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# Center for the Prevention of School Violence

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Winter 2001

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### MORE SROs THAN EVER BEFORE

Six-hundred-twenty-three School Resource Officers (SROs) are working in schools across North Carolina this school year...more than ever before. The number of SROs represents more than a doubling of the Center for the Prevention of School Violence's baseline of 243 SROs in 1996.

One-hundred-twelve of the 117 North Carolina school districts have at least one identified SRO, and 96 of the state's 100 counties have an SRO presence in at least one school. Three-hundred-ten (77%) of the state's 402 high schools have SROs assigned exclusively to cover them which means that the SRO is not shared with another school. One-hundred-ninety-three (53%) of the 365 middle schools have exclusive SROs. Exclusive assignment has increased at both levels by about five percent over the previous school year.

The Center's annual census of SROs in North Carolina employs a definition for "School Resource Officer" that was developed through research of law enforcement presence in schools. The definition is of critical importance since it distinguishes those law enforcement officers who may be only visiting schools occasionally from those who are permanently assigned to schools. Specifically, the Center's definition for an SRO is:

**a certified law enforcement officer who is permanently assigned to provide coverage to a school or a set of schools. The SRO is specifically trained to perform three roles: law enforcement officer; law-related counselor; and law-related education teacher. The SRO is not necessarily a DARE officer (although many have received such training), security guard, or officer who has been placed temporarily in a school in response to a crisis situation but rather acts as a comprehensive resource for his/her school.**

The definition emphasizes the permanent assignment and specialized training that characterize a programmatic approach to placing law enforcement officers in schools.

Mounting anecdotal evidence, surveys of administrators and of stakeholders (students, parents, and staff) in schools where SROs work, the General Assembly's funding initiative, COPS funding, and heightened concern about the security of schools help explain why the assignment of specially trained law enforcement officers to schools continues. The Center's involvement with SROs has also contributed to the increased use of the SRO approach as a means to prevent violence in schools across the state.

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SRO SURVEY

Seeing a School Resource Officer (SRO) in a school in the state of North Carolina is almost becoming as common place as seeing an educator. As SROs become more permanent fixtures in our schools, a greater interest has arisen about who they are and what they do. The Center for the Prevention of School Violence, in an effort to answer these questions, surveyed the SROs attending the North Carolina Association of School Resource Officers annual conference.

Some highlights from the survey include:

- The mean age of SRO in North Carolina is 36.5 years old.
- The mean number of years of experience in law enforcement is 9.7 years.
- The mean number of years of experience in schools is 2.7 years.
- The mean for the number of hours a week SROs said they working is 47.
- SROs perform three roles in the schools: law enforcement officer (47% of their time), law-related counselor (35% of their time), and law-related educator (18% of their time).
- The mean number of counseling sessions held by an SRO in a week is 9.13.
- The mean number of lectures presented by an SRO in a week is 2.44.

These are just a few of the findings from the survey. A full report of the survey will be released in an upcoming research bulletin.

## WAVE-ing FOR SCHOOL SAFETY

We are being proactive. That's the key." So says Lt. Don Fraser, Buncombe County's School Resource Officer (SRO) supervisor, of the WAVE (Working Against Violence Everywhere) program.

WAVE refers to the statewide anonymous school safety tip line and awareness campaign. The WAVE line offers an avenue for students, parents, and community members to report school safety concerns. The WAVE awareness campaign focuses upon the leadership skills of respect, resolve, and responsibility.



Lt. Fraser's SROs and others around the state are playing important roles in the implementation of

the WAVE program. SRO Jonathan Scruggs at C.D. Owen Middle School in Buncombe County wrote about WAVE on the SRO web forum ([www.cpsv.org](http://www.cpsv.org)):

The folks from WAVE America and the Center for the Prevention of School Violence showed up and boy did they bring a message! We hosted one of the five [WAVE-S.A.V.E.] kick-off rallies held in the state. If you are looking for ways to promote non-violence in your school, contact the Center; they have something wonderful to offer you.

SRO Brad O'Briant of Southern High School in Durham added on the forum that "[SRO Scruggs] is right. WAVE is a really good program to introduce to your school."

If you are interested in learning more about WAVE, give the Center a call.

## SROs SPEAK OUT: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Over the last three years School Resource Officers (SROs) have gotten the opportunity through the SRO Web Forum to put in their own words what it means to be an SRO. The forum has allowed SROs from across the nation to communicate with each other. Through the web forum, SROs share ideas and explain their roles in the schools to which they are assigned. They also share information about the challenges they face.

SROs discuss a number of topics and issues on the web forum. One of the more interesting involves the SRO role itself. The question posed to SROs is, "What do you do in your school?" Cynthia Suggs from the Greenville Police Department explained, as an SRO, "you are a police officer who serves at the school, and law enforcement is your first job. You also serve as a law-related educator, and a law-related counselor. I feel that you are the police officer of a little community while at the school. Your job is to help keep the peace and protect lives and property on the school grounds." Other SROs wrote similar responses to this question.

SROs were also asked about the three roles they perform in schools (law enforcement officer, law-related educator, and law-related counselor). Some of the issues and duties they have discussed in relation to the law enforcement officer role



include: doing site assessments, putting up no trespassing signs, using force only when necessary, and dressing casually or wearing uniforms at school. SROs agree that the law enforcement role was the most important role they play in their schools although the two other roles they perform make them unique in comparison to other officers.

SROs identified three different ways they handle the law-related educator role. Jimmy Jones from Brevard High School wrote, "I have formally incorporated into my daily duties the teaching of a civil and criminal justice class." This represents one way officers perform this role. Officers also carry out this role by co-teaching classes and by teaching on demand. A number of the newer officers state they enjoy teaching coupled with an experienced teacher, while most officers state they taught classes for teachers when they were invited.

The third role SROs perform is the law-related counselor role. Heidi Wiseman from Dunn Middle School wrote about this role, "When a student comes to me about a law-related topic or issue that is affecting them at home not just at school, I attempt to help them resolve the problem. I am not just a law enforcement officer in the school." Officers also talked about how the most important part of this role is to have an "open door" policy. SROs also stated that it was important to have good connections with resources in the community to help children through some of the tougher issues.

The SRO Web Forum has now entered into its fourth year, and it is more active than ever. The Center invites you to stop by while you are surfing the net. You can post a topic or message or just read what your fellow officers are saying. You can find the SRO Web Forum on the Center's Home Page ([www.cpsv.org](http://www.cpsv.org)).

## ROLL THE VIDEO TAPE

High schools in the state of North Carolina have been given a new tool, and many School Resource Officers (SROs) are rolling the video tape to help them teach about school violence. The Students vs. School Violence is a new video which has been sent to every high school in the state of North Carolina. The video presents a group of high school students working together to put on a school play, a courtroom drama that places the personification of school violence on trial. The video comes with a resource guide to assist the facilitator in discussing the video with students.

Officer Todd Fair from South Johnston High School used the video to start a discussion about school violence prevention in his school. After watching the video, the students discussed a number of topics ranging from what causes school violence to whether school violence is a problem at their school. Officer Fair said, "The video is a great tool to get students talking about school violence and their role in preventing it." He hopes that the video will inspire students in his school to get involved in preventing school violence.

If you are interested in using this tool, ask your principal for your school's copy. If you need additional copies, give the Center a call at 1-800-299-6054.



## PUTTING THE "RESOURCE" IN SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER

School Resource Officers (SROs) are widely recognized and respected as security and safety resources for schools. The North Carolina SRO program serves as a model for other states, and much of this attention is due to the work our state's SROs do in the classroom and directly with their students. Many schools recognize what a valuable "resource" a School Resource Officer can be.

SROs are law enforcement officers assigned to school campuses. These individuals have experience serving entire communities. Schools are a direct reflection of their surrounding communities and areas, and, therefore, an SRO is a bridge between the school and community. For this reason, from a law-related education perspective, SROs are viewed as excellent Community Resource People.

**What is a Community Resource Person?** A Community Resource Person is anyone who the

**CENTER FOR THE PREVENTION  
OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE**

**313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 140  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27603  
1-800-299-6054 • 919/773-2846 • FAX: 919/773-2904  
[www.cpsv.org](http://www.cpsv.org)**

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LET'S GET IT OUT OF OUR SYSTEM!**

students do not usually interact with in an instructional or classroom setting. Police officers, social workers, lawyers, and mediators, for example, enhance various educational topics through their professional expertise and the positive role models and relationships they offer. Many individuals in your community are more than willing to lend their expertise and spend time with your group. However, often times this individual is right in your own school ... YOUR SRO!

Community Resource People are important to use because they:

- make classroom lessons come alive by introducing "real-life" experiences;
- break down barriers between young people and the community;
- act as excellent role models;
- provide career information;
- foster connections to community resources;
- ensure that learning is fun and dynamic;
- offer expertise that might not otherwise be able to be accessed.

Utilizing an SRO as a Community Resource Person in the classroom is important because:

- it allows the SRO to build bonds with students;
- students and faculty are better able to understand the roles of the SRO;
- an "in-house" resource for students is presented for students to turn to for advice on the law and related topics;
- myths about law enforcement and their views on youth can be addressed;
- students are shown the "human" or personal side of law enforcement;
- the officer is able maximize his/her presence as a resource to more people.

Putting the "resource" in School Resource Officer is not necessarily up to the officer or the school's administration but the responsibility of all students and school faculty. Find out what valuable resources lie within YOUR SRO!

## **SROs RECEIVE SITE ASSESSMENT TRAINING**

This year the Center for the Prevention of School Violence, in cooperation with the North Carolina Justice Academy, trained well over 100 School Resource Officers (SROs) from across North Carolina in site assessment procedures. This training was added to the Advanced SRO curriculum because a large number of requests for this type of training had been fielded.

The training involves a half day of classroom work. Materials for this part of the training include an overview of the importance of safe school planning and how the site assessment itself is a key component in that process. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) concepts are taught in addition to a review of the recent and current assessment tools being utilized in North Carolina and across the United States.

The second half of the training involves a practical application of the above by performing a site assessment of a local school. Students are then debriefed as to what areas need attention and also about what suggestions or corrections might be made.

If you would like more information on safe school site assessments, please contact the Center.



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**Center for the Prevention of School Violence**  
313 Chapanoke Road, Suite 140 • Raleigh, NC 27603

## **GUEST COLUMN**

### **Center's SRO Work Will Continue in North Carolina's New Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**



As the former police chief of Winston-Salem and now secretary of North Carolina's new Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP), I want to convey my support of North Carolina's School Resource Officers (SROs) and communicate how delighted I am that the Center for the Prevention of School Violence, now a division within DJJDP, will continue its work with SROs in the state.

I am quite familiar with the Center's work with SROs. I know that the combined efforts of the Center and the North Carolina Association of School Resource Officers as well as the efforts of SROs who work to make our schools safer every day have made North Carolina's SRO approach a national model. I also know that there are challenges associated with being an SRO and that some of these challenges involve youth who become part of North Carolina's juvenile justice system. The relationship between SROs and juvenile court counselors is of great import and worthy of the attention that the Center has planned for it in the coming months.

DJJDP is committed to helping all youth in our state. North Carolina's SROs are playing a critical role helping our youth by working to make our schools as safe as possible. Now a part of DJJDP, the Center will continue to provide support to SROs. All of us together can work to stay focused on our youth so that they have schools that are conducive to learning and committed to their success. Thank you for your work.

### **FIVE NORTH CAROLINA SRO PROGRAMS TO BE PART OF NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE NATIONAL SRO ASSESSMENT**

Five North Carolina School Resource Officer (SRO) programs will be selected by the Center for the Prevention of School Violence in the coming months to participate in the National Institute of Justice's national SRO assessment.

The Center is working with several national organizations to conduct this assessment. The project is focusing on several types of SRO programs: those that are newer and in urban areas; those that are older and in urban areas; those that are newer and in rural areas; and those that are older and in rural areas. North Carolina's five sites will

represent the older, rural area programs. Over the next several months, site visits to the chosen programs will be made by teams of researchers. A case-study approach will be used to determine best practices as well as to obtain information about effectiveness. Information from the North Carolina case studies will be combined with information reflecting the other types of programs.

The Center is very excited about this project as it further demonstrates that North Carolina's SRO programs serve as national models. Stay tuned for updates.

## **SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS AND CRISES**

The training and roles of School Resource Officers put them in unique positions when crises occur at the schools to which they are assigned. Their opportunity for input in such situations ranges from actions taken to prevent the crisis from occurring to assisting the school community in the healing which must take place after a crisis happens.

"Crises" that schools experience can range from what might be described as an insignificant occurrence such as a rumor of a gun on campus to horrifically violent events such as those which occurred in Springfield, Oregon, and Littleton, Colorado. Most of the crises that schools will experience will not be of a "school violence" nature but instead involve incidents such as nonviolent deaths of school community members, fires, and water line breaks. As members of the school community, SROs serve as resources in all of these situations by providing services and supports; however, the more critical crisis roles that SROs fulfill come in the arena of school violence as those types of crises tap into their law enforcement training.

In this arena, SROs function along the time lines that are associated with crisis occurrence. They play roles in crisis prevention, intervention/response, management, and recovery. In the prevention role, they can assist with crisis planning efforts by being members of the school crisis team. In the intervention/response mode, they often become the first responders when incidents occur. During the management of a crisis, they become vital resources and often work as the key communication link between the school and law enforcement agency that might be involved. In the recovery phase, they assist the school in getting back to the business of teaching and learning.

The specific roles that SROs play during the occurrence of a crisis are very much incident dependent. The type of crisis determines what actions need to be taken. A key point to remember is that SROs combine in crisis situations the training that comes from their law enforcement backgrounds with the knowledge they have of the schools to which they are assigned. They therefore can contribute enormously to a school's response when a crisis occurs.

School Resource Officers

Juvenile Court Counselors

# INVITATION

The Center for the Prevention of School Violence invites School Resource Officers and Juvenile Court Counselors to a discussion of the roles, relationships, and interactions these professionals have as they work with young people in their communities. The outcome of the discussion will be materials which both SROs and Juvenile Court Counselors will be able to use to assist in the successful conduct of their relationships.

The Center is interested in having SROs and Counselors attend who have ideas to share about how to make their relationships work. We will be personally contacting SROs and Counselors we know have something to contribute but also invite any SROs or Counselors who would like to attend this working discussion to come.

**DATE:** April 4, 2001

**TIME:** 9:30 - 2:30 (with lunch break)

**PLACE:** Center for the Prevention of School Violence  
313 Chapanoke Road Suite 140  
Raleigh, NC 27603

If you are interested in attending, please contact Billy Lassiter at the Center (919-773-2934 or 800-299-6054 or billy\_lassiter@ncsu.edu) or fax (919-773-2904) the following:

-----Registration-----

**SRO - Juvenile Court Counselor Discussion  
April 4, 2001**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School (if SRO): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Seating is limited so let us know by **March 21, 2001**, if you would like to participate.