



RESEARCH BRIEF

Center for the Prevention of School Violence
North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

EVALUATING THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER (SRO) APPROACH: THE CENTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE'S ROLE IN THE NATIONAL SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER ASSESSMENT

The Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – Center for the Prevention of School Violence is partnering with Abt Associates of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to conduct an assessment of the School Resource Officer (SRO) approach. The Center was afforded this opportunity because of North Carolina's strong track record with regard to SRO programs. The national assessment of SROs seeks to identify effective program models and practices.

In the national assessment, SRO programs have been divided into four different types of models in order to distinguish program size and history. Programs delineated with regard to the following are being assessed: large, established sites; large, new sites; small, established sites; and small, new sites. Five SRO programs in North Carolina were selected to represent small, established sites as models in the national assessment: Lenoir County Sheriff's Department; Montgomery County Sheriff's Department; Pasquotank County Sheriff's Department; Boone Police Department; and Garner Police Department. These sites qualified as small, established models because the involved law enforcement agencies have fewer than fifty officers and have been involved with the SRO approach since 1995.

Phase One of the national assessment consisted of site visits where data were collected and effective practices were identified. SROs, other non-SRO law enforcement officers, and school personnel were interviewed and SROs were observed as they carried out their duties. A wide variety of topics, ranging from effective practices to challenges involved with the implementation of the program were identified. Data collected from each site include school safety surveys, school violence incidents reports, and weekly reports capturing SRO activities.

Some of the effective practices revealed during the initial phase of the assessment include: good communication between the school system, law enforcement agencies, and community members; a strong leader within the law enforcement agency serving as a role model for other SROs; and specific SRO personality traits including self-motivation and enjoyment for working with students.

Phase Two of the national assessment will consist of the analysis of collected data and the testing of the effective practices identified in Phase One. Follow-up interviews and meetings with school and law enforcement personnel will also take place.

Since its establishment in 1993, the Center has emphasized the importance of SROs serving as law-related educators, law-related counselors, and law enforcement officers. At the conclusion of this project, communities beginning or seeking to enhance their SRO programs can learn from others the effective practices involved in developing, implementing, and maintaining a successful SRO program.