Community and Law Enforcement Partnerships: Strategies for Developing a Partnership to Improve School Climate and Safety Outcomes

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DCJS and the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety

**What do we do?**

- Provide **training** for stakeholders
- Develop and disseminate **resources** to improve school safety
- Facilitate the **annual school safety audit** pursuant to § 22.1-279.8
- Provide **technical assistance** for Virginia school divisions and law enforcement
- Develop **partnerships** to promote school and campus safety in Virginia
History of Community and Law Enforcement Partnerships

- Initial evaluation of traditional policing was started as a result of the Civil Rights Movement (1960s)
- Policing research (1970s) (academic studies)
- Broken Window (1980s)
- Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) (1990s)
Community Policing

“The division between reactive-punitive and proactive-relational policing is the cause of much controversy facing law enforcement today.” – Scott Gellar and Bobby Kipper, Actively Caring for People Policing
Community Policing

- Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. (The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), U.S. Department of Justice)
Problem-oriented Policing

Police are proactive in identifying underlying problems which can be targeted to reduce crime and disorder at their roots.
History of School Resource Officers

- Law Enforcement would periodically provide lectures on bike and traffic safety.
- Flint, Michigan (late 1950s)
  - Utilized primarily to improve relationship between police and youth
  - Part-time assignments
- Tucson (1963)
  - Considered first true SRO Program.
  - Full-time in middle schools
- Los Angeles (1968)
  - Viewed as an informal counselor.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Policing in Schools</th>
<th>Community Policing in Schools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactive response to 911 calls.</td>
<td>Law enforcement officer is assigned to the school “community.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimal school-law enforcement interaction, typically limited to post-incident reporting and investigation.</td>
<td>Ongoing school-law enforcement partnership to address problems of concern to educators, students, and parents.</td>
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<td>Law enforcement role limited to enforcement.</td>
<td>Law enforcement role expanded beyond enforcement to include school safety assessment and planning, crime prevention activities, problem-solving, law related education, and diversion that contributes to positive and supportive school climate.</td>
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<td>Law enforcement viewed as reactive responder to incidents.</td>
<td>Law enforcement viewed as a partner with the school’s “citizens” (students, teachers, administrators) in addressing concerns.</td>
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<td>Information sharing minimal and often reluctant.</td>
<td>Information sharing valued as an important problem-solving tool.</td>
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<td>Inconsistent/inadequate enforcement when incidents are not always reported to law enforcement.</td>
<td>Consistent responses to incidents result in consistent enforcement – both criminal and administrative/disciplinary.</td>
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<td>Law enforcement/other emergency responders not always involved with school crisis/emergency planning.</td>
<td>School crisis/emergency planning routinely involves assigned SRO, other law enforcement and emergency responders.</td>
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<td>Effectiveness measured by arrest rates, response times, calls for service.</td>
<td>Effectiveness measured by the absence/reduced rates of crime and disorder and declines in fear of crime.</td>
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Steps in developing interagency partnerships

- Establishing leadership commitments
  - the superintendent of schools and the chief of police/sheriff must commit their involvement and organizational resources to the partnership.

- Formalizing commitments in an MOU
  - Purpose, roles, schedule for updating and renewing.

- Developing partnership relationships
  - Establish goals and expectations
  - Operations
  - How does the partnership fit into current procedures?
Steps, continued

- Developing operational procedures
  - Law enforcement operations should reflect the partnership philosophy

- Clarifying key issues
  - Crime reporting, differentiating criminal and disciplinary matters, information sharing, searches, arrests, and specifying the role of SROs in threat assessment and school safety audits.
Components of an MOU

- Establishing goals
- Defining roles
  - SRO
    - Law enforcement and safety
    - Informal mentor and positive role model
    - Law related educator (Virginia Rules)
    - Crime prevention specialist (school safety inspection checklist)
  - Building and division level roles
Components of an MOU, cont.

- Information sharing
- Student Code of Conduct v. Criminal Offenses
- Investigation and questioning
- Searches
- Arrests
- Physical intervention
- Crime reporting
- Threat Assessment
- Safety Audit
School to Prison Pipeline

- Center for Public Integrity Report
  - Named Virginia #1 in referring students to law enforcement

1. Virginia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Fallout from the Report

- Led some to push for removal of law enforcement from schools
- Legislation was developed in response to the report.
  - Reporting requirements
- In part, the Children’s Cabinet was formed to address being #1
Children’s Cabinet

- Secretary of Education
- Secretary of Health and Human Resources
- Secretary of Public Safety
- Secretary of Commerce and Trade
Children’s Cabinet Recommendations

**Develop Joint Training Curricula**

DCJS, DOE, DJJ and stakeholders will collaborate to develop curricula for joint training and new training opportunities for school personnel, SROs, law enforcement, parents, and members of the community.
Children’s Cabinet Recommendations, cont.

Revise the Model School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding and Program Guide

The Children’s Cabinet agreed that DCJS will update and revise the SRO Program Guide and model MOU. This will ensure that schools and law enforcement have guidance reflecting the latest best practices and the current language and intent of the Code of Virginia.
compared DCV to DJJ, and DJJ to DCV.

The total number of checkboxes populated was 39,411 which were referred to LE.

The total number of possible matches, based on the computer comparison (including multiples) was 10,668.

After they manually compared and selected the best fit when possible the number of true matches was 5,715.
Correct Data

- 15.8 to 2.3 per 1000 students
- Not #1, but towards the bottom.

But, . . .
Concerns to Consider

• Over 49.4% of referrals to law enforcement in Virginia are black students, yet black students make up only 23% percent of the student population.
• Students with disabilities are referred for suspensions four times more frequently, and are referred to law enforcement at a rate about three times the average.
• These findings indicate the need to dig deeper.
How Can the SRO Program be Leveraged to Reduce Crime, Increase Safety, and Improve School Climate?

- Review climate survey data.
  - DCJS website (Jessica Smith)
  - Use information to make changes
- Campus walks (CPTED) Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
  - School Safety Inspection Checklist
  - maintenance requests
- SRO as a part of RTI, VTSS, etc. . .
Tier I School Safety and Emergency Response

- Survey the property for potential problems.
- Contribute to the development of school emergency plans.
- Serve as the first responder during a school emergency.
- Provide guidance to school staff and students on emergency actions.

-Bobby Kipper
An SRO at Tier I: Prevention

- Train students and staff on law related topics.
- Communicate with parents and the community on law related topics.
- Build relationships in the community.
- Participate in the school’s system of support training and activities.
- Participate in the school-based teams that address safety and conduct.
- Know the school data for discipline referrals, attendance, and achievement.
- Reinforce positive behavior.
- Identify potential areas of concern.
An SRO at Tier II: Intervention

- Provide a bridge to services and community resources that students and families may need.
- Provide conflict management, anger management, problem solving guidance.
- Mentor/Advise students.
- Participate on Student Assistance Team
At Tier III, An SRO should

- Understand the issues that students who need intensive supports face.
- Know about autism, trauma, conduct disorders, etc.
- Be able to respond to students with disabilities appropriately.
- Seek guidance from the educators who work with these students.
Additional thoughts

- SROs should never enforce student code of conduct violations in absence of a criminal offense.
  - Staff may need reminders
  - South Carolina
- An SRO is an excellent liaison between the school and community, courts, and current crime related trends.
- Relationships matter.
Thank you for what you do!

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