once a week: SRO 15%, SRO Supervisor 20%
- Once a day: SRO 20%, SRO Supervisor 25%
- Hourly: SRO 25%, SRO Supervisor 30%

**Phone/radio contact**
- Never: SRO 0%, SRO Supervisor 0%
- Once a year: SRO 5%, SRO Supervisor 10%
- Once a month: SRO 10%, SRO Supervisor 15%
- Once a week: SRO 15%, SRO Supervisor 20%
- Once a day: SRO 20%, SRO Supervisor 25%
- Hourly: SRO 25%, SRO Supervisor 30%
SROs: Contact with School Liaisons

Individual meeting

- Never
- Once a year
- Once a month
- Once a week
- Once a day
- Hourly

- SSA17
- NIJ2 SRO
- NIJ2 SRO Lia
SSOs: Supervision

Individual meeting

- SSA17
- NIJ2 SSO
SSOs: Supervision

Phone/radio contact

- Never
- Once a year
- Once a month
- Once a week
- Once a day
- Hourly

SSA17
NU2 SSO

Lawson & Welfare, 2018
Involvement in School Discipline

- To what extent are SROs and SSOs involved in addressing school disciplinary matters that do not rise to the level of criminal activity?
- How are these situations initiated and handled?
- What does the SRO or SSO do in these situations?
- Why is the SRO or SSO involved in these situations?
SROs: Liaisons’ Perspective on School Discipline

On average, how often do school employees request SRO assistance with school disciplinary incidents that do not involve criminal activity or threaten public safety?
On average, how often are you requested to intervene in physical altercations between students?
In a typical case, how do you become involved in a school disciplinary matter? - Selected Choice

- I am present in the area where an incident begins and I respond when needed.
- A school employee requests help after an incident has begun.
- A school employee requests my presence in advance of a meeting or event that is likely to escalate.
- I do not become involved in these incidents.
- Other.
Do SROs believe that their work is valued by Law Enforcement and Schools?
SROs Feel Valued by the School

I feel my work is valued by the school communities that I serve.

How long have you been at this assignment?

Proportion Selected

Less than a year | 1 - 2 years | 2 - 5 years | 5 - 10 years | >10 years

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree

SROs Feel Valued by the School

Lawson & Welfare, 2018
SROs Feel Valued by Law Enforcement

I feel my work is valued by my law enforcement agency.

How long have you been at this assignment?
Thank you!

Any questions, comments?

Contact:

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