VIRGINIA SCHOOL-LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIP GUIDE

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES
VIRGINIA CENTER FOR SCHOOL AND CAMPUS SAFETY

School-Law Enforcement Partnerships Advisory Group

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About the Partnership Guide

Purpose and Intended Users

The *Virginia School-Law Enforcement Partnership (S-LEP) Guide* is intended to serve as a user-friendly resource for members of local law enforcement and school administrators who are directly involved with implementing school-law enforcement partnerships.

The content is the product of a comprehensive review of the field and extensive consultation with those most deeply knowledgeable about S-LEPs at the local, state, and national levels. Numerous publications and other resources were identified, then reviewed and assessed to determine their suitability for inclusion in the *S-LEP Guide*. At the end of the process, the content and related resources included are those from the most authoritative sources that were determined to be the most relevant and useful to intended users – those directly involved with implementing S-LEPs.

There is an intentional emphasis on content directly related to S-LEP implementation and operational issues. Although descriptions are provided of educational and law enforcement philosophies, theoretical frameworks, and key principles that inform policies and practices, the descriptions are brief and intended to provide basic context. For each substantive topic and issue there is a "*To learn more…*" element that lists key publications and/or sources of more in-depth information on topics. As with all *S-LEP Guide* content, the resources listed were carefully selected to be from the most authoritative sources and of greatest relevance and usefulness to intended users.

Uses of S-LEP Guide

While Virginia's Model Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes essential understandings and operational parameters of the partnership, the *S-LEP Guide* is designed to provide more specific best practice guidance and implementation strategies. The Model MOU and *S-LEP Guide* are intended to be used in tandem; one provides a framework, and the other provides implementation guidance. It is anticipated that users will employ the *S-LEP Guide* as a resource, referring to it as needed, multiple times, over an extended period of time rather than reading it all at once and not referring to it again. Consistent with this anticipated pattern of use, there is some limited repetition of content on particularly important issues that needs to be considered from multiple perspectives. For example, issues related to differentiating disciplinary and law enforcement responses to student misconduct must be examined from both legal and operational perspectives. Cross-referencing to closely related issues that should be understood or taken into consideration is also employed.

Organization of *S-LEP Guide*

The *S-LEP Guide* contains five main chapters, three Supplements, and an Appendix containing Virginia's Model MOU. The main chapters begin with a focus on establishing the partnership and the MOU as an operational framework, then describe key roles and responsibilities of law enforcement and school personnel, legal foundations, related operational issues, and approaches to working effectively with students and other members of the school community. The majority of the *S-LEP Guide* is devoted to partnership strategies at the school level.

> **Chapter I. School-Law Enforcement Partnerships** focuses on the emergence of and rationale for S-LEPS, the positive effects of S-LEPs and contributions to safe and supportive schools, and brief explanations of sections of Virginia's Model MOU with cross-referencing to SRO Standards and to

sections of the *S-LEP Guide* and related resources that provide greater detail on implementation strategies. The chapter concludes with a discussion of concerns about law enforcement in schools, features of Virginia's policies and practices that address concerns, and credible sources of best practice guidance to aid partner organizations and front-line SROs and school administrators in implementing effective S-LEPs.

Chapter II. Fundamental Roles and Responsibilities focuses on the roles and responsibilities of school and law-enforcement partners, focusing on roles of law enforcement agencies, the three school resource officer roles, and school division-level administrators and staff. Law enforcement agency and SRO roles and responsibilities are examined in some detail with emphasis on outlining known best practices and authoritative sources of additional information on best practices. For the purpose of introducing SROs to key division-level resources, key school division-level personnel are profiled with emphasis on their roles or potential roles in supporting S-LEP efforts. To further introduce SROs to the school context, the chapter concludes with discussions of school climate and discipline and social and emotional learning.

Chapter III. Legal Issues in School-Law Enforcement Partnerships focuses on reporting of school-related incidents to law enforcement, differentiating disciplinary and law enforcement responses to student misconduct, use of discretion and supportive responses to student misconduct, and legal issues and practices associated with information sharing, questioning, searches, arrests, physical intervention, and student victims' rights. There is an emphasis on establishing foundational understandings at the school division and law enforcement agency levels to ensure policies and procedures of partner organizations support the successful implementation of the partnership.

Chapter IV. Building Effective Partnerships at the School Level focuses on implementing S-LEPs at the school level and contains information most relevant for SROs and school building administrators who collaborate in schools on a daily basis. It begins with a description of the collaborative nature of the SRO-school administrator relationship and focuses on establishing school-specific understandings about day-to-day operations, the handling of student misconduct, crime reporting, threat assessment, crisis planning, and critical incident response. The remainder of the chapter is designed primarily to orient SROs to key stakeholders in the school community, differentiating the roles of SRO and school security officer, strategies for effective communications and relationship-building with key stakeholders. The chapter also provides an introduction to school programs and supports typically found in schools including services for children with disabilities and concludes with an overview of sources of available data on individual schools that may be helpful to SROs in becoming acquainted with their schools.

Chapter V. Understanding and Working Effectively with Students begins with a look at the adolescent brain and implications for school discipline and law enforcement. Then, through the lens of community policing in a school setting, common challenges that students experience are briefly discussed, and specific SRO strategies are listed along with sources of more in-depth information about the challenges and resources for addressing them. Challenges discussed include adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), bullying, child abuse and neglect, trauma, mental health issues, alcohol and other drug use, gangs, homelessness, justice-involved youth, students with disabilities, and human trafficking. The chapter concludes with challenges related to social media and current practices to address risks.

Supplement 1. SRO Toolkit contains resources for SROs in their law enforcement officer and law-related educator roles.

Supplement 2. Strategies for Safe and Supportive Schools provides supplementary information on principles for improving school climate and discipline and basics on Virginia's student behavior and administrative response.

Supplement 3. Key Partnership Resources contains a list of authoritative, Virginia-specific and national resources of high relevance and value in implementing S-LEPs.

Appendix A contains Virginia's Model MOU.

A Note about Web Links –

The *S-LEP Guide* contains numerous web links to key resources and publications. Although links were operational as of August 2022, it is well known that web links are subject to change at any time when host sites move the resource or publication to another location.

Tips: If a link fails, try taking the web address back to the main host site address (i.e., ending in .gov, .org, .edu, .net, and .com). Once at the main website, use the site's "Search" function to locate the topic or publication listed in the *S-LEP Guide*.

Sometimes items are removed from the website where they were originally posted but may have been picked up and posted by another organization's website. An alternative approach is to simply use a search engine of your choice (e.g., Google, Bing, DuckDuckGo) and enter the main title of the resource or publication in the "search" field.

I. School-Law Enforcement Partnerships

The *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-280.2:3 requires each school division in which the law enforcement agency employs school resource officers to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the law enforcement agency. Provisions of the MOU may be tailored to local needs but are required to be based on the model MOU developed by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) – Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS). MOUs must be reviewed and either amended or affirmed every two years or upon the request of either party. Each school board is required to ensure the current MOU is conspicuously published on the division website and to provide notice and opportunity for public input during the period the MOU is being reviewed.

This chapter of the *Virginia School-Law Enforcement Partnership Guide* focuses on establishing the partnership and related policies and procedures at the school *division* and law enforcement *agency* levels. It is most relevant for school division-level administrators and law enforcement officers at the executive and command levels. Following a brief background on community policing in schools, the rationale for and most authoritative sources for best practice guidance are reviewed. Key features of Virginia's policies that effectively address concerns about S-LEPs are also described. The chapter concludes with a cross referencing of sections of Virginia's Model MOU with related sections of the *S-LEP Guide*.

A. *Emergence of School-Law Enforcement Partnerships*

Although law enforcement officers have always provided services to schools, and a few law enforcement agencies placed officers in schools decades ago, only in the past 20 years has the practice of assigning officers to work full-time in schools become widespread. The Congressional Research Service (2018) [https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45251] has estimated there are between 17,000 and 20,000 School Resource Officers (SROs) across the United States. A 2018 report by the National Center for Education Statistics reported that during the 2015–2016 academic year, 42 percent of public schools in the nation reported that they had at least one SRO present at least one day a week.

Today, in Virginia, SROs are in 52 percent of public schools on an at least part-time basis. According to the 2022 School Safety Survey (January 2023) educators reported SROs were assigned on either a *full-time* or *part-time* basis in:

- 88% of Virginia's high schools,
- 79% of middle schools,
- 34% of elementary schools, and
- 45% of the 198 "other" schools, defined as those that do not fit into the high, middle, and elementary categories, such as combined schools or those with a specific purpose (e.g., alternative, technical, special education, correctional education).
- Across all schools (n=1,982), 52 percent reported having SROs in their buildings at least part-time.

Chart 1. Percentages of Virginia Schools with Security Personnel (Full- or Part-Time) in 2021–2022 by school level.
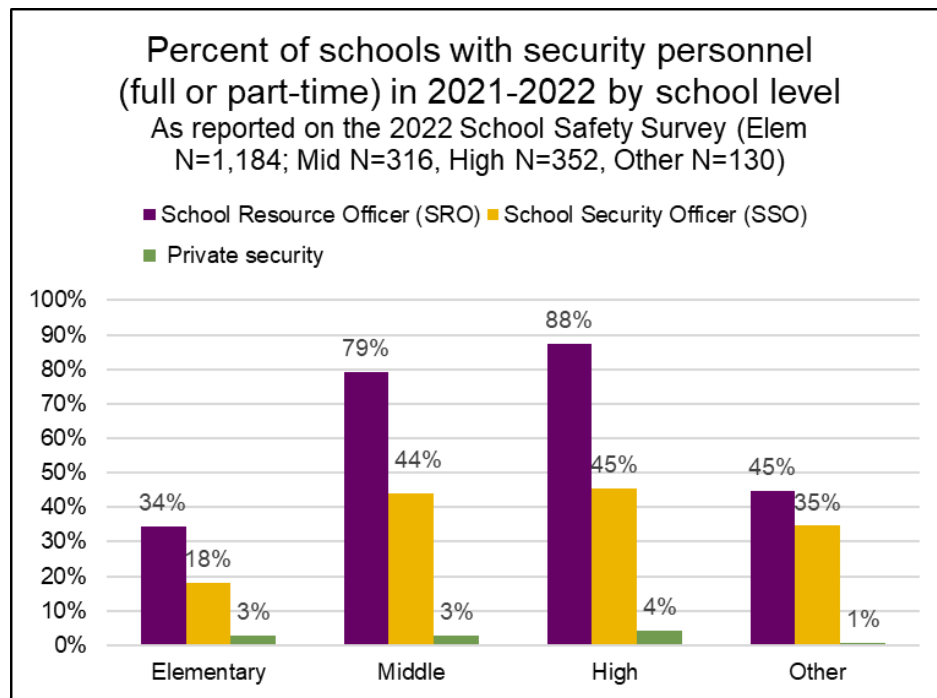
Source: 2022 Virginia School Safety Audit

To Learn More about SRO Programs Nationally and in Virginia

KEY NATIONAL RESOURCES

U.S. Department of Justice, COPS Office –
 SRO Guiding Principles (March 2022)
 School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding (Nov. 2021)
 Supporting Safe Schools webpage

U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice (Joint Resource)
 SECURe – Safe, School-based Enforcement through Collaboration, Understanding and Respect Rubrics (2016)

National Association of School Resource Officers
 NASRO School Resource Officer Program Recommendations (July 2021)

National Sheriffs' Association – School-Based Law Enforcement (Webinar – March 17, 2021)

Congressional Research Service (R45251) School Resource Officers: Issues for Congress (July 5, 2018)

Congressional Research Service (T43126). School Resource Officers: Law Enforcement Officers in Schools (June 26, 2013)

National Institute of Justice. Comparison of Program Activities and Lessons Learned Among 19 School Resource Officer (SRO) Programs (2007).

Federal Bureau of Investigation. Violence Prevention in Schools: Enhancement Through Law Enforcement Partnerships (March 2017)

KEY VIRGINIA-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

[Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety](#)

WEBINAR: [Leveraging Positive Partnerships Between SROs and School Administration: Working Together to Make Our Schools Safer"](#) (Webinar, recorded June 11, 2020)
[2021 School Virginia School Safety Audit Highlights](#) (April 2022)
[An Investigation of School Resource and Safety Programs Policy and Practice in Virginia](#) (2020) by Lawson, G., Welfare, L., Hori, K., Bowers, A., Edwards, C., Bluestein, T., Rowley, P. & Asidi, G.

B. *Community Policing*

School-law enforcement partnerships are best understood from a community policing perspective. The [Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)](#), U.S. Department of Justice, defines community policing in the following way:

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 key elements of this definition reflect the core functions of S-LEPs. Partner organizations:

- align resources and efforts
- engage in proactive and systematic problem solving
- address conditions (going beyond responding to incidents)

The strength of community policing approach is that it does not require a uniform, standardized approach to policing and security. Responsive actions can be tailored to the conditions and resources of individual schools and employ proactive, solution-based, and community driven strategies to address problems identified at the particular school.

C. *Rationale for School-Law Enforcement Partnerships*

There is a broad consensus across most communities that a law enforcement presence is advisable, if not required, in public spaces and especially where large numbers of people gather. Law enforcement officers and/or security officers are routinely seen at ballgames, festivals, and shopping areas and simply patrolling neighborhoods and other places people gather. Schools are settings in which large numbers of communities' most valuable assets – and arguably most vulnerable populations – gather on a daily basis. It is more than reasonable to provide a level of protection in schools comparable to that provided in shopping areas and at ballgames. S-LEPs proactively extend into the school setting the services and protection that law enforcement agencies already provide in the broader community.

Although a few communities placed law enforcement officers in schools decades ago, placement of law enforcement in schools increased significantly following the 1999 Columbine shooting. Flannery *et al* (2021) examined the six-year period 2013 to 2018 and observed that "out of the 55 million children enrolled in our nation's primary and secondary schools, (there existed) less than a one-in-a-million risk for any particular student over that time frame." Despite evidence that schools are among the safest places for children, fear of an active shooter remains high and is heightened further when shootings occur.

Importance School Safety

The importance of school safety as a primary reason for S-LEPs is supported by references to school safety in Virginia's Model MOU in both the statement of purpose and the stated goals:

"The purpose of the S-LEP is to foster relations of mutual respect and understanding in order to build a positive and **safe school environment** and to facilitate effective, timely communication and coordination of efforts for both the SD and the PD/SO."

"The primary goals of the S-LEP and this model MOU are to (i) promote positive and supportive school climates and (ii) create and maintain **safe and secure school environments**."

D. *Comparing Traditional Policing and Community Policing in Schools*

Community policing in schools represents a significant departure from traditional policing. Rather than a reactive response to incidents, community policing in schools involves assigning law enforcement officers to school communities and using collaborative, problem-oriented policing strategies. As the title indicates, SROs serve as a *resource*, not just a response.

Taking a community policing approach, schools and law enforcement agencies engage in ongoing collaboration to address problems of concern. The role of the law enforcement officer is extended beyond law enforcement and incident response to include school safety assessment and planning, crime prevention activities, law-related education, and diversion strategies that contribute to positive outcomes for youth. Such collaborative prevention and early intervention activities contribute directly to positive and supportive school climates.

Communication is valued and becomes ongoing and of high quality as the same officers work daily in the same school "community" with the members of that community. When a community policing approach is employed, law enforcement presence in schools is viewed not as an indicator that schools are unsafe, but an indicator that positive action is being taken to ensure schools are safe and conducive to learning. To members of the community, seeing a law enforcement vehicle in front of a school becomes a sign that good things, rather than bad, are happening.

Just as in the community, community policing in the school setting is *proactive*, *solution-based*, and *community driven*. SROs not only respond to threats to safety and incidents involving violations of law, but also build collaborative relationships to solve problems. The aim is improving the *quality of life* within schools by maintaining order, reducing fear, and contributing to an environment conducive to learning and positive youth development. Table 1 compares some key features of traditional policing and community policing in schools.

Table 1. Comparison of Traditional Policing with Community Policing in Schools

Traditional Policing in Schools	Community Policing in Schools
Reactive response to 911 calls.	Law enforcement officer assigned to support the school "community."
Minimal school-law enforcement interaction, typically limited to post-incident reporting and investigation.	Ongoing school-law enforcement partnership to address problems of concern to educators, students, and parents.
Effectiveness measured by arrest rates, response times and requests for service.	Effectiveness measured by the absence/reduced rates of crime and fear and disorder and declines in fear of crime.
Law enforcement viewed as reactive responder to incidents.	Law enforcement viewed as a partner with members of the school community (students, teachers, administrators) in addressing concerns.
Information sharing minimal and often reluctant.	Information sharing valued as an important problem-solving tool.
Potential for inconsistent/inadequate enforcement if incidents are not consistently reported to law enforcement.	Consistent responses to incidents result in consistent enforcement – both criminal and administrative/ disciplinary.
Law enforcement/other emergency responders not always involved with school crisis/emergency planning.	Assigned SRO, other law enforcement, and emergency responders routinely involved with school crisis/emergency planning.
Law enforcement role limited to 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.

To Learn More about Community Policing

Office of Community Oriented Policing, U.S. Department of Justice.

Community Policing Defined (Revised 2014)

Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (May 2015)

Positive Effects of School-Law Enforcement Partnerships

Positive effects of the presence of law enforcement in school settings are cited in reports from numerous, diverse sources. Examples are brief summarized here.

Canadian Comprehensive Evaluation

Duxbury & Bennell, in their book *Police in Schools: An Evidence-based Look at the Use of School Resource Officers* (Routledge, 2020) identify these SRO Program benefits:

1. Prevention or minimization of property damage in the school and surrounding areas.
2. Prevention of student injuries and even death due to violence, drug overdoses, etc.
3. Reduction of need for schools to call 911.
4. Reductions in the likelihood that a student will end up with a criminal record.
5. Increase in the likelihood that students will get help from social service and health care systems.
6. Increase in feelings of safety among students and staff.

National Threat Assessment Center

Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools (2021), a publication from the National Threat Assessment Center, reported findings from a study of 67 disrupted plots against K-12 schools from 2006–2018. Findings were reported to be "clear and consistent: Individuals contemplating violence often exhibit observable behaviors, and when community members report these behaviors, the next tragedy can be averted." Among key findings and implications:

> *"School resource officers (SROs) play an important role in school violence prevention. In nearly one-third of the cases, an SRO played a role in either reporting the plot or responding to a report made by someone else. In eight cases, it was the SRO who received the initial report of an attack plot from students or others, highlighting their role as a trusted adult within the school community"* (p. 5).

Federal Commission on School Safety

According to the Federal Commission on School Safety, the ability of specially selected and trained SROs to establish trusting relationships with students has been demonstrated to prevent school shootings. There have also been numerous documented instances of SROs directly intervening to quickly mitigate active school shootings. See the full Federal Commission Report for details.

National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention

The National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention has reported that surveys of educators, students, officers, and community members suggest that school-based law enforcement programs are popular and perceived as effective. Survey respondents report that officers can do the following:

1. Increase feelings of safety among students, teachers, and administrators
2. Deter aggressive behavior and empower school staff to maintain order and address behavioral issues in a timely fashion
3. Improve school safety and reduce school-based crime
4. Increase the likelihood that students report witnessing a crime and help reduce community-wide criminality
5. Improve relationships between law enforcement and students

While noting the need for more rigorous research, VCSCS concludes that in communities that opt to use school-based law enforcement as part of their school safety strategy, the evidence to date suggests that *properly selected, trained, and governed SROs can achieve positive outcomes* and avoid the pitfalls linked to some school-based law enforcement programs.

The DCJS Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety emphasizes the great importance of clearly defining and differentiating the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement officers and school administrators, particularly related to student misconduct. This *S-LEP Guide* is intended to provide usable information about strategies and resources to assist SRO programs to achieve high standards of effectiveness.

Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions

Findings from the Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions reflect widespread favorable views of SROs in Virginia in terms of having a positive impact on schools and making students and staff feel safer. The 2022 survey of 9th–12th grade students and Virginia public school staff published found:

Levels of agreement for 2021-2022: "The School Resource Officer (SRO) makes me feel safe at school."
As reported on the 2022 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions

Levels of agreement for 2021-2022: "The School Resource Officer (SRO) makes a positive contribution to the school."
As reported on the 2022 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions
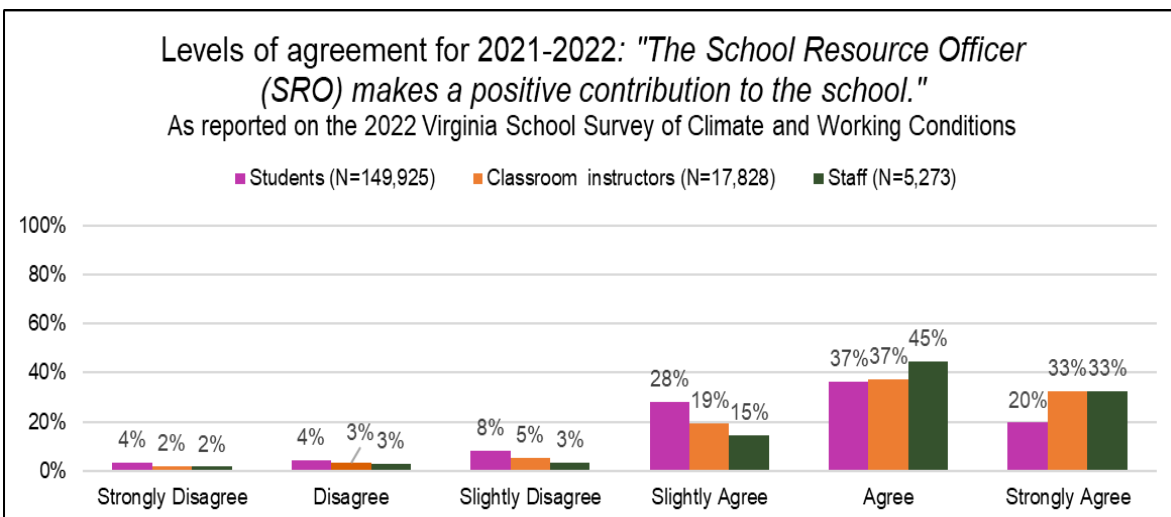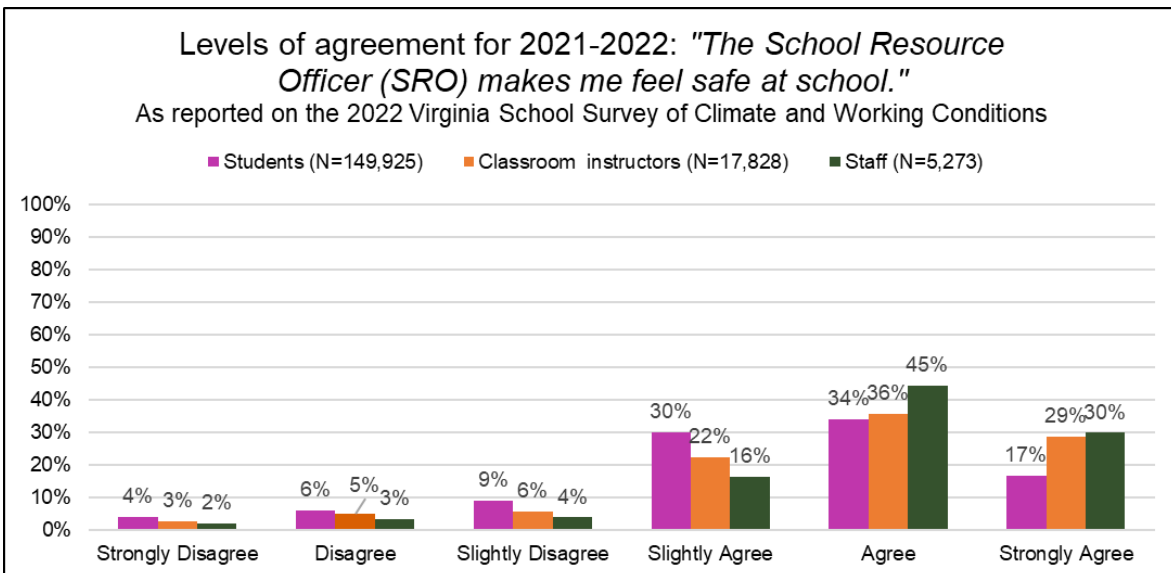
Results for individual school divisions and secondary schools with comparisons to state averages and other schools in the region can be accessed at the Center at: https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/school-safety-survey/secondary-school-climate-survey/results. It is important for SROs to understand these data and to have an understanding of survey results for the schools where they work. Guidance in understanding and using this data for S-LEP evaluation and school-specific safety planning is contained in the related publication *Virginia S-LEP Evaluation Toolkit*.

E. *Virginia's Model MOU: The Partnership Framework*

The MOU establishes the framework in which the SRO program operates, outlining the purposes and goals of the partnership and the fundamental responsibilities of each agency involved. Virginia's Model MOU is included as Appendix A of the *S-LEP Guide*.

This section of the *S-LEP Guide* may be read as an introductory overview of Virginia's Model MOU that briefly examines the elements of the partnership agreement with cross-referencing to related S-LEP Guide content and SRO and SRO Program Standards. Whereas this section simply describes *what* is in the agreement, subsequent chapters of the *S-LEP Guide* contain more in-depth discussions of issues, implementation strategies, and related resources that provide guidance in *how* to implement. More detailed information on SRO and SRO Program Standards is contained in the related publication *Virginia S-LEP Standards and Leadership Tools*.

Parties to the Partnership

The overwhelming majority of MOUs in Virginia and elsewhere are between school divisions and law enforcement agencies. In a few localities, the agreements name local school boards as the contracting entity, rather than the school division. In the absence of controlling laws and regulations, this appears to reflect a local practice related to school board vs superintendent authority to sign contracts and agreements. Whether the school board or the superintendent signs the agreement appears to make no operational difference in partnerships; it is clear that implementation responsibilities fall to the school division and schools.

Authority

The *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-280.2:3 requires each school division in which the law enforcement agency employs school resource officers to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the law enforcement agency. Provisions of the MOU may be tailored to local needs but are required to be based on the Model MOU developed by the DCJS Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS).

Each school board is required to ensure the current division memorandum of understanding is conspicuously published on the division website and provide notice and opportunity for public input during each memorandum of understanding review period.

Purpose

The "purpose" section of the Virginia Model MOU specifies that the purposes of both the MOU and the partnership. Dissecting the stated purposes:

Purposes of MOU:

- To set forth the respective roles and responsibilities of both parties regarding the use of school resource officers (SROs).

- To establish a mutually beneficial partnership that both schools and law enforcement can work within to achieve shared goals.

Purposes of Partnership:

- To foster relations of mutual respect and understanding in order to build a positive and safe school environment.
- To facilitate effective, timely communication and coordination of efforts.

These statements of purposes are followed by a disclaimer that the MOU creates no contractual obligations and an acknowledgement that "the vast majority of student misconduct can be best addressed through classroom and in-school strategies" owing to their lack of maturity and experience that affects judgment.

The MOU then directs readers to this *S-LEP Guide* and to the *S-LEP Standards and Leadership Tools* available on the DCJS website for further details about S-LEPs.

Importance of Statements of Purpose

Statements defining purposes have been very important in legal cases that have called into question actions of educators and of SROs. As a general principle, when actions have stemmed from educational and school safety interests consistent with the pursuit of purposes defined in the MOU, courts have found the actions justified. The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) in its October 2012 report *To Protect and Educate: The School Resource Officer and the Prevention of Violence in Schools* advises:

> "The courts now take the contents of the MOU very seriously when resolving the issues that arise from the presence of a SRO on campus. Every jurisdiction with a school-law enforcement partnership should have such an agreement. The key to the resolution of many of the legal disputes has been found in the language of the MOU itself … A flawed MOU is either one that does not accurately state the intentions of the safe schools team, or one that has not kept up with the changing duties of the SRO after its original implementation. Both instances can create liability for the team or the individuals implementing the plan" (*To Protect and Educate*, p.48,).

Purpose: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter I, Section C. – Rationale for and benefits of partnership. Chapter I, Section D. – Implementation and Practice Guidance. Chapter I, Section F. – MOU as critical framework for partnership implementation. Chapter III, Section A. Overview of Virginia Student Conduct Laws, Policies, and Practice Guidance. Chapter III, Section B. Student Misconduct: Differentiating Disciplinary and Law Enforcement Responses – clarifying appropriate avenues in addressing student misconduct and avoiding inappropriate law enforcement involvement. Chapter III, Section C. Use of Discretion – Use of discretion by school administrators and SROs – minimizing youth involvement with juvenile and criminal justice systems. Chapter V, Section A. Adolescent Development – Adolescent development and implications for school discipline and law enforcement.	The Law Enforcement Agency has established and maintains a current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Local School Division that governs its School-Law Enforcement Partnership (S-LEP). SRO Program policies, procedures, and implementation activities are designed to achieve the two primary S-LEP goals: 1) promote positive and supportive school climates and 2) create and maintain safe and secure school environments.

Goals

The Virginia Model MOU cites two primary goals: 1) to promote positive and supportive school climates and 2) to create and maintain safe and secure school environments.

Actions associated with each of the two goals are cited:

1. Actions associated with *promoting positive and supportive school climates* include increasing law-related education, expanding school safety and crime prevention efforts, reducing conflict, and supporting effective interventions for students.

2. Actions associated with *creating and maintaining safe and secure school environments* are collaboration to reduce and prevent crime, violence, victimization, and fear in and around schools and minimizing youth involvement with the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

Establishing specific goals is of great value in specifying expected outcomes of the partnership and focusing activities to achieve identified goals and objectives. Goals and objectives that are well defined and periodically measured will strengthen accountability and credibility of the partnership with the broader community.

Goals: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter II, Section B-E. School Resource Officer Roles – SRO roles as law enforcement officer, law-related educator, and role model and informal mentor. Chapter IV, Section F. Key school programs and student supports for effective interventions for students. Supplement 1. SRO Tools Supplement 2. Strategies for Safe and Supportive Schools.	SRO Program policies, procedures, and implementation activities are designed to achieve the two primary S-LEP goals: 1) promote positive and supportive school climates and 2) create and maintain safe and secure school environments. The SRO carries out responsibilities in a manner consistent with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing the School-Law Enforcement Partnership (S-LEP) and applicable law enforcement agency policies and procedures.

Evaluation of the School-Law Enforcement Partnership

The Model MOU establishes expectations for jointly developing measurable objectives of the partnership and jointly reviewing and reporting progress at least annually. It also prescribes the use of data related to school-based incidents, school climate survey data, and other data deemed to be relevant.

Partnerships may choose also to establish additional school-specific goals and objectives that support the more global partnership goals at the school division level. For example, if an objective is reducing fights in middle schools, each middle school might have its own performance target for reducing fights.

See the *Virginia School-Law Enforcement Partnership Evaluation Toolkit* for approaches and strategies to evaluate partnerships. The *Toolkit* contains information on sources of a broad range of data readily available in Virginia and guidance in using available data to inform S-LEP evaluations.

Evaluation of S-LEP: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
See the *Virginia School-Law Enforcement Partnership Evaluation Toolkit* for details about evaluation and reporting requirements, relevant data sources, and strategies for meeting requirements for S-LEP evaluation. Chapter III, Section A. and Supplement 2 about use of Virginia SBAR data in S-LEP evaluations.	The SRO Program collaborates with the school division to evaluate performance of the S-LEP in achieving prescribed goals and measurable objectives established and establishes an SRO Program evaluation that assesses the activities and impacts of SROs across schools.

Roles and Responsibilities: Police Department/Sheriff's Office

The Model MOU lists law enforcement responsibilities to designate a point of contact for the law enforcement agency and expectations for the point of contact to address operational and administrative issues, as well as maintaining an especially deep understanding of school rules and regulations and related laws. Depending on the size and organizational structure of partner organizations, the law enforcement point of contact/liaison and the SRO supervisor/coordinator functions may be different persons or assigned to a single person. It is strongly recommended, based on experience, expert opinions, and best practice standards, that the SRO supervisor/coordinator have experience as an SRO.

This section of the Virginia Model MOU also clearly places SROs fully under the control of the law enforcement agency, through the chain of command, and assigns to the law enforcement agency responsibility for ensuring SROs meet training standards in accordance with the *Code of Virginia* §§ 9.1-102(54) and 9.1-114.1. The law enforcement agency is to take into consideration the views of the school division and identified needs and conditions in matters related to policy and personnel.

Law Enforcement Roles and Responsibilities: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter II, Section A. Law Enforcement Partners – SRO qualifications, recruitment, selection, retention, training, and supervision. See also *Virginia School-Law Enforcement Partnership Standards and Leadership Tools*	The SRO Program employs an effective recruitment and retention program to attract and retain effective SROs, reduce turnover, and provide redundance in coverage in case of SRO absence or vacancy. The SRO Program engages in a selection process designed to ensure that officers who become SROs are well-qualified and effective. The SRO Program provides qualified supervisory guidance that facilitates successful implementation and operation of the SRO Program. The SRO Program ensures that SROs are appropriately trained and have opportunities for continuing professional development. The SRO Program establishes an SRO performance evaluation and recognition system for SROs that includes a review of information from multiple sources, supervisory observation, and a mechanism for collecting feedback from students, families, peers, and school administrators and staff.

Roles and Responsibilities: School Division

School division responsibilities include designating a primary division-level point of contact, committing to school administrator support for the partnership, providing work areas for the SRO in each school, and ensuring that school administrators meet training requirements set forth in the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.8(E).

Very importantly, the school division commits to handling discipline within the school disciplinary process without involving SROs and to clearly communicate these perimeters to school administrators, school personnel, and students. SRO involvement in a disciplinary matter is limited to when factual information relevant to the disciplinary matter is gathered or observations by the SRO.

Points of contact designated by school divisions in Virginia vary greatly but division-level administrators responsible for school safety and/or school discipline are often tapped for this role. As noted under "Purpose," differentiating disciplinary and law enforcement responses to misconduct is critically important and is addressed from multiple perspectives in the *S-LEP Guide*.

School Division Roles and Responsibilities: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter II, Section F. School Partners – school division-level roles and responsibilities. Chapter III, Section C. Use of Discretion – use of discretion by SRO, administrator, and juvenile court. Chapter IV, Section B. School-based Implementation Strategies – SRO Location Chapter IV, Section G. Critical Importance of Communication	The SRO Program develops and maintains current informational products designed to effectively communicate information related to the S-LEP and MOU development process and roles and responsibilities of SROs; products are to be designed for key audiences and highly accessible in both print and electronic formats (and other relevant languages where necessary for the parent population).

SRO Roles and Responsibilities

The Model MOU prescribes that SROs should be considered active members of their assigned schools, specifies channels of communication, the need to provide coverage, and key roles of SROs. Some localities choose to include additional information about SRO qualifications, selection, training, duty schedule, and supervision in MOUs; however, most localities place this type information in the law enforcement agency policies and procedures.

Three key roles are identified and described: 1) law enforcement officer, 2) law-related educator, and 3) role model and informal mentor. These roles and related implementation strategies are more fully described in the *S-LEP Guide* and *S-LEP Standards and Leadership Tools*.

SRO Roles: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter II, Section B through E. – introductory descriptions of three key SRO roles. See also *Virginia School-Law Enforcement Partnership Standards and Leadership Tools*	The SRO engages in activities designed to inform members of the school community about the roles and responsibilities of SROs and benefits of the S-LEP. The SRO collaborates effectively with key school and school division personnel. The SRO interacts effectively with all students in an unbiased and culturally competent manner across multiple SRO roles and responsibilities.

SRO Roles: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
	The SRO interacts effectively in an unbiased and culturally competent manner with parents and other members of the public across multiple SRO roles and a broad range of responsibilities.
	The SRO collaborates effectively with community agencies and organizations that assist students and their families.

Law enforcement officer

The law enforcement officer role is identified as the primary role, taking precedence over other roles performed by the SRO, and encompassing not only response to requests for assistance but also crime prevention and promotion of safety.

School Division Roles and Responsibilities: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter II, Section C. – Law Enforcement Officer Role	The SRO provides law enforcement and public safety services to the school, school grounds, and areas adjacent to the school in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, procedures, and best practice guidelines.

Law-related educator

In this role, SROs assist with presentations to school personnel on law-related topics and may also provide law-related education to students using lessons/curricula approved in advance by the SD.

School Division Roles and Responsibilities: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter II, Section D. – Law-Related Educator Role	The SRO serves as a law-related educator in response to identified needs of school personnel, students, and other school community audiences.

Role model and informal mentor

Through formal and informal interaction with students, SROs provide approval, direction and guidance and may, when indicated, refer students to school- and community-based resources.

School Division Roles and Responsibilities: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter II, Section E. – Role Model and Informal Mentor Role	The SRO serves as a role model and informal mentor to students likely to benefit from supportive interaction.

School Administrator Roles and Responsibilities

In addition to listing responsibilities of the school division, the Virginia Model MOU sets out roles and responsibilities of administrators at the school level. Citing Virginia Standards for Accrediting Public Schools, principals are recognized as "the instructional leader and manager of the school and responsible for fostering success of all students by developing, advocating, and sustaining an academically rigorous, positive, and safe school climate for all stakeholders." Additionally, "the school administrator should ensure that the school has written procedures "to follow in emergencies such as fire, injury, illness, allergic reactions, and violent or threatening behavior" and "for responding to violent, disruptive, or illegal activities by students on the school property or during a school activity." School administrators are expected to "review the MOU annually with SROs and establish school-specific operational and communications procedures to support goals of the S-LEP."

The *S-LEP Guide* emphasizes the importance of the SRO and school administrator collaboratively determining school-specific procedures and contains numerous school-level implementation strategies and related resources.

School Administrator Roles and Responsibilities: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter IV, Section B. School-Based Implementation Strategies – school-level implementation strategies and related resources. Chapter IV, Section C. Establishing Critical Operational Specifics – determining school-specific procedures related to criminal vs disciplinary responses to student misconduct, crime reporting, threat assessment, critical incident response, and school safety audits.	The SRO, in collaboration with school administrators, clarifies school-specific operational procedures related to communications, crime reporting, threat assessment, crisis and critical incident planning and response, and other matters necessary for the effective S-LEP operation through an ongoing collaborative process with administrators. The SRO Program reflects a community policing orientation and law enforcement best practices in its operation.

Operational Procedures: Differentiating Disciplinary Misconduct from Criminal Offenses

On the issue of differentiating disciplinary misconduct from criminal offenses, the Model MOU explicitly places responsibility for school discipline with school administrators and teachers and states that SROs should ***not*** be involved with the enforcement of school rules or disciplinary infractions that are not violations of law. It further establishes expectations for interventions that allow students to learn from their mistakes and consideration of alternatives to exclusionary practices and referrals to law enforcement or juvenile courts.

Differentiating Disciplinary Misconduct from Criminal Offenses	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter III, Section A. Overview of Virginia Student Conduct Laws, Policies, and Practice Guidance Chapter III, Section B. Student Misconduct: Differentiating Disciplinary and Law Enforcement Responses Chapter III, Section C. Use of Discretion	The SRO engages in supportive responses to student misconduct.

Operational Procedures: Information Sharing

The MOU specifies that release of student records is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g. and specifies that school officials notify SROs of any special needs students under prescribed circumstances in order to assist the SRO in recognizing and accommodating behaviors that may be manifestations of the student's disability. For purposes of access to student records, SROs are considered "school officials" and may be provided student information as needed to carry out their duties related to the school environment. SROs may also access records with consent of parents or of a student age 18 or older and in the event of a significant and articulable threat to health or safety. It is also made clear that law enforcement records are not subject to FERPA and may be released only for the purposes of ensuring the physical safety and security of people and property in schools and/or enforcement of laws.

Additional information on FERPA and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) are detailed in Chapter III on legal issues along with lists of most authoritative resources for more in-depth information.

Information Sharing: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter III, Section D. Information Sharing – Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and lists of most authoritative sources for additional in-depth information.	The SRO engages in information access and sharing in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and its implementing regulations (34 C.F.R. § 99) and applicable state law (*Code of Virginia* § 22.1-287.1).

Operational Procedures: Investigation and Questioning

The Model MOU makes it clear that SROs have authority to question students who may have information about criminal activity without prior authorization of the school administrator or contacting parents, but that questioning during school hours at school should occur only when delay might result in danger, destruction of evidence, or flight from the jurisdiction. All interviewing should be conducted privately in an office setting and students may remain silent and/or request their parents or attorneys and in accordance with the *Code of Virginia* § 16.1-247.1. It is further made clear that SROs are responsible for leading the investigation and questioning of students related to suspected violations of criminal law and that school administrators are responsible for questioning students about violations of the code of conduct.

Detailed information on investigation and questioning is contained in Chapter III on legal issues along with a list of most authoritative resources related to investigation and questioning.

Investigation and Questioning: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter III, Section E. Questioning – law enforcement investigation and questioning. Supplement 1. Talking with Teens: Basic Strategies for Interviewing See also *School-Law Enforcement Partnership Standards and Leadership Tools*	The SRO assumes the lead in conducting investigations of violations of criminal law, including questioning of students.

Operational Procedures: Searches

All searches – whether by school administrators or SROs – are conducted in accordance with applicable laws and policies. Permissible searches by school administrators based on reasonable suspicion and by SROs based on probable cause are described in the Model MOU which specifically cautions against SRO involvement in administrative searches for law enforcement purposes.

More detailed information on searches is detailed in Chapter III on legal issues.

Searches: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter III, Section F. School Searches – balancing competing interests in school searches, reasonable suspicion, and probable cause; lists of authoritative sources for additional in-depth information.	The SRO conducts all searches in accordance with federal and state laws and applicable school division and law enforcement agency guidelines.

Operational Procedures: Arrests

Whenever practical, arrests of a student or staff member should be accomplished outside of school hours in order to not disrupt the educational process or school setting. Arrests that must occur during school hours or on school grounds should be coordinated through the school administrator to minimize potential disruption. When circumstances do not allow for prior coordination through the school administrator, arrests will be reported to the school administrator as soon as possible. In addition to any required notification of parents and legal guardians by the SRO taking a student into custody, school administrators or their designees are also responsible for an additional notification of parents and legal guardians upon a school-based arrest of their student.

Arrests: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter III, Section G. Detention and Arrest – detaining and arrests of students.	The SRO arrests students in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and applicable law enforcement agency policies and procedures.

Operational Procedures: Physical Intervention by School Personnel

The Model MOU defines physical restraint and prescribes its use by school personnel in accordance with Virginia Board of Education's Regulations Governing the Use of Seclusion and Restraint in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (8VAC20-750) and related local school board policies. Every effort is to be made to prevent the need for use of restraint and then only by personnel trained in its use. The expectation is that school staff will act to de-escalate situations and, if physical intervention is used, it must be reported promptly to the school administrator and the rationale for the action fully documented.

Operational Procedures: Physical Intervention by School Resource Officers

The Model MOU, reflecting DCJS standards, limits SRO physical intervention to situations involving *clear and imminent threat to safety* and as sworn law enforcement officers, for purposes of de-escalating situations. SROs do not engage in seclusion. The Model MOU further states that the SRO should be aware of regulations applicable to school personnel and may attend related training but should continue to operate by policies and procedures of the law enforcement agency. Any instance in which physical intervention occurs is to be reported and fully documented. Additionally, the school division and law enforcement agency are to coordinate to ensure reasonable effort to notify the parents/legal guardians on the day of the incident.

Physical Restraint: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter III, Section H. Physical Intervention – prohibition of corporal punishment, criteria for use of physical restraint by school administrators and other school personnel and physical intervention by SROs.	The SRO provides physical intervention only when necessary in an appropriate manner consistent with applicable laws and law enforcement agency policies, and procedures.

Key Statutory Responsibilities

Crime Reporting

Certain school-related offenses are required to be reported by school officials to law enforcement in accordance with applicable statute(s).

The Model MOU cites statutory requirements for notification of the division superintendent by law enforcement agencies and/or intake officers when a student commits certain offenses and for reporting to

law enforcement by school officials of certain types of criminal activity. The division superintendent is required to report the information to the principal of the school in which the student is enrolled. As a general practice, SROs should notify the principal as soon as practical of any significant law enforcement events occurring at or in association with the school. It is made clear also that no SRO or school administrator will be required to file delinquency charges in response to any law enforcement activity.

The *S-LEP Guide* details statutory requirements, emphasizes the need for clear policies and procedures at both the school division and school building levels, discusses strategies for ensuring required reporting occurs, and lists most authoritative sources for more in-depth information.

Crime Reporting: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter IV, Section C. Establishing Critical Operational Specifics – statutory requirements for crime reporting by schools and by law enforcement and school-based strategies and related resources.	The SRO, in collaboration with school administrators, clarifies school-specific operational procedures related to communications, crime reporting, threat assessment, crisis and critical incident planning and response, and other matters necessary for the effective S-LEP operation through an ongoing collaborative process with administrators.

Threat Assessment

Threat assessment teams are established for each school and operated in accordance with local school board policies consistent with model procedures and guidelines published by DCJS. Threat assessment teams must include persons with prescribed expertise including law enforcement. Effective 7/1/2022, in schools with SROs, the SRO will serve on the threat assessment team and is authorized to assist in the monitoring of subject students and determining the need, if any, for law enforcement action.

Review of MOU: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter IV, Section C. Establishing Critical Operational Specifics – Threat Assessment	The SRO carries out defined responsibilities related to the school's threat assessment process.

School Safety Audits

SROs, in collaboration with school administrators, will conduct school inspection walk-throughs using a standardized checklist developed by the CSCS. SROs and the law enforcement agency are also to collaborate in other school safety audit mandates including school crisis, emergency management, and medical emergency response planning and preparation. Effective 7/1/2022, detailed and accurate floor plans for each school building are to be created and certified as accurate by school boards.

Review of MOU: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter IV, Section C. Establishing Critical Operational Specifics – school safety inspection checklist Chapter IV, Section D. Crisis Planning and Critical Incident Response – Statutory requirements and implementation strategies and resources related to school safety audits.	The SRO provides law enforcement and public safety services to the school, school grounds, and areas adjacent to the school in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, procedures, and best practice guidelines.

Review of MOU

School boards and local law and enforcement agencies are required to review and amend or affirm memorandums of understanding at least once every two years, or at any time upon the request of either party. Further, school boards are required to ensure the current division memorandum of understanding is conspicuously published on the division and to provide notice and opportunity for public input and discussion during each memorandum of understanding review period. The MOU sets an expectation that quarterly meetings of partner points of contact are to occur throughout the year to support successful implementation of the partnership. MOUs remain in force until such time as either party withdraws from the agreement by delivering a written notification of withdrawal at least 45 days prior to the date of withdrawal.

Review of MOU: Related S-LEP Guide Content	Related SRO/SRO Program Standards
Chapter IV, Section G. Effective Communication	The Law Enforcement Agency has established and maintains a current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Local School Division that governs its School-Law Enforcement Partnership (S-LEP).

To Learn More about Establishing School-Law Enforcement Partnerships and MOUs

U.S. Department of Justice, COPS Office –
School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding (Nov. 2021)
How to Write a Compelling Memorandum of Understanding Memorandum of Understanding for your School Resource Officer Program (August 2019)

U.S. Department of Education and Department of Justice
Safe School-based Enforcement through Collaboration, Understanding, and Respect (SECURe) rubrics. Also see in the related publication *Virginia School-Law Enforcement Partnership Standards and Leadership Tools.*
Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety (Dec. 2018)
Report of a Presidential Commission to study and recommend solutions to advance the safety of schools. Features summaries of key issues and sets of recommendations.

Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety
WEBINAR: Leveraging Positive Partnerships Between SROs and School Administration: Working Together to Make Our Schools Safer (Recorded on June 11, 2020)

Older but Still Relevant Publications
Fostering School-Law Enforcement Partnerships (2002) by A. Atkinson. Guide 5: Guides to Creating Safer Schools. Northeast Regional Educational Laboratory; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
A Guide to Developing, Maintaining, and Succeeding with Your School Resource Officer Program (2005) by P. Finn, M. Townsend, M. Shively, & T. Rich. Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.
Assigning Police Officers to Schools (2010) by B. Raymond. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Series. Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice.
SROs, Safe Schools, and the Interagency Agreement (2012) by Bernard James, Pepperdine University.

F. *Addressing Concerns about Law Enforcement in Schools*

In recent years, in the wake of several highly publicized incidents of inappropriate involvement of SROs in school disciplinary situations, concerns have been registered about the presence of SROs in schools (ACLU, 2017). Unfortunately, scholarly research to date has produced a mixture of findings that have not clearly demonstrated that SROs improve school safety. In a recent review of research on school safety (Flannery *et al*, 2021), the authors concluded, "Currently, we cannot say with confidence that the presence of a school resource officer improves school safety…" (p. 246). The authors observed that most studies have had methodological weaknesses (e.g., weak study design; evidence of bias in design or interpretation of findings) that keep the field from reaching a clear conclusion. Another examination of the school policing programs using reviews of the literature and expert panel opinions produced similar inconclusive findings and a set of recommendations for additional, better designed studies and standardization of practices to allow for more controlled studies (McKenna & Petrosino, 2022).

Some studies have found the presence of an SRO to be related to increased recording of drug crimes, crimes involving weapons, and serious violent crimes and interpreted this finding as a negatively (Na & Gottfredson, 2013; Owens, 2016; Weisburst, 2019). Others, however, suggest the increases in recorded offenses may be due to increased surveillance, detection, and/or enforcement rather than actual increases in numbers of crimes (Gottfredson et al, 2020). It is argued that in a context of lax enforcement, increases in recorded incidents should be interpreted as a positive impact.

Still others attribute increases in numbers to a "criminalization" of school-related misconduct (Hirschfield, 2008; Theriot, 2009) and assert that the presence of law enforcement officers in schools increases the numbers of students who enter the justice system. Gottfredson *et al.* (2020), summing up the assertions from multiple studies, wrote, "SROs, by increasing exclusionary responses to school discipline incidents, increase the criminalization of school discipline and in so doing contribute to the 'school-to-prison pipeline.'" Concerns center not only on the criminalization of school-related misconduct but also evidence of disproportionality with students of color and students with disabilities experiencing more sanctions (Hirschfield, 2008; Skiba *et al*, 2018).

Schools' "zero tolerance" policies remain a source of great concern. Pigott *et al* (2017) assert "the apparent lack of school discretion and the presence of strict zero tolerance policies are at the root of an issue that has been termed the 'School to Prison Pipeline' by mass media." Others, however, conclude that it is not the presence of SROs that produced a harsher disciplinary stance but schools' "zero tolerance" policies that were the driver of the trends observed (Welch & Payne, 2018; Lynch & Chappell, 2021).

The debate continues and is not likely to be settled until additional, methodologically sound and unbiased research is conducted. Therefore, it behooves school divisions and law enforcement agencies implementing partnerships to be aware of these concerns and to take action to avoid criminalization of minor offenses and to be aware of potential for bias in the application of responses to student conduct.

National Association of School Resource Officers Position Statement

In response to assertions that the presence of SROs in schools increase the number of students who enter the justice system, contributing to the "pipeline to prison," the NASRO issued a position statement emphasizing the importance of S-LEP agreements requiring SROs to be carefully selected and trained, clearly define their roles, prohibit their becoming involved in formal school discipline situations that are the responsibility of school administrators, and receive training on responses to children with special needs. Virginia's laws, Model MOU, and SRO Standards meet and exceed NASRO recommendations.

Virginia Policies and Practices Responsive to Concerns

Those concerned about criminalization of school discipline, exclusionary responses, and a "school-to-prison pipeline," advocate for disciplinary processes that allow students to learn from their mistakes and avoid unintended negative consequences of involvement with the justice system.

It is important for educators and law enforcement officers involved with implementation of S-LEPs in Virginia to recognize important features of the education and juvenile justice systems in the Commonwealth, as well as standards governing SRO programs, that specifically seek to avoid criminalization of school-related misconduct and exclusionary disciplinary responses by school administrators.

- The Virginia Board of Education has issued Model Guidance for Positive and Preventive Code of Student Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension (June 2021) strongly reinforces responses to student behaviors that are non-exclusionary and rehabilitative rather than punitive.
- Virginia's Court Service Units (entry point for juvenile justice involvement) are deeply committed to diversion of youth from the juvenile justice system as part of their agency's Transformation Plan.
- S-LEPs are formed and implemented in accordance with laws, practice models, standards, and operational guidance that clearly address concerning issues and support approaches being advocated by those expressing concerns. These include a prohibition on SRO involvement in non-criminal matters, use of discretion by SROs and school administrators, and numerous strategies to divert youth from the justice system. Each of these features is discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters of this *Guide*. Standards that apply at both the Officer and Program levels are published in *Virginia S-LEP Standards and Leadership Tools.*

Virginia Data Related to Concerns

In addition to Virginia's Model MOU and practice standards that address concerns about law enforcement officers in schools, findings from studies focused on Virginia and compilations of Virginia-specific data provide little evidence of SROs contributing to the criminalization of misconduct or a "pipeline to prison.

National Institute of Justice Study

A National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice grants-funded study (Award No. 2014-CK-BX-0007) found that referrals to Virginia's juvenile court intake appeared to be well below the national average. According to Principal Investigator and Virginia Tech Associate Professor Gerard Lawson, Ph.D., 14.5 percent of school-based incidents reported to law enforcement actually appeared at juvenile court intake; when calculated as a rate of referral, the rate was found to be 2.3 per 1,000. Although ascertaining an accurate national average rate is difficult due to known errors in data reported nationally, the rate of 2.3 per 1,000 fell *well below* the national average for the period studied (Personal communications with Dr. Lawson, August 1, 2021).

These findings contradict those published by the Center for Public Integrity in April 2015 that claimed Virginia's rate of referrals to law enforcement was three times the national average and a highly publicized report issued in 2016 by the *JustChildren* Program of the Legal Aid Justice Center in Virginia that relied on the Center for Public Integrity data. Unfortunately, it was not acknowledged that the overwhelming majority of incidents to law enforcement were required by Virginia law to be reported and it was later determined that the reports conflated referral to law enforcement with referral

to juvenile justice intake. The impression left by these reports was that reports to law enforcement automatically produced referrals to juvenile court, thus feeding the "pipeline to prison." These errors produced highly inflated numbers and rates that, unfortunately, continue to be cited by some lesser informed advocates.

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice Report

A Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) report using more recent data provides additional perspective on concerns related to criminalization of misconduct and disproportionality. *Statewide Juvenile Intake Complaints from School Resource Officers (SROs), FY 2017–2020* reports the following across the four years reported:

- Complaints from SROs totaled 7.1% of all juvenile intake complaints.
- Less than half (38.6%) of juvenile intake complaints from SROs were petitioned as the initial intake decision, compared to 65.0% from other complainants.
  - As DJJ focuses on increasing diversions as part of the agency's Transformation Plan, the petition rate for complaints from SROs has shifted substantially over the past four fiscal years, decreasing from 47.8% in FY 2017 to 31.2% in FY 2020.
  - Diversion plans for complaints from SROs had slightly higher success rates (87.8%) compared to other complainants (83.4%) across all offense severities.
- Juvenile intake complaints from SROs were slightly less racially disproportionate than complaints from other sources, though Black youth were still disproportionately represented.

Table 2 summarizes numbers of complaints and student enrollment in Virginia across the four years reported. Note that this table reports "complaints" and not students referred to juvenile intake. Multiple complaints may be filed against a single student arising from a single incident; therefore, numbers of incidents will necessarily be higher than numbers of juveniles. Shown for each year are the total enrollment (from the annual September 30 count reported to the Virginia Department of Education), the total number of complaints to Intake (reported by Court Service Units to the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice), the total number of complaints by SROs, and the percentage of total complaints filed by SROs.

It can be seen from these numbers that SROs file about 2.5 complaints per 1000 students enrolled across all grade levels and that this rate is consistent with the NIJ study summarized above. Importantly, the complaints from SROs that are successfully diverted are trending upward.

Table 2. Student Enrollment and Juvenile Intake Complaints, 2017–2020

Student Enrollment and Juvenile Intake Complaints, 2017–2020				
	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Total Enrollment	1,288,033	1,292,706	1,290,513	1,298,083
Total complaints to Intake	54,537	51,079	46,363	41,594
Complaints by SROs	3,239	3,288	4,004	3,163
% of Complaints by SROs	5.9%	6.4%	8.6%	7.6%

*Totals through March 2020 due to Covid 19-related school closures.

Data extracted from Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice report, *Statewide Juvenile Intake Complaints from School Resource Officers (SROs), FY 2017–2020*,

Arrest Data Compilation

Actual arrests in schools are rare. Using arrest data from 2013–2014, *Education Week* in 2017 compiled arrest data for all states. (Source: https://www.edweek.org/which-students-are-arrested-most-in-school-u-s-data-by-school#/overview). The average percentage of students arrested across all states was 0.140 or 1.4 students out of 1,000. The average percentage of students arrested in Virginia was 0.067 – less than half the national average. According to this compilation, out of 1,275,000 students enrolled in Virginia schools in 2013–2014, there were 851 arrests in schools.

Charging Decisions: An Area for Further Investigation

The DCJS Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) has ongoing, extensive contact with SROs throughout Virginia. Within the context of that contact, SROs from across the Commonwealth have reported that decisions to charge are often not SRO decisions, but are influenced, and in some cases determined entirely, by Commonwealth Attorneys, local school boards, parents of victims, and law enforcement agency superiors. The issue of who drives decisions to file complaints with juvenile intake is an issue ripe for further study to better understand variables contributing to decisions to charge and implications for policy and practice.

G. *Implementation and Practice Guidance for School-Law Enforcement Partnerships*

Guidance in implementing S-LEPs is available from several authoritative sources that are highlighted below. What is important for Virginia partnerships to recognize is that Virginia's laws, Model MOU and SRO Standards are consistent with and often exceed known current best practices.

Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS)

The VCSCS is part of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and is the most comprehensive resource for SROs in Virginia.

The Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety offers a wealth of information, training, and technical assistance on:

- K-12 Curriculum and Resources
- K-12 Threat Assessment
- School Resource Officers
- School Security Officers
- School Safety Audit
- VCSCS Training

Guiding Principles for School Resource Officer Programs

In March 2022, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice issued Guiding Principles for School Resource Officer Programs. This is a one-page flyer listing and briefly describing the 12 principles is also available. A comparison of the COPS Guiding Principles and corresponding provisions of Virginia laws governing school-law enforcement partnerships demonstrates that practice standards in Virginia meet and exceed those in the recently published principles.

Guiding Principles

1. **Local decision-making** – Operating an SRO program is a local decision that should be made with significant community input.
2. **Memorandum of understanding (MOU)** – Law enforcement agencies should have a fully executed MOU with the school district(s) where SROs are assigned.

3. **School discipline** – SROs should not be involved in school disciplinary incidents that would normally be handled by teachers, administrators, and other school staff.
4. **Judicious use of law enforcement powers** – SROs should detain, arrest, or use force only as a last resort.
5. **Specialized hiring processes** – Law enforcement agencies should have a collaborative selection process for SROs that includes specialized qualifications and traits.
6. **Tailored performance evaluation and supervision** – Law enforcement agencies should develop systems of evaluation and supervision for SROs that are tailored to their duties and expectations.
7. **Development of transparent data and tracking system** – Law enforcement agencies should develop systems to track SRO duties and activities that are as transparent to stakeholders as the law allows.
8. **Specialized training** – Law enforcement agencies should ensure that SROs receive specialized training that is unique to their role in promoting school safety and distinguishes SRO duties from the duties of general law enforcement officers. School staff should be trained in the operations of SROs and the SRO program.
9. **Student and family engagement** – Law enforcement agencies and school districts should regularly engage in outreach to students, families, and school staff to solicit feedback and collectively problem-solve to address student or community concerns.
10. **Annual program assessment** – SRO programs should be reviewed no less than annually to ensure that they are meeting expectations.
11. **Duty assignments** – When possible, SROs should have fixed duty assignments with one or a limited number of schools.
12. **Community of practice and professional support** – Law enforcement agencies should provide SROs with opportunities to interact with peers and national networks.

SECURe Rubric

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) and the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services have jointly released [Safe, School-based Enforcement through Collaboration, Understanding and Respect (SECURe) Rubrics](#) intended to help schools and law enforcement agencies that use SROs to review and, if necessary, revise SRO-related policies to improve school safety and improve outcomes for students.

The rubric for local schools and law enforcement recommends five action steps that help ensure that SROs are incorporated effectively into school learning environments.

Step 1. Create sustainable partnerships and formalize MOUs among school districts, local law enforcement agencies, juvenile justice entities, and civil rights and community stakeholders.
Step 2. Ensure that MOUs meet constitutional and statutory civil rights requirements.
Step 3. Recruit and hire effective SROs and school personnel.
Step 4. Keep SROs and school personnel well trained.
Step 5. Continually evaluate SROs and school personnel and recognize good performance.

For each of the five action steps of SECURe, there are a) policy recommendations, b) a checklist of establishing new partnerships, and c) a checklist for reviewing and improving existing partnerships.

The full list of policy recommendations and checklists are included Tool #1 in the related Virginia publication *Virginia School-Law Enforcement Partnership Standards and Leadership Tools*.

Safe and Supportive Schools Model

The Safe and Supportive Schools Model shown in Figure 1 below was developed by a national panel of researchers and other experts who concluded that positive school climate involves:

a. **Engagement.** Strong relationships between students, teachers, families, and schools and strong connections between schools and the broader community.

b. **Safety.** Schools and school-related activities where students are safe from violence, bullying, harassment, and controlled-substance use.

c. **Environment.** Appropriate facilities, well-managed classrooms, available school-based health supports, and a clear, fair disciplinary policy.

The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments notes that these areas overlap in many existing frameworks of school climate, and it is critical that all three areas be considered as a single issue in policy and practice.

Figure 1. Safe and Supportive Schools Model

Engagement	Safety	Environment
•Cultural and linguistic competence •Relationships •School participation	•Emotional safety •Physical safety •Bullying/Cyberbullying •Substance abuse •Emergency readiness/ management	•Physical environment •Instructional environment •Physical health •Mental health •Discipline.
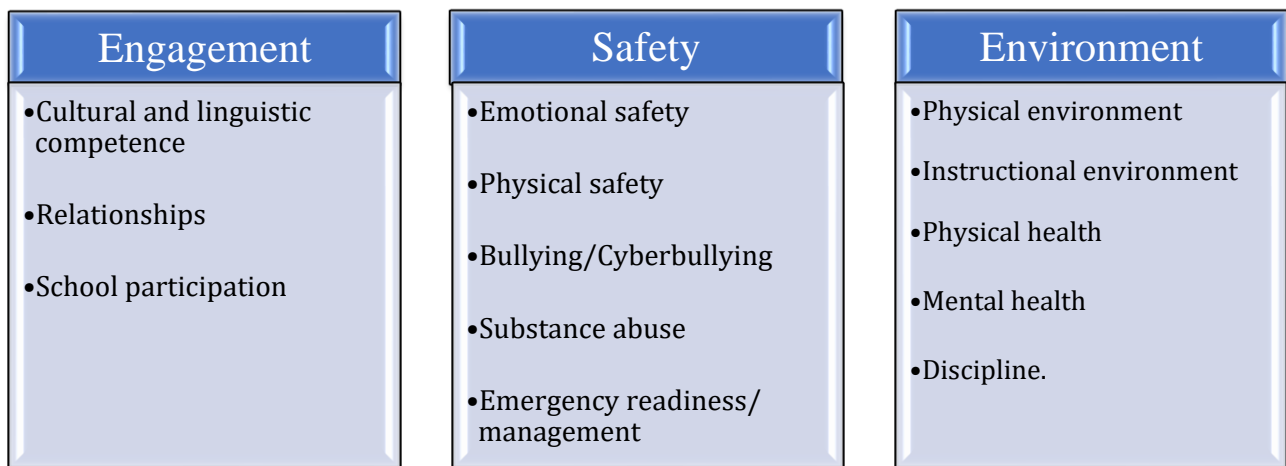
Source: National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

Safety is one of the three main elements of safe and supportive schools and SROs clearly play an integral role in establishing and maintaining safety in their law enforcement officer role. It is evident, however, that SROs can also contribute positively to strong relationships and a favorable environment in their other roles as law-related educators, role models, and informal counselors.

Among the contributions of S-LEPs to safe and supportive schools are:

a. SROs bring to the school the *expertise of public safety specialists*. They provide an immediate response to life-threatening situations, ensure that laws are enforced when illegal activities occur, and work collaboratively with schools to resolve problems that threaten the safety of students and staff. Their presence has a deterrent effect on illegal and disruptive behavior and communicates that the school and larger community have made school safety a priority.

b. SROs *reinforce high expectations* for appropriate behavior and *behavioral boundaries* through enforcement of laws, law-related education, and in their role as role model and informal mentor.

c. The school-law enforcement partnership *reduces serious crime and strengthens perceptions of safety* among students and teachers, improving school climate that positively impacts attendance, achievement, and retention and even rates of graduation.

d. S-LEPs reinforce rehabilitative administrative responses to student conduct employing restorative practices.

See Chapter II for additional information about the multiple dimensions of school climate, their indicators, and how SROs can support each dimension.

Ten Essential Actions for Physical and Emotional Safety in Schools

In a [report to the U.S. Attorney General](#) (2020), a school safety working group representing national law-enforcement organizations, including the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), identified ten essential action steps for physical and emotional safety in schools. The report discusses the rationale for each action step and offers guidance on best practices and most relevant resources. The essential actions for school safety, shown in Table 3, are predicated on these guiding principles:

- A balanced approach to enhance safety and security in the learning environment

- A holistic approach that reflects physical safety, mental health, and personal connections to the school community

- A multidisciplinary approach that involves school personnel – including teachers, administrators, counselors, mental health professionals, and support staff such as janitors and school bus drivers – as well as law enforcement, other first responders, community-based resources, and families

- A focus on attack prevention via intervention rather than solely victim mitigation.

Information related to each of the action steps is contained throughout this *S-LEP Guide*.

Table 3. Essential Actions for Physical and Emotional Safety in Schools

Physical Safety	Emotional Safety
1. Comprehensive school safety assessment	2. School climate
3. Campus, building, and classroom security	4. Anonymous reporting systems
5. Coordination with first responders	6. Behavior threat assessment and management
7. School-based law enforcement	8. Mental health resources
9. Drills	10. Social media monitoring

Source: *Ten Essential Actions to Improve School Safety: School Safety Working Group Report to the Attorney General* (2020).

Five Things to Consider Before Posting Cops in Schools

An article that appeared in *Education Week (*October 2017) and is published online in COPS *Dispatch* (February 2018), describes what we know from decades of experience about placing law enforcement officers in schools. Shown below are key considerations that were published and notations about their status in Virginia that demonstrate sound practices prevalent in Virginia.

1. **We must clearly define roles.** School Resource Officers perform many functions, including educator, mentor/informal counselor, and law enforcement officer. These functions vary by school environment and community needs. But one role the SRO should not play is that of enforcing school discipline. An SRO is sworn to uphold civil law, not enforce school rules. Communities should carefully consider how the role of the SRO differs from and complements that of the school security officer.

   In Virginia, SRO roles and responsibilities are well-defined and involvement with non-criminal matters is clearly prohibited.

2. **We need to make sure that we select the most appropriate officers to work in our schools**. Recall that SROs work for the local law-enforcement agency from which they are assigned. They are partners with the school district, not the administrators' personal 9-1-1 officers. We should therefore pay close attention to candidates' motivations to assume this role. Are they volunteering for the job or have they been assigned to it? Do they really want to help students and keep them out of trouble? School and community members' involvement in the process of interviewing and selecting the SROs can further clarify their roles and expectations.

   In Virginia, the Model MOU clearly places SROs fully under the purview of the law enforcement agency chain of command but allows for input from the school community on personnel matters and on policies and procedures affecting schools. SRO Program Standards address SRO recruitment, selection, and retention in ways that discourage assignments that are not voluntary and set expectations for community input. The collaborative nature of the SRO – school administrator relationship is discussed in Chapter 4, Section B of this Guide.

3. **We must make sure the SROs are adequately prepared to do their job**. Anyone who works in schools should receive special training to better understand today's young people and the problems they face. School Resource Officers' training must be thorough, up-to-date, and go beyond standard training as a law-enforcement officer. In addition to having basic SRO training, these officers should have access to specialized training in accordance with the specific expectations of the local law-enforcement/school/ community partnership. That might include training in adolescent brain development, de-escalating threatening situations, mental-health awareness and how to make referrals, understanding special needs, or more. If the SRO is trained with members of the school community, everyone can be on the same page.

   In Virginia, SROs must be fully qualified and certified law enforcement officers who have demonstrated success in carrying out basic law enforcement duties and are required by law to complete an SRO Basic training prior to or within 60 days of assignment. Additionally, *school administrators are required to meet the training requirements set forth in Virginia Code § 22.1-279.8(E). Training opportunities on a broad array of topics are available through the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety and other authoritative sources.*

4. **We should define policy for a stronger partnership**. What is the policy that guides the partnership between school districts and law enforcement? An official memorandum of understanding (MOU) can clarify the duties and responsibilities of both the law enforcement and school partners so that the entire community understands the role of the SROs. This policy should include a clear statement that enforcing school discipline is not part of their job.

   Virginia's Model MOU clarifies duties and responsibilities and clearly prohibits SRO involvement in school disciplinary matters. Duties, responsibilities, and parameters of authority are further reinforced through training, in this Guide, and in other informational resources.

5. **We must engage community partners**. Keeping schools safe is the responsibility of more than just the education and law-enforcement partners. School/law-enforcement partnerships should identify and team up with other community partners that care about safe schools. For example, local mental-health providers may be able to offer supports to help students and their families when needed.

   Virginia's SRO Standards include an officer standard stating, "The SRO collaborates effectively with community agencies and organizations (e.g., mental health, social services, youth development, domestic violence) that assist students and their families" and sets expectations for SROs to develop working understandings of and collaborative relationships with services and supports in their communities. Additional information and specific strategies are contained in this Guide.

Becoming a Lifelong Learner

Being an effective SRO requires active engagement in continuing professional growth. Some of that professional growth involves participating in trainings – and that is strongly recommended. However, becoming a savvy consumer of information and developing some habits of a lifelong learner will be especially valuable.

Demands of the job often require SROs to learn more about a topic by ***tomorrow*** – not after training that isn't being offered until next month! Strategies for learning more do ***not*** include relying on results of a quick internet search or a recent Facebook post – even if it's from a favorite online community.

For SROs, being a savvy consumer of information involves:
- Relying on authoritative source such as those listed in "To Learn More" sections of this *Guide*.
- Being alert to possible bias, especially when the source is an advocacy organization. Advocacy organizations can sometimes have the best information but it's important to be aware of the possibility that what is published isn't the whole story.
- Looking at whether the information is reasonably current. Look at the date of publication and check content and illustrations.
- Considering whether the information that applies to students is developmentally appropriate. What applies to elementary/middle school students may not apply at all to older adolescents.
- Considering the developmental appropriateness of information is especially important when choosing law-related educational materials.

Lifelong learners are people who continue to learn throughout their lives. They are willing to explore new things and seek to improve their skills and knowledge. Some habits of lifelong learners that serve SROs well include:
- Using almost every opportunity to pick up new knowledge
- Not relying only on structured learning such as formal education and trainings
- Learning from multiple sources (e.g., reading, training, conversations with knowledgeable people)
- Listening more than speaking
- Being self-aware and curious
- Not being afraid to unlearn or re-learn in light of new information
- Aiming for more wisdom and better judgement
- Maintaining a to-learn list

Numerous other habits have been attributed to lifelong learners but these form a firm foundation for ongoing professional growth and success as an SRO.

To Learn More about SRO Best Practices

National Center for School Safety
This national center is focused on improving school safety and preventing school violence. Multiple informational resources, trainings, podcasts, and high-quality videos series especially for SROs are available on the website. SRO Videos (as of fall 2022):

- The First Five Things an SRO Should Do
- The Next Five Things an SRO Should Do
- The Teen Brain
- Cultural Differences: Who Knew?
- Autism Spectrum Disorder

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Policing Services

Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice
Webinar: At the Intersection of School Safety and Supportive Discipline: Navigating the Roles and Responsibilities of School Resource Officers.

U.S. Department of Education

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

School-Justice Partnership
Established in 2015 by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges as a resource for schools and law enforcement agencies with a goal of keeping kids in school and out of the juvenile justice system. The project promotes collaboration and coordination among schools, mental and behavioral health specialists, law enforcement and juvenile justice officials to help students succeed in school and prevent negative outcomes for youth and communities.

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II. Fundamental Partner Roles and Responsibilities

This Chapter focuses on the roles and responsibilities of school and law-enforcement partners, focusing on roles of law enforcement agencies, the three school resource officer roles, and school division-level administrators and staff. Law enforcement agency and SRO roles and responsibilities are examined in some detail with emphasis on outlining known best practices and authoritative sources of additional information on best practices. For the purpose of introducing SROs to key division-level resources, key school division-level personnel are profiled with emphasis on their roles or potential roles in supporting S-LEP efforts. To further introduce SROs to the school context, the chapter concludes with discussions of school climate and discipline and social and emotional learning.

A. *Law Enforcement Partners*

Designed Law Enforcement Point of Contact

> ***From Model MOU***: The PD/SO will designate a direct point of contact between the PD/SO and the SD. The PD/SO point of contact will address any operational and administrative issues and will serve as a consultant for school safety and security issues including assessments and critical incident response planning. The PD/SO point of contact will maintain a working knowledge of school rules, regulations, and laws regarding student safety and conduct. The PD/SO point of contact will establish and maintain effective relationships with school personnel at the division and school levels.

Police Departments/Sheriff's Offices are required to designate a point of contact at the agency level who assumes responsibility to:

- Address any operational and administrative issues
- Serve as a consultant for school safety and security issues, including assessments and critical incident response planning
- Maintain a working knowledge of school rules, regulations, and laws regarding student safety and conduct
- Establish and maintain effective relationships with school personnel at the division and school levels

This role is a critical one, making the designated point of contact an important resource for SROs, particularly in providing authoritative information on policy and resolving any unclear or potentially S-LEP-related policies and procedures. The law enforcement agency and school division points of contact assume primary responsibility for ensure the S-LEP evaluation is conducted, and that the MOU is reviewed in accordance with legal requirements.

Police-Youth Engagement: Practices in Modern Policing (2018) published by the International Association of Chiefs of Police identifies considerations in implementing youth engagement strategies. Considerations include:
1. Select and recruit new law enforcement officers who demonstrate positive qualities of an evolving 21st century officer and who exhibit sensitivity toward youth issues.
2. Train and educate law enforcement officers and members of the community on adolescent brain development and behaviors.
3. Identify youth and other leaders in the community who can help bridge the gap between youth and law enforcement.

4. Take advantage of the various types of social media platforms that youth use.
5. Create non–law enforcement interactions between officers and youth in the community.
6. Form or strengthen partnerships between officers and schools, district attorneys' offices, social service organizations, places of worship, local businesses, and other community stakeholders and collaborate on positive, proactive, and restorative strategies to engage youth and address juvenile justice issues.
7. Use existing and future studies on police-youth relations to implement what works best regarding youth interactions – and publicize the findings.
8. Institute regular health and wellness programs for officers, so they will be better equipped to stay calm and de-escalate situations in which juveniles question their authority.

Legal Definition of SRO

School resource officer is defined in the *Code of Virginia* § 9.1-101 as:

> *From Model MOU*: The PD/SO will ensure the SRO meets the training standards for SROs established by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) pursuant to the *Code of Virginia* §§ 9.1-101(54) and 9.1-114.1.

"School resource officer" means a certified law enforcement officer hired by the local law enforcement agency to provide law enforcement and security services to Virginia public elementary and secondary schools.

Understanding key words from the statutory definition, the SRO must:

▪ *Be a certified law enforcement officer.* SROs have met all requirements to be a law enforcement officer and have authority set forth in state law, including the authority to arrest. Law enforcement officers are "responsible for the prevention and detection of crime and the enforcement of the penal, traffic or highway laws of the Commonwealth." (*Code of Virginia* § 9.1-101)

▪ *Be employed by a local law enforcement agency.* SROs are law enforcement officers who are employed by a local law enforcement agency. They are assigned by the law enforcement agency to work in one or more schools but remain under the administrative control of the law enforcement agency.

▪ *Provide law enforcement and security services to public elementary or secondary schools.* Note the SRO is defined as providing both law enforcement and security services.

▪ Where there is both an assigned SRO and a school security officer (SSO), the division and coordination of security responsibilities is to be determined collaboratively and should be defined in both school policies and procedures and the interagency memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the school division and law enforcement agency.

SRO Minimum Training Standards

The *Code of Virginia* § 9.1-114.1. requires every full-time and part-time law-enforcement officer employed as a school resource officer after July 1, 2020 to comply with compulsory minimum training standards for SROs established by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

Qualifications

Individuals being considered to become SROs should be fully qualified and certified law enforcement officers who have demonstrated success in carrying out basic law enforcement duties. In addition, they should demonstrate:

- Desire to serve as an SRO based on a sound understanding of roles and responsibilities associated with the assignment
- Ability to work well with children and youth either as a law enforcement officer or in other substantive roles (e.g., volunteer work, coaching, church youth activities)
- Character traits known to be associated with SRO success (e.g., calm, approachable, patient, empathetic, flexible, mature, able to work with people from diverse populations)
- Evidence of dependability, sound judgment, and ability to work hard and independently

It is helpful for SROs to have knowledge of the juvenile code and juvenile court procedures and to be skilled in conflict resolution; however, these are knowledge and skills competencies that an officer who meets other qualifications can build early in the SRO assignment.

In *School Resource Officer Program Recommendations* (July 2021), NASRO recommends that officers selected to be SROs have at least three years of law enforcement experience, citing that the experience helps selected officers obtain credibility and to have a greater understanding of their local agency's policies and procedures

Recruitment, Selection, and Retention

> ***From Model MOU***: The PD/SO will be responsible for the selection, assignment, scheduling, training, supervision, and evaluation of SROs. In their performance of law enforcement functions, the SRO will remain at all times under the control, through the chain of command, of the PD/SO.

> ***From Model MOU***: The PD/SO will take into consideration the views of the SD and the identified needs and conditions of the schools when (i) developing and implementing law enforcement policies and practices that may affect schools, and (ii) selecting, assigning, scheduling, training, supervising, and evaluating SROs.

The SECURe Local Implementation Rubric lists the following potential hiring guidelines:

- Ability to work effectively with students, parents, teachers, and school administrators
- An understanding of the importance of diversion programs and alternatives to arrest
- Respect for youth and families of all backgrounds and cultures
- An understanding of developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed practices for interacting with youth
- Strong interpersonal communication skills
- Strong public speaking ability
- Effective law-related teaching and mentoring skills
- Minimum years of experience
- An interest in promoting and enriching the lives of youth
- Knowledge of the specific needs and local concerns of the community

To help identify the most appropriate and well-suited officers for this assignment, inform them during the screening process that they will need to:

- Serve multiple constituencies—school administrators, faculty, students, parents, the community at large, and the police or sheriff's department—with different backgrounds and relationships to the SRO
- Perform many—even a majority of—duties not traditionally associated with being a law enforcement officer, such as monitoring the cafeteria during lunch or counseling troubled kids
- Live with the fact that their "beat" is reduced from a precinct or county to a school and its area
- Overcome fears about standing in front of a classroom
- Attend after-school and (in some cases) weekend events that on occasion may prevent them from attending their own families' events
- Be willing to work harder than they ever thought the position would require—or harder than they ever worked as patrol officers
- Accept being isolated in many respects from the rest of the department

Practice Wisdom from Virginia SROs

A 2020 survey conducted by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) asked SROs "what guidance they would give to a new SRO just starting out." Responses suggest important considerations including the following:

> "This is not a job, it is a passion. This is not the place to set up radar in the hallway. You are here to advocate for the children and keep them safe. You are here to educate them but to also be the go-to person that they can trust. The SRO bridges the gap between law enforcement and the community."

> "This is TOTALLY different work than patrol. Our job is to build relationships with kids to be a positive role model."

> "To be patient with students. You don't know what kind of home life some children might have. You have to be able to communicate with people. You can't bring the street mentality into the schools."

> "Be approachable, work hard on establishing relationships with the student body so people will talk to you about issues that are likely to affect school safety."

> "Flexibility (is most important). Learn how to switch gears because you may be saying good morning to kids to start the day, have to handle an irate parent over a custody issue, and then go read to a class. Being an effective SRO also means building relationships with students and staff. You have to step away from the patrol mindset and be willing to relate to them on a more personal level."

The _National Assessment of School Resource Officer Programs Final Project Report_ describes multiple approaches used by school-law enforcement partnerships for SRO selection and no clear consensus about a preferred approach. Options identified included:

- Final decision was made by the school administrators from a list of qualified applicants from the SRO Supervisor
- School division and school-level administrators were added to the law enforcement agency's interview panel and their views influenced final decisions
- Having the school division safety/security director and/or school administrators of affected schools review personnel files and participate in formal interviews of finalists

The final selection of officers to serve as SROs typically remains with the law enforcement agency but is influenced by the views of school personnel informing the selection process.

SRO Training

Keeping SROs and school personnel well trained is critical for S-LEP effectiveness in operation and success in achieving partnership goals and objectives. Prior to selection, SROs must already be well trained and demonstrate proficiencies in law enforcement basics. In Virginia, SROs are required to complete SRO Basic training prior to or within 60 days of assignment. Law enforcement agencies are responsible for ensuring that SROs meet the training standards for SROs established by DCJS pursuant to the *Code of Virginia* §§ 9.1-102(54) and 9.1-114.1.

The *Code of Virginia* §§ 9.1-102(54) specifies compulsory minimum training standards for certification and recertification of school resource officers requiring the training to be specific to the role and responsibility of a law-enforcement officer working with students in a school environment and include (i) relevant state and federal laws; (ii) school and personal liability issues; (iii) security awareness in the school environment; (iv) mediation and conflict resolution, including de-escalation techniques; (v) disaster and emergency response; (vi) awareness of systemic and individual racism, cultural diversity, and implicit bias; (vii) working with students with disabilities, mental health needs, substance use disorders, or past traumatic experiences; and (viii) student behavioral dynamics, including current child and adolescent development and brain research.

Working within the school environment, however, requires understanding a broad range of additional topics. The National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention recommends specialized training for SROs on these topics in its report *School Resource Officers: Steps to Effective School-Based Law Enforcement*:

- **Mental health.** Training SROs to understand mental illness and mental health problems, recognize signs of emotional disturbance, and intervene in mental health crises can diminish referrals to juvenile court and promote diversion of at-risk youth into mental health services. Experienced officers can champion mental health awareness and increase buy-in among new SROs through active endorsement of mental health training.

- **Adolescent development and communication.** With continued development in key decision-making areas of the brain, youth are more reactive, prone to risk-taking behavior, and influenced by social pressures. Environmental factors (including culture, socio-economic status, and family structure) also impact youth behavior and perceptions. Instruction on adolescent physical and social development and developmentally appropriate communication prepares SROs to respond to youth misbehavior.

- **Implicit bias.** Training officers to understand that all individuals harbor unconscious bias, helping them recognize bias and its impacts, and instructing them on how to implement controlled responses can promote fair and impartial reactions to misbehavior and offenses.

- **Trauma-informed care.** Adverse events (e.g., domestic violence, neglect, physical and sexual abuse) can potentially harm a child's emotional and physical well-being and can lead to behavioral issues. Instruction on how to recognize and respond to the causes and implications of trauma can help officers intervene more effectively when signs of trauma appear.

- **De-escalation techniques.** SROs can benefit from instruction on how to interact with and respond to students in crises using validated communication and behavioral techniques.

- **School-specific topics.** Training in positive school discipline, school crisis planning, and bullying, substance use, truancy, and dropout prevention can help SROs more effectively carry out their duties.

- **Cultural competence.** This type of training prepares SROs to communicate and tailor interventions based on an understanding of student and staff cultures. Culturally competent SROs can work with individuals representing diverse cultures, including students of various socio-economic strata, religions, ethnicities, or countries of origin.

It is also helpful for SROs to gain an understanding of special populations in schools and the types of services and supports that are present for these and other students. Information about students with disabilities and implications for law enforcement is included in Chapter V. Also included in Chapter V are brief descriptions of other challenges that students face (e.g., abuse and neglect, homelessness) and specific related SRO strategies.

A [National Institute of Justice-funded study](#) conducted in Virginia found that the top five areas in which Virginia SROs thought they need more training were:
- working with students with special needs
- mental health issues in childhood and adolescence
- dangerous and threatening students
- bullying
- establishing effective working relationships with parents

Among SRO training best practice recommendations cited in the full [study report](#) that are particularly important to ongoing professional development are the following:

- School administrators should be provided with opportunities to learn about law enforcement and legal issues. This can be accomplished by joint training where school leaders attend SRO training, such as the DCJS School Resource Officer and School Administrator Basic Course, to experience firsthand what SROs are learning.

- One SRO Supervisor described a monthly meeting that involves all the SROs under his supervision coming together to discuss issues, trends, and experiences, and may also include a training component. The meeting location rotates through the different schools. At each meeting, the host SRO is responsible for a 15-minute presentation on an SRO-related topic.

Joint Training with Educators

Experience has shown that SROs can benefit from participating in certain types of in-service opportunities provided in schools, particularly in light of the SROs' role in supporting safe and supportive schools.

By participating in selected in-service opportunities, SROs not only increase their effectiveness, but also help ensure that SROs and educators are "on the same page" when working with students.

SRO Supervision

When law enforcement officers are being assigned to schools, the immediate supervisor can either facilitate the success or ensure the failure of the SRO program.

SRO Supervisors are strongly encouraged to become familiar with the Virginia School-Law Enforcement Standards and Leadership Toolkit that contains Virginia Standards for both Officers and Programs as well as a Toolkit designed for use by SRO Supervisors to help ensure standards are met.

Orientation of the new supervisor should include not only written information on the purpose, philosophy, and operation of the school-law enforcement partnership, but also opportunities to visit and observe successful partnerships in action. For newly established SRO programs, it is strongly recommended that supervisory staff understand, and preferably be experienced in, community policing. It is also recommended that personnel supervising new SRO programs shadow SROs and SRO supervisors in established, well-functioning programs in other jurisdictions.

Most law enforcement agencies have no formal procedures for selecting supervisors for the SRO program beyond what is required by agency policies and procedures. However, departments that have developed formal, detailed procedures for screening candidates for SRO supervisor positions report the process results in the selection of qualified individuals who can best ensure that the program is properly monitored.

According to the COPs publication *Guide to Developing, Maintaining, and Succeeding with Your SRO Program* approaches to effective supervision include:

- ▪ Regular reviews and discussions of SRO records such as activity logs and incident reports
- ▪ Meeting with SROs as a group, which promotes sharing, discussion of common issues and trends, and promotes a esprit de corps among SROs
- ▪ Regularly visiting schools; allowing for observation of SRO interaction with students and staff, and communicates to schools how important the law enforcement agency considers the SRO program to be
- ▪ Maintaining frequent telephone and/or radio communication with SROs, particularly during periods when problematic conditions may be occurring (e.g., gang activity, racial tension, recent critical incident)
- ▪ Seeking school administrator feedback on the SRO program and any school safety-related issues

To Learn More about SRO Qualifications, Selection, Training and Supervision

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice
Assigning Police Officers to Schools (2010) by B. Raymond.
A Guide to Developing, Maintaining, and Succeeding with Your School Resource Officer Program (2005)
    by P. Finn, M. Townsend, M. Shively, & T. Rich.

National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention
School Resource Officers: Steps to Effective School-Based Law Enforcement (September 2013) by
    B. Thomas, L. Towvim, J. Rosiak, & K. Anderson.

B. *An Overview of SRO Roles*

Although there is general agreement about the nature of SRO work, experts do not agree on a single list of roles and responsibilities. Therefore, numbers and titles attached to roles vary in publications from authoritative sources.

The U.S. Department of Justice Guide *Assigning Police Officers to Schools* organizes SRO activities into three general categories:

1. Safety expert and law enforcer – assuming primary responsibility for handling calls for service at the school and serving as first responders in the event of critical incidents

2. Problem solver and liaison to community resources – developing and expanding crime prevention efforts and community justice initiatives for students

3. Educator – presenting courses on topics related to policing or responsible citizenship

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) currently cites three roles (law enforcement officer, public safety educator, and informal counselor/mentor) while early versions of the Virginia SRO Program Guide listed four roles (law enforcement officer, law-related educator, community liaison, and positive role model).

More recently, the COPs website Supporting Safe Schools has identified four roles:

1. Law Enforcer – promotes safety in or around the school by addressing crime and fear of crime and serves as liaison between the school and outside agencies.

2. Educator – teaches topics related to law enforcement geared toward positive student behavior and collaborates with stakeholder groups.

3. Informal Counselor – builds relationships, reinforces positive behaviors, and connects youth with needed services.

4. Emergency Manager – develops and implements comprehensive safety plans or strategies, in coordination with school administrators and local first responders.

Interrelated Nature of Roles

It is clear that different organizations categorize and label SRO roles in different ways but that the roles and responsibilities represented are similar. What is most important is to recognize that the roles are *interrelated* rather than entirely separate, discrete sets of activities. For example, within the context of a student violation of law such as assault and battery, the SRO is likely to respond in the role of law enforcement officer. However, subsequent to the incident, the SRO, acting as role model and informal mentor, may use the incident as an example and help students see better strategies to handle problems that do not lead to assault. In the context of the law-related educator role, the SRO can draw upon experience as a law enforcement officer to speak credibly about what actions constitute violations of law and potential consequences of breaking the law.

*Reference: Virginia S-LEP Guide*e

To Learn More about the SRO Roles and Responsibilities

The Police Foundation
Defining the Role of School-Based Police Officers – An issue brief

National Association of School Resource Officers
School Resource Officer Program Recommendations (2021).
To Protect and Educate: The School Resource Officer and the Prevention of Violence in Schools
(October 2012)
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice
Beyond the Badge: Profile of a School Resource Officer – A Guide for School Communities (2016).

Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention
The Importance of Working with School Resource Officers
Webinar: OJJDP's National Technical Assistance Center (NTTAC) in conjunction with the National
District Attorney's Association provided an overview of the importance of School Resource Officers and
included real-life examples of existing relationships and policies that help to achieve these goals.

Virginia SRO Roles

> *From Model MOU*: SROs should be considered active members of their assigned schools.
>
> To the extent possible, SROs' duty schedules should be organized to provide coverage throughout the school day. SROs provide a visible deterrent to crime and shall be visible patrolling the exterior and interior grounds. SROs should wear the regulation uniform of the employing PD/SO and operate a marked PD/SO vehicle while on duty unless otherwise authorized by the SRO's supervisor.
>
> SROs serve multiple roles in schools. The roles are interrelated, but all are carried out with the aim to contribute to school safety and security and to promote positive and supportive school climates.

While law enforcement agencies are familiar with the roles of SROs, school personnel likely do not have a comparable level of understanding. These descriptions of SRO roles are included in the interest of aiding school personnel's understanding of the roles of SRO. Three roles are featured in this *S-LEP Guide* and they align with the two primary goals of school-law enforcement partnerships.

The role most closely associated with **creating and maintaining safe and secure school environments** is that of law enforcement officer that includes crime prevention and school and public safety functions.

Roles most closely associated with **promoting positive and supportive school climates** are law-related educator and role model/informal mentor.

Examples of ways these roles support S-LEP goals are provided throughout the *S-LEP Guide*.

C. *Law Enforcement Officer Role*

> *From Model MOU*: The SRO facilitates the effective delivery of law enforcement services and assists with matters related to safety, security, and the exchange of information between the SD and the PD/SO.
>
> **Law enforcement officer**
>
> As a sworn law enforcement officer, the primary role of an SRO in a school is as a law enforcement officer. SROs assume primary responsibility for responding to requests for law enforcement assistance from school administrators and coordinating the response of other law enforcement resources to the school. SROs should work with school administrators in problem-solving to prevent crime and promote safety in the school environment. In all cases, the SRO's role as a law enforcement officer should take precedence over any other roles performed by the SRO.

SROs bring to the school setting not only law enforcement services, but also crime prevention and school and public safety expertise.

Law Enforcement Services

In this role, SROs provide *law enforcement services* to the school, school grounds, and areas adjacent to the school.

As certified law enforcement officers, SROs assume a leadership role in law enforcement and public safety matters in schools. Specific operational procedures related to investigation, searches, and arrests should be clearly set forth in written procedures. The law enforcement role can be effective when the officer assigned to a school:

▪ Assumes primary responsibility for handling all calls for service from the school and coordinates the response of other police resources to the school.

▪ Serves as a liaison between the school and the police and provides information to students and school personnel about law enforcement matters.

▪ Is advised of all situations where other units within the law enforcement agency have provided services to the school.

▪ Provides information to the appropriate investigative units of crimes or leads that come to the attention of the officer.

▪ Is kept advised of all investigations by other units that involve students from the assigned school.

▪ Ensures school administrator safety by being present during incidents that may involve weapons, controlled dangerous substances, or in such cases that the student's emotional state may present a serious risk to the administrator.

SROs also serve as members of school threat assessment teams and assist in monitoring of subject students as well as determining the need, if any, for law enforcement action.

Crime Prevention Expertise

Beyond responding to calls for service, the law enforcement officer brings to the school setting expertise in *crime prevention*. Focusing on crime prevention, SROs assist school administrators in problem-solving to address school crime and disorder in collaboration with members of the community.

Problem-solving is a fundamental element of crime prevention. In a neighborhood setting, for example, making the environment inhospitable to drug dealers may involve not only the law enforcement agency but also the coordinated efforts of local departments of zoning, environmental health, sanitation, and traffic engineering. In the school setting, crime prevention also involves coordinated efforts by administrators, teachers, students, parents, in-school intervention programs, and community-based resources. Examples of problems addressed through proactive policing include:

▪ Larcenies in parking areas are addressed by limiting access to property; developing an enforceable parking policy; increasing parking area patrol; involving students in reporting suspicious activities; raising awareness among students, staff, and visitors of risks of leaving items in vehicles.

▪ Fights in the cafeteria are addressed by increasing SRO presence throughout lunch periods, adjusting schedule and patterns of entry/exit from the food line.

▪ Illegal parking on roadway and nearby business lots may be addressed by posting "No Parking" signs; collaborating with business owners to post notices; enforcing ticketing and towing.

▪ Larcenies from locker rooms are addressed by increasing frequency of patrol during the time period larcenies are occurring; installing temporary surveillance cameras outside locker rooms; involving students in being more vigilant and securing personal property.

▪ Graffiti/vandalism at school is addressed by giving classroom presentations about penalties or

requirements for restitution; increasing awareness of students and of parents; establishing crime lines or anonymous reporting systems to receive tips.

- Smoking in the woods behind school before/after school is addressed by increasing surveillance of the area; working with property owners to post "no trespassing" signs; enforcing trespassing violations.

School and Public Safety Expertise

SROs, as part of their law enforcement role, also bring into the school setting expertise in *school and public safety*. They assist school administrators in developing school crisis, emergency management, and medical emergency response plans. They are likely to serve as a first responder in the event of critical incidents such as serious accidents, fires, explosions, shootings, and other life-threatening events. When critical incidents occur, schools become crime scenes. Among activities SROs may undertake are:

- Conducting school safety and security assessments.
- Practicing protocols regularly using tabletop exercises and practice evacuations and lockdowns, then critiquing performance and refining protocols as needed.
- Conducting drills and related staff training to prepare staff for emergency response.
- Coordinating emergency response plans with other emergency responders.

D. *Law-Related Educator Role*

> *From Model MOU*:
> **Law-related educator**
> As resources permit, SROs should strive to assist with presentations to school personnel on law-related topics such as law enforcement practices, changes in relevant laws, crime trends, crime prevention, school safety strategies, and crisis response procedures. SROs may also deliver law-related education to students using lessons/curricula approved in advance by the SD.

Per the Law-Related Education Act of 1978, law-related education has been defined as "education to equip non-lawyers with knowledge and skills pertaining to the law, the legal process, and the legal system, and the fundamental principles and values on which these are based."

Law-related education (LRE) with school personnel and other adults such as parents is designed to inform them about law-related topics such as law enforcement practices, changes in relevant laws, crime trends, crime prevention, school safety strategies, and crisis response procedures.

The *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-253.13:1. was amended in 2022 to require that any physical education class offered to students in grades seven and eight include at least one hour of personal safety training per school year in each such grade level. The training is to be developed and delivered in partnership with the local law-enforcement agency and consists of situational safety awareness training and social media education.

Law-related education (LRE) with students is designed to teach fundamental principles and skills needed to become responsible citizens in a democracy. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, law-related education:

- helps young people avoid delinquent behavior and develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizens.
- enriches social studies, language arts, and science courses through interactive instructional strategies.
- enhances learning by providing opportunities for young people to participate in and take responsibility for their communities.
- equips young people to confront challenging issues such as substance use, crime, and violence.

As *law-related educators*, SROs draw on their expertise about the law and their law enforcement experiences. Because they are representatives of the law, they are in a particularly effective position to communicate to students the consequences of unacceptable behavior.

Involving Other Law Enforcement Resources

Although most frequently used in the social studies classes, law-related education has potential applications in other classes and may be used at any grade level. Law enforcement officers can serve as a valuable resource for classroom presentations that complement the school's curriculum. For example, SROs, or their law enforcement colleagues, can provide presentations on topics such as:

- forensics for a science class
- ballistics or crime scene investigation for a physics class
- crime scene photography for a photography class
- calculating speed of cars from the length of skid marks on grass and pavement for an algebra or physics class

SROs might consider creating and sharing a list of available or potential presentations with teachers at the beginning of each school year. Such presentations not only enrich learning but are excellent opportunities for the public to learn more about policing.

Most law-related education occurs on a scheduled basis. However, events such as an alcohol-related vehicle crash involving students, a high-profile crime affecting the community, or highly publicized trial can sometimes create opportunities for the timely delivery of important related lessons.

See **Supplement 1** for Tips for Effective Presentations with Students at Different Grade Levels and Public Speaking Tips with Adult Audiences.

Law-Related Education Resources

Virginia Rules
[https://virginiarules.org/]
A key resource that SROs can use is Virginia Rules, Virginia's state-specific law-related education program for middle and high school students. Virginia Rules is designed to educate young Virginians about Virginia laws and help them develop skills needed to make sound decisions, to avoid breaking laws, and to become active citizens of their schools and communities.

The Virginia Rules website contains:

- Lessons designed for middle and high school students.

▪ Instructor resources including an Instructor Guide for teaching Virginia Rules lessons. From the website, instructors can access and download lessons with student worksheets, student topical handouts, and supplemental materials.

Virginia Rules Lesson Topics (2022)

Laws in Virginia	Crimes Against Persons
Teens and Employment	Drugs – Overview
Virginia's Judicial System	Property Crimes
Family Relationships and the Law	Prescription Drugs
Juvenile Justice in Virginia	Shoplifting
Bullying	Opioids
A Virginia Courtroom	Student Responsibilities
Gangs	Technology and You
Criminal Law Basics	Keeping Your Driver's License
Teens and Violence	Victims' Rights
Civil Law Basics	Trust and Respect Between Teens and
Dating Violence	Law Enforcement
Legal Rights of Juveniles	Teens and Crime Prevention
Alcohol, Tobacco and Marijuana	

The "curriculum in a box" format is designed to provide instructors with the teaching aids they need at their fingertips: instructors can access and download lessons plans, including student worksheets, student topical handouts, PowerPoints, supplemental materials, and resource links.

In addition to lessons for students, the Virginia Rules website contains an extensive collection of resources and publications for parents and educators and students on the lesson topics. Many can serve as handouts for SRO law-related education activities.

Cyberbullying Research Center
The Cyberbullying Research Center offers numerous up-to-date informational resources suitable to be used as content for brief presentations with students, teachers, and parents. Spanish translations are available for most. Examples of topics (current August 2022):
▪ Sexting
▪ Digital Dating Abuse
▪ Internet Harassment
▪ Digital Reputation
▪ Student Athletes and Social Media
▪ Cyberbullying and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Digital Futures Initiative
Digital Futures Initiative Offers a digital citizenship curriculum designed to be taught by SROs, teaching kids ways to stay safe when using technology. Includes downloadable presentations. Lessons on relationships, distracted driving, substance use, and a Parent Academy.

Street Law
Street Law offers textbooks, lesson plans, and teaching activities they need to be effective educators of law, government, democracy, and rule of law. Resources available for educators, legal professionals, and

community based and civil society organizations. Their legal life skills program offers lessons on financial literacy, personal and public safety, and courts, public policy and civic engagement.

G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training)
G.R.E.A.T. is an evidence-based and effective gang and violence prevention program built around school-based, law enforcement officer-instructed classroom curricula. The Program provides a continuum of components for children and their families including a 13-lesson middle school curriculum, a six-lesson elementary school curriculum, a summer component, and a family component.

National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)
NCPC offers attractive interactive information kits, print materials, and social media toolkits focused primarily on strengthening personal and home safety. Current (August 2022) topical materials include bullying, cyberbullying, home and neighborhood safety, intellectual property theft, and gun safety.

American Bar Association (ABA)
The ABA offers lesson plans with accompanying handouts on a wide range of law-related topics. Although designed for use primarily by classroom teachers, the lessons and other informational resources can easily be delivered by SROs. Numerous State Bar Associations offer state-specific LRE resources.

National White Collar Crime Center (NW3C)
NW3C sponsors Traffick Stop – a human trafficking identification and prevention curriculum for high school students, designed to be delivered by law enforcement officers.

The Hero In You Foundation
Rocket Rules
Sense of Safety & Security – designed for ages Pre-K to 3rd grade with the goal of teaching situational, action and sensory awareness skills that kids can apply in the event of a dangerous situation. SRO lessons and activities available. Materials on hurricane, tornado, wildfire, flood, and earthquake also available.
Coping Tools/Activity Book – a new mental health program children PreK to 2nd grade.
Designed to be taught by SROs in 15–20-minute activities. Subjects available (August 2022): Self-Regulation, Self-Esteem, Identifying Your Emotions, Anxiety, Trauma, Grief and Loss, Empathy, Exercise and Mental Health, Asking for Help, Cyberbullying.

E. *Role Model and Informal Mentor Role*

> *From Model MOU*:
> **Role model and informal mentor**
> Students often seek approval, direction, and guidance from adults in the school setting about various problems. Through formal and informal interaction with students, SROs serve as role models and informal mentors. SROs are expected to communicate clearly to students about acceptable and unacceptable behavior, set a positive example in handling stressful situations and resolving conflicts, show respect and consideration of others, and express high expectations for student behavior. Students who may need additional assistance shall be referred to a school-based resource.

SROs serve as role models and informal mentors through formal and informal interactions with students that increase the visibility and accessibility of police to the school community. Being a positive role

model is a more subtle and unofficial, yet potentially very powerful role that SROs play in schools. It is in the less formal interactions that students often seek approval, direction, and guidance about problems.

Adolescents are at a formative stage of development and can be strongly influenced by the messages – both spoken and unspoken – that they receive. SROs can best serve as positive role models by:

- Setting limits – Being clear about what is acceptable and what is not; letting students know the consequences of unacceptable behavior and the rewards of acceptable behavior

- Setting an example – Demonstrating how to handle stress, resolve conflicts, celebrate successes, and be a friend

- Being honest – Providing accurate information about risks and demonstrating how to express thoughts and feelings in a mature, straightforward manner

- Showing respect – Treating students with respect; expressing high expectations for them

- Providing resources – The word "resource" in the SRO title should not be overlooked

- SROs can serve as crime prevention information resources to the entire school community

Social and Emotional Learning

SROs serving as role models and informal mentors have numerous opportunities to promote social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL involves youth developing core skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Importantly, research has shown that youth who develop these skills manage their emotions and interactions in beneficial ways, have improved educational outcomes, and have significantly decreased likelihood of crime and delinquency, substance use, antisocial behavioral conditions, aggression, and violent behavior.

To Learn More about Police-Youth Engagement and Mentoring

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)
Police-Youth Engagement (2018) – Building on findings of The Task Force on 21st Century Policing, the guide describes how positive police and youth engagement can increase public safety; reduce crime, victimization, and recidivism; and foster trust between young people and law enforcement. The guide also includes background material on the issues surrounding police-youth interactions and examples of model programs for youth engagement.

National Mentoring Resource Center
Funded through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency, U.S. Department of Justice, the center focuses on improving the quality and effectiveness of mentoring with particular focus on youth at risk of juvenile justice involvement. Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring and related Supplements can be downloaded for the Center.

F. *School Division Roles and Responsibilities*

Designated School Division Point of Contact

> *From Model MOU*:
> **School Division Responsibilities**
>
> The SD will designate a primary division-level point of contact between the SD and the PD/SO. The SD point of contact will implement the S-LEP and maintain ongoing communications with PD/SO officials.

Just as required of law enforcement agencies, school divisions are required to designate a point of contact at the school division level who assumes responsibility to:

- Implement the S-LEP and
- Maintain ongoing communications with Police Department/Sheriff's Office Officials.

This role is a critical one, making the designated point of contact an important resource for building-level school administrators, particularly in providing authoritative information on policy and resolving any unclear or potentially S-LEP-related policies and procedures. The school division and law enforcement agency points of contact assume primary responsibility for ensure the S-LEP evaluation is conducted, and that the MOU is reviewed in accordance with legal requirements.

Additional School Division Commitments

> *From Model MOU*:
> **School Division Responsibilities**
>
> School administrators will be responsible for facilitating effective communication between the SRO and school personnel and for supporting the goals of the S-LEP.
>
> Each school with an assigned SRO should provide work area(s) for the SRO that allow access to technologies, private interviewing of multiple persons, and locking storage space for securing physical evidence.
>
> The SD will handle discipline within the school disciplinary process without involving SROs. The SD policies, administrative guidance, training, and ongoing oversight should clearly communicate that school personnel is responsible for school discipline and that law enforcement is not to be involved with disciplinary action, except as may be requested by the SD (e.g., if factual information gathered or observations by the SRO are relevant to a disciplinary matter). The SD is responsible for communicating the goals and role of the SRO to all school administration, personnel, and students.
>
> The SD should ensure that school administrators meet the training requirements set forth in the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.8(E).

In addition to designating a point of contact, school divisions assume responsibility for:

- Facilitating effective communication between SRO and school personnel
- Supporting the goals of the S-LEP

- Communicating the goals and role of the SRO to all school administration, personnel, and students
- Ensuring that school administrators meet training requirements set forth in law

Other commitments are more applicable to building-level implementation including:

- Providing assigned SROs work area(s) that allow access to technologies, private interviewing of multiple persons, and locking storage space for securing physical evidence; and
- Handling discipline within the school disciplinary process without involving SROs.

In further support of schools handling discipline within the disciplinary process without involving SROs, school divisions pledge that:

- School division policies, administrative guidance, training, and ongoing oversight should clearly communicate that school personnel remain responsible for school discipline and that law enforcement is not to be involved with disciplinary action.

Exceptions to SROs being involved in disciplinary processes are limited to when factual information gathered or observations by the SRO are relevant to a disciplinary matter.

From Model MOU:
School Administrator Roles and Responsibilities

Consistent with the Virginia Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, 8 VAC 20-131-210(A), "the principal is recognized as the instructional leader and manager of the school and is responsible for [f]ostering the success of all students by developing, advocating, and sustaining an academically rigorous, positive, and safe school climate for all stakeholders[.]" Additionally, pursuant to 8 VAC 20-131-260(D), the school administration should ensure that the school has written procedures "to follow in emergencies such as fire, injury, illness, allergic reactions, and violent or threatening behavior" and "for responding to violent, disruptive, or illegal activities by students on school property or during a school sponsored activity[.]"

School administrators should review the MOU annually with SROs and establish school-specific operational and communications procedures to support the goals of the SLEP.

In addition to School Division Responsibilities, Virginia's Model MOU sets forth School Administrator Roles and Responsibilities including:

- Recognizing the principal as the instructional leader and manager of the school responsible for fostering success of all students by developing, advocating, and sustaining an academically rigorous, positive, and safe school climate for all stakeholders
- Ensuring that the school has written procedures to follow in emergencies such as fire, injury, illness, allergic reactions, and violent or threatening behavior; and for responding to violent, disruptive, or illegal activities by students on school property or during a school sponsored activity
- Reviewing the MOU annually with SROs and establishing school-specific operational and communications procedures to support the goals of the S-LEP

Chapters III and IV contain a great deal more information on the nature of the SRO-school administrator relationship and strategies for S-LEP implementation at the school building level.

Key School Division Personnel

It is important for SROs to understand how school divisions and schools are organized and to become familiar with key roles and responsibilities of those with whom the SRO interacts. The section focuses on school division-level personnel with emphasis on those that have a clear connection to S-LEP operations and/or may be a resource to SROs. Role descriptions focus on functions most relevant to the S-LEP and work of SROs are not intended to be comprehensive job descriptions which, of course, vary widely across locally administered Virginia school divisions.

A similar section focusing on school building level personnel is contained in Chapter IV. It also is intended to orient SROs to the school environment and to the varied personnel in the school "community" with whom there may be daily contact.

Public education in Virginia is organized into *school divisions* that are in most cases contiguous with cities and counties. School division "*central offices*" vary in size and organization but are typically made up of the superintendent, division and program administrators, and specialists who oversee, coordinate, or otherwise support programs that operate in schools. "Central offices" often include three major operational divisions: instructional services (i.e., reading, mathematics, science, and health education), student support services (i.e., counseling, school social work, and school psychological services) and school operations (i.e., transportation, food service, and maintenance).

Local School Boards

In Virginia, local school boards are the highest education authority in counties and cities; these are *governing* boards – not just advisory. The Virginia Constitution vests the supervision of schools in each school division in a school board (Va. Const. Art. VIII, § 7; see also Va. Code Ann. § 22.1-28). Local school boards have a very broad range of duties and responsibilities specified in the *Code of Virginia*. Most important, they promulgate local policy and regulation for the day-to-day operation of schools. (Va. Code Ann. § 22.1-78).

School Division Superintendent

Division superintendents are appointed by the local school board and typically function as chief executive officers responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school division. Interagency agreements between schools and law enforcement agencies are typically executed between the police chief or sheriff and the school division superintendent.

School divisions typically have one or more deputy and/or assistant superintendents who oversee major areas of the organization. In many smaller Virginia school divisions, a deputy or assistant superintendent is designated the point of contact for the S-LEP.

School Division Emergency Manager

School divisions have been required since 2013 by the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.8. to designate an emergency manager. The emergency manager has the potential to be an important partner to first responders and an enhancement to daily safety in schools. The emergency manager should be included in the school-law enforcement partnership at the agency level and should be apprised of the role of the SRO and coordinate their responses. This may be a role already in place under a different title. Since there were no requirements for an additional person to be hired for this role, many school divisions may find it helpful to realign responsibilities with existing requirements.

The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services publication, *Guidance on Emergency Manager Designee* provides an extensive list of potential responsibilities of the emergency manager designee utilizing responsibilities already required of schools and/or school boards and school divisions.

School Division Disciplinary Hearing Officer

At the school division level, the superintendent administers discipline policy. In most school divisions there is a superintendent's designee who typically conducts disciplinary hearings, has authority to suspend for more than ten days, investigates incidents, and prepares recommendations for action by the school board. Virginia law defines the designee as a "(i) trained hearing officer or (ii) professional employee within the administrative offices of the school division who reports directly to the division superintendent and who is not a school-based instructional or administrative employee" (*Code of Virginia* § 22.1-276.01.B).

School disciplinary officers are often involved in the more serious incidents but typically have a great deal of influence on how all disciplinary policies and procedures are carried out by school administrators across school divisions. Many are responsible for the annual review and revisions to local codes of student conduct. Misconduct that involves violations of law can result in both administrative/disciplinary response and juvenile court action. Therefore, it is important for SROs to know and develop relationships with the school division disciplinary hearing officers to help ensure a coordinated handling and resolution of incidents. In numerous Virginia school divisions, the disciplinary hearing officer is the school division's designated point of contact for the S-LEP.

Instructional Program Supervisors/Coordinators

Educators overseeing instructional programs are also typically based at the school division "central office" and may have a variety of titles (e.g., director, supervisor, coordinator, specialist). These leaders are deeply knowledgeable about school instructional programs and are likely to be important resources in efforts to intervene with students in need of modified or alternative programming.

SROs who are providing law-related education are serving an instructional role that should always complement the ongoing education mission of schools. It is helpful for SROs to know these division-level leaders who can often help open doors to classrooms for law-related education opportunities and advise how law-related education can complement ongoing education.

Student Services Supervisors/Coordinators

Student support services typically encompass counseling, school social work, school psychological services, and may include programs such as those addressing truancy, dropout, drug prevention/intervention. Professionals who oversee these programs and services are typically based at the school division "central office" and may have a variety of titles (e.g., director, supervisor, coordinator, specialist). These professionals are deeply knowledgeable about school programs and services as well as community resources and are likely to be important resources in efforts to intervene with students in need of school and/or community services.

SROs will work on a regular basis with student services professionals in schools when supporting efforts to maintain positive and supportive schools. It is very helpful for the SRO to know those at the school-division level who coordinate or supervise these services in schools. They are the most knowledgeable about division-wide policies, procedures, and practices and can open doors and facilitate relationship-building in schools and provide alternatives to arrest.

School Operations Leadership

Transportation, maintenance, and food services are typically administered at the school division level. Transportation leaders who oversee bus drivers can be very helpful when incidents occurring on buses or at bus stops must be investigated. Similarly, maintenance personnel are likely to be the most knowledgeable about school physical facilities and often have information that is critical in planning for and responding to crises. At the school level, SROs interact daily with bus drivers and with those who maintain schools and provide food services. It is important for SROs to recognize that these personnel play important roles in safety and security on a day-to-day basis and to make a point of meeting these members of the school community.

Homeless Liaison

The McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. § 11432) requires schools to provide services to homeless children and the local liaison is the primary contact between homeless families, schools, and other services providers. Liaisons ensure that homeless children are identified, enrolled in school, their families are referred to needed services, school personnel who serve homeless children receive relevant professional development, and the Act is properly implemented. Liaisons are very knowledgeable about local homeless conditions and related resources. A Directory of local homeless liaisons is maintained on the Project Hope – Virginia.

G. *School Climate and Discipline*

The two goals identified in Virginia's Model MOU are:
1) promote positive and supportive school climates, and
2) create and maintain safe and secure school environments.

Therefore, it is important to understand what "school climate" means and what it involves. The National School Climate Center defines school climate as "the quality and character of school life." Just as community policing focuses on quality-of-life issues, promoting positive and supportive school climates focuses on the quality of school life.

School climate is based on patterns of students', parents', and school personnel's experience of school life; it also reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributory, and satisfying life in a democratic society. A positive school climate includes:

- Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe
- An environment where people are engaged and respected
- Students, families, and educators working together to develop and contribute to a shared school vision
- Educators modeling and nurturing attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning
- Each person contributing to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment

The National School Climate Center has identified 13 dimensions of school climate. Shown in Table 4 are the dimensions with indicators and examples of ways that SROs support each dimension.

Table 4. Dimensions of School Climate with Indicators and How SROs Support Each

Dimensions of Climate	Indicators	Key SRO Support
Safety		
1. Rules and Norms	Clearly communicated rules about physical violence; clearly communicated rules about verbal abuse, harassment, and teasing; clear and consistent enforcement and norms for adult intervention.	Rules and norms are clearly communicated and enforced and reinforced by SRO in all three roles.
2. Sense of Physical Security	Sense that students and adults feel safe from physical harm in the school.	SROs serve as an on-site public safety officer, law enforcement officer and first responder.
3. Sense of Social-Emotional Security	Sense that students feel safe from verbal abuse, teasing, and exclusion.	SRO presence deters crime and disorder and serves as another supportive adult for students.
Teaching and Learning		
4. Support for Learning	Use of supportive teaching practices, such as: encouragement and constructive feedback; varied opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills; support for risk-taking and independent thinking; atmosphere conducive to dialog and questioning; academic challenges; and individual attention.	SROs incorporate and reinforce these approaches, particularly in law-related education and role model/mentor roles.
5. Social and Civil Learning	Support for the development of social and civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions including effective listening, conflict resolution, self-reflection and emotional regulation, empathy, personal responsibility, and ethical decision making.	SROs demonstrate effective listening and empathy while reinforcing emotional regulation and personal responsibility.
Interpersonal Relationships		
6. Respect for Diversity	Mutual respect for individual differences (e.g., gender, race, culture, etc.) at all levels of the school – student-student, adult-student, and adult-adult – and overall norms for tolerance.	SROs are trained to approach students, parents, and other members of the school community in an unbiased and culturally competent manner, reflecting an understanding of norms within diverse communities they serve.
7. Social Support – Adults	Pattern of supportive and caring adult relationships for students, including high expectations for students' success, willingness to listen to students and to get to know them as individuals, and personal concern for students' problems.	SROs are another caring adult in the school to reinforce high expectations and to listen and address students' problems.
8. Social Support – Students	Pattern of supportive peer relationships for students, including friendships for socializing, for problems, for academic help, and for new students.	SROs can involve diverse groups of students in meaningful crime prevention and youth development activities.
Institutional Environment		
9. School Connectedness/ Engagement	Positive identification with the school and norms for broad participation in school life for students, staff, and families.	SROs reinforce positive identification with the school by enhancing safety and security and representing a community service based in the school.
10. Physical Surroundings	Cleanliness, order, and appeal of facilities and adequate resources and materials.	SROs contribute to safe, secure, and orderly environments.
Social Media		
11. Social Media	Sense that students feel safe from physical harm, verbal abuse, teasing, gossip, and exclusion when online or on electronic devices (for example, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms; by email, text messaging, posting photo/video, etc.)	SROs routinely bring advanced investigative tools to incidents involving use of social media, directly enforce serious criminal offenses, and refer related matters to school administrators for appropriate and timely action.

Dimensions of Climate	Indicators	Key SRO Support
Staff Only		
12. Leadership	Administration that creates and communicates a clear vision and is accessible to and supportive of school staff and staff development.	In collaborative, collegial relationships, SROs support and facilitate the work of effective school administrators.
13. Professional Relationships	Positive attitudes and relationships among school staff that support effectively working and learning together.	SROs serve as problem-solving resources, contributing to environments conducive to teaching and learning.

Source for Dimensions and Indicators: National School Climate Center

School Climate and Student Behavior

According to the U.S. Department of Education's *Resource Guide for Superintendent Action*, safe, supportive school climate and discipline are associated with the following improved outcomes:

- Few incidences of school violence as well as increased staff and student feelings of safety

- High academic achievement, including improved grades and test scores

- Strong student attendance, which, in turn, has been associated with improved academic performance and graduation rates

- Minimal engagement in risky behaviors, including substance use

- High levels of student engagement and self-discipline, due in part to the emphasis on cooperative learning and respectful interaction that help promote good behaviors (with less likelihood of being referred to the office for disciplinary reasons or to receive a formal disciplinary action)

- Strong attachment to school and positive student relationships with adults and peers, which are associated with student engagement and satisfaction

- High levels of staff satisfaction, involvement, and investment

Exclusionary Practices Are Mostly Ineffective

Research shows that discipline policies and practices that remove students from engaging instruction – such as suspensions, expulsions, and inappropriate referrals to law enforcement – generally fail to help students improve their behavior and fail to improve school safety. Suspended students are less likely to graduate on time and more likely to repeat a grade, drop out of school, and become involved in the juvenile justice system (Rocque & Snellings, 2018).

Authoritative Schools: High Structure and High Support

The Youth Violence Project at the University of Virginia has conducted extensive research on school climate. Research in developmental psychology has found that children are most successful and well-adjusted when their parents are both strict (high structure) and affectionate (high support). This combination of structure and support has been termed authoritative parenting. Applying this model of good parenting to schools, the project researchers have used school climate surveys in Virginia to identify four climates:

1. Authoritarian – where there is high structure and low support

2. Authoritative – where there is high structure and high support

3. Permissive – where there is low structure and high support
4. Negligent – where there is low structure and low support

The research is continuing but findings to date demonstrate that authoritative schools, compared to schools with other climates, have less teasing and bullying, less student aggression towards teachers; fewer disciplinary infractions for aggressive behavior; high achievement test passing rates; less fighting and weapon carrying at school; less alcohol and marijuana use; and lower suspension rates for Black and White students (Mayer *et al*, 2021; Cornell *et al*, 2021).

Connecting Whole Child Education and a Positive School Climate

The connection between a positive school climate and student learning is more fully discussed in *Educating the Whole Child: Improving School Climate to Support Student Success* (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018) that reports:

"Two recent reviews of research, incorporating more than 400 studies, have found that a positive school climate improves academic achievement overall and reduces the negative effects of poverty on achievement, boosting grades, test scores, and student engagement. The elements of school climate contributing most to increased achievement are associated with teacher-student relationships, including warmth, acceptance, and teacher support. Other features include:
- high expectations, organized classroom instruction, effective leadership, and teachers who are efficacious and promote mastery learning goals
- strong interpersonal relationships, communication, cohesiveness, and belongingness between students and teachers
- structural features of the school, such as small school size, physical conditions, and resources, which shape students' daily experiences of personalization and caring."

To Learn More about School Climate and Discipline

National School Climate Center
    The National School Climate Center offers information about school climate and works with schools using a five-stage process for climate improvement.

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments
    The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments maintains resources on School Climate Improvement including a Parent and Educator Guide to School Climate Resources and a School Climate Resource Package.
    Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Social Emotional Learning
    *School Climate and Social and Emotional Learning: The Integration of Two Approaches (2*018). The brief reviews research on how positive school climates support Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and how improved SEL contributes to improved school climate in elementary and secondary schools. The brief discusses school climate, SEL, and blended models that have effects on school climate and social and emotional competence.

H. *Social and Emotional Learning*

SROs are well positioned to support school efforts to develop social and emotional learning (SEL), particularly in their law-related educator and role model/informal mentor roles.

SEL is a term often used in connection with efforts to promote safety and connection in classrooms. In Virginia Board of Education *Model Guidance for Positive and Preventive Code of Student Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension* SEL skills are described as "vital to student development" and "directly related to Virginia's Profile of a Graduate, which expects students to demonstrate the 'Five C's:' critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and citizenship."

According to CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning), SEL is "the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."

Chapter II References

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III. Legal Issues in School-Law Enforcement Partnerships

This Chapter focuses on legal issues in S-LEPs, reports of incidents to law enforcement, clarifying/ differentiating disciplinary and law enforcement responses to incidents, use of discretion and supportive responses to student misconduct, and issues associated with information sharing, questioning, searches, arrests, physical intervention, and student victims' rights. There is an emphasis on establishing foundational understandings at the school division and law enforcement agency levels to ensure that division-wide and law enforcement agency policies and procedures support the successful implementation of the partnership.

All issues in this chapter should be clearly defined and procedures delineated as fully as possible at the school division and law enforcement agency level and not left to be determined by building administrators and individual SROs.

A. *Reports of Incidents to Law Enforcement Agencies*

> ***From Model MOU***: *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.3:1 (effective 7/1/2022) requires the reporting of certain acts to school authorities; reporting of certain acts by school authorities to parents; and reporting of certain acts by school authorities to law enforcement. [Offenses listed]

Virginia law requires school authorities to report certain acts to law enforcement. It is important to recognize that although schools do not have discretion in reporting required offenses, SROs retain discretion related to filing complaints with the juvenile court. Likewise, the juvenile court services unit intake officers retain discretion in whether petitions will be filed or matters will be handled in other ways, diverting the student from formal juvenile justice involvement. See a discussion on the use of discretion in Chapter III, Section D.

Report of Incidents from Law Enforcement to Schools

> ***From Model MOU***: Pursuant to §§ 16.1-260(G) and 19.2-83.1(B), law enforcement agencies and/or intake officers are required to notify the division superintendent if a student is arrested for certain offenses or subject to a petition alleging that the student committed certain offenses. Division superintendents who receive such reports are required to report the information to the principal of the school in which the student is enrolled.

Procedures around this type of reporting are usually established at the school division/law enforcement agency level/court service unit level. However, it is important for the SRO and principal to know the procedures that have been established and their respective roles in complying with legal requirements.

> ***From Model MOU***: As a general practice, SROs should notify the principal as soon as practical of any significant law enforcement events occurring at or in association with the school (e.g., at a school bus stop or off-campus activity, during or outside school hours). No SRO or school administrator will be required to file delinquency charges in response to any such activity.

Within the context of school, and in accordance with the Model MOU, SROs should notify the principal as soon as practical of any significant law enforcement incident. School-specific practices related to criteria for a "significant law enforcement event and methods of notification will have been determined collaboratively by the SRO and principal.

The last provision of the Model MOU, "No SRO or school administrator will be required to file delinquency charges in response to any such activity" reinforces that discretion regarding response to the activity is retained by both the SRO and administrator. See Section D of this Chapter for more detailed information regarding the exercise of discretion.

Educator Misconduct

Although not addressed in the Model MOU, SROs should be aware of legal requirements for reporting misconduct by school employees. The *Code of Virginia* § 19.2-83.1 requires law enforcement agencies to notify the superintendent of the employing school division whenever a person known to be a school employee is arrested "for a felony or a Class 1 misdemeanor or an equivalent offense in another state."

Guidance is provided to school divisions in Superintendent's Memo #195-22 (dated August 26, 2022), citing the purpose of the law of "weeding offenders out of schools." The memo includes a review of applicable state statutes and education regulations related to educator misconduct.

B. *Overview of Virginia Student Conduct Laws, Policies, and Practice Guidance*

School officials have a direct responsibility for student behavior as well as school safety and security. SROs must avoid involvement in any non-criminal matters and have no responsibilities for school discipline. However, it is important for SROs to become familiar with school division codes of student conduct, school rules, and permissible/recommended ranges of disciplinary responses to violations that are applied in day-to-day practice.

The Virginia Board of Education (the state-level school board) is required to establish guidelines and develop model policies for codes of student conduct to aid local school boards in the implementation of such policies. The statute prescribes a number of items to be contained in the guidelines and model policies (*Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.6). The Virginia Board of Education is also charged with establishing standards for accreditation of schools (*Code of Virginia* § 22.1-253.13:3).

Local school boards are required to adopt codes of student conduct that are consistent with, but may be more stringent than, the guidelines established by the state board. The part of the *Code* that is known as the Standards of Quality requires local school boards to maintain and follow an up-to-date policy manual that includes "standards of student conduct and attendance and enforcement procedures designed to provide that public education be conducted in an atmosphere free of disruption and threat to persons or property and supportive of individual rights" (*Code of Virginia* § 22.1-253.13:7.C.3.). In related law, the codes of conduct must incorporate discipline options and alternatives "to preserve a safe, non-disruptive environment for effective teaching and learning" (*Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.6).

The superintendent administers discipline policy at the school division level. However, in most school divisions a superintendent's designee typically conducts disciplinary hearings, has authority to suspend for more than ten days, investigates incidents, and prepares recommendations for action by the school board. Virginia law defines the designee as a "(i) trained hearing officer or (ii) professional employee within the administrative offices of the school division who reports directly to the division superintendent and who is not a school-based instructional or administrative employee" (*Code of Virginia* § 22.1-276.01.B).

Principals are "recognized as the instructional leader and manager of the school" (Standards of Accreditation - 8VAC 20-131-210.) They are responsible for "Fostering the success of all students by developing, advocating, and sustaining an academically rigorous, positive, and safe school climate for all the stakeholders). Model Guidance specifies principals are responsible for managing student conduct on school premises, on the school bus, and at school sponsored events in accordance

with local board policy and for establishing and implementing a clear, consistent, restorative process consistent with local board policy for removing students from an instructional setting at a teacher's request and for returning the student to the instructional setting.

Teachers have authority to remove a student from a class for disruptive behavior (*Code of Virginia § 22.1-276.2*). The local school board must establish criteria for the removal, documentation, procedures for parental notification, guidelines for alternative assignment, and procedures for return to class.

SROs are strongly urged to review the Virginia Board of Education's *Model Guidance for Positive and Preventive Code of Student Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension* (June 2021) to understand and to become familiar with the local school board student conduct policies and procedures. This document contains Virginia Board of Education student conduct policy guidelines and information on student and parent rights, preventative and positive approaches to discipline, guidance on the application of policy and disciplinary options, specific definitions of violations, alternatives to suspension, and appendices containing information on related policy issues and applicable provisions of the *Code of Virginia*. The guidance provided shapes school division-wide policies that must be well understood by SROs.

While a basic understanding of state-level Model Guidance, SROs need a more in-depth understanding of **local student conduct policies** and practices. Interventions and supports referenced in state guidance may or may not be readily available in particular school divisions and schools. For example, alternative placements or intensive behavioral supports may not be available or have capacity to serve very limited numbers of students. SROs need an accurate understanding of local disciplinary practices and norms at their assigned schools.

In addition to division-wide conduct policies, individual schools typically have **school rules** (e.g., no students allowed in certain areas during certain hours) with which SROs should become familiar. It is made abundantly clear in Virginia's Model MOU and best practice guidance from every authoritative source that SROs have no role in disciplinary matters. However, SROs do need to be sufficiently familiar with division conduct codes and school rules to recognize violations when observed so that they may be reported to administrators for disciplinary response. SROs must refrain from involvement in enforcement but are likely to witness violations and need to be prepared to provide factual information to the disciplinary process.

Approach of Virginia's *Model Guidance*

As the title indicates, the Virginia Board of Education's *Model Guidance for Positive and Preventive Code of Student Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension* (June 2021) articulates preventive and positive approaches to conduct policy and disciplinary responses that reserve exclusionary practices for the most serious violations and/or when other interventions have proven ineffective. Development of the *Model Guidance* was influenced by concerns about evidence of overrepresentation of students with disabilities and African American students in the use of exclusionary practices (i.e., out-of-school suspensions) and a desire for more equitable processes for managing student behavior and reducing exclusionary practices.

Framework for Interventions and Supports

The Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS) provides a framework for instructional interventions and behavioral supports when students do not meet behavioral expectations. The tiered systems is

intended to help reduce the use of punitive, exclusionary practices and features three tiers of support.

Tier 1 supports are universal – for *all students* – and include school-wide prevention efforts such as health curriculum or bullying prevention programs.

Tier 2 involve targeted supports that *some students* (up to 20%) who need to meet behavioral expectations and include interventions to promote social-emotional skills or improve decision-making.

Tier 3 supports are for the *few students* (up to 5%) who require supports based on their individual needs. These wraparound supports may include more intensive mental health intervention.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

In Virginia schools, PBIS is the behavioral component of the Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS). It is a nationally recognized approach to support positive academic and behavioral outcomes for all students. PBIS utilizes a positive approach to shift attention to positive behavior and successful learning systems for students, teachers, and administrators.

To Learn More about VTSS and PBIS

Virginia Department of Education webpage featuring VTSS and PBIS.

Virginia Tiered Systems of Support – The Virginia Department of Education, through a contract with Virginia Commonwealth University, offers training and technical assistance related to Virginia's Tiered Systems of Support.

U.S. Department of Education (USED) –USED Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports – PBIS.org provides schools, school divisions, and states with capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, implementing, adapting, and sustaining a framework for effective school-wide behavioral practices.

Categories of Behaviors and Levels of Administrative Responses

The *Model Guidance* defines five categories of behavior (least to most serious) and five levels of (graduated) administrative response that include both behavioral interventions and disciplinary sanctions. School administrators are required to work within local school board policies but exercise discretion. Although SROs have no role in the application of school discipline policy, understanding how student conduct policies are applied and in what ways discretion is exercised by administrators within a school is an important aspect of an SRO understanding the environment of a school.

More specific information about categories of behaviors and levels of responses is provided in Supplement 2.B. Basics of Virginia's Student Behavior and Administrative Response (SBAR) Reporting.

Classroom Teacher Responses and Interventions

The Virginia Board of Education's *Model Guidance* establishes clear expectations for effective classroom management and detailed guidance on appropriate types of interventions that are to occur *before* an office referral is made. It is very important for SROs to be aware of these expectations for effective classroom management and the fact that teachers are expected to handle all but the most serious behaviors within the classroom using prescribed interventions.

Lists of examples of a) proactive teacher interventions and b) instructional strategies for managing behaviors are provided in Supplement 2.B. Basics of Virginia's Student Behavior and Administrative Response (SBAR) Reporting.

SROs who receive inappropriate requests for assistance with behavior management from classroom teachers should tactfully re-direct teachers to an appropriate administrator for additional support in implementing the teacher interventions and instructional strategies in accordance with policies.

C. *Student Misconduct: Differentiating Disciplinary Misconduct from Criminal Offenses*

Virginia's Model MOU clearly assigns responsibility for discipline to school administrators and responsibility for violations of criminal law to SROs.

> *From Model MOU*:
> **Differentiating Disciplinary Misconduct from Criminal Offenses**
> School administrators and personnel are responsible for school discipline. Although SROs are expected to be familiar with the school division code of student conduct, the rules of individual schools, and their application in day-to-day practice, SROs should not be involved with the enforcement of school rules or disciplinary infractions that are not violations of law.

Elsewhere in the Model MOU, there are addition provisions making that SROs have responsibility only for violations of law and that school administrators handle the disciplinary process without involvement of SROs.

> *From Model MOU*:
> **School Division Responsibilities**
> The SD will handle discipline within the school disciplinary process without involving SROs. The SD policies, administrative guidance, training, and ongoing oversight should clearly communicate that school personnel is responsible for school discipline and that law enforcement is not to be involved with disciplinary action, except as may be requested by the SD (e.g., if factual information gathered or observations by the SRO are relevant to a disciplinary matter). The SD is responsible for communicating the goals and role of the SRO to all school administration, personnel, and students.
>
> **Investigation and Questioning**
> SROs are responsible for leading the investigation and questioning of students related to suspected violations of criminal law. SROs shall not be included in the investigation and questioning of students about student code of conduct violations that do not involve any criminal activity or risk of harm to self or others. School administrators are responsible for the investigation and questioning of students about violations of the code of conduct.

Such policies have been consistently endorsed by authoritative sources of best practice guidance for the past two decades:

As early as 2002, in *Fostering School, Family, and Community Involvement* [https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/book7.pdf] the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Clearinghouse on School Safety advised that experience with school-law enforcement partnerships had taught some important lessons:

▪ Law enforcement officers are not school disciplinarians.
▪ The officer's presence does not reduce the responsibility of teachers and of administrators to enforce school rules and the school division's student code of conduct.
▪ Classroom management rests with the teacher.
▪ Disciplinary responses remain the responsibility of school administrators.
▪ The focus of law enforcement involvement in conduct matters is properly centered on incidents that involve a violation of law.

In a similar message, the *School Discipline Consensus Report* (2014) from the Council of State Governments Justice Center advised:

> *"Policy Statement II: Educators and school officials do not call on officers to respond to students' minor misbehavior that can be appropriately addressed through the school's disciplinary process, and officers use their discretion to minimize arrests for those offenses when possible"* (p.183).

The same clear message is contained in the *School Resource Officer Program Recommendations* (Fall 2021) issued by the National Association of School Resource Officers:

> *"The school resource officer should NOT administer formal school discipline such as detentions, suspensions, or expulsions. These decisions are the sole responsibility of the school personnel."*

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice Guiding Principles for School Resource Officer Programs (published March 2022) includes as one of twelve guiding principles:

School discipline – SROs should not be involved in school disciplinary incidents that would normally be handled by teachers, administrators, and other school staff.

> *SROs should not be involved in disciplining students or be directed to resolve student issues that would otherwise be the responsibility of a teacher or school administrator or subject to the school's internal discipline procedures or school code of conduct. SROs should not respond to incidents that do not pose a threat to safety or involve typical student behavior that can be safely and appropriately handled by a school's internal disciplinary procedures. The COPS Office will continue to stress the importance of this prohibition – any matter that would not require a school to call 911 for service is outside the scope of SROs' law enforcement duties. The administration of student discipline, including student code of conduct violations and misbehavior (such as profanity or dress code violations) is the responsibility of school administrators and teachers. SROs should therefore not enforce compliance with school rules.*

> *The prohibition of SRO involvement in school discipline matters should be discussed by all stakeholders prior to executing the MOU and reiterated to SROs, school staff, and students and families during the school year. If school and district administrators are improperly relying on the SRO to intervene in school discipline incidents, the SRO should report this to their supervisor for immediate resolution.*

D. *Use of Discretion*

Both school administrators and SROs have authority to exercise discretion in response to the vast majority of school-based incidents. Criminalizing misconduct that arises from youthful poor judgment should be avoided if at all possible.

> *From Model MOU*:
> **Purpose**
> The parties agree the vast majority of student misconduct can be best addressed through classroom and in-school strategies. The parties acknowledge that students are generally less mature and responsible than adults; they often lack the experience, perspective, and judgment to recognize and avoid choices that could be detrimental to them; and they are more susceptible to outside pressures than adults.

Discretion by School Administrators

The Virginia Board of Education (June 2021) states disciplinary action should be determined based on the facts of each incident in the reasonable discretion of the school board and other appropriate school officials and be aligned with the levels established by the school board. Additional guidance focuses on the reduction of bias and harassment in the enforcement.

Although school principals are required by the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.3:1.D. to report certain student conduct violations to law enforcement, the statute also states, "Nothing in this section shall require delinquency charges to be filed or prevent schools from dealing with school-based offenses through leveled sanctions or educational programming before a delinquency charge is filed with the juvenile court."

Discretion by SROs

In deciding whether to handle an incident formally or informally, SROs and their law enforcement agency policies should consider:

- Seriousness of offense
- Prior record of student
- Child's age
- Cooperation and attitude of all parties (student, parent, victim) and the possibility of the offense being repeated
- Degree of wrongful intent, violence, premeditation, knowledge of violation
- Likelihood that the student or parent can be successfully referred to a helping resource

Formal handling (e.g., filing of a petition with the juvenile court or filing charges if an adult) is usually required for:

- Acts that if committed by an adult would be a felony
- Acts involving weapons
- Acts involving aggravated assaults
- Acts committed by juveniles already on probation

SROs should reserve petitions to juvenile courts for serious offenses and only after considering alternative consequences that divert students from court involvement.

SROs and school administrators can consider the totality of circumstances to determine what responses best serve the interest of the student and the welfare of the school community. Parties may not achieve full agreement in balancing these interests in all cases. However, good faith efforts to exercise discretion by school administrators and SROs, within their respective spheres of authority, is more likely to balance the interests of the school community and of the student.

Parallel Disciplinary and Juvenile/Criminal Justice Processes

Some offenses may result in students experiencing both disciplinary and juvenile justice/criminal processes. One example is a bomb threat by any student age 15 or older. It is among the incidents school officials are required to report to law enforcement in accordance with the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.3:1. A complaint may also be made to juvenile court intake, resulting in the student experiencing both disciplinary and juvenile justice processes. When the student is age 18 or older, the complaint would go to the District Court and the student would experience both the school disciplinary process and a criminal justice process.

Virginia Juvenile Courts: Potential Partners in Diversion

Often overlooked in discussions of S-LEPs and diversion from justice systems are the juvenile courts and, more specifically, court service units (CSUs) that carry out intake and supervisions throughout Virginia. Experience with SRO programs has shown the value of S-LEPs establishing collaborative relationships with juvenile court judges and their CSU personnel to identify and employ strategies for keeping students on track educationally and out of the justice system.

CSUs, in their intake capacity, are heavily invested in diverting low-risk youth from the justice system and reducing the number of youth on probation. When complaints are received, the intake officer reviews the circumstances of the complaint first to determine whether probable cause exists; if there is insufficient probable cause, the complaint is resolved with no further action. If probable cause exists, in most cases the intake officer has the discretion to informally process or divert the case, file a petition to initiate court action, or file a petition with an order placing the juvenile in a juvenile detention center.

A broad range of diversion options can be used including family counseling, substance use intervention, mental health intervention such as anger management, mentoring, life skills training, community service, restitution, and other rehabilitative and restorative consequences.

Resources for Diversion from Justice Involvement

The School-Justice Partnership National Resource Center, created by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, has produced a wide range of resources to support school-justice partnerships intended to increase understanding and awareness of the adverse effects of exclusionary discipline policies, reduce referrals from schools to the juvenile justice system, and improve school climate through the use of positive school discipline approaches and interventions to increase school engagement and connectedness.

The Partnership cites a wide range of collateral consequences of juvenile adjudication including possible expulsion from school and difficulty entering a new school, trouble obtaining a job, suspended driving license, difficulties joining the military, difficulty attaining financial aid for higher education, financial burdens accrued from court fines, and eviction from public housing. The Partnership's library contains resources intended for law enforcement, including SROs.

To Learn More about the Role of SROs in Diversion

National Resource Center for School-Justice Partnership – Established in 2015 by the national Council of
Juvenile and Family Court Judges as a resource for schools, law enforcement agencies, and to advance
school discipline reform efforts. The purpose of the School-Justice Partnership Project is to enhance
collaboration and coordination among schools, mental and behavioral health specialists, law enforcement
and juvenile justice officials to help students succeed in school and prevent negative outcomes for youth
and communities.

U.S. Department of Justice
How SRO Programs Can Actually Divert Youth from Pipeline (10/15/18) by John Rosiak. Juvenile
Justice Information Exchange.
How SROs Can Divert Students from the Justice System (May 2015) Community Oriented Policing
Services
Diversion from Formal Juvenile Court Processing: A Literature Review (2017) Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention
The Importance of Working with School Resource Officers (Webinar: February 2021).
Webinar from OJJDP's NTTAC in conjunction with the National District Attorneys Association
provided an overview of the importance of School Resource Officers and included real-life examples of
existing relationships and policies that help to achieve these goals.
The NASRO Position Statement on Police Involvement in Student Discipline (2015)

Restorative Justice

Closely related to use of discretion in disciplinary action is use of restorative justice approaches to
school discipline. These practices have emerged in response to unintended negative consequences of
zero tolerance and other exclusionary discipline policies including student "push-out," disproportionate
minority exclusion, and unnecessary juvenile justice involvement.

Within a school context, the main aims of restorative practices are to improve school climate and to
reduce disciplinary responses that exclude children from school (e.g., expulsions and suspensions).
Restorative practices have deep roots in Indigenous communities where the emphasis of criminal justice
stresses repairing the harm done to people and relationships rather than only punishing offenders. A
restorative response requires a different mindset. Table 5 compares traditional and restorative systems.

Table 5. Comparison of Traditional and Restorative Systems

Traditional Systems	Restorative Systems
What law was broken?	Who has been harmed and what harm was done?
Whose fault is it? (Who did it and who do we blame?)	What are their needs?
What do they deserve? (What should the punishment be? How should we punish them?)	Whose obligation is this? (What repair is needed and who is responsible?)

According to the National Center for School Safety's (NCSS) *Introduction to Restorative Practices*,
implementation of restorative practices helps to:

- Reduce crime, violence, and bullying
- Improve behavior
- Strengthen civil society
- Provide effective leadership

- Restore relationships
- Repair harm
- Build stronger and healthier connections with each other

The NCSS publication also makes connections between restorative practices and a multi-tiered system of supports consistent with Virginia's system of administrative responses to student conduct.

Although conceptually appealing and supported by some research (Augustine *et al*, 2018), research evidence has not yet clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of such practices. In a systematic evaluation of restorative justice practices, Katic *et al* (2020) reported that although some studies showed positive outcomes in terms of social relationships and reductions in office discipline referrals, there remains a high degree of variability in implementations and evaluations. The authors point out limitations of the research methods and that some outcomes produced could have been produced by other variables such as policy changes.

As noted by the National Center for School Safety, "successful implementation of evidence-based restorative practices requires program-specific training, the development of aligned policies and procedures, and a commitment to fidelity" (*An Introduction to Restorative Practices*, p. 4).

To Learn More about Restorative Justice in Schools

National Center for School Safety – https://www.nc2s.org
An Introduction to Restorative Practices (August 2022) – a guide for school personnel on what restorative practices are, their benefits, and considerations for their use in school. https://www.nc2s.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/An-Introduction-to-Restorative-Practices.pdf
Podcast series:
Part 1 (35 min.) https://www.nc2s.org/resource/restorative-practices-part-1/
Part 2 (30 min.) https://www.nc2s.org/resource/restorative-practices-part-2/

International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP)
IIRP [https://www.iirp.edu/] focuses on broaden the field of restorative practices by partnering with practitioners, students, and scholars. To learn about efforts in Fairfax, Virginia to develop restorative practices in schools, juvenile justice, and policing, see: https://www.iirp.edu/news/fairfax-virginia-developing-restorative-practices-in-schools-juvenile-justice-policing

E. *Information Sharing*

> *From Model MOU*:
> **Information Sharing**
> The release and sharing of student records is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, and its implementing regulations, 34 C.F.R. Part 99, and the *Code of Virginia* §§ 22.1-287 and 22.1-287.1.

The exchange of information in schools is governed primarily by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is the primary law that governs the privacy of educational records. Where there are health records, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is also applicable.

Information sharing is an important issue to address in the S-LEP MOU and related policies and procedures. SROs in Virginia are typically defined as a "school official with a legitimate educational

interest" and can access most educational records. On a day-to-day basis, most information shared is obtained through an administrator's or other school official's personal knowledge or observation and observations are not defined as education records.

The Virginia Model MOU includes provisions that address SRO access, disclosure with consent and in the event of emergencies, and disclosure of law enforcement records. The *Information Sharing Guide for K-12 Public Schools* (March 2020) offers these guidelines for making information sharing work in Virginia:

- School and law enforcement personnel have broad discretion to, at the very least, immediately share information regarding a potential health or safety emergency where doing so is necessary to protect the health or safety of a student or other individuals.

- There should be a consensus on the criteria under which school personnel may allow law enforcement access to student records. Access to those records can be limited by statutory protection at the federal and state levels for both parties.

- In accordance with the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-79.4 which authorizes and requires schools to establish threat assessment policies and procedures, form a threat assessment team (for which law enforcement expertise is required), and provide guidance to students and staff on recognizing and reporting threatening or aberrant behavior.

- Emphasize the provision of the *Code of Virginia* § 8.01-47 as it grants immunity from civil liability to any person who, in good faith, reports to authorities actions or behavior that may pose a threat to others.

- Recognize that electronic devices may hold key insights into the mindset of students when behaviors resulting in threats to safety are exhibited. School officials are therefore encouraged to incorporate a clear policy and procedure for the seizure and search of electronic devices and the requisites for doing so under criminal law by a law enforcement officer, and under civil law by a school official. Information gathered by law enforcement is not protected by FERPA but is subject to laws as they pertain to seizure and search in the Commonwealth.

- Understand that while school officials and law enforcement should reach agreement on sharing information whenever circumstances allow, especially when time is of the essence, a subpoena, search warrant, and/or court order may be necessary to obtain the information sought in some instances.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The U.S. Department of Education maintains a Privacy Technical Assistance Center that offers several Guides and FAQ publications that are listed in the "To Learn More" following this section. *School Resource Officers, School Law Enforcement Units and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* is a FAQ document that contains 37 commonly asked questions with answers.

Table 6 contains examples of what types of records generally are and are not considered to be education records.

Table 6. Comparison of Education and Non-Education Records

Education Records	Non-Education Records
Transcripts	Records that are kept in the sole possession of the maker and used only as personal memory aids
Disciplinary records	Law enforcement unit records
Standardized test results	Grades on peer-guided papers before they are collected and recorded by a teacher
Health (including mental health) and family history records	Records created or received by a school after an individual is no longer in attendance and that are not directly related to the individual's attendance at the school
Records on services provided to students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Employee records that relate exclusively to an individual in that individual's capacity as an employee
Records on services and accommodations provided to students under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the ADA	Information obtained through a school official's personal knowledge or observation and not from the student's education records

Source: U.S. Department of Education. *Balancing Student Privacy and School Safety: A Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act for Elementary and Secondary Schools.*

Who May Access *FERPA*-Protected Education Records?

"School officials with a legitimate educational interest" may access FERPA-protected education records. Schools determine the criteria for who is considered a school official with a legitimate educational interest under FERPA regulations, and it generally includes teachers, counselors, school administrators, and other school staff.

The term "school official with a legitimate educational interest" may also include contractors, consultants, volunteers, and other parties if those individuals:

▪ Perform an institutional service or function for which the agency or institution would otherwise use employees

▪ Are under the direct control of the agency or institution with respect to the use and maintenance of education records

▪ Are subject to the requirements of 34 CFR § 99.33(a), which specifies that individuals who receive information from education records may use the information only for the purposes for which the disclosure was made and which generally prohibits the re-disclosure of records to any other party without the prior consent of the parent or eligible student

Balancing Safety and Privacy

Source: U.S. Department of Education. *Balancing Student Privacy and School Safety: A Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act for Elementary and Secondary Schools.*

School officials must balance safety interests and student privacy interests. *FERPA* contains exceptions to the general consent requirement, including the "health or safety emergency exception," and exceptions to the definition of education records, including "law enforcement unit records," which provide school officials with tools to support this goal.

Personal Knowledge or Observation

FERPA does not prohibit a school official from disclosing information about a student if the information is obtained through the school official's personal knowledge or observation, and not from the student's education records. For example, if a teacher overhears a student making threatening remarks to other students, *FERPA* does not protect that information, and the teacher may disclose what he or she overheard to appropriate authorities.

Health or Safety Emergency Exception

In an emergency, *FERPA* permits school officials to disclose without consent education records, including personally identifiable information from those records, to protect the health or safety of students or other individuals. At such times, records and information may be released to appropriate parties such as law enforcement officials, public health officials, and trained medical personnel. See 34 CFR § 99.31(a)(10) and § 99.36. This exception is limited to the period of the emergency and generally does not allow for a blanket release of personally identifiable information from a student's education records.

The Law Enforcement Unit Record (LEUR) Exemption to the Definition of Education Records

FERPA defines a "law enforcement unit" as any individual, office, department, division, or other component of an educational agency or institution, such as a unit of commissioned police officers or non-commissioned security guards, that is officially authorized or designated by that agency or institution to:

(i) Enforce any local, state, or federal law, or refer to appropriate authorities a matter for enforcement of any local, state, or federal law against any individual or organization other than the agency or institution itself; or

(ii) Maintain the physical security and safety of the agency or institution.

Significantly, to be considered a "law enforcement unit" under this definition, an individual or component must be officially authorized or designated to carry out the functions listed above by the school. Schools may designate a traditional law enforcement entity (such as school security staff, school resource officers [SROs], school safety officers, school police, or other school officials).

Security Videos

Schools are increasingly using security cameras as a tool to monitor and improve student safety. Images of students captured on security videotapes that are maintained by the school's law enforcement unit are not considered education records under *FERPA*. Accordingly, these videotapes may be shared with parents of students whose images are on the video and with outside law enforcement authorities, as appropriate. Schools that do not have a designated law enforcement unit might consider designating an employee to serve as the "law enforcement unit" in order to maintain the security camera and determine the appropriate circumstances in which the school would disclose recorded images.

To Learn More about FERPA and Related Exceptions

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
Information Sharing Guide for K-12 Public Schools (March 2020).

U.S. Department of Education – USED Student Privacy Policy Office [https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/]

School Resource Officers, School Law Enforcement Units, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
A Parent's Guide to FERPA (July 2021).
FERPA General Guidelines for Students (April 2020).
FAQs on Photos and Videos under FERPA.
FERPA and Disclosure of Student Information Related to Emergencies and Disasters (June 2010).

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy Rule provides federal privacy protections for individually identifiable health information, called protected health information (PHI), held by most health care providers and health plans and their business associates. The HIPAA Privacy Rule sets out how and with whom PHI may be shared. The Privacy Rule also gives individuals certain rights regarding their health information, such as the rights to access or request corrections to their information.

Disclosure Circumstances

In general, a HIPAA covered entity may disclose personal health information to law enforcement under these circumstances:

A HIPAA covered entity may disclose PHI to law enforcement with the individual's signed HIPAA authorization.

A HIPAA covered entity also may disclose PHI to law enforcement without the individual's signed HIPAA authorization in certain incidents, including:

- To report PHI to a law enforcement official reasonably able to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of an individual or the public.
- To report PHI that the covered entity in good faith believes to be evidence of a crime that occurred on the premises of the covered entity.
- To alert law enforcement to the death of the individual, when there is a suspicion that death resulted from criminal conduct.
- When responding to an off-site medical emergency, as necessary to alert law enforcement to criminal activity.
- To report PHI to law enforcement when required by law to do so (such as reporting gunshots or stab wounds).
- To comply with a court order or court-ordered warrant, a subpoena or summons issued by a judicial officer, or an administrative request from a law enforcement official (the administrative request must include a written statement that the information requested is relevant and material, specific and limited in scope, and de-identified information cannot be used).
- To respond to a request for PHI for purposes of identifying or locating a suspect, fugitive, material witness or missing person, the information must be limited to basic demographic and health information about the person.
- To respond to a request for PHI about an adult victim of a crime when the victim agrees (or in limited circumstances if the individual is unable to agree). Child abuse or neglect may be reported, without a parent's agreement, to any law enforcement official authorized by law to receive such reports.

To Learn More about HIPAA

U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education
  Joint Guidance on the Application of FERPA and HIPAA to Student Health Records (Updated Dec. 2019).

F. *Questioning*

> *From Model MOU*:
> **Investigation and Questioning**
> SROs have the authority to question students who may have information about criminal activity.
>
> SROs are responsible for leading the investigation and questioning of students related to suspected violations of criminal law.

Virginia's Model MOU contains the following key provisions in the Investigation and Questioning section:

- SROs have the authority to question students who may have information about criminal activity. As certified law enforcement officers, SROs have authority to stop, question, interview, and take law enforcement action without prior authorization of the school administrator or contacting parents.

- The investigation and questioning of students during school hours or at school events should be limited to situations where the investigation is related to suspected criminal activity. Investigations and questioning of students for offenses not related to the operation of or occurring at the school should take place at school only when delay might result in danger to any person, destruction of evidence, or flight from the jurisdiction by the person suspected of a crime.

- The interviewing of students – whether suspects, victims, or witnesses – should be conducted privately in an office setting.

- SROs will take steps to ensure minimal intrusion into the educational experience of students being questioned in the school setting.

- Custodial interrogation of a minor must be conducted in accordance with the *Code of Virginia* § 16.1-247.1.

- SROs are responsible for leading the investigation and questioning of students related to suspected violations of criminal law. SROs shall not be included in questioning students about student code of conduct violations that do not involve any criminal activity or risk of harm to self or others. School administrators are responsible for the questioning of students about violations of the student code of conduct.

It is important to keep in mind that students may choose to voluntarily provide information to the SRO, school official, or SSO at any time.

Law Enforcement Questioning

As a practical matter, virtually all questioning by a law enforcement officer would trigger constitutional protections.

Ordinarily, law enforcement-led questioning requires constitutional protections. This would include informing the student generally of the purpose of the investigation, giving the student an opportunity to present informally his or her knowledge of the facts, warning against self-incrimination in a developmentally appropriate manner, and respecting the student's wishes to remain silent, to contact parents, or an attorney. Courts have used a "total circumstances" approach to determine whether the encounter between the SRO or other police official and the student constitutes "custody," which does trigger constitutional protections. The elements of the case examined by the courts illustrates the strict approach applied to law enforcement-initiated and -led activities on campus:

- Juvenile's age and experience
- Juvenile's background and intelligence
- Capacity of juvenile to understand the implications of waiving rights
- Juvenile's experience with police
- Opportunity for juveniles to have access to a parent or other supportive adult

Interviews of students – whether suspects, victims, or witnesses – should be conducted privately in an office setting.

For tips on effective questioning, see "Talking with Teens: Basic Strategies for Interviewing" in Supplement 1.

Also see the International Association of Chiefs of Police

Introduction and Intermediate Juvenile Interview and Interrogation Online Training Series (2018) https://www.theiacp.org/resources/document/juvenile-interview-and-interrogation

School Administrator/School Security Officer (SSO) Questioning

> *From Model MOU*:
> **Investigation and Questioning**
> SROs shall not be included in the investigation and questioning of students about student code of conduct violations that do not involve any criminal activity or risk of harm to self or others. School administrators are responsible for the investigation and questioning of students about violations of the code of conduct.

School officials, including SSOs, can pose reasonable and relevant questions to students, both potential witnesses and those who are alleged to have violated law or school policy. Students who refuse to answer such questions or give untruthful responses may be subject to disciplinary action. Questioning of a minor student by school officials/SSOs may be conducted without the presence of, or notification of, the student's parents.

When a student or students are being questioned concerning a serious breach of the criminal code such as a weapons- or drug-related incident, it is best practice to have law enforcement officials conduct the formal interrogation. They will be using required standards of law and law enforcement agency policies to guide their actions in obtaining information and such information is more likely to be fully admissible in any subsequent legal proceedings.

Local school board policy should address the respective roles of school administrators/SSOs and SROs related to questioning and investigation. SSOs are often responsible for investigating or assisting school personnel in investigating violations of school board policies that occur on school property or at school-sponsored events. Investigative activities must be carefully coordinated with school administrators and care must be taken that students are in no way denied due process. Virginia law is very specific as to due process in school disciplinary matters. Even in the case of very minor disciplinary violations, the student must be told what he is accused of and must be given the opportunity to tell his version of events. More serious offenses that result in out-of-school suspensions and expulsion require written notifications of parents and carry rights to various levels of appeal. For a fuller comparison of SRO and SSO roles and responsibilities, see Chapter IV.

To Learn More about Youth Questioning

International Association of Chiefs of Police
　　　　Juvenile Interview and Interrogation – a series of training, tools, and resources for law enforcement.

G. *School Searches*

> ***From Model MOU***:
> **Searches**
> All searches shall be conducted in accordance with federal and state laws and applicable SD and PD/SO policies and guidelines, including the principles embodied in this MOU.

Virginia's Model MOU contains the following provisions:

- All searches shall be conducted in accordance with federal and state laws, and applicable school division and police department/sheriff's office policies and guidelines, including the principles embodied in this memorandum of understanding.

- **School administrator searches.** School officials may conduct searches of student's property and persons under their jurisdiction in accordance with guidelines developed by the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.7 and the advice of the school's legal counsel.

- **SRO searches.** Any search initiated by SROs or other law enforcement officers shall be based upon probable cause and, when required, a search warrant should be obtained. All searches should occur outside the presence of students and school staff, with the exception of school administrators, unless there is a clear and immediate threat to physical safety.

- SROs should not become involved in administrative searches and at no time shall SROs request that an administrative search be conducted for law enforcement purposes, or have the administrator act as the SRO's agent.

Balancing Competing Interests

The following is an excerpt from the Virginia School Search Resource Guide, a guide produced by the Virginia Department of Education in 2000. Although dated, it remains the most recently issued and accurate guidance.

All searches entail invasion of privacy. Whether a particular search is legally permissible involves a balancing of competing interests: the individual student's right to privacy and security against the school division's interests in maintaining order, discipline, and the security and safety of other students.

Although students do not "shed their constitutional rights … at the schoolhouse gate," students have a lesser expectation of privacy than members of the general population. In the public-school context, however, when "carrying out searches and other disciplinary functions…, school officials act as representatives of the State … and they cannot claim the parents' immunity from the strictures of the Fourth Amendments." *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, 469 U.S. 325 at 336-37 (1985).

Reasonable Suspicion

In the school environment (and at school-sponsored activities), a search is permissible where a school official has reasonable grounds, based on the totality of the circumstances, for suspecting that the search will reveal evidence that the student has violated either the law or rules of the school. Reasonable suspicion must be based on "individualized suspicion of wrongdoing." It goes beyond a hunch or supposition, and it must be reasonable not only at its inception but also in its scope.

Probable Cause

SROs must have probable cause to conduct a search.

- any search by the SRO shall be based upon probable cause and, when required, a search warrant will be obtained
- the SRO shall not become involved in administrative searches unless specifically requested by the school to provide security, protection, or for handling of contraband
- at no time should the SRO request that an administrative search be conducted for law enforcement purposes or have the administrator act as his or her agent

An example of when the school might request the SRO "provide security, protection, or for handling of contraband" is a search that involves a weapon, particularly a firearm.

H. *Arrests*

Virginia's [Model MOU] contains the following provisions related to arrests:

- Whenever practical, arrests of a student or staff member should be accomplished outside of school hours in order to not disrupt the educational process or school setting.
- Arrests that must occur during school hours or on school grounds should be coordinated through the school administrator to minimize potential disruption. When circumstances do not allow for prior coordination through the school administrator, arrests will be reported to the school administrator as soon as possible.
- In addition to any required notification of parents and legal guardians by the SRO taking a student into custody, school administrators or their designees are also responsible for an additional notification of parents and legal guardians upon a school-based arrest of their student.

I. *Physical Intervention*

Corporal Punishment Unlawful

Virginia law states, "No teacher, principal or other person employed by a school board or employed in a school operated by the Commonwealth shall subject a student to corporal punishment." Corporal punishment means inflicting physical pain on a student as a means of discipline (*Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.1).

The law against corporal punishment does not prevent:

(i) the use of incidental, minor or reasonable physical contact or other actions designed to maintain order and control

(ii) use of reasonable and necessary force to quell a disturbance or remove a student from the scene of a disturbance which threatens physical injury to persons or damage to property

(iii) the use of reasonable and necessary force to prevent a student from inflicting physical harm on himself

(iv) the use of reasonable and necessary force for self-defense or the defense of others

(v) the use of reasonable and necessary force to obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects or controlled substances or paraphernalia which are upon the person of the student or within his control."

Virginia law makes it clear that corporal punishment also does not include physical pain, injury or discomfort caused by participation in practice or competition in an interscholastic sport, or participation in physical education or an extracurricular activity.

Physical Restraint by School Personnel

Virginia Board of Education Regulations Governing the Use of Seclusion and Restraint in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Virginia (8VAC20-750-40 et.seq.) became effective January 1, 2021.

8VAC20-750-40. Use of physical restraint and seclusion.

A. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to require a school division to employ physical restraint or seclusion in its schools. School divisions electing to use physical restraint and seclusion shall comply with the requirements of this chapter.

B. School personnel may implement physical restraint or seclusion only when other interventions are or would be, in the reasonable judgment of the particular school personnel implementing physical restraint or seclusion in an emergency situation, ineffective and only to:

1. Prevent a student from inflicting serious physical harm or injury to self or others

2. Quell a disturbance or remove a student from the scene of a disturbance in which such student's behavior or damage to property threatens serious physical harm or injury to persons

3. Defend self or others from serious physical harm or injury

4. Obtain possession of controlled substances or paraphernalia that are upon the person of the student or within the student's control

5. Obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects that are upon the person of the student or within the student's control

C. Physical restraint and seclusion shall be discontinued as soon as the imminent risk of serious physical harm or injury to self or others presented by the emergency situation has dissipated.

D. Nothing in this section shall be construed to require school personnel to attempt to implement a less restrictive intervention prior to using physical restraint or seclusion when, in the reasonable judgment of the school personnel in an emergency situation, a less restrictive intervention would be ineffective.

E. Unless a student's damage to property creates an imminent risk of serious physical harm or injury to the student or others, the damage of property does not itself indicate an imminent risk of serious physical harm or injury and shall not be the justification for the restraint or seclusion of a student.

F. Any incident involving physical restraint or seclusion in any of the circumstances described in this section shall be subject to the requirements of 8VAC20-750-50 through 8VAC20-750-100.

Subsequent sections of the regulations specify structural and physical standards for rooms used for seclusion and requirements for documentation and parental reporting.

Online training is offered to school personnel through Old Dominion University at https://cieesodu.org/initiatives/restraint-and-seclusion/. The five training modules focus on 1) General Overview of Restraint and Seclusion, 2) Policies and Procedures, 3) Safe and Supportive School Environments, 4) Conflict Resolution and De-Escalation, and 5) Preventing the Use of Restraint and Seclusion, and Returning the Student to the Learning Environment after Restraint or Seclusion.

Physical Intervention by School Resource Officers

> *From Model MOU*:
> **Physical Intervention by School Resource Officers**
> An SRO should not be involved in the physical restraint of a student unless there is a clear and imminent threat to safety. As sworn law enforcement officers, SROs may intervene to de-escalate situations.

Physical intervention policies with students, parents, and visitors within the school zone should be established by the local law enforcement agency after careful thought and review.

Law enforcement agency policies and standard operating procedures describe actions an officer may take to resolve a situation using a continuum of escalating levels of response that are appropriate to the situation at hand. In practice, situations may change quickly and an officer may move from one part of the continuum to another in a matter of seconds.

The *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.10. requires the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services to collect data on an annual basis related to use of force by school resource officers. Preparations are under way to begin collection of data specified in the statute. The statute prescribes the following:

The Department of Criminal Justice Services, in coordination with the Department of Education and the Department of Juvenile Justice, shall annually collect, report, and publish on its website data on the use of force against students, including the use of chemical, mechanical, or other restraints and instances of seclusion; detentions of students; arrests of students; student referrals to court or court service units; and other disciplinary actions by school resource officers involving students. Such data shall (i) be published in a manner that protects the identities of students and (ii) be disaggregated by local school division and by student age, grade, race, ethnicity, gender, and disability, if such data is available.

The National Institute of Justice provides this example of a use-of-force continuum:

Officer Presence – No force is used. Considered the best way to resolve a situation.
- The mere presence of a law enforcement officer works to deter crime or diffuse a situation.
- Officers' attitudes are professional and nonthreatening.

Verbalization – Force is not-physical.
- Officers issue calm, nonthreatening commands, such as "Let me see your identification and registration."
- Officers may increase their volume and shorten commands in an attempt to gain compliance. Short commands might include "Stop," or "Don't move."

Empty-Hand Control – Officers use bodily force to gain control of a situation.
Soft technique. Officers use grabs, holds and joint locks to restrain an individual.
Hard technique. Officers use punches and kicks to restrain an individual.

Less-Lethal Methods – Officers use less-lethal technologies to gain control of a situation.
- *Blunt impact*. Officers may use a baton or projectile to immobilize a combative person.
- *Chemical*. Officers may use chemical sprays or projectiles embedded with chemicals to restrain an individual (e.g., pepper spray).
- *Conducted Energy Devices (CEDs)*. Officers may use CEDs to immobilize an individual. CEDs discharge a high-voltage, low-amperage jolt of electricity at a distance.

Lethal Force – Officers use lethal weapons to gain control of a situation. Should only be used if a suspect poses a serious threat to the officer or another individual.
- Officers use deadly weapons such as firearms to stop an individual's actions.

Source: National Institute of Justice, "The Use-of-Force Continuum," August 3, 2009, nij.ojp.gov: https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/use-force-continuum

Context Matters!

Because contexts are dynamic, the level of force necessary depends on the circumstances and there is no simple "formula" for pre-determining with any certainty what circumstances dictate what level of force.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), citing a 1989 Supreme Court decision that established the legal framework for evaluating excessive force claims against law enforcement officers, notes the Court "recognized that law enforcement officers do not need to use the minimum amount of force in any given situation; rather, the officer must use a force option that is reasonable based upon the totality of the circumstances known to the officer at the time the force was used" (p. 3, IACP Use of Force Task Force Recommendations)

Key SRO considerations include:

- The seriousness of the offense at issue

- Whether the suspect poses a threat to the officer or others

- Whether the suspect is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight

> *Any use of force or restraint (e.g., handcuffing) for punitive purposes is inappropriate.*

Courts have long termed "force that is reasonable and necessary under the circumstances" to achieve one or more of the following goals:

- To protectively defend themselves from the actions of another

- To protectively restrain an individual from harming themselves, harming you, or harming others

- To protect property from being damaged or to prevent property from being used to cause harm
- To prevent, control, or to reduce risk of disturbance or disorder of any nature
- To be able to affect the physical and legal arrest of an individual be it student, parent, or visitor
- To protectively restrain an individual or individuals from fleeing your immediate area who have clearly established the intent by fleeing to harm others or to harm themselves

To Learn More about Physical Intervention

Virginia Board of Education
Regulations Governing the Use of Seclusion and Restraint in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Virginia (8VAC20-750-5 et.seq.) became effective January 1, 2021.
Virginia Department of Education has compiled a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) focused primarily on training requirements and is available online through a link from Superintendent's Memo #151-21 (June 11, 2021) at
https://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2021/151-21.pdf

Five-module online training *Understanding the Regulations Governing Use of Restraint and Seclusion in Elementary and Secondary Schools in Virginia* is offered to school personnel by Old Dominion University.

International Association of Chiefs of Police

Use of Force Position Paper: Legislative Considerations and Recommendations (2019)

National Consensus Policy and Discussion Paper on Use of Force (Oct. 2017)

National Association of School Resource Officers [https://www.nasro.org] (NASRO)

Excessive Force and SRO Liability (School Safety, Spring 2015).

De-escalation

De-escalation involves actions or communication (verbal or non-verbal) during an encounter in an attempt to stabilize the situation and reduce the immediacy of the threat so that more time, options, and resources can be called upon to resolve the situation without the use of force or with a reduction in the force necessary. Techniques may include communication techniques to calm an agitated subject and promote rational decision making such as:

- Regulating vocal tone, pitch, and body language (e.g., speaking slowly in a calm voice, rather than shouting commands)
- Exhibiting a genuine willingness to listen
- Verbal persuasion (e.g., explaining how the person would benefit from cooperation)
- Verbal advisements (e.g., respectfully explaining the person's rights or what the police want the person to do)
- Verbal warnings (e.g., notifying the person of consequences of continued non-cooperation and then offering the person a chance to cooperate)

It is important for SROs to keep in mind the developmental immaturity of students who are more likely to:
- act on impulse
- misread or misinterpret social cues and emotions
- get into accidents of all kinds

- get involved in fights
- engage in dangerous or risky behavior

And less likely to:
- think before they act
- pause to consider the potential consequences of their actions
- modify their dangerous or inappropriate behaviors

See *10 Strategies to Improve Law Enforcement Interactions with Youth* in Chapter V for additional related guidance.

Trauma and De-escalation

Students who have experienced trauma – particularly from repeated, ongoing adversity – have had their "flight or fight" responses activated over and over again, taking a toll of their developing brains. Depending on what area(s) of the brain are harmed, they may experience increased anxiety and fearfulness, difficulty focusing, poor memory, difficulty with critical thinking, or impaired mood control (Perry, 2016; Black, Henderson-Smith, & Flinspach, 2021). Put simply, such students have less control over their emotions and behaviors and efforts to de-escalate are likely to be more challenging.

See Chapter V for additional information on adolescent development and brain development and the implications for law enforcement.

To Learn More about Physical Intervention

Youth De-Escalation and Conflict Resolution for School Safety Officers – Webinar (2018) Focused on strengthening fundamental skills and techniques for youth in schools, particularly youth de-escalation and conflict resolution.

J. *Student Victims' Rights*

The *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-3.3 allows the transfer of students who were the victims of any crime against the person committed by:

- another student who attends classes in the same school
- any employee of the local school board
- any volunteer, contract worker, or other person who regularly works in the school

A student may also transfer if the crime was committed on school property or on any school bus owned or operated by the school division. The transfer must be to another comparable school within the school division if available. Such transfer is to occur only when requested by a parent or the student, if emancipated, when the student would suffer physical or psychological harm by remaining in the current school.

Victims of Critical Incidents and Emergencies

Pursuant to the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.8, school divisions are required to immediately contact the Virginia Criminal Injury Compensation Fund and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services when any school's crisis response plan has been implemented and students and staff are victims of crimes as defined by the *Code of Virginia* § 19.2-11.01.

See *Guidance for School Systems in the Event that Victims Arise from an Emergency*

To Learn More about Victim Rights and Resources

[Victim Services, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services](#) – Administers grants, coordinates training, provides technical assistance, implements statewide initiatives, develops best-practice resource materials, drafts and reviews policies, and supports victim-serving organizations throughout the Commonwealth. Victims Services staff also assist individuals and communities impacted by mass casualty events through victim assistance emergency response.

[Virginia Victim Assistance Network](#) – A statewide nonprofit organization that advocates on behalf of victims. Programs include a victim assist helpline, human trafficking Infoline, homicide survivor support groups, and legal services; offers training and a directory of resources for victims that can be searched by locality.

This graphic depicts the SRO operational parameters established in Virginia's Model MOU:

Operational Parameters Governed by Virginia's Model School-Law Enforcement Memorandum of Understanding

Non-Criminal Misconduct
• Classroom teacher and/or administrator response in accordance with local school board policies.
• No SRO involvement.

Crime

Investigation and Questioning	Search	Arrest
• Related to suspected violations of criminal law only (*not* code of conduct violations). • Authority to stop, question, investigate without prior authorization of school administrator or parent/guardian. • Occurs at school only when related to/occurring at school or when delay might result in danger to any person, destruction of evidence, or flight from the jurisdiction by the person suspected of a crime.	• Conducted by SRO or other law enforcement officer in accordance with constitutional search and seizure requirements; based on probable cause. • Occur outside the presence of students and school personnel, with the exception of school administrators, unless there is a clear and imminent threat to safety. • No SRO involvement in administrative searches.	• Standard procedure is to accomplish arrest outside school hours so as not to disrupt the educational process or school setting. • Arrests that must occur during school hours or on school grounds are to be coordinated through the school administrator to minimize potential disruption. When circumstances do not allow for prior coordination through the school administrator, arrests are to be reported to the school administrator as soon as possible. • Parent notification by SRO is required; additional notification by school administrator is strongly recommended.

Threat to Safety

Crisis Planning, Preparation & Response	Threat Assessment	Physical Intervention
SRO Prevention Role • SRO assessment of safety conditions in schools through inspection walk-throughs using a standardized checklist. • SROs collaboration in school crisis, emergency management, and medical emergency response planning and preparation. SRO as First Responder • SRO is first responder in the event of critical incidents such as serious accidents, fires, explosions, shootings, and other life-threatening events.	• SROs may serve as members of threat assessment teams and assist in monitoring of subject students as well as determining the need, if any, for law enforcement action.	• Clear and imminent threat to safety must be present for SRO to engage in physical intervention. • Undertaken in accordance with policies and operational procedures of the PD/SO and state law regarding physical intervention and use of force by a law enforcement officer. • Any use of restraint or physical intervention by SRO is reported to the SRO's supervisor and school administrator and fully documented.

Chapter III References

Augustine, C.H., Engberg, J., Grimm, G.E., Lee, E., Wang, E.L., Christianson, K., and Joseph, A.A. (2018). *Restorative Practices Help Reduce Student Suspensions.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Full report available at: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB10051.html.

Black, P., Henderson-Smith, L., & Flinspach, S. (2021, September 21). *Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Toolkit*. National Center for School Safety https://www.nc2s.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Trauma-Informed-Resilience-Oriented-Schools-Toolkit.pdf

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Perry, B. (December 13, 2016). The brain science behind student trauma. Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-the-brain-science-behind-student-trauma/2016/12

U.S. Department of Justice (2019). *Law Enforcement Best Practices: Lessons Learned from the Field*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

IV. Building Effective Partnerships at the School Level

This chapter focuses on implementing S-LEPs at the *school* level and contains information most relevant for SROs and school building administrators who collaborate in schools on a daily basis. It begins with a description of the collaborative nature of the SRO-school administrator relationship and focuses on establishing school-specific understandings about day-to-day operations, the handling of student misconduct, crime reporting, threat assessment, crisis planning, and critical incident response. The remainder of the chapter is designed primarily to orient SROs to key stakeholders in the school community, differentiating the roles of SRO and school security officer, strategies for effective communications and relationship-building with key stakeholders. Next, the chapter provides an introduction to school programs and supports typically found in schools including services for children with disabilities and programs for bullying prevention/ intervention, truancy prevention/intervention, student assistance, suicide prevention, and mediation and conflict resolution. The chapter concludes with an overview of sources of available data on individual schools that may be helpful to SROs in becoming acquainted with their schools and determining conditions, particularly relative to other schools in the school division, region, and state.

A. *The Collaborative Nature of SRO-School Administrator Relationships*

The relationship of the school administrator and the SRO is a *collaborative* one.

Successful SROs recognize that they are the on-campus representative of their law-enforcement agencies and they relate to school administrators as collaborative peers. The collaborative relationship requires the SRO to function autonomously – *not* as a school employee. While experience teaches that S-LEPs are most effective when SROs are treated and function as members of the school's administrative team, they remain the law enforcement representative at all times under the command and control of the law enforcement agency. A clear understanding of the boundaries of SRO and school administrator authority and autonomy are critical to the collaborative relationship. Two examples illustrate those boundaries:

Example 1. Authority: The SRO, as part of efforts to be a visible presence, may decide to regularly be present in the cafeteria area during lunch and the bus loading zones at the beginning and end of school. The SRO is *not*, however, "assigned" to lunch duty or bus duty by the school administrator. The SRO, a fully qualified law enforcement officer, retains the authority for autonomous decision making in carrying out duties.

Example 2: The school administrator may report an incident that the administrator thinks is a violation of law. In the absence of legal or policy requirements for law enforcement action, receiving the incident report does not compel the SRO to arrest the student or file a complaint with a court. The SRO retains authority to determine whether further action is appropriate.

These and other situations that test boundaries of authority and autonomy are best resolved when they are addressed directly in the MOU and operational procedures, reinforced by common sense and goodwill among partners. Table 7 lists a few of the components of a successful SRO Program.

Table 7: Components of Successful School–Law Partnerships

A School-Police Partnership Requires:	A Partnership Requires the SRO to:
▪ Positive relationships with the school administrators, faculty, support staff, students, and parents; ▪ Community involvement in developing more effective strategies to control and prevent school crime, violence, and disruptive behavior; ▪ Shared approaches and pooled resources to address concerns; and ▪ Shared responsibility for crafting workable solutions to problems that detract from school safety and security and an environment conducive to learning.	▪ Learn the service needs and demands in the school; ▪ Devise ways to manage information gleaned from various sources, including administrators, teachers, students, parents, and school and law enforcement records; ▪ Learn how to identify patterns of crime and disorder problems and distinguish them from behaviors that are best addressed through administrative responses; and ▪ Develop plans collaboratively with members of the school community to address problems related to safety, crime, and disorder.

B. *Key School-Based Implementation Strategies*

Although S-LEPs are formed at the highest levels of the organizations – school divisions and Chief/Sheriff – and formalized through the MOU that establishes a framework formalizing commitments and related policies and procedures, the day-to-day implementation of S-LEPs is carried out in individual schools and by individual law enforcement officers and school administrators working together.

Operationalizing the S-LEP: "How do we implement it at *this* school?"

> *From Model MOU*: School administrators should review the MOU annually with SROs and establish school-specific operational and communications procedures to support the goals of the SLEP.

Every school is different. Each school presents its own challenges and opportunities in implementing S-LEPs. It is essential for the SRO and the school administration to be on the same page and that requires advance planning and ongoing good communication.

On "Day #1" – and preferably in advance of the arrival of students – the SRO and administrator(s) should meet to clarify the specifics of operations at the particular school. The agenda of initial meeting(s) should include:

▪ Reviewing of the MOU, section by section, so that both the SRO and school administrator clearly understand any operational procedures established at the division/law enforcement agency level.

▪ Discussing the specifics of how the SRO program will operate in the particular school. For example, the MOU may contain language such as that the SRO "shall notify the school administrator" or that the school administrator "shall meet with the SRO," it is in these initial meetings that it is decided specifically:

▪ *How the notification will occur* – via phone, text, or using a form of some type? How will notification be documented? What is a reasonable timeline for notifications under what types of circumstances?

▪ *When will the meetings be held* – regularly scheduled? As needed? Depending on the urgency of conditions? As part of an already scheduled meeting of administrators?

This initial orientation represents the beginning of an ongoing *process* in which the SRO develops a clearer understanding of how the school operates and the school administrator develops a deeper understanding of how the law enforcement agency operates. Discussions of program philosophy and operational strategies are critically important in facilitating shared understandings in the early stages of program development.

Time invested in orientation at the beginning stage greatly enhances development of the type of collaborative relationship and the shared ownership characteristic of effective S-LEPs. As one experienced SRO explained:

> *"The best advice that I could give would be to talk to your administration before beginning at school. Ask questions about what they expect from you and explain what you can and cannot do. Make sure that the door of communication between administration and the SRO stays open and ALWAYS be helpful."*

Establishing Operational Basics

Earlier in this chapter it was recommended that SROs and principals meet in advance of the opening of school or the SRO's first day on duty to review the MOU and establish the operational specifics of how the S-LEPs will operate in particular schools. Some aspects of operation are easily determined and it makes little difference whether something is done one way or another. However, other aspects of operational specifics are critical. Among the critical operational specifics are the differentiation and handling of disciplinary and criminal matters, crime reporting, behavioral threat assessment, crisis management and critical incident response, and school safety audits.

SRO Location

> **From Model MOU**: Each school with an assigned SRO should provide work area(s) for the SRO that allow access to technologies, private interviewing of multiple persons, and locking storage space for securing physical evidence.

Where the SRO is housed in a particular school tends to be a function of space availability, layout of the school, working relationships with administrators, and convenience. Many SROs have found that proximity to the principal or administrative staff is an important factor in SRO program efficiency and effectiveness. Other SROs have found that because they are typically "out and about" the school campus, maintaining a high level of visibility and rarely in an office, the actual location of their "office" is less important than access to school administrators, records, telephones, and an appropriate space to interview students. If the SRO's office is located away from the main administrative office, it is critical for the SRO to be integrated into the school's communication system. The SRO's area should be equipped with a locked storage area for securing contraband recovered in the school by the SRO or by school staff.

Given the diverse configurations of schools, the space for all SRO functions may not be in a single space. Key considerations, however, remain:
- Access to technologies,
- Space for private interviewing of multiple persons, and
- Locked storage.

Requests for SRO Assistance

> ***From Model MOU***: Unless there is a clear and imminent threat to safety, requests from school personnel for SRO or other law enforcement assistance are to be made to a school administrator, and such administrator should, if appropriate, request assistance from the SRO.

Ensuring that requests for assistance from the SRO go through a school administrator is an operational procedural requirement that often needs ongoing reinforcement. In appropriate requests may be based in ignorance of the procedure, a lack of understanding of the SRO roles and responsibilities, or misperceptions about what the SRO does and does not handle. Many SROs report a frequently occurring challenge to be classroom teachers experiencing difficulty managing student behavior. To reinforce compliance with this procedural requirement, the SRO and administrator must be on the same page, ensuring:

- School personnel are fully informed about how requests for SRO assistance are to be directed and are provided some guidance in the operational criteria for "clear and imminent threat to safety"

- Information about the roles and responsibilities of SROs is shared with and readily available to school personnel, parents, and students

- Classroom teachers understand and are supported by administrators in carrying out their responsibilities related to behavior management

Facilitate Communication

> ***From Model MOU***: School administrators will be responsible for facilitating effective communication between the SRO and school personnel and for supporting the goals of the S-LEP.

Strategies for both initial and ongoing communication between the SRO and school personnel are needed. SROs and administrators should develop an initial general plan and refine it, as needed, once the newly assigned SRO has become better oriented to the school. Informational products about the S-LEP and SRO roles and responsibilities should be available for use by SROs and school administrators in print and electronic forms and posted online.

See Chapter IV., D. School Partners: Key School Building-Level Personnel to learn more about the roles of those typically based at schools and E. Effective Communications for additional strategies for effective communication with key groups (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents, & students).

Reports of Incidents to Law Enforcement Agencies

> ***From Model MOU***: the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.3:1 (effective 7/1/2022) requires the reporting of certain acts to school authorities; reporting of certain acts by school authorities to parents; and reporting of certain acts by school authorities to law enforcement. [Offenses listed]

Specific procedures for how this reporting occur in a particular school should be reviewed and confirmed and/or refined, as needed, by the SRO and school administrators. It is likely school division policies exist, but they need to be operationalized within the context of the S-LEP being implemented in a specific school. SROs and administrators should review and ensure they are on the same page regarding reporting procedures, methods, documentation, and timelines.

Although schools do not have discretion in reporting required offenses, it is important to keep in mind

that this reporting does not require the SRO to file a complaint with the juvenile court. In accordance with S-LEP purposes, SROs are strongly urged to "minimize student involvement with juvenile and criminal justice systems." Likewise, the juvenile court services unit intake officers retain discretion in whether petitions will be filed or matters will be handled in other ways, diverting the student from formal juvenile justice involvement. See a discussion on the use of discretion in Chapter III, Section D.

Report of Incidents from Law Enforcement to Schools

> ***From Model MOU***: Pursuant to §§ 16.1-260(G) and 19.2-83.1(B), law enforcement agencies and/or intake officers are required to notify the division superintendent if a student is arrested for certain offenses or subject to a petition alleging that the student committed certain offenses. Division superintendents who receive such reports are required to report the information to the principal of the school in which the student is enrolled.
>
> As a general practice, SROs should notify the principal as soon as practical of any significant law enforcement events occurring at or in association with the school (e.g., at a school bus stop or off-campus activity, during or outside school hours). No SRO or school administrator will be required to file delinquency charges in response to any such activity.

The first MOU provision quoted above typically applies to incidents that are not school based but include serious offenses (e.g., firearm, homicide, felonious assault, criminal sexual assault) that represent potential risks to the school community. The second provision addresses school-related law enforcement events. Again, the SRO and school administrators should discuss types of events and levels of seriousness and reach a reasonable consensus about the timelines and methods of notification and handling of potential "next steps" in administrative response.

Student Misconduct and Criminal Acts: Differentiating Responses

Multiple provisions of the Model MOU address the differentiation of criminal and non-criminal incidents, school responsibility for disciplinary matters, and SRO responsibility for criminal matters only and prohibitions from involvement with school disciplinary matters. Implementation, however, within a S-LEP and at a particular school, requires an SRO and the schools' administrators to establish some common understandings and expectations. SROs are strongly urged to:

- Develop a clear understanding of the parameters of discretion that SROs and school administrators have (see Chapter III, D. Discretion)
- Discuss with school administrators their approach and criteria they use day-to-day in responding to different types of student misconduct
- Share with school administrators any applicable law enforcement agency policies and procedures that guide your practices
- If there are policies, procedures, or guidelines that appear to be contradictory or need to be clarified, promptly seek clarification through appropriate channels
- Agree with school administrators to sometimes disagree, but remain committed to the collaborate effort

C. *Key School Safety Operations*

SROs are involved with several key school safety-related areas of operation, and it is important for SROs and school administrators to clarify expectations about the nature and level of SRO involvement and to specify school-specific operational procedures.

Threat Assessment

From Model MOU: **Threat Assessment**

Threat assessments will be conducted in accordance with local school board policies adopted as required by the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-79.4 and, in general, consistent with model procedures and guidelines published by the DCJS Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety and other appropriate practices.

Pursuant to § 22.1-79.4 each division superintendent shall establish, for each school, a threat assessment team that shall include persons with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement **and (effective 7/1/2022), in the case of any school in which a school resource officer is employed, at least one such school resource officer**. SROs serving as members of threat assessment teams (including as school officials with a legitimate education interest, as defined by FERPA and as discussed above) may assist in the monitoring of subject students as well as determining the need, if any, for law enforcement action.

Although SROs were already members of threat assessment teams in many schools, recent legislation formally establishing SROs as members of school threat assessment teams may require review of school-specific threat assessment operational procedures and clarification of expectations. School administrators should ensure that SROs are introduced to key personnel who coordinate the threat assessment process who can provide a deeper orientation to the process.

Comprehensive guidance is contained in the DCJS Threat Assessment and Management in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines (July 2020) that contains an overview of Virginia laws related to threat assessment including the scope, structure, and duties of threat assessment teams; civil immunity and access to protected information; and requirements for record keeping.

Background Basics on Threat Assessment

Guiding Principles for threat assessment and management include:

- Effective assessment is based upon observations of behaviors rather than on any general characteristics.
- Targeted violence is the result of an understandable and usually discernible process of thinking and behavior.
- Violence stems from an interaction among the **S**ubject(s), **T**arget(s), **E**nvironment/Systems and **P**recipitating Incidents.
- Violence is a dynamic process.
- Threat assessment is about prevention, not prediction.
- Social media and online activity are critical considerations in many cases.
- A central question in a threat assessment inquiry is whether the subject poses a threat (i.e., is building the capability to cause harm), not just whether the subject has made a threat (directly expressed intent to harm).

- The relationship between mental illness and violence is complex.
- An inquisitive, objective, and diligent mindset is critical to successful threat assessment and management.
- A collaborative and coordinated approach between systems within the school and the community are critical for an effective threat assessment and management process.

The DCJS Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety maintains multiple threat assessment resources on its website.

Threat Assessment in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines (Revised July 2020) employs a system of threat assessment levels that take into account the STEP® model that consider Subject(s), Target(s), Environment, and Precipitating events and the overall level of concern associated with a case.

SROs are encouraged to:

- Review the DCJS Threat Assessment and Management in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines (July 2020) and any school division policies and procedures governing threat assessment
- Become familiar with definitions of threat levels that began to be used in 2020–2021 and related responses
- Determine what methods the SRO can potentially use to monitor subject students (that preserve privacy rights)
- Anticipate you may be asked to determine need for law enforcement action and confirm appropriate criteria
- Consistently reinforce with students and school personnel the need to report any concerning information so that potential threats can be properly investigated, and action taken, if needed

Importance of Detecting Threats

One concerning finding from the 2020–2021 Virginia School Safety Audit was that while 95% of school administrators reported they had informed students on how to recognize and report threatening or aberrant behavior, only 57% of middle school students reported being aware that their school utilizes a team approach to respond to threats of violence from students or other individuals. Despite the lower percentage of middle schoolers being aware of how threats are handled at their schools, substantially more were willing to report:

- 85% would report if they heard someone threaten to harm themselves
- 93% would report if they heard any threats at school
- 87% feel others would report threats to school

In interactions with students, SROs can encourage reporting and help students know what to do with concerning information.

Two major studies have found evidence demonstrating the presence of warnings prior to planned or actual acts of violence and the critical importance of reporting concerns so that timely action can be taken.

U.S. Secret Service Study on Averting Targeted Violence

Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools (2021), a publication from the National Threat Assessment Center, reported findings from study of 67 disrupted plots against K-12 schools from 2006–2018. Findings were reported to be "clear and consistent: Individuals contemplating violence often exhibit observable behaviors, and when community members report these behaviors, the next tragedy can be averted." Among key findings and implications:

> *"School resource officers (SROs) play an important role in school violence prevention. In nearly one-third of the cases, an SRO played a role in either reporting the plot or responding to a report made by someone else. In eight cases, it was the SRO who received the initial report of an attack plot from students or others, highlighting their role as a trusted adult within the school community"* (p. 5).

The American School Shooting Study (TASSS)

A national, open-source database of all known shootings on school grounds between 1990–2016 has been created. To be included in the database, the incident had to:

- Take place between 1990 and 2016
- Occur at a K-12 school with in the continental United States
- Result in a criminal justice response
- Include a firearm that discharged explosives to propel a projectile, and
- Injure or kill at least one person with a bullet wound

Researchers examined two theories of criminology in the context of the school shootings:

1. Life-Course Theory that posits that an individual's bond to society, which evolves over time, is fundamentally related to their tendency toward crime.

2. Situational Crime Prevention Theory that argues that for crime to occur there must first be the opportunity to commit the offense.

Full initial findings (Freilich *et al.*, 2021) are reported on the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) at https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/301665.pdf. The study found evidence supporting both theories of criminology, suggesting a one-size-fits-all approach may not work and need to focus on both detecting behavioral indicators and reducing opportunity for crime.

Importantly, the authors found that over 50 percent of offenders provided prior warning or made threats that they would commit the shooting; unfortunately, **over 80 percent of the time the warnings were not acted upon** because the recipient of the leakage did not take the threat seriously. The authors recommend a focus on educating students and staff about the importance of recognizing and reporting threats.

Learn More about Threat Assessment:

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, Center for School and Campus Safety – Threat Assessment Resources
Threat Assessment in Virginia Public Schools: Model Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines (Revised July 2020).
K-12 Threat Assessment in Virginia: A Prevention Oerview for School Staff, Parents, and Community Members.
K-12 Threat Assessment in Virginia: A Prevention Overview for School Staff, Parents, and Community Members (Video)
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About K-12 Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management

U.S. Secret Service
Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools (2021)

National Threat Assessment Center
Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence (July 2018)

Anonymous Reporting Systems

Anonymous Reporting Systems (ARS) is a technology-based method for educating all members of the school community on indicators of potential self-harm or violence and how to share this information so that officials can intervene before injury or loss of life occurs.

Such systems are listed in a set of ten major recommendations in *Ten Essential Actions to Improve School Safety*. According to *School Tip Line Toolkit: A Blueprint for Implementation and Sustainability* (2018) "tip lines leverage students' direct knowledge of potential threats or adverse events, which is critical because students are often the best source of such information." Advocates say that tip lines:

- break the code of silence
- give voice to students who might otherwise remain silent out of fear of retaliation or rejection
- provide an avenue for students to step up and speak out
- provide an opportunity to increase the likelihood that threats to school safety are reported

In 2019 VCSCS produced a *Plan for Implementation of a Statewide School Safety Mobile Application* in response to Virginia General Assembly action. The review of existing school safety mobile applications found that although about one-half of Virginia school divisions have implemented some type of school safety reporting system, none of these have the sophistication of the statewide systems that have been implemented in other states and far fewer divisions have systems with the extensive capabilities listed in legislation that was proposed but not enacted. The comprehensive study contains a great deal of information of value to any S-LEP considering implementation of an ARS.

Those studying critical incidents (O'Toole, 2000; Madfus, 2021) have identified "leakage" as a critical element in averting shootings (and other violence) at schools (and elsewhere) due to perpetrators intentionally or unintentionally signaling their intentions. Beyond fostering trusting relationships, having easily accessible avenues for students and others to report concerns increases likelihood of detection and opportunity for a harmful or dangerous incident to be averted. An anonymous reporting system has potential to serve as such a vehicle.

To Learn More about Anonymous Reporting Systems

School Tip Line Toolkit: A Blueprint for Implementation and Sustainability – This report is from a 2018
National Summit on School Safety Tip Lines and contains information designed to help stakeholders
navigate key decisions and consider the factors necessary to support successful and efficient tip line
implementation as part of an overall school safety strategy

Reports to General Assembly of Virginia
Plan for Implementation of a Statewide School Safety Mobile Application – RD678 (2019)

The National Sheriff's Association
Webinar on Anonymous Reporting Systems (2021) as part of a series focusing on School Safety.

The National Center for School Safety
Webinar about Anonymous Reporting Systems (2020) – reviews essential components, benefits and
considerations in implementing such systems.

School Safety Audits

> *From Model MOU*: **School Safety Audits**
> School safety audits will be conducted annually as required by the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.8
> to assess school safety conditions in schools. SROs, in collaboration with school administrators,
> will conduct school inspection walk-throughs using a standardized checklist developed by the
> Center for School and Campus Safety. SROs and the PD/SO should collaborate in other school
> safety audit mandates set forth in the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.8, including school crisis,
> emergency management, and medical emergency response planning and preparation, **and
> (effective 7/1/2022) as part of each such audit, the school board shall create a detailed and
> accurate floor plan for each public school building in the local school division or shall
> certify that the existing floor plan for each such school is sufficiently detailed and accurate.**

Also, effective 7/1/22, school boards are required to require schools to collaborate with the chief law
enforcement officer when conducting required school safety audits. The previous law had simply
required the division superintendent to make the results of such audits available to the chief law-
enforcement officer upon request.

School Safety Inspection Checklist

Schools are required to conduct a school safety inspection walkthrough using a checklist provided by the
VCSCS that incorporates crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles. The
purpose of this checklist is to identify vulnerabilities and offer a foundation upon which to build a safer
learning environment. The checklist and related guidance are posted on the VCSCS website
[https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/crime-prevention-through-environmental-design-cpted-and-safety-
inspections-school-and-law/]

*To Learn More about Virginia's School Safety Audit, School Safety Inspections and School Security
Technologies*

School Safety Inspections
School Safety Inspection Checklist for Virginia Public Schools (2021).
Guidance for Use of the School Safety Inspection Checklist for Virginia Public Schools (September
2021).
K-12 School Security Guide (3rd Edition, 2022)

CPTED

Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety webpage on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and Safety Inspections for School and Law Enforcement Resource Page: The Design of Safe, Secure and Welcoming Learning Centers (2019). The American Institute of Architects.

Safety and Security Guidelines for K-12 Schools (2020) Partner Alliance for Safer Schools.

CPTED School Assessment (CSA) (May 2017)

School Security Technologies

5 New Technologies That Enhance School Safety and Security (2022). Partner Alliance for Safer Schools.

A Comprehensive Report on School Safety Technology (Oct 2016). National Institute of Justice. Reviews technologies, how they are being used, and how they are working. Technologies reviewed include personal protection, access control, alarms and sensors, lighting, software applications, surveillance, weapons detection, and other technologies.

Mobile Application (App) for K-12 Schools, School Districts, and Institutions of Higher Learning. REMS TA Center Offers a free, secure mobile app designed specifically for education agencies that allows personnel to walk around buildings and grounds and examine their safety, security, accessibility, and emergency preparedness. Users select whether they are conducting a site assessment at a K-12 school or IHE and are directed to the section that is optimized for that setting according to its unique characteristics.

Crisis Planning and Critical Incident Response

In addition to involvement in required school safety inspections, SROs function as first responders and must be familiar with schools' plans for responding to critical incidents and emergencies. The *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.8.D requires "Each school board shall ensure that every school that it supervises shall develop a written school crisis, emergency management, and medical emergency response plan and provides the following definition:

> *"School crisis, emergency management, and medical emergency response plan" means the essential procedures, operations, and assignments required to prevent, manage, and respond to a critical event or emergency, including natural disasters involving fire, flood, tornadoes, or other severe weather; loss or disruption of power, water, communications or shelter; bus or other accidents; medical emergencies, including cardiac arrest and other life- threatening medical emergencies; student or staff member deaths; explosions; bomb threats; gun, knife or other weapons threats; spills or exposures to hazardous substances; the presence of unauthorized persons or trespassers; the loss, disappearance or kidnapping of a student; hostage situations; violence on school property or at school activities; incidents involving acts of terrorism; and other incidents posing a serious threat of harm to students, personnel, or facilities.* (Code of Virginia § 22.1-279.8.A)

All schools have comprehensive all-hazards Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) or Crisis Management Plans (CMPs) as a part of their broader crisis plan. SROs are strongly encouraged to:

- Become familiar with their school's current crisis plans and critical incident procedures established at the assigned school. Review the plan and school-specific procedures to clarify any areas that remain unclear.
- Become thoroughly familiar with the physical plant, grounds and surrounding areas, and any emergency response protocols that have been established.
- Learn the specific logistics for each of the main critical incident response actions for

each building as they differ in design/features and the way spaces are used.
- Make a point of meeting the school division's emergency manager who is an authoritative source of information and potential source of support for troubleshooting.
- Support drills as opportunities to train, assess, practice, and improve performance in responding to emergencies.
- Take advantage of the wealth of information and training opportunities available from DCJS/VCSCS.

To Learn More about Crisis Planning and Critical Incident Response

VIRGINIA Resources
Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS) Resources
    A partial list of publications related to school crisis and emergency planning and response:
    School Crisis, Emergency Management and Medical Emergency Response Plan (Full Plan)
    School Crisis, Emergency Management and Medical Emergency Response Plan (Quick Guide)
    Virginia School Bus Driver and Monitor Safety and Security Manual (2019)
    Virginia School Bus Driver and Monitor Safety and Security Manual (2019) (accompanying video)
    Guidance for Emergency Manager Designee
    The Virginia Educator's Guide for Planning and Conducting School Emergency Drills (2019).
    Critical Incident Response for School Faculty and Staff (2019).
    Critical Incident Response (Video)

OTHER Resources
REMS Site Assess App – an application developed by the REMS TA Center to assist agencies in conducting site assessments, which can be found at online app stores.
Educational Facilities Vulnerability/Hazard Assessment Checklist
FEMA Multihazard Emergency Planning for Schools Toolkit.
Safe and Sound Schools – A non-profit founded by parents who lost children at Sandy Hook, provides resources for crisis prevention, response, and recovery. Their website contains:
Resource Library – containing resources on recovery, trauma-informed schools, violence prevention, and active assailants.
Resource Toolkit for parents, schools, and members of media about supporting children and students after a tragedy.
Especially Safe! Program focuses on addressing the special safety needs of children with disabilities and offers a Planning and Preparation Guide and a Teaching and Training Guide.

D. *School Partners: Key School Building-Level Personnel*

The key school division-level personnel whose roles were described in Chapter II typically provide oversight and/or coordination of programs and services. Most programs and services, however, are carried out at the school level. This section continues the overview of key school personnel, focusing on those who typically work in schools working directly with students in administrative, instructional, and support capacities. Role descriptions focus on functions most relevant to the S-LEP and work of SROs are not intended to be comprehensive job descriptions which, of course, may vary widely across school. The intent of including this information in this *Guide* is to aid SROs in becoming oriented to the school environment and support their forming effective relationships with members of the school community.

School Administrators

Individual schools are headed by school administrators or ***principals*** who, in addition to being the instructional leaders, are responsible for overseeing virtually every aspect of the day-to-day operation of the school. It is the principal (and assistant principals) with whom SROs *must* establish effective collaborative relationships for partnerships to be implemented successfully.

Instructional Staff

Central to the primary function of schools are the ***instructional staff*** including classroom teachers, instructional assistants, and library/media specialists. Their primary focus is on teaching and learning. These educators work with the full spectrum of students, see students on a daily basis, and are well-positioned to observe changes in students' behavior, conduct, and interactions with other students.

Specialists

In addition to the school administrator and assistant administrator(s) and classroom teachers, schools typically have other professionals who work with students. These ***specialists*** provide a broad range of services. Because much of the work of these specialists is focused on high-risk students, it is important for the SRO to understand the roles of these specialists and to establish working relationships with them.

Among the specialists who work with a broad spectrum of students are school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, and school social workers. To be effective, SROs must establish collaborative relationships with these specialists.

School Counselors are professional educators who hold graduate degrees and are licensed by the Virginia Department of Education. They typically do the following:

- Counsel students individually or in small groups
- Coordinate services to students
- Provide crisis counseling
- Consult with school multi-disciplinary teams
- Evaluate student records and interpret test scores
- Conduct classroom guidance sessions
- Explore educational and occupational information
- Refer students and parents to community resources

School counseling departments in individual secondary schools vary in their organization and specialized assignments. Understanding how a particular school counseling department is organized and operates helps SROs work more effectively with counselors in a school.

School Nurses are fully qualified nurses who work within schools and typically do the following:

- Manage medical emergencies and administer medications
- Conduct vision, hearing, scoliosis, and other health screenings and, when problems are detected, refer for additional services
- Provide continuous observation for and, if necessary, control of communicable and infectious diseases
- Assist with family life education activities
- Provide individual counseling of students regarding health concerns
- Provide crisis counseling

▪ School nurses are critical actors in emergencies and should be involved with any planning for crisis or critical incident response.

School Psychologists hold graduate degrees, are licensed by the Virginia Department of Education and may hold additional clinical licensure. Some of the duties of school psychologists are:

▪ Formal assessment of cognitive, academic, and social/emotional functions of students

▪ Crisis counseling and referral of students and their families to community services

▪ Consultation with teachers, parents, and others regarding the psychological needs of students

▪ Development of curriculum and teaching strategies and behavior management programs

School psychologists can contribute valuable insights to decisions about students, particularly related to threat assessment and disciplinary action.

School Social Workers hold graduate degrees and are licensed by the Virginia Department of Education and may hold additional clinical or specialty licenses. They typically have some of the following responsibilities:

▪ Serve as liaison between home, school, and community resources, uniting the efforts on behalf of students

▪ Provide individual and small group counseling and counseling with families

▪ Serve on school and community interdisciplinary teams

▪ Serve as attendance officer designee and enforce compulsory attendance

▪ Provide outreach, including dropout retrieval

▪ Serve on the school's crisis team and provide crisis counseling

School social workers focus a great deal on linking students and their families to needed school and community resources. They are especially knowledgeable about community conditions and the nature and availability of community-based services.

Custodians and *maintenance and cafeteria personnel* are particularly knowledgeable about the school's physical plant and operation. Many are also observant of students and are known to detect changes in or concerning behaviors of students.

Bus drivers are familiar with neighborhoods and with activities at and around bus stops. Their involvement is critical in investigations of incidents occurring on busses, on field trips, or at bus stops as well as in crisis preparation and response.

Also found in many schools are other specialists such as *speech pathologists, physical therapists*, and *occupational therapists* who typically work with students with disabilities. Services of these specialists are usually part of the student's individual education plan (IEP). These professionals often serve more than one school depending on the numbers of students in each school requiring therapy.

The Broader School "Community"

Schools are communities within communities. Beyond students, teachers, administrators, and a variety of specialists and support personnel, there are additional members of the broader community that might be overlooked. Schools are where the whole community comes together, and SROs are strategically located to interact with and be of assistance to numerous members of the community.

▪ It is not uncommon for parents to approach SROs concerning non-school related issues.

▪ Faculty and staff members will seek advice from the SROs concerning domestic issues or neighbor complaints.

- ▪ Homeowners near the school may report suspicious activity to SROs.
- ▪ Business owners may request assistance from SROs concerning student conduct in their stores, particularly if students are there during school hours.

Although an SRO may be assigned to a school with 1,500 students, the actual number of community members served can be much higher when taking into account the broader school community. Shown in Table 8 are some key groups and some examples of their roles in school-law enforcement partnerships.

Table 8: Key Stakeholder Groups in School–Law Enforcement Partnerships

Key Members of School-Law Enforcement Partnerships	Partnership Roles
Local School Board	The Virginia Constitution vests the supervision of schools in each locality in a local school board.
School division leadership: Superintendent and division-level administrators.	Their support is critical. Agreement between the superintendent and police chief/sheriff establishes the framework for partnership. They are key to implementation of division-wide policies.
Building leadership: Principal, assistant principals.	On a day-to-day basis, principals carry primary responsibility for school building operations including implementing student conduct policies and procedures.
School administrative personnel (e.g., school secretary, administrative assistants)	Front-office administrative personnel are typically deeply knowledgeable about how the school operates and a valuable source of information for SROs. As a primary point of contact for the public, they are strategically positioned to observe interactions and to have insights into problems, conditions in the community, and things occurring in the lives of students.
Instructional staff: Department heads, faculty, instructional assistants.	Focus primarily on teaching and learning. Often very knowledgeable about individual students and student groups. Their support for partnership efforts is critical.
Specialists: School counselors, school nurses, school social workers, and school psychologists.	Focus largely, although not exclusively, on high-risk students. They are key to developing intervention strategies for individual students.
Operations staff: Custodian, maintenance and cafeteria personnel, bus drivers.	Knowledgeable about the school's physical plant and operation; often in a position to observe important student interaction and may be knowledgeable about community conditions and concerns. Sometimes overlooked, they are important successful partnership activities, particularly related to safety and security.
Coaches	Coaches are well positioned to observe behavior and peer interaction and to have informal contact with students. Further, they are typically held in high esteem by students and are very influential. Their understanding and support for the school-law enforcement partnership implementation is very important.
Students	Although some students have needs that require school intervention and a very small number require law enforcement intervention, most can serve as a valuable resource for school safety and security. They can be engaged in law-related education, in crime prevention activities, and are an excellent source of information for problem analysis and developing solutions.
Parents	Parents provide valuable perspectives not only about their child(ren), but also about schools and communities; they are also important to continuing community support for partnerships.

Key Members of School-Law Enforcement Partnerships	Partnership Roles
Local businesses and civic groups	Often strongly invested in schools, they can provide valuable perspectives and financial and/or political support.
Community-based agencies serving children and families including –Community Services Boards (CSBs) –Court Service Units (CSUs) –Departments of Social Services (DSSs)	Students and their families may be involved with or need the services of various community mental health, social services, or counseling and support organizations. See Chapter V, Section B. Challenges Students Experience for additional related information on issues these specialists address and strategies for effective collaboration with these resources.

School Security Officer Role

Another school building-based staff member found in many Virginia schools is the School Security Officer (SSO). It is critical for SROs to very clearly understand the roles and responsibilities of SSOs in their assigned schools and to coordinate their respective efforts.

§ 9.1-101, *Code of Virginia*, defines the SSO as:

"School security officer" means an individual who is employed by the local school board or a private or religious school for the 16.1-247.1 singular purpose of maintaining order and discipline, preventing crime, investigating violations of the policies of the school board or the private or religious school, and detaining students violating the law or the policies of the school board or the private or religious school on school property, school buses, or at school-sponsored events and who is responsible solely for ensuring the safety, security, and welfare of all students, faculty, staff, and visitors in the assigned school.

Virginia Administrative Code (6VAC20-240-20) sets forth requirements to be an SSO including training and certification by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

The key responsibilities of an SSO in Virginia are to work with the school staff and students to *maintain order and discipline in the school*. They are employed by school divisions that prescribe the specific duties and responsibilities of the SSOs they employ.

Detailed information about Virginia's School Security Officer Certification Program is available on the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services website.

Parameters of SSO Authority

Of particular importance to an SRO is having a clear understanding of the authority of SSOs and how it differs from that of SROs. The key difference is that SROs are certified law enforcement officers and have authority set forth in state law, including the authority to arrest. SSOs in Virginia are school division employees working under the direction of a local school administrator. SSOs do *not* have law enforcement authority.

Within the school environment, it is critical to differentiate criminal matters that are the responsibility of the SRO from disciplinary matters that are the responsibility of the school administrator. As a rule,

- Law enforcement officers take the lead when there are serious criminal violations
- School officials take the lead on school violations

▪ Roles of SSOs are specified by the employing school division

Comparing SRO and SSO Roles

The SSO must work effectively with both law enforcement and educators to resolve school security problems. Roles of the SSO and the SRO are compared in Table 9. It is important to understand that SSOs are school employees, and their roles are prescribed by schools either at the division or school level. Therefore, roles may vary widely across school divisions and schools.

Table 9. Comparison of SRO and SSO Roles

School Security Officer	School Resource Officer
1. A school employee	1. A law enforcement agency employee
2. Complying with and guided by local school policies and regulations	2. Complying with federal and state laws and local ordinances
3. Functions under the direction of local school principal or designee	3. Functions under the direction of law enforcement command
4. Primarily assigned to school campus activities	4. Assigned to school and community activities
5. Responsible for enforcing school policy	5. Responsible for enforcing laws
6. Responsible for detaining individuals	6. Responsible for custody and arrest in conformance with law
7. Can search students based upon reasonable suspicion in accordance with local school board policy	7. Search in accordance with State and Federal laws; search requires probable cause or permission
8. May detain and question students	8. Laws and custody requirement procedures apply
9. Act in absence of parents (*in loco parentis*)	9. Act under the standards of law
10. Use of force should be limited and only used in accordance with local school policy	10. Use of force is permissible as guided by department policy

E. *Effective Communications*

The importance of effective communications, particularly related to promoting understanding of the SRO roles and partnership operational procedures, can hardly be overemphasized. Misinformed, inaccurate expectations can easily occur and undermine partnership relationships.

SRO Program and Officer Standards underscore the importance of communication. SRO Programs should develop and maintain informational products that are up-to-date and are designed to effectively communicate information related to the S-LEP and MOU development process and roles and responsibilities of SROs. The products are to be designed for key audiences and highly accessible in both print and electronic formats (and other relevant languages where necessary for the parent population). Examples of strategies at the SRO Program level include:

▪ Developing and maintaining a set of basic informational products describing the roles and responsibilities of SROs, the S-LEP purpose, and MOU development and review process.

▪ Engaging with county-/city-wide PTA and civic organizations in activities to enhance parent and public understanding of the S-LEP and SRO roles and responsibilities.

▪ Ensuring print and electronic versions, in multiple languages where necessary, of all products are accessible for use by all SROs.

- Posting electronic versions of items on publicly accessible websites.
- Reviewing all informational items on an at least annual basis and updating content as needed.

There is also an SRO Standard specific to communication: The SRO engages in activities designed to inform members of the school community about the roles and responsibilities of SROs and benefits of the S-LEP. Strategies associated with this standard include:

- Ensuring that school administrators at assigned schools develop a clear understanding of the SRO roles and responsibilities by reviewing the current MOU with administrators and specifying implementation strategies at the particular school.

- Maintaining and distributing accurate and up-to-date information about SRO roles and responsibilities in print and electronic formats.

- Seeking and taking advantage of opportunities to provide brief informational updates at meetings of school personnel and at meetings and events of parent and community organizations.

- Within the context of parent contact to resolve student-specific issues, clearly explaining the SRO roles and responsibilities and consistently seeking to clarify and correct any misperceptions or inappropriate expectations.

SRO Wisdom on Communication, Relationship-Building, and Being Approachable

Experienced SROs emphasize the importance of effective communication, relationship-building, and being approachable. Virginia SROs, when asked in a recent survey "What guidance would you give a new SRO just starting out?" and "What do you consider to be the most important skill set for an SRO?" cited communication most frequently. Examples of responses include:

"Communication skills are by far the most important. Get out of your office and learn about your kids."

"Communication/demeanor – if you just stand in the hallway with your back against the wall with your sunglasses on and your arms crossed then you have already lost."

"Communication skills. Being able to interact with people from different cultures and lifestyles. Knowing when you need to step into certain situations, remember your training. First and foremost you're a law enforcement officer, but as law enforcement officers we many times are counselors and advisors for people that are struggling with any number of issues. Use those same skills with a desire to help the people in your care find peace and safety."

"Communication and contact is everything."

"Listen, be accessible, be visible, be approachable, get involved, and always BUILD RELATIONSHIPS. Show students, parents, faculty, and staff you care every day!"

"Open communication with the school is the best advice when dealing with anything if the school and the law enforcement are not on the same sheet then it is a lot harder to do the job."

"Get to know your school, namely the teachers and staff and develop a good working relationship with them. Walk the hallways and be friendly with everyone. Develop a good line of communication with everyone in your school, be approachable. Make kids laugh, teachers too. Don't take yourself too seriously and don't be offended by donut jokes."

"Talk to your students, get to know them, develop a rapport for being understandable and approachable."

"COMMUNICATION AND EMPATHY."

"Communication skills. Listening (really listening), offering advice or alternative methods and building rapport and trust."

"COMMUNICATION SKILLS!!! If you cannot communicate well with others you will not be able to fake it when you have 1600 people that want to talk to you."

"Develop relationships with your students and staff. Earning the students' trust will pay great dividends in your daily work. Both the students and staff are very valuable when it comes to solving crimes in the school and your jurisdiction."

Strategies for Effective SRO-Administrator Ongoing Communication

The importance of good communications between the SRO and school administrators cannot be overemphasized. Here are some simple strategies to promote effective ongoing communication include:

- Hold 10- to 15-minute conferences daily with the school administrators to keep them abreast of law enforcement-related matters and to receive input and related information from them.

- Meet weekly to discuss operational issues and to plan and monitor larger school safety activities.

- Place the officer on the school's distribution list for all memoranda and other notices.

- Do not overlook the value of informal, unscheduled communication between the SRO, SSO, and administrators as they go about their daily activities.

Communicating about the SRO Role

SROs need to be able to quickly explain who they are, what they do, and why it matters. This type communication is commonly referred to as an "elevator speech" because when someone asks, "What, exactly, does an SRO do?" the SRO will typically have no more than a minute to reply! Having an elevator speech memorized and rehearsed so that it flows naturally when needed is an important first step in effectively clarifying the SRO role with the broad range of members of the school community.

The "elevator speech" should contain the most essential "basics" about the SROs roles and clearly connect it to the broader goals of the S-LEP, using language consistent with the local MOU. An example that takes about a minute to deliver:

I'm [Rank & Name] and serve as SRO at [School(s)]. SROs have three main roles – law enforcement officer, law-related educator, and role model/informal mentor. As a fully [qualified/ certified] law enforcement officer, I not only respond to requests for law enforcement assistance when crimes are committed or there is an emergency, I work collaboratively with school administrators in problem-solving to prevent crime and improve school safety. I serve on the school's threat assessment team and assist with crisis planning and school safety audits. The law enforcement role is primary, but I also make presentations to school personnel and to students to keep them informed about law-related topics and, in daily interactions with students, I set a positive example, listen and guide them toward positive solutions to problems, and connect them to resources in the school and sometimes the community. The SRO program is part of a partnership between the school division and the [Sheriff's Office/Police Department] to have schools that are safe and have positive school climates.

When evidence of effectiveness is available, include that, too. For example,

This year, working with school personnel, we've been able to ... [reduce fights ... reduce thefts... get

students involved with crime prevention efforts…]

If there is time, inviting questions from others allows an SRO to respond to specific questions the person may have:

I'd be glad to share more. Is there anything you are particularly interested in?

This approach not only opens an opportunity for further discussion but communicates SRO interest in answering **their** question and respond to **their** particular concerns. It's okay if you don't know the specific information requested or are not sure how to answer. Explain that you'll find out the answer and get back to them.

You might anticipate a question commonly asked, particularly if there has been confusion about the issue and you want to make sure that you cover the point. For example, you might say:

Sometimes people ask what role SROs have in school discipline and the answer is "none." Unless there has been a violation of law or there is a threat to safety, SROs would not have any involvement when a student simply violates the student code of conduct or school rules. Only certain particularly serious crimes are required by Virginia law to be reported to law enforcement. We avoid criminalizing minor offenses, often working with parents.

Beyond developing the basic "elevator speech" about the SRO role, it can be helpful to develop a clear and concise response to other questions or concerns that come up regularly. Effective communication is key!

Communication with Teachers

According to the 2020 School Safety Audit Survey Report that collects data from school personnel, the majority of schools (64%) reported that training on SRO roles and responsibilities was provided to school personnel. Despite 64% already providing training on SRO roles and responsibilities, 70% agreed teachers would benefit from more training.

Chart 2. Percent of School Administrators Who Think Teachers Would Benefit from More Training on the Roles of SROs
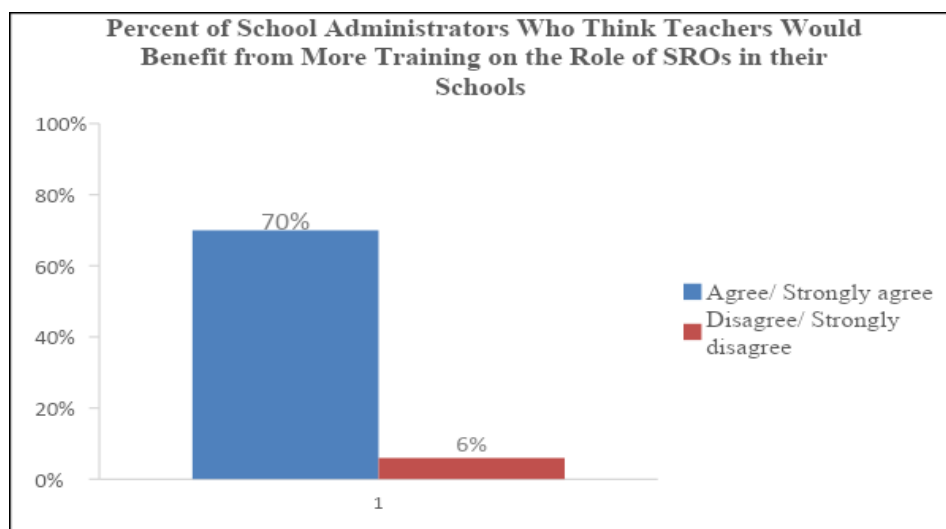
Source: Virginia 2020 School Safety Audit Survey Report

Of particular concern are instances in which teachers ask SROs to become involved with non-criminal activities. This suggests need to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of messaging to teachers about several key provisions of Virginia's Model MOU:

- The school division will handle discipline within the school disciplinary process without involving SROs.
- The SD is responsible for communicating the goals and role of the SRO to all school administration, personnel, and students.
- School administrators and personnel are responsible for school discipline.
- Although SROs are expected to be familiar with the school division code of student conduct, the rules of individual schools, and their application in day-to-day practice, SROs should not be involved with the enforcement of school rules or disciplinary infractions that are not violations of law.

The Value of Joint Training for Being "On the Same Page"

Joint training of SROs and school administrators, particularly on legal issues, is particularly effective in further clarifying boundaries of authority and discretion, areas of responsibility, and strategies for effective collaboration.

Including SROs in in-service trainings related to student issues (e.g., mental health conditions, substance use, intervention programs and supports, suicide prevention) can be a simple and effective strategy for SROs to access such specialized training, maintain up-to-date understandings of important issues, and gain additional insight into their law enforcement roles related to these student issues.

Communicating Effectively with Students

As suggested in the previous section titled "SRO Wisdom on Communication, Relationship-Building, and Being Approachable," engaging students in general involves being **visible and approachable**.

Key SRO strategies for being visible involve being where students and others are – being regularly present in the cafeteria area during lunch, in the bus loading zones and/or student parking lots at the beginning and end of the school day, and occasionally checking in at before- and after-school practices and student organization meetings.

Being approachable involves:
- Smiling (even when you've had a tough day)
- Being accessible (not talking just to school staff members)
- Being positive and encouraging
- Talking with and getting to know students
- Listening … *really* listening (attune to the emotion)
- Acknowledging victories (acing a test) and showing empathy in defeats (team losses)

Other strategies for engaging students in specific circumstances are also contained in this *Guide*. See:
- Chapter V for "10 Strategies to Improve Law Enforcement Interactions with Youth" for guidance on communicating effectively with youth.
- Supplement 1 for additional tips for interviewing students and for making presentations to students at different grade levels:

  Talking with Teens: Basic Strategies for Interviewing

  Tips for Effective Presentation with Students at Different Grade Levels

Communicating with Parents

If the SRO program is a new one, it is especially important to prepare parents in advance, clearly explaining what the role and types of services the SRO provides. Even if the SRO program is well-established, it is important to continue to actively communicate about what the SRO does and to use multiple channels for communication. Consider:

- Including information about the SRO in routine communications with parents such as letters/newsletters

- Including information about the SRO on the school's website

- Publishing an article in the high school newspaper about some activity the SRO organized

- Attending and providing a brief presentation at PTA meetings and other community meetings that parents attend

- Being present with print information to share at "Back to School" open houses and other gatherings that parents attend

- Using social media and messaging groups (e.g., Facebook and WhatsApp) in accordance with related law enforcement agency policies

See Supplement 1 of this *Guide* for "Public Speaking Tips with Adult Audiences."

What Parents Want to Know

Pay special attention to the questions parents are asking and prepare answers that are clear and fully responsive to their questions – if several parents ask the same question, it's likely others have the same question, and it may be wise to write down and make available answers to "frequently asked questions" (FAQs) and to be sure to communicate about these whenever you speak with groups of parents.

At the SRO program level, written materials should be prepared for use by all SROs in the law enforcement agency that can be shared with parents (and others) in both print and electronic formats. The items should include a space where the contact information for the assigned SRO can be included.

A sample/template for several informational items is contained in the companion publication *S-LEP Standards and Program Leadership Tools.*

"The Basics" that parents typically want to know include:

- *What are the role(s) of the SRO in the school?* Good examples can help clarify!

- *There's already a school security officer. How are they different?*

- *How is the SRO involved with student discipline?* This is an opportunity to clearly delineate SRO and administrator roles and responsibilities.

- *What are the SRO's qualifications and training? Does he/she understand kids? Does he/she understand **my** kid who has special needs?*

- *Is the SRO armed? What is he/she supposed to do if there's a school shooter?* This is a good opportunity to affirm there are plans in place for critical incident response, and to also talk about the SRO's involvement in school security, prevention strategies, and with the school's threat assessment team.

Effective One-on-One Communication with Parents

In one-on-one encounters with parents (and others) it is important to strike the right tone.

- *Listen and ask questions* – It is very important for you to understand parent perceptions and concerns.

- *Be welcoming* – Whatever the method of communication, be warm and positive.

- *Emphasize their importance* – Recognize their efforts and acknowledge their strong influence on their child.

- *Foster trust* – Be clear that you share the same primary interest: their child's (their student's) best interests.

A Parent Checklist to Consider

Strategies for Youth, a youth advocacy organization that focuses on law enforcement-youth engagement, reports that parents are often not aware of the scope of officers' authority and officers are not aware of what parents have been told about law enforcement's role in the school – a situation that causes confusion and at times significant problems. In response, the organization has published *Parent's Checklist for SROs in Your Children's School* that offers a checklist to provide parents with a set of questions designed to help parents better understand the SRO role. Although the organization has often been critical of SRO programs, their recommendation for S-LEPs to create parent guides has merit. Striving for transparency and responding honestly to "hard" questions reduces misperceptions and can reduce potential opposition to the presence of law enforcement in schools. A Parent Guide might include information on these topics:

MOUs – contents and process of development, including opportunities for parent involvement.

SROs and School Personnel – definition of role, role in school discipline, searches, crime reporting requirements, de-escalation and use of force, training on child/adolescent development, trauma-informed approaches, children with special needs, etc.

SRO Qualifications, Selection and Evaluation – experience, qualification, opportunities for school/parent involvement in selection, training, performance evaluation.

Use of Force and Restraints – policies and procedures, reporting requirements.

Parent and Student Notifications – requirements/circumstances/process for notification, avenues for complaints and compliments.

Special Education Needs – SRO training/understanding of students with special needs and of disciplinary process with these students.

Children with Immigrant Status – school policies regarding disclosure of children's status to ICE and other authorities.

Social Networks

Today's youth are often more comfortable communicating via text or on social media. SROs should give thought to using technology-based channels for communication with members of the school community. Social networks have proven effective in community engagement, general announcement, soliciting tips, and investigations. In-depth information about use of social media is available from the International

Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Law Enforcement Policy Center. Three items available online are:

Social Media: Considerations Document (May 2019)

Social Media: Concepts & Issues (May 2019)

Social Media: Need to Know (May 2019)

Cultural Differences, Racism, and Implicit Bias

Cultural competence is a critical dimension of effective communication. As law enforcement officers, SROs routinely complete training on cultural awareness and related issues of racism and bias and the importance of cultural competence in their law enforcement role. Such trainings build an awareness of systemic and individual racism, cultural diversity, and implicit bias. Briefly, according to the Cambridge Dictionary:

Individual racism refers to unfair or harmful behavior, beliefs, or actions from one person directed against another person or other people, based on race.

Systemic racism refers to policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organization, and that result in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race. It does not assume the people within the society or organization are racist or intentionally inflict harm, but that the policies and procedures have racially disparate negative outcomes.

Implicit bias describes the automatic associations individuals make between groups of people and stereotypes about those groups. Under certain conditions, those automatic associations can influence behavior, making people respond in biased ways even when they are not explicitly prejudiced. Such bias apply not only to racial differences but also gender, age, religion, or sexual orientation and can influence interactions between police and citizens, affecting presumptions of guilt or innocence (National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, 2015).

Within the school community context SROs have even greater opportunity to create climates of inclusion in their roles as not only law enforcement officers but also as law-related educators and role models/informal mentors. The National Center for School Safety offers a video on cultural differences and recommends that SROs:

- Learn about different cultures
- Understand the significance of different clothes and hair styles
- Support students practicing their religion through fasting
- Respect student choices on the types of food they eat
- Sit with students isolated at lunchtime or before school
- Ask students questions about their background and culture
- Be kind and intercede when you see intolerance
- Show students how to accept and embrace differences

To Learn More about Cultural Differences, Racism, and Implicit Bias

U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services
Implicit Bias (2015) – A Community-Oriented Trust and Justice Brief.

National Center for School Safety –
YouTube Video: Cultural Differences: Who Knew? www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1VGiTC2tZs

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F. *Understanding Key School Programs and Supports*

There are certain programs and supports that are found in virtually all Virginia schools. Having basic knowledge of these programs and supports helps SROs navigate the school environment and understand better how to collaborate in ways that keep schools safe and contribute to positive school climates.

Important related information is included in Supplement 2. Strategies for Safe and Supportive Schools that explains the features and guiding principles of the Safe and Supportive Schools Model the relationship of school climate and student behavior and guiding principles for improving school climate and discipline, and Virginia's Tiered Systems of Support.

Special Education

"Special education" means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent(s), to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in a classroom, in the home, in hospitals, in institutions, and in other settings and instruction in physical education.

The Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) guarantees a free appropriate public education to all eligible children with disabilities. The steps in the special education process include:

1. Identification and referral
2. Evaluation
3. Determination of eligibility
4. Development of an individualized education program (IEP) and determination of services
5. Reevaluation

There are timelines schools must follow for each step. Timelines help to prevent any delay. Procedural safeguards ensure that the student is provided a free appropriate public education according to the federal and state rules. The services and placement of students with disabilities who need special education, are developed through an individualized education plan (IEP) that is the responsibility of local public-school divisions.

This section of the *S-LEP Guide* focuses on programs and services found in schools. It is important for SROs to recognize that students and others with special needs require special consideration within the contexts of crisis planning and of law enforcement. Information on school safety planning for students and others with special needs is contained in Section D of this Chapter. Additional information on how disabilities can affect encounters with law enforcement and related SRO strategies is contained in Chapter V.

To Learn More about Special Education

Virginia Department of Education
Virginia Department of Education's Special Education webpage contains a comprehensive range of information and resources related to special education.

Family Special Education Connection Funded by the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia Family Special Education Connection website provides a one-stop-shop for parents, families, and caregivers of children with special needs to:
▪ Access local school system contacts and disability services in local communities

▪ Explore an abundance of resources to help your children succeed
▪ Learn about and plan their children's educational program
▪ Understand their legal rights and responsibilities

U.S. Department of Education
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) website
Comprehensive informational resource related to federal education policy.

Safe and Sound Schools – A non-profit founded by parents who lost children at Sandy Hook, provides resources for crisis prevention, response, and recovery. Their Especially Safe! Program focuses on addressing the special safety needs of children with disabilities.

National Center for School Safety
Autism Spectrum Disorder (SRO Video Series) – https://www.nc2s.org/resource/autism-spectrum-disorder-school-resource-officer-video-series/
Video for SRO on identifying signs of ASD and other disabilities, understanding potential behavioral characteristics, and strategies to de-escalate conflict and support students with ASD. Related poster also available for download.

Students Eligible for Services under Section 504

Section 504 is part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, that requires schools to provide a free and appropriate public education to students and operates very much like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Whereas IDEA provides a very specific list of categories of disabilities, Section 504 has no categories with strict eligibility criteria but may include a broad range of impairments such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), allergies, disabilities, multiple chemical sensitivity, obesity, pregnancy, and social maladjustment. Section 504 requires that the disability substantially limits one or more major activities. Temporary impairments are not protected disabilities. A student with a temporary disability expected to last six months or less, such as a broken arm, would typically *not* qualify for Section 504. Examples that may qualify would include:

▪ A student with severe arthritis may have persistent pain, tenderness or swelling in one or more joints which may require a modified physical education program, a rest period during the day, or use of assistive devices for writing (e.g., pencil grips, non-skid surface, typewriter/ computer, etc.)

▪ For a student with a special health care problem that requires clean intermittent catheterization twice each day, the school would provide trained personnel to perform the procedure or a private location for the student to perform the procedure and may adapt physical education requirements.

Both IDEA and Section 504 require testing and a determination of eligibility and, if eligible, modifications to the student's education, such as allowing more time to complete tests, may be made or an individualized Behavioral Management Plan (BMP) may be developed. The disciplinary process with a student with a disability under Section 504 is similar to that for students with a disability under IDEA in that a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) must be conducted before suspending a student for more than 10 days.

To Learn More about Section 504

Virginia Department of Education
SECTION 504: Keys to Implementation in Virginia Schools is an introductory presentation that contains basic information on Section 504.

U.S. Department of Education
Parent and Educator Resource Guide to Section 504 in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (Dec. 2016) – A comprehensive guide summarizing key requirements of 504 and lists of sources of technical assistance

Disciplinary and Law Enforcement Action with Children with Disabilities

Confusion has sometimes arisen in situations related to the handling of offenses committed by students with disabilities. Although the IDEA constrains disciplinary penalties schools can use with such students, these provisions *do not* apply to law enforcement activities or to the imposition of legal penalties for criminal acts.

It is, however, important for SROs to be aware that there are concerns about exclusionary discipline practices impacting children with disabilities disproportionately and to have a basic understanding of the educational rights of these students and of required procedures.

Excerpts from *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia* (2010) that contain provisions governing discipline of students with disabilities are published as Appendix C of the Virginia Board of Education's *Model Guidance for Positive and Preventive Code of Student Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension* (June 2021).

There are limits on the number of days these students can be excluded from school and requirements to continue the provision of education in accordance with students' individual education plan (IEP). Schools must make a "manifestation determination" to determine whether the conduct was related to the disabilities. See Chapter V, Section C for additional information on disabilities and implications for law enforcement, as well as specific SRO strategies for understanding and working effectively with students with disabilities.

Bullying Prevention/Intervention

The *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-208.01 requires local school boards to establish character education programs that include addressing the inappropriateness of bullying. Bullying is defined in the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-276.01.

"Bullying" means any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim; and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. "Bullying" includes cyber bullying. "Bullying" does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict.

Typically, cyberbullying is defined as using information and communication technologies, such as cell phone text messages and pictures and internet email, social networking websites, defamatory personal websites, and defamatory online personal polling websites, to support deliberate, hostile behavior intended to harm others. Additional information on students who are bullied is contained in Section B of this Chapter.

Model Policy and Guidance to Address Bullying

Model Policy to Address Bullying in Virginia Public Schools was developed and adopted by the Virginia Board of Education to address and prevent bullying. The *Model Policy* provides information to assist local school boards in formulating policies to help prevent bullying and procedures to report, investigate and intervene when bullying behavior occurs. The document also addresses different types of bullying and describes the potential ramifications for all those involved in bullying incidents; bullying prevention and intervention practices and strategies are described. Additional information on reporting, investigating, and recording incidents, and the necessary notifications for parents and law enforcement are detailed. The appendix provides a sample school board policy, reporting samples and follow-up forms, as well as guidance from the U.S. Department of Education. Most instances of bullying will be investigated and handled via the disciplinary process and the *Model Policy* cautions school administrators not to rush to criminalize behavior. Local school boards are required to address bullying in their student conduct policies and strongly encouraged to establish school programs and supports to address bullying. The Virginia Board of Education's *Model Guidance* related to student conduct, initial incidents of bullying with no physical injury and cyberbullying are classified as "Relationship Behaviors (RB)" that create a negative relationship between two or more members. Subsequent incidents, after intervention, receive a higher classification of "Behaviors of a Safety Concern (BSC) that create unsafe conditions for students, staff, and/or visitors to the school.

Schools are not required to report incidents of bullying or cyberbullying to law enforcement, but referral to the school's threat assessment team may also occur. Additionally, students and their parents/guardians may take action to remediate harassment or discrimination based on a person's gender or membership in a legally protected class under local, state, or federal law.

Bullying prevention efforts at a school can take many forms, including:
- classroom based programs that aim to build a safe environment and teach students to recognize, respond, and report bullying
- policies and rules that discourage bullying and guide appropriate responses
- incorporation of anti-bullying messages and activities in extracurricular programs
- engagement of parents and broader community
- appropriate support for victims, bullies, and bystanders

Cyberbullying is typically addressed in school division policies related to appropriate use of technologies.

To Learn More about Bullying & Cyberbullying

Bullying
> StopBullying.gov –
> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website containing information on training, state laws and policies, and strategies for schools, parents, and children.

Virginia Department of Education
> Webpage on Bullying Prevention VA Board of Education Model Policy to Address Bullying in Virginia's Public Schools (Oct. 2013)

Cyberbullying
> Cyberbullying Research Center
> Provides research findings, stories, cases, fact sheets, tips and strategies, current headlines, quizzes, a frequently updated blog, and a number of other helpful resources. It also has downloadable materials for

educators, counselors, parents, law enforcement officers, and other youth-serving professionals to use and distribute as needed. Key publication: Cyberbullying: Identification, Prevention, & Response (2019 Edition)

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

    Netsmartz – an online safety education program providing videos and activities teaching online safety.
    KidSmartz – a child safety program that educates families about preventing abduction and empowers kids in grades K-5 to practice safer behaviors. Offers resources for parents, caregivers, and teachers.
    Cyber Tipline – Tipline for reporting online exploitation of children, multiple videos and publications related to online safety.

Truancy Prevention/Intervention

In Virginia, the law does not define a truant specifically but does define a child who is habitually and without justification absent from school as a "child in need of supervision" when certain other conditions are met. The *Code of Virginia* § 16.1-228 requires schools to intervene with students who have excessive absences and to ensure that they are provided educational and support services to meet their identified needs. The *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-277 prohibits the use of suspensions or expulsions as a response to events related to attendance. Simply stated, a school division cannot suspend or expel a student for truancy.

Although truancy is addressed by school attendance officers and SROs are not typically involved with truancy intervention, it is important to be aware of risk factors associated with truancy and to recognize that truancy is a predictor of delinquency. Many factors associated with truancy are also associated with delinquency; on the flip side, a strong commitment to school has been cited by numerous researchers as a protective factor against risky behaviors among youth.

According to Strategies for Youth law enforcement should be concerned about truancy because:

- Law enforcement agencies that address truancy often see an immediate decrease in delinquency in their jurisdictions during school hours because potentially delinquent youth are engaged in school.

- Truancy by youth under the age of 12 is the best predictor of a youth's involvement in delinquency.

- Truancy is also a predictor of substance use, teen pregnancy, and social isolation, and is the number one reason youth drop out of school.

- Truant youth typically have low self-esteem and are more sensitive to rejection and criticism. They are often vulnerable to peers and adults who may pressure them to become involved in negative behaviors that could undermine their chances for success and increase involvement with law enforcement.

Strategies for Youth reports:

- Law enforcement officers are most effective in reducing truancy when they recognize that truancy is not a crime. It is a symptom of a youth's troubled adjustment to school for educational or social reasons.

- Law enforcement participation in community responses to truancy are most effective when they:
    - Communicate with schools and parents
    - Do not criminalize truancy
    - Intervene immediately when youth under the age of 12 are truant
    - Work with schools to promote re-engagement of truant youth.

To Learn More about Truancy

Virginia Department of Education
Attendance and Truancy webpage – Contains basic information related to attendance and truancy and links to multiple resources including:
Attendance and Truancy Among Virginia Students – A 12 module training series examining current practice and ways to improve future practice with the goal of addressing and eliminating chronic absenteeism, and ultimately boost student outcomes and success.
Defining Chronic Absentee Webinar (Oct. 2019)
Overview of Chronic Absenteeism Calculation Webinar (Nov. 2019)
Reducing Chronic Absenteeism through Best Practices (Dec. 2019)
Applying Chronic Absenteeism to Accountability (Jan. 2020)
Strategies for Youth –
Strategies for Youth: How to Understand Truancy (2019) – A factsheet defining truancy, its prevalence, reasons it is concerning, and causes.

Student Assistance Programs

Schools throughout Virginia have student assistance teams or other school-based teams by other names (e.g., student intervention team, student support team) to which students who need additional intervention and support are referred. A referral may be based on behavioral or academic problems. Teams typically include an administrator, counselor, specialists such as school social worker and/or school psychologist, and instructional staff who collect data to assess needs and facilitate access to interventions at school and in the community. Students who display chronic behavioral or academic problems are assessed and an individualized plan is developed. Often, mental health professionals are involved in providing support. Student assistance teams are important in managing schools' tiered systems of support.

According to the Virginia Department of Education, student assistance programming:

▪ provides a framework and process for managing the continuum of social, emotional, and mental health supports for all students and intervention for those in need.
▪ engages students and parents at each level of prevention, intervention, and support services.
▪ offers a systematic and flexible approach for integrating and sustaining evidence-based practices, programs and strategies to enhance a positive school climate and safe school environment.
▪ builds and maintains collaborative partnerships with multiple community stakeholders – e.g., law enforcement agencies, community service boards, other behavioral health service providers, social services, the faith community, youth and family service organizations, prevention councils.
▪ uses a data-driven decision-making process conducted by a planning team in each school to assess needs and monitor interventions.
▪ changes priorities as determined by relevant data and review of existing plans, curriculum, practices, programs, and strategies.

Suicide Prevention

The *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-272.1 requires licensed school personnel, who have reason to believe a student is at imminent risk of suicide, to contact as soon as practicable, at least one of the student's parents. If the student has indicated parental abuse or neglect, contact with the parent is not to be made and social services is to be notified.

Since July 1, 2013, as per the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-79.4, Virginia public schools have been required to "adopt policies for the establishment of threat assessment teams, including the assessment of and intervention with individuals whose behavior may pose a threat to the safety of school staff or students."

Multiple Virginia statutes govern suicide prevention in schools:

§ 22.1-272.1. Responsibility to contact parent of a student at imminent risk of suicide.

§ 22.1-207.2:1. Anti-bullying or suicide prevention materials; parental right to review.

§ 32.1-73.7. Lead agency for youth suicide prevention.

§ 8.01-220.1:2. Civil immunity for teachers under certain circumstances

§ 9.1-184. Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety created; duties.

§ 22.1-79.4 Threat assessment teams and oversight committees.

As a practical matter, schools play a key role in identifying youth at risk of suicide because school faculty and staff are well positioned to observe students' behavior and to act when a student is suspected to be at risk of suicide. Schools in Virginia follow guidelines developed by the Virginia Board of Education. The *Suicide Prevention Guidelines* (2020) focus on suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention (i.e., crisis response after a suicide).

It is important to note that students about whom there are concerns about potential for suicide may be the subject of threat assessments. SROs serve as members of threat assessment teams and assist in monitoring of subject students as well as determining the need, if any, for law enforcement action. See additional information on threat assessment earlier in this chapter.

There are several types of training available for school personnel and others who work regularly with youth. SROs have found these types of training to be helpful:

▪ Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (A.S.I.S.T) for a broad range of school and campus law enforcement and security officers, as well as campus and school administrators, counselors, teachers, and staff. The training is a two-day intensive, interactive and practice-dominated course designed to help caregivers recognize and review risk, and intervene to prevent the immediate risk of suicide.

- ▪ Other available "Gatekeeper Trainings" such as QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) and SafeTALK (Suicide Alertness for Everyone) are designed to give faculty members the skills to recognize individuals at risk and make referrals to the appropriate services and are an important piece of any school-based suicide prevention program.

To Learn More about Suicide Prevention

Virginia Department of Health
   Suicide Prevention Program – coordinates statewide training on suicide prevention and intervention and offers numerous informational and training resources and technical assistance.

Virginia Department of Education
   Suicide Prevention Guidelines for Virginia Public Schools (2020)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
   Preventing Suicide: *A Technical Package of Policy, Programs and Practices* (2017)

National Association of School Psychologists
   Preventing Youth Suicide – offers facts and tips for educators, parents, and teens.

Mediation and Conflict Resolution

Mediation and conflict resolution are employed in many Virginia schools and can be employed as a both preventative and post-conflict intervention. Conflict resolution education teaches the skills needed to engage in creative problem solving. Parties to disputes learn to identify their interests, express their views, and seek mutually acceptable solutions. These programs are most effective when they involve the entire facility or school community, are integrated into institutional management practices and the educational curriculum, and are linked to family and community mediation initiatives.

Mediation is one form of conflict resolution in which a third party may be invited to guide parties through a mediation process to reach a win-win solution. Most mediation involves a five-step process:

In the introductory stage, the mediator(s) will explain the process and ask if the parties would like to continue.

1. The storytelling stage allows each side to present its story.
2. Next, they will be asked to identify issues that have arisen through the stories told.
3. In the problem-solving stage, the disputants have the opportunity to brainstorm creative solutions for the raised issues.
4. In the final stage, an agreement may be crafted that will detail the accepted terms of the resolution.

To Learn More about Conflict Resolution and Mediation

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
   Conflict Resolution/Interpersonal Skills (February 2011). OJJDP-Sponsored, Model Programs Guide Literature Review.

International Institute for Restorative Practices
   Article featuring a 5-day intervention program in Fairfax, VA for more serious incidents of wrongdoing teaching and model conflict resolution and communications skills.

G. *Getting to Know Your School: Using Available Data*

An important aspect of building effective S-LEPs at the school level is developing a deep understanding of the school and how it compares with other schools. There is a great deal of publicly available information on schools in Virginia, but you need to know where to find it. Briefly summarized here are main types and sources of data that are especially relevant for SROs.

Student Conduct Data

Chapter III provided an overview of Virginia student conduct laws and policies, discussed the importance of differentiating disciplinary and law enforcement responses to student misconduct, emphasized the use of use of discretion and use of supportive responses. This section focuses narrowly on data and its usefulness to SROs employing a community policing approach.

Background – Data on student conduct and disciplinary actions first began to be collected in 1991 after the Virginia General Assembly enacted a law requiring school divisions statewide to submit such data. Subsequently, data required by various federal and state laws and regulations began to be collected in one system of reporting called "school discipline, crime, and violence" (DCV) data. The collection of DCV data continued through 2020–2021 and a new system [Student Behavior and Administrative Response Reporting (SBAR)] began to be collected in 2021.

DCV data for recent past years can be accessed on the [Safe Schools Information Resource (SSIR)](#). The SSIR website was established by the Virginia Department of Education to provide user-friendly public access to the discipline, crime, and violence (DCV) data for any school or school division in the Commonwealth. These data can provide insights helpful for school safety and crime prevention efforts including:

- the nature and frequency of incidents at the school,
- trends in types of incidents over multiple years,
- patterns and trends in disciplinary action(s), and
- comparisons to other schools in the school division, neighboring school divisions, and state averages.

Methods of user-friendly access to SBAR data have not yet been established as of the data of publication of this *Guide* (fall 2022). The Basics of Virginia's Student Behavior and Administrative Response (SBAR) Reporting can be found in Supplement 2.

To Learn More about SBAR Reporting

Virginia Department of Education
[Virginia Department of Education, SBAR Collection webpage](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/info_management/data_collection/sbar/index.shtml) [https://www.doe.virginia.gov/info_management/data_collection/sbar/index.shtml] – contains detailed information about all aspects of the SBAR collection.

Virginia Survey of School Climate and Working Conditions

The Virginia Survey of School Climate and Working Conditions is one of five elements of the Virginia School Safety Audit Program.

Key features of the survey are:

- Administration occurs annually in the spring.

- Middle schools are surveyed one year and high schools are surveyed the following year.

- Two surveys are administered: one for students and another for teachers and other staff.

- The purpose is to provide schools with information on school climate, safety, and working conditions.

- Student and teacher/staff perceptions of school rules and discipline, teacher-student relationships, student engagement in school, and the extent of bullying and teasing at school are measured.

Survey results for individual schools can be accessed on the VCSCS Survey Results webpage.

The Virginia School Safety Survey and the Division Safety Survey are two of five elements of the Virginia School Safety Audit Program. Both are administered annually.

The Virginia School Safety Survey focuses on individual schools and is completed by principals. Data collected are:

I. School Identification and Demographic Information

II. Safety-Related Personnel and Partnership
- Mental Health Personnel
- School Resource Officers and Certified School Security Officers

III. Emergency Planning, Drills, and Response
- School Crisis/Emergency Management/Medical Response Plan

IV. Threat Reporting and Assessment
- Threat Assessment Team, Reporting, and Records
- Threat Assessments Conducted in (school year)

School Safety Audit – inquiries about top issues, potential solution, whether recommendations about the issues were made to their school board, whether the issues were resolved, and resources needed to resolve identified issues.

Narrative responses are required for questions about:

- How data from the most recent Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions were used

- Any additional safety related comments or concerns

Types of year-to-year changes and to what the changes are attributed

The Virginia Division Safety Survey focuses at the school division level and is completed by superintendents who must affirm compliance with requirements that all schools have a Crisis Management Plan and School Safety Inspections.

Information derived from these surveys can be particularly valuable in:

▪ identifying most concerning school safety issues at both the school division and school levels,

▪ defining what actions have already been taken and current status of the concern, and

▪ providing insight into needed resources and potential next steps in addressing concerns.

Virginia Education Data

The Virginia Department of Education reports a variety of data on public education in the Commonwealth, including information on enrollment, demographics, student achievement, finances and safety.

Report cards for schools, school divisions and the Commonwealth provide detailed information about the quality of learning and instruction, including state and federal accountability ratings, grade-by-grade data on student achievement, graduation rates and teacher qualifications.

The Virginia Department of Education's Statistics & Reports webpage contains links to the following collections of data:

Graduation, Completion, Dropout & Postsecondary Data
Contains:

▪ four-year and five-year graduation and dropout rates for all schools expressed as the percentage who earn diplomas;

▪ data on high school graduation and of all students and students with disabilities;

▪ numbers and percentage of high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary institutions;

▪ numbers and percentages of high school graduates who enrolled in higher education in Virginia and earned one-year college credit within two years of enrolling;

▪ school, school division, and state-level data on high school graduation and completion;

▪ annual division-level data on Standard and Advanced Studies Diplomas earned by students with disabilities; and

▪ annual school and division-level data on students who drop out in grades 7–12 and 9–12.

Superintendent's Annual Report –
This Annual Report contains educational statistics reported annually by school divisions to the Department of Education. The report includes tables on enrollment, pupil-teacher ratios, promotion, retention, graduation, dropouts, and attendance, as well as financial data and data on school division personnel.

Accreditation & Federal Reports –
The Virginia Board of Education's revised accreditation system measures performance on multiple school quality indicators. The reports available focus on:

▪ School Accreditation Ratings – state and school-level accreditation ratings for current and previous school years.

- ▪ Federal Accountability – federal accountability indicators and lists of schools identified for improvement.
- ▪ SOL Test Results/Pass Rates – school, division, and state-level results by subject and grade level.

School Quality Profiles – These profiles are available for all schools, school divisions, and for the state at https://schoolquality.virginia.gov/. A series of YouTube videos explains what is contained in and how to use the Profiles. Types of data that can be found include:

- ▪ Accreditation Status
- ▪ Academic Achievement in English, mathematics, and science
- ▪ Achievement Gaps in English and math – by student groups (race, economic disadvantage, English learners, and disability)

Chapter IV References

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V. Understanding and Working Effectively with Students

This chapter begins with a look at the adolescent brain and implications for school discipline and law enforcement. Then, through the lens of community policing in a school setting, common challenges that students experience are briefly discussed, and specific SRO strategies are listed along with sources of more in-depth information about the challenges and resources for addressing them. Challenges discussed include adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), bullying, child abuse and neglect, trauma, mental health issues, alcohol and other drug use, gangs, homelessness, justice-involved youth, students with disabilities, and human trafficking. The chapter concludes with challenges related to social media and current practices to address risks. It is important to understand this chapter as a brief introduction for SROs that includes specific strategies for ongoing professional development. SROs are strongly urged to use the informational resources listed and take advantage of the numerous training opportunities available, many designed specifically for law enforcement and increasingly available online.

A. *Adolescent Development*

The Teen Brain: Behavior, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

Legal Recognition of Differences

The fact that adolescents differ from adults in the way they behave, solve problems, and make decisions is broadly recognized. The U.S. Supreme Court has held there are fundamental differences between children and adults in several important decisions:

Roper v. Simmons, 543 U.S. 551 (2005) – held that the execution of individuals who were under 18 years of age at the time of their capital crimes is prohibited by the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments.

The Court cited three general differences between juveniles and adults that demonstrate juveniles cannot reliably be classified as the worst offenders (as required for imposition of the death penalty).

1. Lack of maturity and an underdeveloped sense of responsibility are more common and more understandable in youth. "These qualities often result in impetuous and ill-considered actions and decisions."
2. Juveniles are "more vulnerable or susceptible to negative influences and outside pressures, including peer pressure," and
3. The character of a juvenile is not as well formed as that of an adult. Juvenile personality traits are more transitory.

The court noted that these characteristics of youth lead to diminished culpability and that diminished culpability reduces the penological justifications (retribution and deterrence) for use of the death penalty.

Graham v. Florida, 560 U.S. 48 (2010)
The Court held that the Eighth Amendment prohibits the imposition of a life without parole sentence on a juvenile offender who did not commit homicide and that the juvenile nonhomicide offender must be given a meaningful opportunity to obtain release. The Court reiterated the reasoning about the unique nature of adolescents found in *Roper*.

Miller v. Alabama, 567 U.S. 460 (2012)
The Court held that mandatory life imprisonment without parole for youth who were under age 18 at the time of their offense violates the Eighth Amendment. The decision noted that Roper and Graham

establish that children are constitutionally different from adults for purposes of sentencing. Because juveniles have diminished culpability and greater prospects for reform, we explained, 'they are less deserving of the most severe punishments.'

Changing Brains Make the Difference

There are biological explanations for this difference. Studies have shown that brains continue to mature and develop throughout childhood and adolescence and well into early adulthood. According to Bostic *et al* (2014), in an article published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, scientists have identified a specific region of the brain which is responsible for instinctual reactions including fear and aggressive behavior. This region develops early. However, the area of the brain that controls reasoning and helps us think before we act, develops later. This part of the brain is still changing and maturing well into adulthood.

Changing brains mean that adolescents act differently from adults. Research has also demonstrated that exposure to drugs and alcohol before birth, head trauma, or other types of brain injury can interfere with normal brain development during adolescence.

Based on the stage of their brain development, adolescents are more likely to:

- act on impulse
- misread or misinterpret social cues and emotions
- get into accidents of all kinds
- get involved in fights
- engage in dangerous or risky behavior

Adolescents are less likely to:

- think before they act
- pause to consider the potential consequences of their actions
- modify their dangerous or inappropriate behaviors

These brain differences do not mean that young people cannot make good decisions or tell the difference between right and wrong. It also does not mean that they should not be held responsible for their actions. But an awareness of these differences can help parents, teachers, advocates, and policy makers understand, anticipate, and manage the behavior of adolescents.

Implications for School Discipline, Law Enforcement, and Juvenile Justice

It is especially important for SROs to have an understanding of the basics of adolescent development.

According to *Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice,* a publication of The Future of Children, adolescents' relative developmental immaturity contributes to immature judgment and criminal behavior in the following ways:

- *Poor decision making*: Teens are less able to process information quickly and thoughtfully in real-world situations. Their ability to make good decisions in situations that require a fast and well-thought-out response is sometimes flawed – such as whether or not to go along with a friend to steal a car for a joyride – because they may not have the ability to process the ramifications of the action quickly.

- *Not thinking about the future*: Teens are less likely than adults to consider the long-term consequences of their actions, termed "future orientation." This reduces their fear of punishment in the future – such as the possibility of going to jail – and leads them to choose the fun of the present over the pain of the future. This is the reason that scare tactics are largely ineffective.

- *Giving in to peer pressure*: Adolescents are more easily influenced by, pay more attention to, spend more time with, and are more responsive to their peers than adults are with friends. Teens are more likely to change their decisions or alter their behavior in response to peer pressure – to use drugs or initiate risky behavior in group situations in order to elevate their status or avoid real or imagined peer rejection.

- *Risk taking*: Teenagers engage in more risky behavior than adults. There are two "blind spots" that adolescents have when it comes to assessing risk that work together to increase their risk-taking behavior: 1) While teens demonstrate that they understand the level of risk associated with a given behavior under ideal (and simulated) conditions, they fail to consider these same risks in real-world situations; and 2) adolescents are more "reward sensitive" (the rush of driving fast) and less "risk averse" (getting a ticket or being in an accident) than adults.

- *Impulsivity and self-control*: Adolescents are more reckless than adults because they are still developing the ability to control impulses. In addition, adolescents experience more rapid and extreme changes in mood than adults do. High levels of emotional arousal, whether anger or elation, have been connected to difficulties with self-control. The combination of moodiness and impulsivity leads adolescents to have more difficulty in controlling their behavior than adults.

- *Unformed identity*: The development of one's sense of self – one's values, plans, attitudes, and beliefs – is one of the fundamental tasks of adolescence. During adolescence, identity is fluid, constantly changing and evolving as teens try to figure out who they are. An important part of the process of forming one's identity is experimentation with different activities and roles, which often includes risky behavior and sometimes includes engaging in crime.

These conditions are acknowledged in the Purpose section of Virginia's [Model MOU](#) which states:

"The parties acknowledge that students are generally less mature and responsible than adults; they often lack the maturity, experience, perspective, and judgment to recognize and avoid choices that could be detrimental to them; and they are more susceptible to outside pressures than adults.

10 Strategies to Improve Law Enforcement Interactions with Youth

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Department of Justice and the International Association of Chiefs of Police published a [Guide on the Effects of Adolescent Development on Policing](#) (2018) and recommend theses 10 Strategies to Improve Law Enforcement Interactions with Youth:

1. **Approach youth with a calm demeanor, conveying that you are there to help them.** Aggression may cause the youth to shut down and make the situation worse. Refrain from pushing back (arguing). If necessary, de-escalate using a calm, focused, and non-confrontational verbal approach. Use a nonjudgmental tone. Youth are particularly attuned to both verbal and non-verbal judgment from adults.

2. **Establish rapport.** Developing rapport is fundamental to successful youth interactions. They are not likely to open up if they feel unsupported or uncomfortable. Give them your undivided attention. Convey that you want to listen and can be trusted. Listen openly and non-judgmentally.

3. **Be patient.** Don't act hurried, like you don't have time to talk with the youth. Give the youth a chance to ask questions and be honest with your responses. Convey that you want to hear what they have to say. Give them a chance to explain what happened. Build in extra time to assess their emotions and to work around blocked thinking due to emotion.

4. **Model the respect you expect in return.** Avoid criticism and lecture. Refer to them by name as much as possible. Avoid correcting them or making statements that may communicate disrespect. You may lessen their aggression and defiance by demonstrating respect and support for their autonomy, views, and choices.

5. **Use age-appropriate language.** Adolescents do not have adult capacity to organize thoughts. They may not fully understand what you tell them and may need time to process information. Keep it simple. Use open-ended questions and be prepared to help them sort out information. Don't expect a long attention span.

6. **Repeat or paraphrase their statements.** Affirm their emotions. Seek clarity and understanding through the use of these three methods. *Repeating* what they say gives you a chance to confirm you heard what they said. *Paraphrasing* shows them you are listening. *Affirming* their emotions (e.g., You're frustrated with your parents) shows them genuine interest.

7. **Take caution with nonverbal communication.** Avoid challenging gestures. Approach youth in a natural manner, not actively seeking or avoiding eye contact. Don't demand eye contact. Convey your warmth over your authority. Get on their level (e.g., sit if they are sitting), lean in when listening, and hold your arms and body in a relaxed manner.

8. **Model and praise calm confidence.** Adolescents seek validation and praise while acting indifferent towards it. They act confident, even when feeling self-doubt. They tend to be most calm and cooperative when provided with adult modeling and sincere praise for their ability to make good decisions.

9. **Empower them through choices.** Adolescents need to feel they have choice and control over their thoughts and actions. They are sensitive to external influence and likely to feel coerced, even when there is no explicit effort to coerce them. Yet, they rely on others to validate their decisions. Provide them a range of options and explain their choices in simple terms. Give them a chance to ask questions.

10. **Serve as a positive adult role model.** Positive relationships with adults are a vital component of healthy youth development. Develop programs in your agency that focus on positive youth development, such as mentoring, job skills training, and recreational programs.

To Learn More about Adolescent Development and Implications for School Discipline and Law Enforcement

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Department of Justice & International Association of Chiefs of Police – The Effects of Adolescent Development on Policing (2018).

National Center for School Safety
The Teen Brain – YouTube video (2021, 3.36 min.)

Strategies for Youth
Policing the Teen Brain and Policing the Teen Brain in School – A training for law enforcement officers to strengthen their effectiveness in interacting with youth. Versions offered include Policing the Teen Brain, Policing the Teen Brain in School, Policing Youth on Public Transit, and Policing Youth Chronically Exposed to Trauma and Violence.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
  Facts for Families: Normal Adolescent Development (2011) – A factsheet for families. Parts I (Middle
  School and High School Years) & Part II (Late High School and Beyond)

B. *Challenges That Students Experience*

This section of the *S-LEP Guide* identifies challenges that are commonly seen and specific SRO strategies for becoming knowledgeable and effective in collaborating with educators to help students manage and overcome these challenges and avoid justice involvement and other negative consequences.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood such as:
- experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect
- witnessing violence in the home or community
- having a family member attempt or die by suicide
- growing up in a home with substance abuse, mental health problems or parental separation from being in jail or prison

Research has shown that these childhood experiences are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use problems in adulthood as well as negative impacts on education, employment, and general wellbeing (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Leeb et al, 2011; Shonkoff *et al*, 2012; Merrick *et al*, 2018). Put simply, these experiences of abuse and household dysfunction are linked to many of the leading causes of death in adults. The more risk factors a person experienced in childhood, the higher the risk of developing lifelong health problems including alcoholism, depression, heart disease, and diabetes.

ACES research makes a powerful case for early intervention to prevent the consequences of early adversity and strengthens the case for stable, caring relationships being essential for healthy development. Beyond prevention of long-term negative outcomes, adversity is associated with behavioral and emotional problems in childhood. For example, children with four or more ACES are particularly at risk for substance use disorder. Failing to recognize that link decreases the chances adults will respond effectively to children with such experiences.

See related information on Children Who Have Experienced Trauma below.

SRO Strategies:

- Learn more about ACEs, how these childhood experiences affect students, and how these experiences may be impacting your interaction with students and their parents.

- Learn more about trauma-informed policing strategies (e.g., avoid interviewing, subduing, or arresting in the presence of children).

- Be aware that a sizable percentage of students with whom you deal are likely to have exposure to multiple childhood adversities. Almost all children in foster care would fall into those categories. There are other students for whom suspected abuse/neglect reports have been made and students known to be living in a household where domestic violence has occurred/is occurring.

Students Who Are Bullied

It is critical for SROs to pay attention to bullying. Bullying is associated with both school violence and suicide. According to the federal resource stopbullying.gov:

Children at risk of being bullied generally have one or more of the following risk factors:

- Are perceived as different from their peers, such as being overweight or underweight, wearing glasses or different clothing, being new to a school, or being unable to afford what kids consider "cool"
- Are perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves
- Are depressed, anxious, or have low self-esteem
- Are less popular than others and have few friends
- Do not get along well with others, seen as annoying or provoking, or antagonize others for attention

However, even if a child has these risk factors, it doesn't mean that they will be bullied.

Children who are more likely to bully others fall into two types.

1. Some are well-connected to their peers, have social power, are overly concerned about their popularity, and like to dominate or be in charge of others.

2. Others are more isolated from their peers and may be depressed or anxious, have low self-esteem, be less involved in school, be easily pressured by peers, or not identify with the emotions or feelings of others.

It is important to recognize that those who bully others do not need to be stronger or bigger than those they bully. The power imbalance can come from a number of sources – popularity, strength, cognitive ability – and children who bully may have more than one of these characteristics.

A positive school climate has been shown to prevent and reduce bullying and the extent to which bullying is or is not a problem is a reliable indicator of school climate. Virginia's School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions asks both students and school employees about bullying at their schools, producing data useful in school safety planning. The results of Secondary Climate Surveys can be searched on the VCSCS Survey Results webpage.

Additional information on Bullying Prevention/Intervention programs and resources can be found in Chapter IV.F. Understanding Key School Programs and Supports.

SRO Strategies:

- Become familiar with any available data on bullying at your school and other indicators of school climate. This would include reviewing your school's most recent school climate survey results as well as discipline data (e.g., DCV data through 2020; SBAR data beginning in 2021).

- Become familiar with efforts your school is making to address bullying. If your school division has a designated "bullying prevention coordinator," ask for a briefing about the efforts and develop a working relationship with the coordinator so that you can support ongoing efforts.

- Gain an in-depth understanding of specific policies and procedures; even if incidents are not referred to you, students and teachers may well share their concerns related to bullying with you and you need to guide them in following established procedures for responding.

- Recognize that some populations have a higher likelihood of being bullied including those with disabilities and those who are LGBTQ.

- Recognize that, although common, bullying has serious and lasting negative effects on the mental health and overall well-being of youth involved in bullying in any way.

- Model supportive, empathic behavior in interactions with students and adults.

To Learn More about Bullying

StopBullying.gov – The primary federal government informational website on bullying. Contains lists of what kids, teens, and adults can do in response to bullying.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Preventing Bullying Factsheet (2021) – Summarizes information about prevalence, consequences, and prevention strategies.
The Relationship Between Bullying and Suicide: What We Know and What it Means for Schools (2014).

Cyberbullying Research Center
Cyberbullying: Identification, Prevention, & Response (2019 Edition) – Provides research findings, stories, cases, fact sheets, tips and strategies, current headlines, quizzes, a frequently updated blog, and a number of other helpful resources. It also has downloadable materials for educators, counselors, parents, law enforcement officers, and other youth-serving professionals to use and distribute as needed.

Child Abuse

The *Code of Virginia* § 63.2-1509 requires certain professionals to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the local department of social services of the county or city where the child resides or to the state's toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline. Both school employees and law enforcement officers are mandated reporters.

Civil Immunity – *Code of Virginia* § 63.2-1512 states that any person making such a report shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability in connection with the reporting unless it can be proven that the person acted in bad faith or with malicious intent.

SRO Strategies:

- Become familiar with indicators of child abuse and neglect – the resources listed below contain a great deal of very helpful information. Free, online training is also available.

- Gain a clear understanding of your agency's policy on mandatory reporting and any established child abuse and neglect reporting procedures at the school that would apply to school personnel. There is a high likelihood you will encounter such cases and knowing how to ensure proper reporting is done will prove valuable.

- Establish and maintain close relationships with child protective services investigators from local departments of social services. They are an excellent source of authoritative information.

- Consider completing training related to child abuse forensic interviews and child abuse injury investigations.

To Learn More about Child Abuse and Neglect in Virginia

A Guide for Mandated Reporters in Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect (July 2019). Virginia Department of Social Services (2019)

Child Abuse and Neglect: Recognizing, Reporting, and Responding for Educators – A free online course provided by the Virginia Department of Social Services.

Students Who Have Experienced Trauma

According to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) more than two thirds of children reported at least 1 traumatic event by age 16. Potentially traumatic events include:

- Psychological, physical, or sexual abuse
- Community or school violence
- Witnessing or experiencing domestic violence
- National disasters or terrorism
- Commercial sexual exploitation
- Sudden or violent loss of a loved one
- Refugee or war experiences
- Military family-related stressors (e.g., deployment, parental loss or injury)
- Physical or sexual assault
- Neglect
- Serious accidents or life-threatening illness

One approach to reducing the negative impacts on children exposed to trauma is the Handle with Care program. The program alerts a child's school or childcare agency that the child was on the scene of a police action in the last 24 hours and was exposed to a traumatic event such as an incident of domestic violence, a shooting in the neighborhood, or a drug raid at the home. Police are trained to identify children at the scene, find out where they go to school or daycare, and send the school or agency a "Handle with Care" communication that lets the child's teachers and school staff be on the alert for possible academic, emotional, or behavioral problems. Teachers are trained on the impact of trauma on learning and incorporate interventions to mitigate the negative impact of trauma for identified students,

including postponing testing, small-group counseling by school counselors, and referrals to external counseling, social service, or advocacy programs.

The need to reduce the negative impacts of exposure to trauma is reflected in recent juvenile justice best practices that emphasize identifying trauma exposure and ensuring that children exposed receive timely trauma-informed interventions.

Cumulative and Complex Trauma

It is helpful to make a distinction between a single traumatic experience and prolonged exposure to multiple traumatic events and/or conditions that of often referred to as complex trauma. Children who have experienced abuse and witnessed domestic violence over a period of years have experienced complex trauma; this would apply to almost all children in foster care.

Trauma affects a student's brain, learning, behavior, relationships, and world view. Trauma is cumulative and complex trauma describes exposure to multiple or prolonged traumatic events and the impact of this exposure on youth development. It involves the simultaneous or sequential occurrence of psychological maltreatment, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, and domestic violence that are chronic and begin in early childhood.

Impact of Trauma on School Performance

Trauma can impact school performance in multiple ways:
- Decreased reading ability
- Lower GPA
- Higher rate of school absences
- Increased drop-out
- More suspensions and expulsions

Trauma in early childhood can have a detrimental effect on brain development. Brain structures associated with regulating emotion, memory, and behavior can be smaller in size, contributing to poor emotional control and aggression.

Chronic trauma can result in deficits impacting goal setting, organizing, planning, anticipating consequences, distorted views of the world, and poor relationships with school staff and peers. They can be impaired in development of competencies in cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships. Their coping strategies often contribute to secondary problems like school misconduct.

See related information on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) above.

SRO Strategies:

- Become familiar with the basics of how trauma affects children – particularly their behaviors and relationships. There is a **great deal** of information available from resources listed below.

- Be aware that a sizable percentage of students in your school have experienced trauma. Almost all children in foster care have experienced trauma. Also, be aware of the strong likelihood of trauma experience for children for whom suspected abuse/neglect reports have been made and students known to be living in a household where domestic violence is/has occurred. When you work with these students, recognize the high likelihood they have experienced trauma!

- ▪ Take advantage of training about trauma and implications for law enforcement.
- ▪ If not yet in your community, consider implementing Handle with Care or, in the absence of the program, be alert to incidents (e.g., fires, vehicle crashes, shootings, domestic disturbances, robberies) occurring in neighborhoods in your school zone that students may have witnessed or been involved.

To Learn More About Trauma and How it Affects Children

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
    Handle with Care is a trauma-sensitive curricula and technical assistance offered to law enforcement through the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

National Center for Safe Schools
    Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Toolkit (2022).

Enhancing Police Response to Children Exposed to Violence: A Toolkit for Law Enforcement (Feb. 2017)

International Association of Chiefs of Police, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, & Yale Medicine Child Study Center

Understanding Child Trauma. Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

National Child Traumatic Stress Network –

    Most relevant items on the NCTSN website include:
    Creating a Trauma-Informed Law Enforcement System –
    Essential Elements of a Trauma-Informed Juvenile Justice System: For Juvenile Justice Professionals/Law Enforcement/First Responders Resources Especially for School Personnel

Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety

Trauma-Sensitive Schools and Social and Emotional Learning: An Integration (2021).

International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) – The IACP and Yale, with support from OJJDP, developed and offer a toolkit of practical tools and resources to assist law enforcement agencies in building or enhancing effective operational responses to children exposed to violence (with or without a mental health partner). This resource contains tools organized in four types: informational items; operational protocols; organizational self-assessment, and operational tools that list reactions police may observe, effective police responses to PTSD, common issues with caregivers, what to do, and teaching tactical breathing technique to children and parents.

Mental Health Issues

The mental health of students has a major impact on their learning. A positive and supportive school environment addresses mental health needs in a proactive manner rather than reacting to crises. Consistent with a tiered system of support, such schools:

- ▪ promote the well-being of all students
- ▪ intervene early with services and supports to prevent problems
- ▪ provide intensive intervention for students with serious or acute needs

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 20% of youth ages 13 to 18 live with a mental health condition. About half of students aged 14 and older with a mental illness drop out of school and 70% of youth in state and local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness.

These statistics have meaning for SROs. They mean:

- That youth with mental health issues are at greatly higher risk of juvenile justice involvement.

- That juvenile justice systems become the destination for youth when earlier interventions do not occur or are not effective

- SROs are strategically positioned to assist schools and communities to identify youth in need of effective intervention before they enter juvenile justice systems.

General warning signs that merit a closer look include:

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks (e.g., crying regularly, feeling fatigued, feeling unmotivated).

- Trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so.

- Out-of-control, risk-taking behaviors that can cause harm to self or others.

- Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart, physical discomfort, or fast breathing.

- Not eating, throwing up, or using laxatives to lose weight; significant weight loss or gain.

- Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships.

- Repeated use of drugs or alcohol.

- Cutting behaviors.

- Drastic changes in behavior, personality, or sleeping habits (e.g., waking up early and acting agitated).

- Extreme difficulty in concentrating or staying still can lead to failure in school.

- Worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities like hanging out with friends or going to classes.

Mental health issues are likely to come to the attention of the SROs within the context of work on threat assessment teams, when concerning patterns of behavior are either observed by the SRO or reported to the SRO by peers, and in the event of mental health emergencies that may require de-escalation.

Non-emergencies – It is common for SROs and SSOs to become aware of problem behaviors such as those listed above either through direct contact with a student or very commonly through reports of the student's peers who are concerned. Concerning patterns of behavior may not involve violations of school conduct policy or law, but they do require a closer look.

Concerns should be directed to an appropriate school administrator, school counselors, other mental health professionals, or the threat assessment team in accordance with school policies.

Section 22.1-79.4 of the *Code of Virginia*, authorizes and requires schools to establish threat assessment policies and procedures, form a threat assessment team, and provide guidance to students and staff on recognizing and reporting threatening or **aberrant** behavior.

It is important for SROs to understand that "aberrant" behavior is only rarely criminal or identifiably bizarre behavior. It is behavior that is unusual for **that** student or a change in behavior that is

uncharacteristic of **that** student. Reports that a student is "not acting like himself" or that "there's been a change" would indicate need for a closer look usually first by school personnel who know the student and, in some cases, the threat assessment team.

Mental health emergencies – In cases of mental health emergencies, SROs may become first responders. A primary concern is how to effectively de-escalate mental health incidents involving agitated or threatening individuals.

The COPS Office identifies multiple benefits of mental health training including:
- Increasing awareness of resources in the community
- Providing better insights into youth
- Helping the SRO be a resource to school staff, parents, and others
- Aiding in understanding officer wellness

SRO Strategies:

- Work with school administrators to develop protocols specifically for incidents involving a mental health emergency. In the case of a student known to have emotional issues, the SRO should be made aware of the student's status. If SRO intervention is thought to be needed, it is highly likely that such disclosure would fall under FERPA's health or safety emergency exception.

- Follow the appropriate, established school procedures related to threat assessment and suicide prevention. Legal requirements for threat assessment and suicide prevention is included in Chapter III.

- Complete specialized training such as Mental Health First Aid, Crisis Intervention Training, or training offered by the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice, law enforcement academies, and state and local mental health agencies.

To Learn More about Adolescent Mental Health

According to the National Institute of Justice, schools using the Interconnected Systems Framework experience positive results across multiple domains. The intervention provides needed assistance to students at-risk for, or presenting, behavioral problems and produces improvements in school administration interconnectedness, broader involvement with school administration, and more attention to school-wide issues as well as decreases in office discipline referrals and in-school suspensions. Students report an increase in feelings of respect for other students and in perceptions of school safety and the school had fewer students rated for at-risk behavioral disorders.
Mental Health.gov
School and Campus Health
Parents and Caregivers Webpage

National Institute of Mental Health
Child and Adolescent Mental Health webpage

Department of Justice
COPS Office – How Mental Health Training Helps School Resource Officers (February 2016). Newsletter, Vol. 9. Issue 2.
Bureau of Justice Assistance – Police-Mental Health Collaboration (PMHC) Toolkit

National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice – Offers training for SROs designed to help SROs serve as a resource, solving problems, de-escalating incidents, communicating, role modeling, and using guided decision making.

Mental Health Aid – Offers training designed especially for law enforcement officers.

National Alliance on Mental Illness –

Mental Health Facts: Children and Teens
Information for Public Safety Professionals (self-care)

Council of Chief State School Officers
National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention

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Alcohol and Other Substance Use Disorders

Recognizing alcohol and other substance use in students is especially important because use can lead to long-term social and health problems, injury, and even death. Adolescents are at a formative stage and growth and development can be affected by tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. Use undermines the developmental tasks teens need to achieve during their teens: finding their identity, building relationship skills, and becoming emotionally stable. They also may have trouble preparing for their future because use affects memory and learning and quickly leads to school failure.

Additionally, substance use can grow very quickly from experimenting or occasional use to substance use disorder in teens at risk. Research has shown that 90 percent of addictions start during the teen years.

Current Issues

Two issues dominate contemporary concerns about substance.

First, although the legalization of marijuana has removed its use, possession, and sale as a legal issue in many states, its use, however, continues to be associated with increased risk of mental health issues, impaired driving, and potential for addiction. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), negative effects include:

- Difficulty thinking and problem-solving
- Problems with memory and learning
- Reduced coordination
- Difficulty maintaining attention
- Problems with school and social live.

Of special particular concern is its availability in higher concentrations that is known to trigger temporary psychosis and long-lasting mental disorders, including schizophrenia. Earlier and more frequent use of marijuana is more likely to trigger a psychotic disorder in people with such a vulnerability.

The second major contemporary concern is unintentional fatal overdoses from fentanyl that appears to be readily available in many communities. Fentanyl reportedly resulted in an estimated 70,000 fatal overdoses in the U.S. in 2021 and numbers continue to increase in 2022. According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, it is a synthetic opioid 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine and recent availability of multi-color pills called "rainbow" fentanyl are reported to be especially attractive to children.

SRO Strategies:

- Pre-plan how incidents of students under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be handled including parent notification and referral for substance use assessment. Be aware that students who come to school under the influence almost always have serious problems that need to be professionally assessed.

- Become familiar with protocols for medical emergencies at school.

- Become familiar with behavioral indicators of substance use.

- Learn about school- and community-based substance use intervention programs, who they serve, and how students access the program.

- Check the availability of naloxone and related training.

To Learn More about Alcohol and Other Drugs

Virginia Department of Alcohol Beverage Control
Education and Prevention Section – Offers a wealth of information on underage drinking, including attractive brochures that can be used with students and their parents.

The Virginia Department of Education
Alcohol, Drug & Tobacco Use Webpage

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) – Parents & Educators Webpage
Contains information designed for various audiences including educators, parents, and youth. Current facts about the most commonly abused drugs are easily accessible on the site. Alerts on current hazards are also posted (e.g., fake prescription drugs laced with fentanyl).

NIDA for Teens. Website helps educate adolescents ages 11 through 15 (as well as their parents and teachers) on the science behind drug abuse.

Gangs

Virginia law (*Code of Virginia* § 18.2-46.1) defines a "criminal street gang" as any group, organization, or association of three or more persons, whether formal or informal,

- which has as one of its primary objectives or activities the commission of one or more criminal acts;
- which has an identifiable name or identifying sign or symbol; and
- whose members individually or collectively have engaged in the commission of, attempt to commit, conspiracy to commit, or solicitation of two or more predicate criminal acts, at least one of which is an act of violence.

According to the 2021 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions State Statewide Snapshot Reports (December 2021), when asked about gangs, 4% of students in grades 6th to 8th reported gangs at their school, 35% reported none and 61% did not know. These 4,104 students reporting gangs in their school were then asked if gangs had caused problems such as fights or sale of drugs at their school 37% answered yes, and 20% said that they had considered joining a gang. When asked about gang activity at their school, 4% of classroom instructors reported the presence of gangs, 58% reported no presence and 46% did not know. Seven percent (7%) of school staff reported gangs existed at their school, 62% reported no presence and 32% did not know. These patterns of responses "do not know" suggest the possible need for greater gang awareness among school staff.

Impact on schools

SROs should recognize that:

According to the National Gang Center
- there is a strong correlation between gang presence in schools and guns, as well as drug availability in schools.
- the presence of gangs more than doubles the likelihood of violent victimization at school and is very disruptive to the school environment, creating fear among students and staff.

Sadly, gang membership has very negative impacts on gang members' lives:
- Gang members are more likely to be victimized themselves. They are also at greater risk of arrest, juvenile court involvement, detention, confinement to juvenile correctional facilities, and, later, imprisonment.
- Gang involvement dramatically alters young peoples' life choices. The gang acts as "a powerful social network" constraining and limiting members so they are cut off from conventional pursuits such as education and employment. Rather than making successful transitions to adulthood, their lives are disordered in a cascading series of difficulties including school dropout, early pregnancy, teen parenthood, and unstable employment.

Indicators

Indicators of gang presence that SROs may observe include:

- Graffiti placed on property, often by gangs, to mark a territory. When there is a great deal of graffiti in an area, it is a strong indicator of gang-related activity.
- Dress of gang members (e.g., similarities in color, athletic team wear, tattoos, branding, or body piercings, similar shoes)
- Photos students make that include gang hand signs, weapons, money, drugs
- Drawings of graffiti on notebooks and other personal belongings

Note that not everyone who dresses like a gang member is connected to a gang. Some who are not members but dress and present themselves are called "wannabes." A more significant indicator of gang membership is when those a student associates with are dressed the same.

SRO Strategies:

- Maintain vigilance for indicators of gang activity in and around school and act promptly to deter their presence.

- Remain current on local gang activities through ongoing communication with other law enforcement officers/gang unit members and attending related training.

- Include lessons on gangs and how to avoid becoming involved in law-related education activities. Key resources are Gang Resistance Education And Training (G.R.E.A.T.), a gang and violence prevention using classroom instruction delivered by law enforcement officers, and Virginia Rules that contains one such lesson.

To Learn More about Gangs and Gang Prevention

The National Gang Center (NGC) – A comprehensive resource to learn about gangs and remain current on
trends. Offers a newsletter, parent guide, online training, and videos.
A sampling of resources includes:

Webinars:	Recognizing Gang Activity in Schools (2021)
	Protecting Youth from Gangs on Social Media (2020)
	Gangs and Human Trafficking (2020)
Publications:	Gangs in Schools (2019)
	Reducing Crime Among Youth at Risk for Gang Involvement (2018)

Virginia Gang Investigators Association – a membership organization open to sworn law enforcement
including police, probation/parole, corrections, and prosecutors offering training and informational
resources.

Homeless Students

According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2017–2018, there were 1,455,537, or 1-in-16,
children under six years old who experienced homelessness; at any single point in time, six percent of
children under six were experiencing homelessness. That same year, in Virginia, 19,751, or eight
percent, of children under six years old experienced homelessness.

According to the National Center for Homeless Education, in 2018–2019 there were 20,443 homeless
children and youth enrolled in Virginia public schools. About 9.5 percent of homeless children lived in
shelters/transitional housing awaiting foster care placement; 16 percent lived in hotels/motels, 73.6
percent were doubled-up (e.g., living with another family), and almost 1 percent were unsheltered (e.g.,
living in cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailer, or abandoned building).

Experiencing homelessness can have significant negative impacts on children academically, socially, and
emotionally. These students have certain rights that allow them to remain in their schools of origin
(where they were enrolled, even when the family is staying in another district) and to immediate
enrollment if they change schools. They are likely to need connection to various services and supports to
address basic needs.

The U.S. Department of Education has published these tips for schools:

Create a welcoming climate and build trust with all students. Many homeless students hesitate to
identify themselves as homeless due to shame, fear of stigma, and concern about possible
consequences of this identification. By not being identified, however, these students miss out on
critical supports. Building a safe and supportive environment in your school or classroom can benefit
all students and alleviate these concerns for homeless students.

Help to identify and support homeless students. While it is important to avoid jumping to
conclusions about students due to their appearance or performance, there are often warning signs that
a child or youth is experiencing homelessness. For example, a child may fall asleep repeatedly in
class, wear the same clothes multiple days in a row, have poor hygiene, fail to complete homework,
or be regularly late or absent. Instead of punishing a student for these behaviors, it would be
beneficial to get to the root cause and find out what supports you may be able to provide.

Be sensitive and understanding. Many homeless youths experience trauma even before they become homeless, and the experience of homelessness can expose youths to violence, abuse, trafficking, and other traumatic experiences (including hunger and illness). Teachers and other school staff who deal directly with children should always employ sensitivity and understanding in conversations with homeless students. School leaders can help by ensuring that all staff members are trained in trauma-informed care.

Ensure that school and classroom policies and procedures, such as disciplinary policies, are fair to homeless students and do not negatively impact them because of their homelessness. Consider providing extra time or other accommodations for homeless students on homework and projects, or extra resources that may be needed, such as access to printers, computers, and school supplies. Review attendance policies to ensure that they do not disproportionately punish homeless students, who may face difficulty arriving on time to school.

SRO Strategies:

- Support school efforts to create a welcoming environment for homeless students.
- To learn more about homelessness in the locality, connect with the school division's Homeless Liaison who will be most knowledgeable about numbers of students considered homeless, shelters, and other related resources in the community.

To Learn More about Homelessness

Project Hope-Virginia is Virginia's Program for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. A directory of local homeless liaisons is maintained on the Project Hope – Virginia.

National Center for Homeless Education
The Center operates the U.S. Department of Education's technical assistance and information center for federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program.

Supporting the Success of Homeless Children and Youth (2016) – A factsheet and tips for teachers, principals, school leaders, and other school staff.

Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth

SROs in Virginia are likely to have regular contact with Court Service Unit (CSU) personnel, most typically related to the probation supervision of students who attend schools to which SROs are assigned and occasionally reporting a particularly serious criminal incident to CSU intake. Recent juvenile justice reforms have placed great emphasis on diverting youth from involvement – or deeper involvement – with the justice system. Joint efforts involving SROs and CSU staff increase the opportunities to develop and use diversion strategies.

Note: Current research is showing that there is a subset of "crossover youth" who have both engaged in delinquent acts and experienced maltreatment. These youth have complex needs that require collaborative, multi-pronged interventions.

SRO Strategies:

- When you learn that a student is justice-involved, be aware that there is a higher likelihood that the student has experienced maltreatment or other trauma.

▪ Develop relationships with CSU personnel who handle intake and provide probation supervision of students in your assigned school.

▪ Learn about any diversion efforts at the juvenile court. There may be opportunities for additional collaboration to address minor offenses through mediation, restitution, completion of brief interventions that avoid filing a formal petition or appearance before a judge.

▪ Consider involving CSU personnel in law-related education activities; they would be expert presenters on the juvenile justice process.

To Learn More about Court Service Units and Juvenile Justice in Virginia

National Institute of Justice.
Dual System Youth: At the Intersection of Child Maltreatment and Delinquency (Aug. 2021)
Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice.
The webpage containing information about Virginia's 34 court service units (CSUs).

C. *Students with Disabilities*

> *From Model MOU*: When appropriate, and to the extent allowable by law, the SD should notify SROs of any special needs of a student involved in a school-based infraction that is not routine discipline in order to assist the SRO in recognizing and accommodating behaviors that may be manifestations of a student's disability.

SROs interact with students with disabilities on a daily basis. Some disabilities are visible while others are invisible, not signaling to the SRO or other law enforcement officer that they are dealing with a student with a disability. Regular contact with students with disabilities is inevitable:

▪ As victims – students with cognitive disabilities are especially vulnerable to victimization; persons with disabilities are four to ten times more likely to be victims.

▪ As perpetrators – some disabilities are associated with problem behaviors.

▪ As witnesses – some students who witness an incident may be impaired in their ability to report what has occurred.

Disability categories in Virginia are:
▪ Autism
▪ Blind/Visual Impairment
▪ Deaf/Hard of Hearing
▪ Intellectual Disability

▪ Orthopedic Impairment (physical disability)
▪ Other Health Impairment (ADHD, Tourette Syndrome)
▪ Specific Learning Disability

Each of these disabilities can significantly affect encounters with law enforcement. Some persons with autism, for example, are known to wander or run away, are attracted to water (a hazard!), react to overstimulation such as sirens, repeat what is said to them (called echolalia), avoid touch, lack a fear of dangers, and resist restraint – sometimes violently.

It is critical for SROs to become familiar with common disabilities
and their implications for law enforcement interaction.

SRO Strategies:

- One of the best beginning strategies for learning about types of disabilities is by talking with the teachers and other specialists who work with students every day; they will have practical insights into their students' abilities, limitations, and strategies for interacting with their students.

- Complete additional disability awareness training that is readily available from many disabilities advocacy groups.

- Learn about "Person First Language" and using the language in communications with others and in official reports.

Examples of Person First Language

Rather than this…	*Say this…*
The disabled, handicapped	Person with a disability
Retarded, slow, simple-minded, moronic	Person with an intellectual, cognitive, developmental disability
Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound	Person who uses a wheelchair
Insane, crazy, nuts, psycho	Person with an emotional or behavioral disability
Crippled, lame, deformed, invalid	Person with a physical disability
Epileptic	Person with epilepsy or seizure disorder
Deaf and dumb, mute	Person who is deaf or unable to speak or uses a device to speak

Learn more: *Communicating with and About People with Disabilities.*
https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/pdf/disabilityposter_visual_alt.pdf

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Students and Others with Access and Functional Needs

Students with access and functional needs may have vision and/or hearing impairments, mobility challenges, or difficulty understanding verbal instructions. Just as their educational programs are individualized to accommodate their needs, planning for critical incident responses needs to recognize individual abilities.

The Council for Exceptional Children recommends individualized safety plans for some students that take into consideration medical, communications, and mobility needs as well as student strengths during planning, preparation, response, and recovery phases. Examples of accommodations for children with certain types of disabilities are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Crisis Planning Disability Considerations

Type of Disability	Characteristics	Considerations
Autism	Works best in predictable routines, needs differentiation in tasks, benefits from peer mediated intervention strategies. Keep consistent.	Structure and predictability are important, so frequent practice with emergency procedures is needed. Task analysis of discrete responses needed, with systematic prompting, use of least intrusive prompts, and error correction. Needs tasks differentiated and predicable routines
Blind/ visual impairment	Partial or complete loss of vision; student may or may not see colors, shapes, or movement; may have total blindness with no residual sight.	Multiple opportunities to explore the facility when it is in lockdown mode to understand which exits might not be available. Strobe lights or vibrating pagers to supplement audible alarms; Braille signage or audible directorial signage; prerecorded directions on a CD.
Deaf-blindness	Significant loss of both hearing and sight. Student may or may not have limited hearing or sight.	Opportunities to explore facility, practice moving to safe locations and positions. Consider a sighted partner to get to safety. Include strobe lights or vibrating pagers to supplement audible alarms; Braille signage or audible directorial signage; color-coded routes; prerecorded directions on a CD.
Emotional/ behavioral disability	Behaviors may be externalizing (overt behaviors) or internalizing (anxiety, depression); behaviors are observed to be markedly and/or chronically beyond the norm of age/cultural group.	Student with emotional disabilities or emotional/ behavioral disorders needs systematic instruction and practice with self-management skills.
Hearing impairment	May have mild to significant hearing loss. Student may or may not have enough hearing to respond to alarms.	Alternate communication system (use of alternate lighting or alerts sent to his or her phone or communication device).
Intellectual disability	Lowered rate of acquiring new knowledge and skills; difficulty with remembering information; slower to attend to critical features of new tasks; limitations in self-care and social relationships, as well as difficulty with behavioral excesses.	Needs to be presented with explicit teaching of desired skills paired with active response opportunities; practice opportunities to build fluency (speed) of responses; programming for generalization of skills over settings.
Orthopedic impairment	Limited mobility, uses crutches or wheelchair to ambulate.	Student may need adaptive equipment, such as wheelchair, positioning device, crutches, or braces, to move to or maintain a safe position, as well as accessible routes to safe locations. If exits or escape are blocked, may need additional supports, including alternate lifts; may need to be carried to exit facility.

Source: Supporting Students with Disabilities During Crises: A Teacher's Guide

The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services has published a Division Guide for Crisis Management Planning (Feb. 2022) that contains Virginia-specific "Key Considerations for Inclusive Safety Planning" (See Appendix E). Each student and staff member with access or functional needs should have an Individual Safety Plan (ISP) that addresses their specific needs for all identified hazards.

To Learn More about Disabilities and Implications for School-Law Enforcement Partnerships

The International Association of Chiefs of Police
  Policing and People with Developmental Disabilities (Webinar – 2022)

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
  Commonly Asked Questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act and Law Enforcement.

Autism Speaks
  Information for Law Enforcement
  School Community Tool Kit

Virginia Department of Education
  Virginia Department of Education's Special Education webpage contains a comprehensive range of information and resources related to special education.
  Discipline of Children with Disabilities webpage contains information specific to discipline with children with disabilities.
  Family Special Education Connection. Funded by the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia Family Special Education Connection website provides a one-stop-shop for parents, families, and caregivers of children with special needs.

For Crisis Planning:

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
  Division Guide for Crisis Management Planning, Appendix E on "Key Considerations for Inclusive Safety Planning" (Feb. 2022)

Safe and Sound Schools
  Especially Safe: Planning and Preparation Guide (2021).
  Especially Safe: Teaching & Training Guide (2021).

D. *Human Trafficking*

Human trafficking is the illegal exploitation of a person and it is a growing problem in the United States. Lead organizations nationally are the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Crimes Against Children and Human Trafficking program and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

According to the Polaris Project, of 22,326 trafficking victims and survivors identified through contacts with the National Human Trafficking Hotline in 2019, at least 5,359 were under age 18. Many underage victims of human trafficking are students in the American school system.

Vulnerable Populations

According to the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, vulnerable populations include:
▪   Runaway youth
▪   Homeless youth
▪   Young people who are or were in the child welfare system
▪   Young people who are or have been in the juvenile justice system
▪   Students who drop out of school
▪   Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities or differences
▪   LGBTQ youth

- Unaccompanied migrant youth
- Migrant and seasonal workers

Risk Factors

The National Center notes there is no standard profile of a child trafficking victim, but several risk factors make certain children more susceptible.

- Researchers have found that sex traffickers often target children and youth with a history of maltreatment, sexual abuse, low self-esteem, and minimal social support.
- Children and youth at risk of labor trafficking share many of the same risk factors; children who have recently migrated or relocated are at a heightened risk.

Their Guide provides a list of risk factors common to both groups in the middle column.

Indicators

Indicators of both sex trafficking and labor trafficking are listed in Figure 2. These indicators should be kept in mind in interactions with students.

Figure 2. Indicators of Child Sex and Labor Trafficking
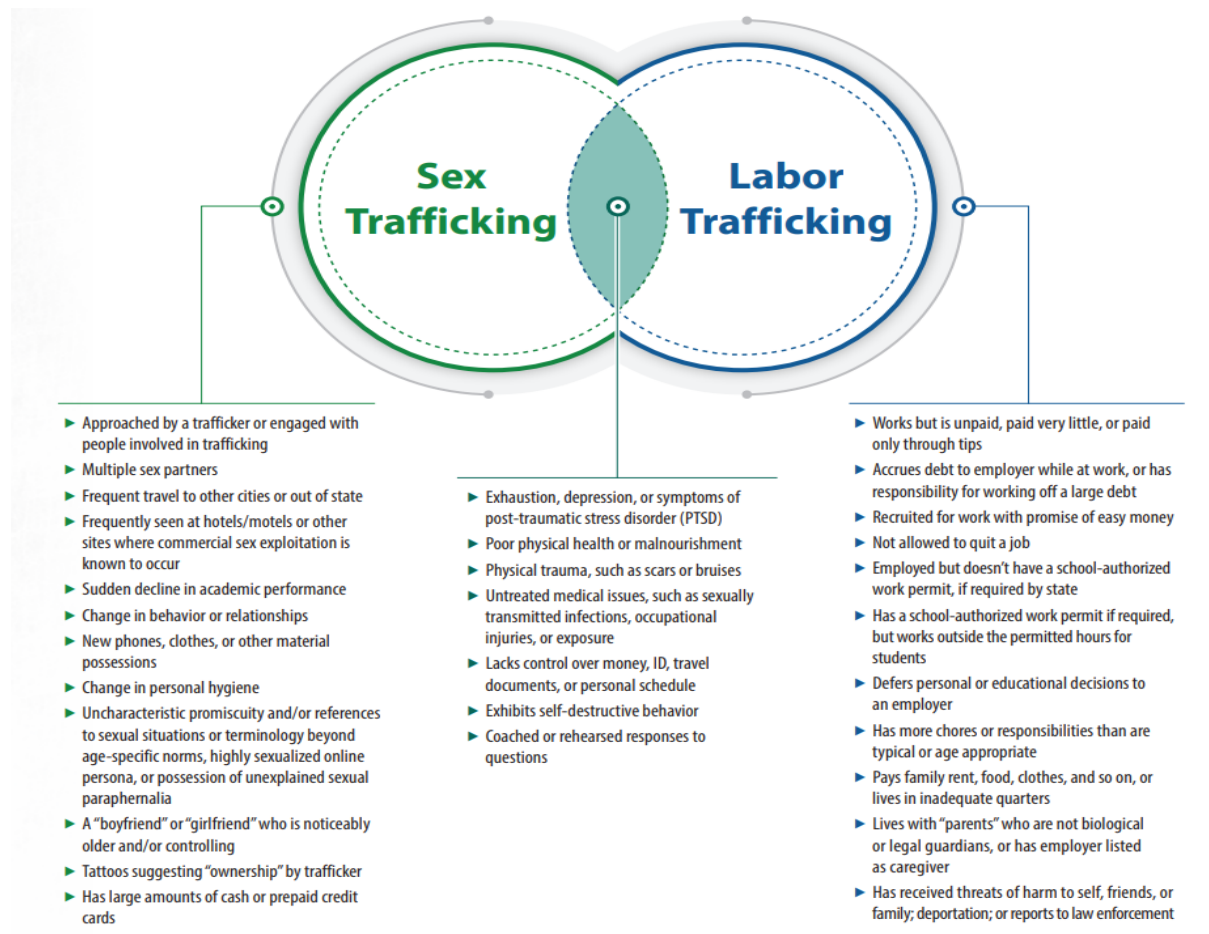
Source: Human Trafficking in America's Schools: What Schools Can Do to Recover from Human Trafficking (Jan 2021)
https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/NCSSLE-2021HumanTraffickingGuide-508.pdf

A [Tool for Educators](#) from the [National Human Trafficking Resource Center](#) lists the following red flags and indicators as part of a sample protocol:

- Exhibits changes in behaviors or school participation, i.e., spike in truancy; or performs severely under grade level.
- Student's family shows signs of frequent migration, periodic homelessness, disorientation, uncertainty of surroundings.
- History of homelessness or running away from home.
- Reveals signs of abusive or inattentive caregivers, such as untreated illness or injury, bruises, or scars.
- Displays heightened sense of duty or obligation to family, has unreasonable or inappropriate chores or duties.
- Works for little or no pay, or the employer keeps identification documents and/or confiscates wages.
- Accumulates debt to employer while at work or recruited for work with promises of easy money.
- Exhibits sexual behavior that is high risk and/or inappropriate for his/her age.
- Has an explicitly sexual online profile via internet community or social networking sites.
- Involved in relationship with an older man, receives frequent gifts, may be picked up from school by controller.
- Engages in sexual activity in exchange for money or anything of value (can include clothing, food, shelter, other goods and resources). No force, fraud, or coercion necessary if the student is under 18.
- Knowledge of the commercial sex industry. Uses lingo: "The Life," "The Game," "Daddy," for boyfriend, "Track" or "Stroll," refers to dates as "Johns" or "Tricks."

SRO Strategies:

- Learn about indicators of human trafficking and conditions in the school community.
- Become familiar with law enforcement agency policies and procedures related to human trafficking, particularly of minors; seek clarification as needed.
- If the school does not have policies and protocols in place to identify and respond to human trafficking, engage the S-LEP leadership and begin to develop them.
- Consider law related education lessons designed to increase awareness about human trafficking among students and school personnel. An initiative of the National White Collar Crime Center, IACP and NASRO offers a human trafficking identification and prevention curriculum for high school students, designed to be taught by law enforcement officers. Information is available at: https://www.traffickingstop.org/about-us/ In one Virginia school division lessons include an opportunity for students to privately identify themselves or friends as possible trafficking victims and meet privately with a social worker who assesses their needs and assists them in securing help. Through these sessions, students have been identified who have been assaulted, groomed, or victims.

To Learn More about Human Trafficking

[Human Trafficking Hotline](#) – [Hotline](#) – 1-888-373-7888 (TTY:711); Text 233733. Live chat at
  [Tools for Educators](#)
[REMS Technical Assistance Center](#) –
  [Integrating Human Trafficking with School Emergency Operations Plans (EOPS) – Webinar Resource List](#)

National White Collar Crime Center (NW3C):
Traffick Stop – a human trafficking identification and prevention curriculum for high school students, designed to be delivered by law enforcement officers.

U.S. Department of Education:
Human Trafficking Webpage
Human Trafficking in America's Schools: What Schools Can Do to Recover from Human Trafficking (Jan 2021)

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments – Human Trafficking Response Guide for School Resource Officers (2022)

E. Social Media

Use of social media by pre-adolescents and adolescents has grown dramatically in recent years while the number of sites has grown exponentially. Clearly, there are benefits in terms of allowing them to access information and enhanced learning opportunities, socialization with friends who share interests, and even strengthening technical skills. However, given their limited life experience, susceptibility to peer pressure, and limited self-regulation, they are also at relatively higher risk for cyberbullying and online harassment and "Facebook Depression" or anxiety due to social exclusion or perceptions of inadequacy compared with what others are posting. Sexual experimentation and sexting are of particular concern and these incidents are likely to come to the attention of SROs for investigation and action.

Schools in Virginia are required by § 22.1-70.2., *Code of Virginia* to have acceptable technology use/internet policies. Most violations of these policies are *not* criminal acts and schools are not required to report incidents to law enforcement. Based on experience of Virginia SROs, social media issues are far more likely to come to the attention of SROs within the context of cyberbullying and harassment (that can include digital dating abuse), sextortion, and inappropriate sexual online contact (i.e., sexting). Additional information about Virginia's acceptable internet use policy is located on their Acceptable Internet Use Policy webpage.

A recently published report from *Pew Research Center, Teens, Social Media and Technology, 2022* confirms that the landscape of social media is everchanging. While YouTube is used by 95% of teens but TikTok, introduced in recent years, has grown to 67% and continues to grow and Facebook has declined from 71% to 32%.

Cyberbullying

Title 18.2-152.7:1., *Code of Virginia* defines harassment by computer; penalty: If any person, with the intent to coerce, intimidate, or harass any person, shall use a computer or computer network to communicate obscene, vulgar, profane, lewd, lascivious, or indecent language, or make any suggestion or proposal of an obscene nature, or threaten any illegal or immoral act, he is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

A definition of cyberbullying that is well-accepted in the field comes from the Cyberbullying Research Center is "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices." The Center points out these elements:

Willful: The behavior has to be deliberate, not accidental.

Repeated: Bullying reflects a pattern of behavior, not just one isolated incident.

Harm: The target must perceive that harm was inflicted.

Computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices: This, of course, is what differentiates cyberbullying from traditional bullying

According to the 2019 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey, about 16 percent of students in grades 9–12 experience cyberbullying. There were similar findings from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System that reported an estimated 15.7% of high school students were electronically bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The most common places where cyberbullying occurs are:

- Social Media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok
- Text messaging and messaging apps on mobile or tablet devices
- Instant messaging, direct messaging, and online chatting over the internet
- Online forums, chat rooms, and message boards, such as Reddit
- Email
- Online gaming communities

Although cyberbullying occurs regularly, it is not typically treated as a criminal incident. It is, however, often an element in the context of interpersonal conflict and SROs need an understanding of social media use by students and applicable school policies.

Digital Dating Abuse

Digital dating abuse is a form of cyberbullying, using uses technology to harass a romantic partner, usually with the intent to control, intimidate, coerce, threaten, or annoy. A study of U.S. middle and high school students (age 12 to 17) found that among those who have been in a romantic relationship, 28.1 percent had been the victim of at least one form of digital dating abuse within the previous year. A guide that is designed for educators and parents and contains numerous strategies is available from the Cyberbullying Research Center at https://cyberbullying.org/digital-dating-abuse.pdf/

Sexting

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (2009) defines sexting as "youth writing sexually explicit messages, taking sexually explicit photos of themselves or others in their peer group, and transmitting those photos and/or messages to their peers."

In a review of research, the Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics reported in June 2019 that at least one in seven teens engages in sexting and as many as one in four teens receive sexually explicit texts and emails. A Drexel University Study found that as many as 61% of teens were not aware of the legal ramifications of underage sexting and said knowing it would have deterred them from sexting (Strohmaier *et al*, 2014).

Results of a more recent review of rigorous research suggest that sexting is associated with various sexual behaviors and mental health risk factors; moving forward, education campaigns should focus on providing youth with comprehensive information about sexting and digital citizenship – a topic very suitable for law-related education lessons (Mori *et al*, 2019). Findings also suggest a need for a great deal more education of teens about sexting – a topic that should be considered for law-related education.

The Virginia Rules lesson *Technology and You* contains most current information about Virginia laws related to technology. Although "sexting" is not defined or explicitly cited in Virginia law, whenever

juveniles engage in sexting, whether through taking a photo of themselves, or receiving such a photo, they are technically in violation of child pornography laws.

An example of information that could easily be incorporated into a law-related education presentation is contained in an article by VeryWellfamily, a service affiliated with the Cleveland Clinic, that was published online (see *To Learn More About Sexting* below).

To Learn More about Sexting

VeryWellFamily: 6 Things Every Teen Needs to Know about Sexting. (2020)

Virginia Crime Commission report on sexting and a related presentation and full report
  [https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2015/RD165/PDF].

Tools to Address Risks from Social Media

There are several sources of high-quality information that include strategies for educators and parents that contain credible and authoritative information of value to SROs:

- StopBullying.gov – has numerous videos, social media, and resources messages related to prevention of and intervention with bullying and cyberbullying. A profile of Virginia laws and policies is reported at: https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/laws/virginia

- The Cyberbullying Research Center –
  has numerous already prepared presentations for student, parent, and community presentations that may be appropriate for use by SROs. A section of the website is devoted to laws related to bullying and cyberbullying.

- The Harvard Graduate School of Education, *Usable Knowledge* contains a posting "Social Media and Teen Anxiety" on how parents can help their children navigate pressures of their digital lives. The article describes the link between social media and mental health concerns and cites other sources for additional related studies.

- The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children maintains a website –
  https://safetypledge.org/ that focuses on online safety.
  Tip line: https://report.cybertip.org – the tip line allows for reporting of suspected online enticement of children for sexual acts, child sexual molestation, child sexual abuse material, child sex tourism, child sex trafficking, unsolicited obscene materials sent to a child, misleading domain names, and misleading words or digital images on the internet.

Social Media Monitoring

Programs that monitor students' social media have grown in popularity. A variety of social media monitoring software have emerged using geo-fencing technologies that use algorithms to search keywords or phrases. The technologies do, however, raise questions about student privacy and free speech rights. The COPS Office School Safety Working Group and the Federal Commission on School Safety note that social media monitoring systems, when implemented with strong protocols to safeguard privacy and free speech, can be an effective tool in a comprehensive, multilayered school safety plan" (p. 27, *Ten Essential Actions to Improve School Safety*, 2020 https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-

w0891-pub.pdf). The report recommends schools consider employing real-time monitoring, encourage parents to monitor their children's social media use, and to ensure the monitoring is accompanied by strong tracking and accountability measures to ensure follow up on potential threats.

To Learn More about Social Media Monitoring

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center
Use of Social Media in School Behavioral Threat Assessments (Presentation – 2020)

Cyber Safety Considerations for K-12 Schools and School Districts (Factsheet – 2019)

COPS Office, U.S. Department of Justice
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Supplement 1: SRO Toolkit

SRO Tools: Law Enforcement Officer Role

A. *Recordkeeping and Reporting Basics for SROs*

Serving as an SRO is a challenging law enforcement assignment. Basic field notes and sound reports are critical. Provided here are some strategies for effective field notes and reporting.

Effective Field Notes

Taking field notes is an important but sometimes overlooked element in effective report writing. While most of the content of a report comes from the officer's memory, taking notes while, or shortly after, observing an event allows the officer to better recall important facts and details, adding to the accuracy and clarity of the final report.

Purposes of Field Notes

- *To make an immediate record of events*.
  Notes taken at the scene of an incident are considered particularly reliable because they are being taken while or shortly after observing an event rather than when a more formal report is being written hours later from memory.

- *To aid memory for formally documenting the incident in a written report or further investigation*.
  SRO duties at the scene of an incident typically prevent a detailed report from being completed until later. Taking notes allows the officer to better recall important facts and details.

- *To counteract changes in a person's story or statements*.
  Spontaneous comments made by those involved in an incident or witnesses are often quite valuable when investigating an incident and developing a more complete picture of what occurred. Those involved or witnesses may later change their stories either intentionally or unintentionally. Notes can refute later denial by someone involved or provide details forgotten by witnesses.

- *To provide an overall picture of what occurred*.
  Notes that capture the "basics" of an incident can provide the framework for the more comprehensive, detailed report to follow.

- *To aid in accurate presentations, if necessary*.
  Notes strengthen an officer's ability to testify accurately and completely. SRO testimony may be required at a disciplinary hearing, an appeal hearing, or at a court hearing. Notes taken at the scene of an incident are considered particularly reliable; testimony based on notes is typically considered more credible than testimony that relies on memory alone.

These are elements of information typically recorded in field notes. With current technologies, field notes can be recorded electronically using a smartphone.

Field Notes: Sample Elements of Information

Date/time SRO notified/called: _____
What happened (brief):
Location:
Staff Involved/Witnesses (names/contact) :
Student(s):
- Perpetrator(s)
- Victim(s)
- Witnesses(es)

SRO action/response:
Other notes/observations:
Time incident resolved:

Effective SRO Reports

Whether a standardized fill-in-the-blank type form or a more open-ended form is used, sound reports share these characteristics:

Factual – It is critically important that reports are factual. Focus on the facts: what did and did not occur. Avoid interjecting personal opinions or subjective observations.

Clear – The report should be easy to read. Use simple language and write what happened in a logical sequence.

Legible – Although reports are increasingly being produced using technology, making sure that handwritten reports are legible remains important. If a report cannot be read, it is not of use and can be harmful.

Concise – It is often harder to write concisely than to produce a long, wordy report. Nevertheless, care should be taken to pare down the story to its essential elements. Using common words and short sentences can help keep the report concise.

Complete – Reports must be complete. Omission of even a small detail can undermine the credibility of the report and be used to discredit an investigation.

Accurate – Information must be factual, and the body of the official report must be based on facts. Make clear distinctions between facts, opinion, and conclusions.

Timely – A report must be available in time for it to be used. Reports should be prepared as soon after the incident as possible.

B. *Talking with Teens: Basic Strategies for Interviewing*

Many factors influence the degree to which a young person is able and/or willing to talk with the SRO. First is the young person's developmental level which determines his or her ability to reason and to express thoughts in a clear and understandable way. Keep in mind not only the age/grade level of the student, but also whether the student has any educational disabilities such as an intellectual or developmental disability. Second, the student's past experience with law enforcement may influence his or her willingness to talk with another authority figure. Third is the nature of the incident being investigated and the student's possible involvement; a student may be very reluctant to tell on fellow students or may be inclined to place blame on other students.

Establish Rapport

Starting the conversation with non-threatening, less serious topics can help reduce the student's anxiety. If you know the student is involved with a sport, you might comment on how the team is doing and ask about the next game or what position he/she plays.

Be Direct

Be direct in introducing the reason for the interview. Do not start by asking, "Do you know why you are here?" Simply state the basics – "on Tuesday, a fight broke out in the cafeteria" – and explain that you need to hear from the student, in their own words, what occurred.

Allow the Story to Be Told

Encourage the student to tell his or her own story. Avoid interrupting or placing the student on the spot by focusing prematurely on incriminating information. Be patient and attentive; use neutral comments such as "tell me more." Be aware of your body language; conveying calm and openness will help the student to relax and tell his/her story. Do not correct grammar or vocabulary.

Ask simple, open-ended questions such as "tell me more about…" or "help me better understand…" Avoid long, complicated questions with a great deal of information in them or containing multiple options – they can be confusing.

Confirm You Heard Accurately

Before ending the interview, confirm that you have heard correctly the information given. Briefly sum up, "What you've told me is that… Is that correct?" This gives the student an opportunity to clarify or add to what he or she has said and confirms that the information given has been accurately understood.

For related information on adolescent development and implications for law enforcement, see .

SRO Tools: Law-Related Educator Role

Tips for Effective Presentations with Students at Different Grade Levels

Selecting teaching techniques that are suited to the age or developmental stage of the audience is an important aspect of being an effective teacher. When working with students, there are some significant developmental differences to keep in mind:

With primary students (K–2)

- ▪ Make the presentation very brief and narrow the message to one or two key points
- ▪ Involve the students
- ▪ Use puppets, coloring books, and animation when possible

With elementary students (3–5)

- ▪ Make the presentation brief and keep the message simple
- ▪ Involve the students by using games or asking what they think
- ▪ Use simple language

With middle school students (6–8)

Note: There is a great deal of variation in the developmental stages of students in middle school; it is a transition period from childhood to early adolescence. Many sixth graders will appear quite childlike; by eighth grade most girls and some boys will appear quite mature. Despite the appearance of physical maturity, these students lack the maturity, experience, and judgment of older adolescents.

- ▪ Engage the students using group participation in exercises or scenarios.
- ▪ Keep the message basic and use simple language; keep things fairly concrete.
- ▪ Ask about their views and respond in a straightforward and honest way, avoiding scare tactics.
- ▪ Peer pressure is beginning to be a significant influence.

With high school students (9–12)

Note: High school students are typically capable of understanding more abstract concepts such as justice and obligations of citizenship; however, they still lack experience and benefit from direct instruction.

- ▪ Treat them as adults – particularly the eleventh and twelfth graders.
- ▪ Remember that peer pressure is great at this stage.
- ▪ Use plenty of examples or scenarios that are relevant to their own experiences.
- ▪ Give facts; be honest and straightforward.
- ▪ Avoid scare tactics or being an overbearing authority figure – it invites students to "test limits".
- ▪ Be prepared for questions about your personal views or experiences.
- ▪ Use discussion and displays; provide sources of additional information on the topic in case the student wants to learn more.

Public Speaking Tips with Adult Audiences

SROs have many opportunities to speak publicly – at faculty meetings, PTA, and community advisory councils, and civic organizations.

The essentials of public speaking are to:

1. ***Know the audience***
   The message needs to be geared to their interests and roles. A parent group differs somewhat from a school faculty, which differs from an administrators' meeting.

2. ***Decide, in advance, on your key message***
   This not only helps give your message focus but can be critical when a meeting runs longer than expected and you do not have as much time as you thought you would. By knowing the key message, you can effectively abbreviate your remarks and not lose the key point(s).

3. ***Make your points clearly and with emphasis***
   Use phrases such as "my second point is. . ." to help the audience follow what you are saying.

4. ***Anticipate the questions and concerns that your audience may have***
   Try to answer these within the presentation. Say, "A concern that parents often have is…" or "Teachers have often asked me…"

5. ***Allow questions***
   This gives you an opportunity to clarify any points which might have been misinterpreted and to make your points again.

Remember:

**Whether you like it or not, *how you look* and *how you sound*
have more impact than the words you speak.**

Supplement 2: Strategies for Safe and Supportive Schools

This supplement to the S-LEP Guide provides additional background information on three topics that are especially important for SROs to understand well. The topics are:

A. [U.S. Department of Education Guiding Principles for Improving School Climate and Discipline](https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf\) [https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf\] and related strategies consistent with each principle.
B. Categories of behaviors used in Virginia's Student Behavior and Administrative Response (SBAR) Reporting system and lists of offenses required to be reported to law enforcement on an either mandatory or conditional basis.
C. Virginia's Tiered Systems of Support – https://vtss-ric.vcu.edu/ that provides a decision-making framework for interventions that schools use in managing student behavior; positive behavioral interventions (PBIS) is the behavioral component of the tiered system.

A. *Guiding Principles for Improving School Climate and Discipline*

Guiding principles for improving school climate and discipline issued jointly by the U.S. Departments of Education and of Justice identify three priorities for policymakers, district officials, school leaders, and stakeholders to consider as they work to improve school climate and discipline.

Principle 1. Create positive climates and focus on prevention

Recommended action steps associated with Principle 1 are:

1. Engage in deliberate efforts to create positive school climates.

2. Prioritize the use of evidence-based prevention strategies, such as tiered supports, to promote positive student behavior.

3. Promote social and emotional learning to complement academic skills and encourage positive behavior.

4. Provide regular training and support to all school personnel – including teachers, principals, support staff, and school-based law enforcement officers – on how to engage students and support positive behavior.

5. Collaborate with local mental health, child welfare, law enforcement, and juvenile justice agencies and other stakeholders to align resources, prevention strategies, and intervention services.

6. Ensure that any *school-based law enforcement officers'* roles focus on improving school safety and reducing inappropriate referrals to law enforcement.

Recommended action steps associated with Principle 1 (#4, #5, & #6) specifically cite school-based law enforcement officers, clearly acknowledging their important roles in creating positive school climates.

Principle 2. Develop clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences to address disruptive student behaviors

Recommended action steps associated with Principle 2 are:

1. Set high expectations for behavior and adopt an instructional approach to school discipline.

2. Involve families, students, and school personnel in the development and implementation of

discipline policies or codes of conduct and communicate those policies regularly and clearly.

3. Ensure that clear, developmentally appropriate, and proportional consequences apply for misbehavior.

4. Create policies that include appropriate procedures for students with disabilities and due process for all students.

5. Remove students from the classroom only as a last resort, ensure that any alternative settings provide students with academic instruction, and return students to their regular class as soon as possible.

Principle 2 recommended action steps reflect an approach to discipline consistent with that discussed in prior chapters of this *S-LEP Guide*. In particular, Chapter III cited the need for supportive responses to student misconduct involving:

▪   *Schools* making every effort to handle routine discipline within the school disciplinary process without involving SROs in an enforcement capacity unless absolutely necessary or required by law. To this end, school division policies, administrative guidance, training, and ongoing oversight must clearly communicate that school administrators and teachers are ultimately responsible for school discipline and culture and that law enforcement should not be involved in the enforcement of disciplinary actions and sanctions.

▪   *SROs* not becoming involved with routine school matters unrelated to any law enforcement or security function and to avoid criminalizing adolescent misbehavior by exercising discretion and judgment in response to school-based incidents. To this end, SROs and their law enforcement agencies should reserve petitions to juvenile courts for serious offenses and only after considering alternative consequences that divert students from court involvement.

▪   *School administrators and SROs,* together using collaborative processes to consider the totality of circumstances to determine what responses to misconduct best serve the interest of the student and the welfare of the school community. Parties may not achieve full agreement in balancing these interests in all cases but making a good faith effort to exercise discretion within their respective spheres of authority, they are more likely to balance interests of the student and of the school community.

Principle 3. Ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement

Recommended action steps associated with Principle 3 are:

1. Train all school staff to apply school discipline policies and practices in a fair and equitable manner so no specific group of students is disproportionately impacted or affected.

2. Use proactive, data-driven, and continuous efforts, including gathering feedback from families, students, teachers, and school personnel to prevent, identify, reduce, and eliminate discriminatory discipline and unintended consequences.

B. *The Basics of Virginia's Student Behavior and Administrative Response (SBAR) Reporting*

The following items are excerpted from the Virginia Board of Education's *Model Guidance for Positive and Preventive Code of Student Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension* (June 2021). The Discipline Process Flow Chart provides an overview of the process showing that classroom teachers provide the majority of support for managing inappropriate behavior.

Discipline Process Flow Chart

The flow chart is an example of the process for managing student behaviors through a positive, proactive, preventive, evidenced-based approach.

Discipline Process: Continuum of Support for Discouraging Inappropriate Behavior
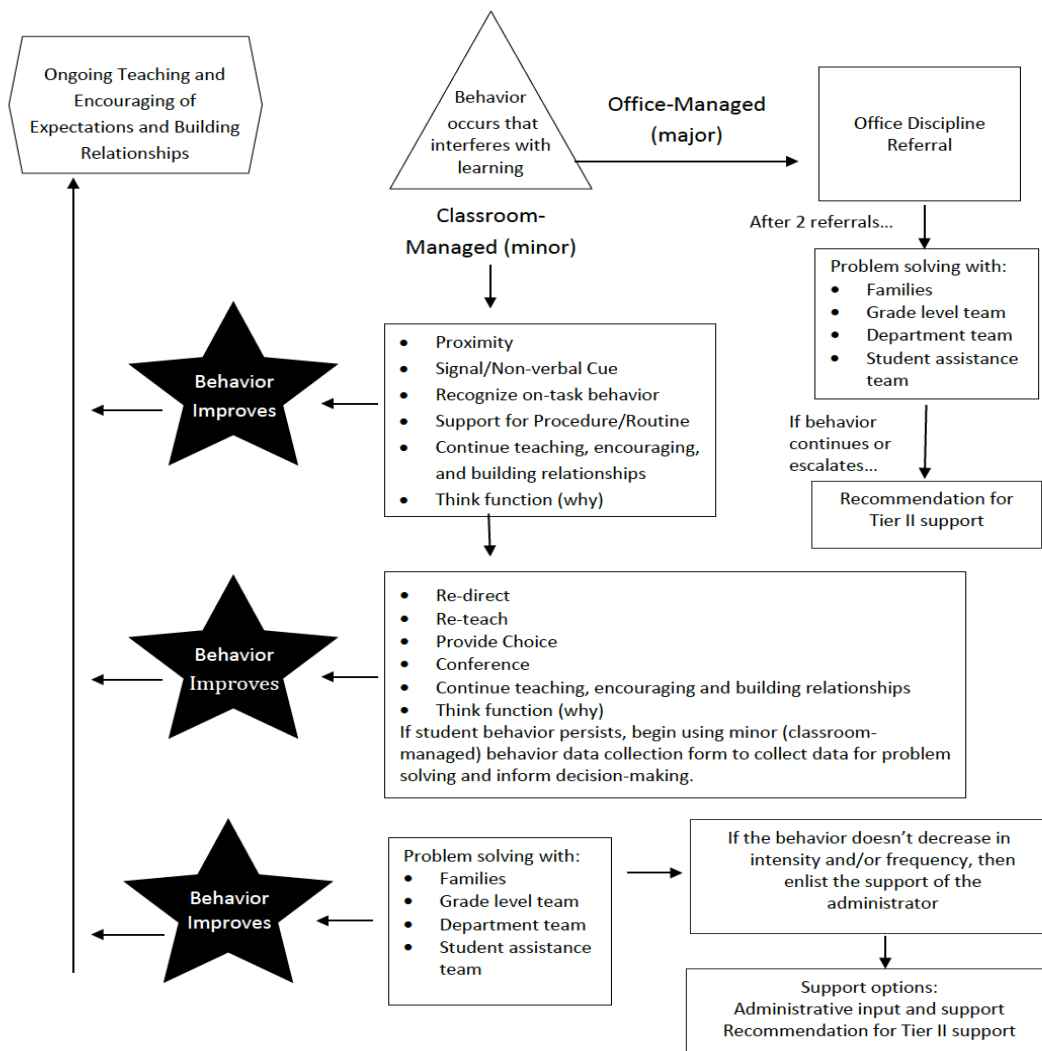
Source: *Model Guidance for Positive and Preventive Code of Student Conduct Policy and Alternatives to Suspension*

Teacher Responses to Manage Student Behaviors

Prior to administrative involvement in student behavior issues, teachers are responsible for supporting students in acquiring the behaviors expected in the school environment. Below are examples of proactive and instructional teacher actions to assist students in meeting behavioral expectations. Teachers have the authority to remove a student from a class for disruptive behavior in accordance with § 22.1-276.2. of the *Code of Virginia.* Local school boards should establish the process as outlined in the *Code.*

Examples of Proactive Teacher Supports for Classroom Managed Behaviors	Examples of Instructional Teacher Responses for Classroom Managed Behaviors
▪ Develop, teach, and maintain clearly defined classroom expectations that are consistent with school wide behavioral expectations, culturally relevant, and applicable across all classroom settings at all times. ▪ Build positive relationships with students and families. ▪ Model and practice expectations in the appropriate settings. ▪ Reteach/review expectations throughout the school year (i.e., quarterly, after breaks). ▪ Use pre-correction strategies to remind students of expectations before transitioning between tasks/assignments. ▪ Use more positive than corrective statements (4:1 ratio). ▪ Create a classroom acknowledgement system to increase responsible student behavior. ▪ Implement effective, evidence based instructional practices match to student learning needs. ▪ Actively engage students in the teaching and learning process. ▪ Teach prevention lessons that address students' social-emotional competencies. Teach lessons that apply the competencies to situations (i.e., bullying, suicide awareness and prevention, workplace skills, citizenship, character education). ▪ Flexible classroom arrangements/seating.	▪ Restructure/revise classroom practices based upon student needs. ▪ Adjust pacing of instruction to increase on-task behavior. ▪ Actively observe and plan for ignoring low-level misbehavior. ▪ Change student seating. ▪ Provide immediate positive feedback when students engage in expected behavior. ▪ Respond calmly, restating the desired behavior. ▪ Use progress-monitoring tools (i.e., behavior chart that includes the replacement behavior, on-task monitoring form, reflection sheets). ▪ Communicate and collaborate with parents/guardians and the student's counselor and/or case manager regarding student behavior, teacher-based actions, and to problem solve. ▪ Reteach desired behavior. ▪ Problem-solve the behavior during a teacher-student conference using active listening. ▪ Establish and consistently implement corrective responses to student misbehavior [i.e., positive practice, community service, restitution, loss of time for a valued activity, in-class time out (not to exceed ten minutes), time-out in another class under adult supervision, loss of privileges]. ▪ Facilitate restorative practices with the student and person(s) affected by the student's behavior. ▪ Assign a working lunch to facilitate re-teaching or making up missed work (ex: lunch with teacher to catch up on work, review a social story, and reteach behavior.

Inappropriate behaviors are categorized from least to most serious:

Categories of Behavior (Secondary Schools)	Types of Behavior
BAP: Behaviors in this category impede the academic progress of the student or of other students. For elementary students, level one responses are recommended for these behaviors. For secondary students, level one or level two responses are recommended. These behaviors should not involve or be reported to law enforcement.	▪ Interfering with learning in the classroom (talking, excessive noise, off-task, out of seat, possessing items that distract) ▪ Interfering with learning outside of the classroom (excessive noise, interrupting a class, etc.) ▪ Scholastic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism) ▪ Unexcused tardiness to class (Level one at elementary; up to level 2 at secondary) ▪ Unexcused tardiness to school (Level one at elementary; up to level 2 at secondary)
BEO: These behaviors interfere with the daily operation of school procedures. Recommended responses to these behaviors for elementary and secondary students range from level one to level three. These behaviors do not require a report to law enforcement.	▪ Altering an official document or record ▪ Giving false information to staff, misrepresentation ▪ Refusal to comply with requests of staff in a way that interferes with the operation of school ▪ Failure to be in one's assigned place on school grounds (Level 1 or 2 only) ▪ Failure to attend assigned disciplinary setting (detention, in-school suspension, Saturday school) ▪ Bringing unauthorized persons to school or allowing unauthorized persons to enter the school building ▪ Dress Code Violation (Level 1 or 2 only) ▪ Gambling (games of chance for money or profit) ▪ Possessing items that are inappropriate for school (examples include toys, literature, electronics) ▪ Possession of stolen items ▪ Unauthorized use of school electronic or other equipment ▪ Violation of the Acceptable Use of Technology/internet policy ▪ Violation of school board policy regarding the possession or use of portable communication devices ▪ Vandalism, graffiti, or other damage to school or personal property
RB: Behaviors in this category create a negative relationship between two or more members of the school community (No physical harm is done.) For elementary and secondary students, recommended responses to these behaviors range from level one to level three. These behaviors do not require a report to law enforcement.	▪ Bullying with no physical injury (Model Policy to Addressing Bullying in Virginia's Public Schools) ▪ Cyberbullying (Model Policy to Addressing Bullying in Virginia's Public Schools) ▪ Posting, distributing, displaying, or sharing material or literature that is libelous, including using electronic means to post such material ▪ Saying or writing either directly or through electronic communication sexually suggestive comments, innuendos, propositions, or other remarks of a sexual nature ▪ Stealing money or property without physical force ▪ Speaking to another in an uncivil, discourteous manner ▪ Teasing, taunting, engaging in a verbal confrontation, verbally inciting a fight ▪ Using profane or vulgar language or gestures (swearing, cursing, hate speech, gang signs or gestures) ▪ Using slurs based upon the actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, weight, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or disability ▪ Failure to respond to questions or requests by staff ▪ Unwanted or inappropriate physical contact
BSC: Behaviors of a Safety Concern create unsafe conditions for students, staff, and/or visitors to the school.	▪ Alcohol: Possessing or using alcohol (Level 1 to 3) ▪ Alcohol: Distributing alcohol to other students (Level 1 to 4) ▪ Drugs: Possessing drug paraphernalia (Level 1 to 3) ▪ Drugs: Violating school board non-prescription (Over the counter) medication policy (Level 1 to 3) ▪ Tobacco: Possessing/Using tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, vaping equipment (Level 2 to 3) ▪ Bullying Behavior without physical injury that continues after intervention (Model

Categories of Behavior (Secondary Schools)	Types of Behavior
	Policy to Addressing Bullying in Virginia's Public Schools); bullying that leads to physical injury should be classified as Assault and Battery (Level 2–4) ▪ Cyberbullying that continues after intervention (Model Policy to Addressing Bullying in Virginia's Public Schools) Cyberbullying that relates a threat to the safety of students and staff should be treated with a higher level of intervention and consequences. (Level 3–5) ▪ Bus: Distracting the bus driver (Level 1–3) ▪ Bus: Endangering the safety of others on the bus (Level 1–3) ▪ Harassment: Repeatedly annoying or attacking a student or group of students or personnel creating an intimidating or hostile educational or work environment ▪ Fire alarm: Falsely activating a or other disaster alarm (Level 1 to 3) ▪ Fire Related: Possessing items that could be used to set or cause a fire or produce large amounts of smoke (Level 1 to 3) ▪ Engaging in reckless behavior that creates a risk of injury to self or others (Level 1 to 3) ▪ Fighting which results in no injury as determined by the school administration ▪ Inciting or causing a substantial disturbance to the operation of school or the safety of staff and/or students (Level 1 to 3 for elementary; Level 2 to 5 for secondary) ▪ Throwing an object that has the potential to cause a disturbance, injury, or property damage (Level 1 to 2 for elementary; up to Level 3 for secondary) ▪ Shoving, pushing, striking a student with no visible injury (Level 1 to 3) ▪ Exposing body parts, lewd or indecent public behavior (Level 1 to 3 for elementary; up to 4 for secondary) ▪ Physical contact of a sexual nature – patting body parts, pinching, tugging clothing (Level 1 to 3 for elementary; up to level 4 for secondary) ▪ Stalking as described in the Code of Virginia section §18.2-60.3 ▪ Stealing money or property using physical force (no weapon involved) (Level 1 to 2; up to Level 3 for secondary) ▪ Leaving school grounds without permission (Level 1 for elementary; up to Level 2 for secondary) ▪ Trespassing (Level 2 to 3) ▪ Weapons: Possessing any weapon (other than a firearm) as defined by § 18.2-308.1 (Level 4 to 5)
BESO: Behaviors in this category endanger the health, safety, and/or welfare of either the student or others in the school community. Recommended responses for all students range from level one to level five depending upon the age and development of the student and the danger caused by the behavior. The range of recommended responses is noted in parenthesis. Behaviors that are felony offenses require a report to law enforcement.	▪ Assault: Intending to cause physical injury to another person (Level 1 to 3) ▪ Assault and Battery: Causing physical injury to another person (Level 3 to 5) ▪ Bomb threat: Making a bomb threat (Level 1 to 4) ▪ Drugs: Possessing controlled substances, illegal drugs or synthetic hallucinogens or unauthorized prescription medications (Level 3 to 5) ▪ Drugs: Being under the influence of controlled substances, illegal drugs, or synthetic hallucinogens or unauthorized prescription medications (Level 3 to 5) ▪ Drugs: Using controlled substances or using illegal drugs or synthetic hallucinogens or unauthorized prescription medications (Level 3 to 5) ▪ Fighting: The use of physical violence between students or on another person where there is no injury as determined by the school administration (Level 1 to 3) ▪ Fire: Attempting to set, aiding in setting, or setting a fire (Level 2 to 4) ▪ Gang-Related Behavior: Engaging in threatening or dangerous behavior that is gang-related as defined in §18.2-46.1. (Level 1 to 4) ▪ Hazing: as defined in §18.2-56. and noted in § 22.1-279.6. (Level 5) ▪ Striking Staff: The use of force against a staff member when no injury is caused (Level 1 to 4) ▪ Threatening or instigating violence, injury, or harm to a staff member (Level 1 to 4) ▪ Threatening or instigating violence, injury, or harm to another student (Level 1 to 3) ▪ Using an object not generally considered to be a weapon to threaten or attempt to injure school personnel (Level 1 to Level 4) ▪ Using an object not generally considered to be a weapon to threaten or attempt to injure a student(s) or others (Level 1 to Level 4)

Administrative responses reflect a system of graduated behavioral interventions and disciplinary sanctions:

Levels of Administrative Responses	Behavioral Interventions	Disciplinary Sanctions
Level 1 Responses: Level 1 responses are intended to prevent further behavioral issues while keeping the student in school.	▪ Re-teaching or modeling of desired behavior ▪ Recognize/Reward appropriate behavior ▪ Administrator/Student conference and/or Administrator/Student/Teacher conference ▪ Written reflection or letter of apology ▪ Peer mediation or conflict resolution ▪ Behavior progress chart ▪ Community service (appropriate to correct the behavior) ▪ Administrator/Teacher/Parent/ Guardian conference	▪ Restitution ▪ Seat change ▪ Loss of school privileges ▪ Confiscation by the administration ▪ Detention (before school, at lunch, after school) ▪ In-school suspension (one–two days) with behavioral instruction and academic support
Level 2 Responses: Administrative responses and interventions at this level are designed to prevent further behavior issues and keep the student in school. Depending upon the severity of the behavior, short-term removal of the student from the classroom may be appropriate.	▪ Student conference ▪ Administrator/Teacher/Counselor/Student conference (includes re-teaching of expected behavior) ▪ Administrator/Teacher/Parent/Guardian conference ▪ Check-In/Check-Out ▪ Mediation or conflict resolution ▪ Referral to support services (e.g., School Counselor, Behavior Interventionist, Mentor Program, and Problem-Solving Team (ex. VTSS), Substance Use and Intervention Program) ▪ Referral to Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Team ▪ Community service (appropriate to correct the behavior) ▪ Referral for community-based services	▪ Schedule change ▪ Detention (before school, at lunch, or after school) ▪ Saturday school ▪ Restitution ▪ Confiscation ▪ Temporary loss of privileges ▪ In-school suspension with behavioral interventions and/or restorative practices (one–three days)

Levels of Administrative Responses	Behavioral Interventions	Disciplinary Sanctions
Level 3 Responses: Dependent upon the severity, chronic nature of the behavior and/or safety concerns, Level 3 behaviors may result in the student's short-term removal from school.	▪ Administrator/Teacher/Parent/ Guardian Conference ▪ Referral to support services (e.g., School Counselor, Behavior Interventionist, Mentor Program, Problem Solving Team, Therapeutic Day Treatment (TDT), Substance Use and Intervention Program) ▪ Referral for community-based services ▪ Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) Development (Special Education Students) ▪ Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and Behavior Support Plan (BSP) Development (General Education Students) ▪ Behavior contract (developed with and signed by the student, parent/guardian, and school officials) ▪ Community service as a part of a restorative practice	▪ In-school suspension with restorative practices (three plus days not to exceed five days) ▪ Detention ▪ Revocation of privileges ▪ Restitution ▪ Referral to alternative education programs ▪ Short-term out-of-school suspension[1] (one-three days for elementary students[2]/one–five days for secondary students) with restorative circle or conference upon return ▪ Referral to law enforcement if required by local policy
Level 4 Responses: Some Level 4 behaviors require a report to the superintendent or superintendent's designee as outlined in the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.3:1. Local school board policy may require additional reporting.	▪ Parent–Administrator–Teacher–Student behavior contract ▪ Referral for community-based services ▪ Threat Assessment as indicated by the behavior	▪ Referral to law enforcement for behaviors that may constitute a felony or that are required by local policy ▪ Schedule change ▪ Long-term revocation of privileges ▪ Restitution via written contract ▪ Short-term out-of-school suspension (for preschool to grade three students one to three days , four to ten days for fourth- to sixth-grade students, or five to ten days for seventh- to twelfth-grade students) ▪ Recommendation for a long-term suspension as determined by local policy or by Code – 11 to 45 days as defined in § 22.1-277.05, Code of Virginia.
Level 5 Responses: Level 5	▪ Threat Assessment as indicated by the	▪ Long term suspension – 11 to 45

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[1] § 22.1-276.01. Definitions. "Short-term suspension" means any disciplinary action whereby a student is not permitted to attend school for a period not to exceed 10 school days. For the purpose of data collection, removal from the student's home school for disciplinary reasons constitutes suspension.

[2] § 22.1-277 Prohibits, except for drug offenses, firearm offenses, and certain criminal acts, students in preschool through grade three from being suspended for more than three school days or expelled from attendance at school unless (i) the offense involves physical harm or credible threat of physical harm to others or (ii) the local school board or the division superintendent or his designee finds that aggravating circumstances exist, as defined by the Department of Education.

Levels of Administrative Responses	Behavioral Interventions	Disciplinary Sanctions
responses are reserved for those behaviors that require a referral to the superintendent or designee. For preschool to grade three students, any suspension beyond three days must be referred to the superintendent. A referral to the superintendent or designee may not automatically result in an expulsion, alternative placement, school reassignment, or long-term suspension.	behavior ▪ Referral to law enforcement for behaviors that may constitute a felony or that are required by law or local policy ▪ Referral to Superintendent or designee	days as defined in § 22.1-277.05, *Code of Virginia* ▪ Alternative placement ▪ Expulsion ▪ School reassignment: Students may be assigned to another school within the division. Board policy should establish the procedures for assigning any student to another school. Those policies and procedures should ensure equity. ▪ Return the student to the school setting with appropriate supports and interventions.

School administrators are required to report a small number of offenses to law enforcement and may report other offenses upon specified conditions.

Supplement 3. Key Partnership Resources

VIRGINIA RESOURCES

Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS)
https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety
Created in 2000, the VCSCS, located within the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) focuses on improving and enhancing safety by addressing topics which affect Virginia law enforcement, schools, and institutions of higher education. The VCSCS is a resource and training center for information and research about national and statewide safety efforts and initiatives in K-12 schools and institutions of higher education.

Through the *Code of Virginia* § 9.1-184, the VCSCS is mandated to:

- Provide training for stakeholders,
- Develop, review, and disseminate resources and legislation,
- Facilitate the annual school safety audit,
- Provide technical assistance, and
- Develop partnerships to promote school safety and campus in Virginia.

VCSCS School Resource Officer Webpage
Features an overview of SRO resources, Model MOU, training, and model SRO curriculum.
https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/school-resource-officers

VCSCS School Security Officer Webpage
Features SSO FAQs, forms, training events, resources.
https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/k-12/safety-security/school-security-officer- sso-certification-program

VCSCS School Safety Audit Program Webpage
Features an overview of the audit program, template for schools, template for audit committee, links to the school safety survey and secondary school climate survey homepages, school safety inspection checklist and related guidance. https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/virginia-school-safety-audit-program

VCSCS School Crisis Management Plan Webpage
Features an overview of the certification process.
https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/school-safety-survey/school-crisis- management-plan-review

VCSCS Publications Webpage
Features an extensive array of school safety related publications on topics such as bullying and school climate, crisis and emergency planning, school safety, school safety audit, threat assessment.
https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/k-12-resources-and-curriculum

VCSCS Legislation Webpage
Features a legislative summary for schools and links to other Virginia legislation resources.
https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/virginia-center-school-and-campus-safety/legislation

Virginia Department of Education
http://www.doe.virginia.gov
The Safe Schools Information Resource (SSIR) – https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/pti/
SSIR is an important tool for SROs in understanding discipline, crime, and violence activities in their schools and school division. The SSIR website was established by the Virginia Department of Education to provide user-friendly public access to the discipline, crime, and violence (DCV) data. Using multiple, easy-to-understand drop-down menus, users can search by school year, school division, school type, school name, offense category, offense type, discipline outcome, and time element. Data for the most recent five years are posted and reports may be generated in numerous categories according to the user's selections. A User Guide is posted on the website.

Note: The Virginia Department of Education's DCV system of data collection is being replaced by the Student Behavior and Administrative Response (SBAR) data collection beginning in the 2021–2022 school year. SSIR will remain operational until transition to a newly designed resource.

School Safety Webpage
Contains information about the collection of Discipline, Crime, and Violence (DCV) data and most recent annual report.
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/info_management/data_collection/support/school_safety/index.shtml

Student Conduct and Discipline Webpage
Contains Virginia Board of Education Student Conduct Policy Guidelines and related documents pertaining to students with disabilities. http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/student_conduct/index.shtml

Prevention Strategies and Programs Webpage
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/prevention/index.shtml
Contains information about drug and alcohol use, child abuse and neglect, suicide prevention, attendance and truancy, gang-related activity, bullying prevention, human trafficking, and mental health in schools.

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
http://www.djj.virginia.gov
The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice is the state agency that serves justice-involved youth through community and residential programs. Community programs include Court Services Units (CSUs), a Community Diversion Unit, a Reentry Unit, and a Practice Improvement and Services Unit that leads quality assurance and practice improvement efforts. Residential Services operate correctional centers and a community placement program.

Court Service Units Webpage
Contains description of functions of court service units, a map and directory with links to individual CSUs. http://www.djj.virginia.gov/pages/community/court-service-units.htm

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety
https://selcenter.wested.org/
The Center has compiled a variety of resources to support states, school divisions, and schools to integrate academic, social, and emotional supports that meet students' individual needs so that they can achieve their greatest potential in K-12 education, as well as in college, career, and life.

National Institute of Justice
NIJ Virtual Conference on School Safety (February 2021). Recorded sessions are available at:
https://nij.ojp.gov/events/nij-virtual-conference-school-safety#nlbfna

School-Justice Partnership National Resource Center
https://schooljusticepartnership.org/
The center provides research, training, and technical assistance to develop effective school/justice policies and practice. Its purpose is to enhance collaboration and coordination among schools, mental and behavioral health specialists, law enforcement and juvenile justice officials to help students succeed in school and prevent negative outcomes for youth and communities. Partners include National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), in partnership with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice, operates the National Resource Center to provide research, training, and technical assistance to develop effective school/justice policies and practice.

LAW ENFORCEMENT RESOURCES

National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO)
http://nasro.org
NASRO is a not-for-profit membership organization for school-based law enforcement officers, school administrators, and school security and/or safety professionals that was founded in 1991. NASRO offers training and publications.

The National Threat Assessment Center
https://www.secretservice.gov/protection/ntac
NTAC provides research and guidance in support of the Secret Service protective mission, and to others with public safety responsibilities. Recent reports have focused on enhancing school safety and studies of targeted school violence and of averted school violence.

International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)
http://www.theiacp.org/
The IACP manages the Juvenile Justice Law Enforcement Training and Technical Assistance Project in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The project is a multi-year initiative focused on increasing the capacity of law enforcement and justice professionals to address juvenile victimization, delinquency, and crime from a holistic perspective.

IACP's Youth Focused Policing Resource Center
https://www.theiacp.org/resources/document/iacps-youth-focused-policing-resource-center

National Sheriffs' Association
The NSA maintains a School Safety Resource Site that has downloadable resources and a recorded webinar series.

The National Gang Center (NGC)
https://nationalgangcenter.ojp.gov/
The National Gang Center (NGC) is a project jointly funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). The NGC program works to further the mission of the DOJ by providing an array of information and resources on gangs for state, local, and tribal jurisdictions. NGC's national leadership serves researchers, policymakers, direct service providers, criminal justice practitioners, and other community members through peer-to-peer information exchange and mentoring, training, and on- and off-site technical assistance.

EDUCATION RESOURCES

The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE)
https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/
The NCSSLE provides training and support to state administrators, including 11 grantees funded under the Safe and Supportive Schools grant program, 22 grantees funded under the Project Prevent grant program, school and district administrators, institutions of higher education, teachers, support staff at schools, communities and families, and students.
The Center seeks to improve schools' conditions for learning through measurement and program implementation, so that all students have the opportunity to realize academic success in safe and supportive environments. The website serves as a central location for the Center, providing information about the Center's training and technical assistance, products and tools, and latest research findings.

Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety
https://selcenter.wested.org/
The Center focuses on social and emotional learning (SEL) offering technical assistance, tools, publications, and evidence-based programs and practices to address important needs.

Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
https://www.pbis.org/
The PBIS Center provides schools, school divisions, and states with capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, implementing, adapting, and sustaining a framework for effective school-wide behavioral practices.

Alliance for Excellent Education
http://all4ed.org/
The Alliance for Excellent Education, a Washington, DC based national policy, practice, and advocacy organization, focuses on America's six million most at-risk secondary school students – those in the lowest achievement quartile. The Alliance helps these students, who are most likely to leave school without a diploma or to graduate unprepared for a productive future, to ensure they graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship.

SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY

National Center for School Safety (NCSS)
https://www.nc2s.org/
The Center is the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) STOP Program National Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) provider and is a multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional center focused on improving school safety and preventing school violence. STOP stands for Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing School Violence.

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.
Supporting Safe Schools Website – https://cops.usdoj.gov/supportingsafeschools
Ten Essential Actions to Improve School Safety: School Safety Working Group Report to the Attorney General (2020). https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-w0891-pub.pdf

National Clearinghouse for School Safety Information
https://schoolsafety.gov
SchoolSafety.gov was created by the federal government to provide schools and districts with actionable recommendations to create a safe and supportive learning environment where students can thrive and grow. The website offers information on prevention, protection and mitigation, response and recovery, and an online information sharing community.

Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety (December 2018)
https://www2.ed.gov/documents/school-safety/school-safety-report.pdf
This is the report of a Federal Commission that identifies best practices and recommendations to prevent school violence, protect students and teachers, mitigate the effects of violence, and respond and recover from acts of school violence.

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center
https://rems.ed.gov/
REMS supports schools in the development of high-quality emergency operations plans (EOPs) and comprehensive emergency management planning efforts. REMS offers:
    Virtual Trainings
    Live Trainings by Request
    Technical Assistance
    Emergency Management Planning Tools
    Tool Box including an online, searchable library of free, downloadable tools
    Community of Practice – a virtual space for collaboration

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
http://www.missingkids.org
NCMEC offers online safety training for K-12 students, parents, and teachers. Their NetSmartz page contains information on social media including cyberbullying and other timely topics such as sextortion and grooming on social media and radicalization through video games.

National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities
http://www.ncef.org/
This resource provides information on designing, building, and maintaining safe, healthy, high-performing schools. Offers a collection of more than 23,000 resources on facilities supporting early childhood and K–12 to higher education. Subject-specific resource lists provide a quick path to 167 school facilities topics; lists include books, studies, reports, and journal articles, with links to online publications and related websites.

JUVENILE JUSTICE RESOURCES

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)
https://www.ojjdp.gov/
OJJDP provides federal leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. The website contains an extensive collection of publications and other informational resources pertaining to juvenile justice and law enforcement.

OJJDP National Training and Technical Assistance Center (NTTAC)
https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/training-and-technical-assistance
NTTAC provides targeted training and technical assistance to policymakers and practitioners. Topics include child safety, preventing violence, cyberbullying prevention, restorative justice, youth and family engagement, court services, mentoring, reducing drug use, and combating gangs.

Beyond the Badge: Profile of a School Resource Officer – A Guide for School Communities (2016)
https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-p357-pub.pdf
A 17-minute film and accompanying guide are designed to initiate conversations in schools to clarify the role of an SRO, model SRO promising practices, inspire creative and constructive relationship-building methods within schools, develop or enhance community partnerships with local law enforcement agencies and other community organizations supporting youth development, and promote safe and inclusive communities for everyone.

The Importance of Working with School Resource Officers (**February 2021**)
https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/taxonomy/term/84356
Held on February 3, 2021 by OJJDP's NTTAC in conjunction with the National District Attorneys Association, this webinar provided an overview of the importance of School Resource Officers and also included real-life examples of existing relationships and policies that help to achieve these goals.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice (NCMHJJ)
http://www.ncmhjj.com/
The NCMHJJ offers several training programs to improve cross-system responses to justice-involved youth with behavioral health needs.

SAMHSA's Ready, Set, Go
This resource provides additional guidance for mental health screening in schools.

Centers for Disease Control
> *Preventing Suicide: A Technical Package of Policy, Programs, and Practices* (2017).
> https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/suicideTechnicalPackage.pdf?s_cid=cs_293
> This is a technical package that contains a set of strategies to reduce suicides, approaches to
> implementing strategies, and summaries of evidence of effectiveness. Of particular interest to SROs are
> strategies that teach coping and problem-solving skills to youth through social-emotional learning (SEL)
> programs.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)
> https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org
> MHFA provides free/low-cost training on mental health, symptoms of mental illness, and intervening
> with those with mental health symptoms. MHFA also has various iterations of this training to include
> Youth Mental Health First Aid, Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety, Teen Mental Health First Aid,
> and Mental Health First Aid for Higher Education.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
> https://www.nami.org
> NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for
> the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. Resources especially for youth and young adults
> are available on the website (https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Teens-Young-Adults).

APPENDIX A. VIRGINIA MODEL MOU

Published: 12/2022

VIRGINIA MODEL
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
between
THE [_____] **SCHOOL BOARD/SCHOOL DIVISION**
and
THE [_____] **POLICE DEPARTMENT/SHERIFF'S OFFICE [DATE]**

AUTHORITY

§ 22.1-280.2:3. *School boards; local law enforcement agencies; memorandums of understanding.*

"The school board in each school division in which the local law enforcement agency employs school resource officers, as defined in § 9.1-101, shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with such local law enforcement agency that sets forth the powers and duties of such school resource officers. The provisions of such memorandum of understanding shall be based on the model memorandum of understanding developed by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety pursuant to subdivision A 12 of § 9.1-184, which may be modified by the parties in accordance with their particular needs. Each such school board and local law enforcement agency shall review and amend or affirm such memorandum at least once every two years or at any time upon the request of either party. Each school board shall ensure the current division memorandum of understanding is conspicuously published on the division website and provide notice and opportunity for public input during each memorandum of understanding review period."

PURPOSE

The [School Board/School Division (SD)] and [Police Department/Sheriff's Office (PD/SO)] hereby enter into this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) setting forth the respective roles and responsibilities of both parties regarding the use of school resource officers (SROs). The purpose of this MOU is to establish a mutually beneficial partnership (School-Law Enforcement Partnership (S-LEP)) that both schools and law enforcement can work within to achieve shared goals. The purpose of the S-LEP is to foster relations of mutual respect and understanding in order to build a positive and safe school environment and to facilitate effective, timely communication and coordination of efforts for both the SD and the PD/SO.

This MOU is intended only to outline expectations between the SD and the PD/SO. It is not intended to create contractual or equitable obligations on the part of the SD or the PD/SO toward particular students, parents, SD or PD/SO employees, or any other third parties.

The parties agree the vast majority of student misconduct can be best addressed through classroom and in-school strategies. The parties acknowledge that students are generally less mature and responsible than adults; they often lack the experience, perspective, and judgment to recognize and avoid choices that could be detrimental to them; and they are more susceptible to outside pressures than adults.

For further details regarding the S-LEP, please see the *School-Law Enforcement Partnership Guide* and

the *S-LEP Standards and Leadership Tools* available on the DCJS website*.*

GOALS

The primary goals of the S-LEP and this model MOU are to (i) promote positive and supportive school climates and (ii) create and maintain safe and secure school environments.

To promote positive and supportive school climates, the SD and PD/SO will collaborate to increase law-related education, expand school safety and crime prevention efforts, reduce conflict, and support effective interventions for students.

To create and maintain safe and secure school environments, the SD and PD/SO will collaborate to reduce and prevent crime, violence, victimization, and fear in and around schools, and minimize student involvement with the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL-LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIP

The SD and the PD/SO should jointly develop measurable objectives of the S-LEP using school discipline, crime, and violence data, school climate survey data, and any other data deemed to be relevant. The SD and the PD/SO will review progress toward achieving such objectives at least annually and the results of the progress review will be made available to the public. For guidance related to evaluation of the S-LEP, see the *S-LEP Evaluation Toolkit*.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I. Police Department/Sheriff's Office Responsibilities

The PD/SO will designate a direct point of contact between the PD/SO and the SD. The PD/SO point of contact will address any operational and administrative issues and will serve as a consultant for school safety and security issues including assessments and critical incident response planning. The PD/SO point of contact will maintain a working knowledge of school rules, regulations, and laws regarding student safety and conduct. The PD/SO point of contact will establish and maintain effective relationships with school personnel at the division and school levels.

The PD/SO will be responsible for the selection, assignment, scheduling, training, supervision, and evaluation of SROs. In their performance of law enforcement functions, the SRO will remain at all times under the control, through the chain of command, of the PD/SO. The PD/SO will ensure the SRO meets the training standards for SROs established by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) pursuant to the *Code of Virginia* §§ 9.1-101(54) and 9.1-114.1.

The PD/SO will take into consideration the views of the SD and the identified needs and conditions of the schools when (i) developing and implementing law enforcement policies and practices that may affect schools, and (ii) selecting, assigning, scheduling, training, supervising, and evaluating SROs.

II. School Division Responsibilities

The SD will designate a primary division-level point of contact between the SD and the PD/SO. The SD point of contact will implement the S-LEP and maintain ongoing communications with PD/SO officials.

School administrators will be responsible for facilitating effective communication between the SRO and school personnel and for supporting the goals of the S-LEP.

Each school with an assigned SRO should provide work area(s) for the SRO that allow access to technologies, private interviewing of multiple persons, and locking storage space for securing physical evidence.

The SD will handle discipline within the school disciplinary process without involving SROs. The SD policies, administrative guidance, training, and ongoing oversight should clearly communicate that school personnel is responsible for school discipline and that law enforcement is not to be involved with disciplinary action, except as may be requested by the SD (e.g., if factual information gathered or observations by the SRO are relevant to a disciplinary matter). The SD is responsible for communicating the goals and role of the SRO to all school administration, personnel, and students.

The SD should ensure that school administrators meet the training requirements set forth in the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.8(E).

III. SRO Roles and Responsibilities

SROs should be considered active members of their assigned schools. The SRO facilitates the effective delivery of law enforcement services and assists with matters related to safety, security, and the exchange of information between the SD and the PD/SO.

Unless there is a clear and imminent threat to safety, requests from school personnel for SRO or other law enforcement assistance are to be made to a school administrator, and such administrator should, if appropriate, request assistance from the SRO.

To the extent possible, SROs' duty schedules should be organized to provide coverage throughout the school day. SROs provide a visible deterrent to crime and shall be visible patrolling the exterior and interior grounds. SROs should wear the regulation uniform of the employing PD/SO and operate a marked PD/SO vehicle while on duty unless otherwise authorized by the SRO's supervisor.

Additionally, SROs should assist school administrators in developing school crisis, emergency management, and medical emergency response plans. SROs should work with school administrators in problem-solving to prevent crime and promote safety in the school environment. SROs are expected to collaborate with school administrators and other school personnel to support positive school climates that focus on resolving conflicts and minimizing student involvement with the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

SROs serve multiple roles in schools. The roles are interrelated, but all are carried out with the aim to contribute to school safety and security and to promote positive and supportive school climates. The key roles of an SRO are:

Law enforcement officer
As a sworn law enforcement officer, the primary role of an SRO in a school is as a law enforcement officer. SROs assume primary responsibility for responding to requests for law enforcement assistance from school administrators and coordinating the response of other law enforcement resources to the school. SROs should work with school administrators in problem-solving to prevent crime and promote safety in the school environment. In all cases, the SRO's role as a law enforcement officer should take precedence over any other roles performed by the SRO.

Law-related *educator*
As resources permit, SROs should strive to assist with presentations to school personnel on law-related

topics such as law enforcement practices, changes in relevant laws, crime trends, crime prevention, school safety strategies, and crisis response procedures. SROs may also deliver law-related education to students using lessons/curricula approved in advance by the SD.

Role model and informal mentor
Students often seek approval, direction, and guidance from adults in the school setting about various problems. Through formal and informal interaction with students, SROs serve as role models and informal mentors. SROs are expected to communicate clearly to students about acceptable and unacceptable behavior, set a positive example in handling stressful situations and resolving conflicts, show respect and consideration of others, and express high expectations for student behavior. Students who may need additional assistance shall be referred to a school-based resource.

IV. School Administrator Roles and Responsibilities

Consistent with the Virginia Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, 8 VAC 20-131-210(A), "the principal is recognized as the instructional leader and manager of the school and is responsible for [f]ostering the success of all students by developing, advocating, and sustaining an academically rigorous, positive, and safe school climate for all stakeholders[.]" Additionally, pursuant to 8 VAC 20-131-260(D), the school administration should ensure that the school has written procedures "to follow in emergencies such as fire, injury, illness, allergic reactions, and violent or threatening behavior" and "for responding to violent, disruptive, or illegal activities by students on school property or during a school sponsored activity[.]"

School administrators should review the MOU annually with SROs and establish school-specific operational and communications procedures to support the goals of the S-LEP.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

I. Differentiating Disciplinary Misconduct from Criminal Offenses

School administrators and personnel are responsible for school discipline. Although SROs are expected to be familiar with the school division code of student conduct, the rules of individual schools, and their application in day-to-day practice, SROs should not be involved with the enforcement of school rules or disciplinary infractions that are not violations of law.

Consequences of student misconduct should be effective, developmentally appropriate, and fair. Interventions and school sanctions should help students learn from their mistakes and address root causes of misconduct. School administrators should consider alternatives to suspensions and expulsions and law enforcement officials should consider alternatives to involvement with the juvenile and criminal justice systems for student violations of law.

II. Information Sharing

The release and sharing of student records is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, and its implementing regulations, 34 C.F.R. Part 99, and §§ 22.1-287 and 22.1-287.1 of the *Code of Virginia*.

When appropriate, and to the extent allowable by law, the SD should notify SROs of any special needs of a student involved in a school-based infraction that is not routine discipline in order to assist the SRO in recognizing and accommodating behaviors that may be manifestations of a student's disability.

Consent access. An SRO or other law enforcement officer may have access to a student's educational records with written consent of the student's parent or legal guardian or of the student if the student is 18 years or age or older.

SRO access. For purposes of access to student records, SROs may be considered "school officials with a legitimate educational interest" in reviewing information from student educational records covered by FERPA, and may be provided student information as needed to carry out their duties related to the school environment, provided such SROs perform a function or service for which the school would otherwise use employees (e.g., maintaining the physical safety and security of the school) and comply with the use and re-disclosure requirements set forth in 34 C.F.R. § 99.33. SROs may have access to (i) information on students in their assigned schools that include directory information and additional items needed to carry out their duties, such as class schedules, as approved by the school administrator, and (ii) directory information for all students in the school division (however, unless they are school officials with a legitimate educational interest, they will not have address to student addresses, telephone numbers or email addresses unless another exception applies, given § 22.1-287.1 of the *Code of Virginia*). While, as noted above, SROs are always under the control of the PD/SO in carrying out their law enforcement duties, the PD/SO agree that SROs will respect the confidentiality of student education records as other school officials would, and are under the control of the SD when it comes to the handling of student education records. PD/SOs understand that unless a FERPA exception applies that would permit disclosure to law enforcement by any school official (e.g., in the context of a health or safety emergency or in response to a subpoena), SROs will not share protected student record information with the PD/SO.

Health or Safety Emergency Exception. Pursuant to 34 C.F.R. § 99.36, in the event of an articulable and significant threat to the health or safety of a student or other individuals, school officials may disclose any information from student records to appropriate parties, including law enforcement officials, whose knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.

SRO disclosure of law enforcement records. SROs may disclose law enforcement records created and maintained by the SRO for the purpose of maintaining the physical security and safety of the school or the enforcement of laws. Because law enforcement records are not student records, they are not subject to the disclosure requirements of FERPA.

III. Investigation and Questioning

SROs have the authority to question students who may have information about criminal activity. As sworn law enforcement officers, SROs have authority to stop, question, interview, and take law enforcement action without prior authorization of the school administrator or contacting parents or legal guardians. However, the investigation and questioning of students during school hours or at school events should be limited to situations where the investigation is related to suspected criminal activity related to the operation of or occurring at the school. The investigation and questioning of students for offenses not related to the operation of or occurring at the school should take place at school only when delay might result in danger to any person, destruction of evidence, or flight from the jurisdiction by the person suspected of a crime.

The interviewing of students, whether as suspects, victims, or witnesses, should be conducted privately in an office setting. SROs shall take steps to ensure minimal intrusion into the educational experience of

students being questioned in the school setting. Custodial interrogation of a minor must be conducted in accordance with § 16.1-247.1 of the *Code of Virginia*.

SROs are responsible for leading the investigation and questioning of students related to suspected violations of criminal law. SROs shall not be included in the investigation and questioning of students about student code of conduct violations that do not involve any criminal activity or risk of harm to self or others. School administrators are responsible for the investigation and questioning of students about violations of the code of conduct.

IV. Searches

All searches shall be conducted in accordance with federal and state laws and applicable SD and PD/SO policies and guidelines, including the principles embodied in this MOU.

School administrator searches. School personnel may conduct searches of a student's property and person under their jurisdiction in accordance with guidelines developed as contemplated by the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.7, and the advice of the school's legal counsel.

SRO searches. Any search initiated by an SRO or other law enforcement officer should be conducted in accordance with constitutional search and seizure requirements. All searches should occur outside the presence of students and school personnel, with the exception of school administrators, unless there is a clear and imminent threat to safety.

SROs should not become involved in administrative searches and at no time should SROs request that an administrative search be conducted for law enforcement purposes or have school personnel conduct a search as the SRO's agent.

V. Arrests

Whenever practical, the arrest of a student or school personnel should be accomplished outside of school hours in order to not disrupt the educational process or school setting. Arrests that must occur during school hours or on school grounds should be coordinated through the school administrator to minimize potential disruption. When circumstances do not allow for prior coordination through the school administrator, arrests should be reported to the school administrator as soon as possible. In addition to any required notification of parents and legal guardians by the SRO taking a student or employee into custody, school administrators or their designees should consider notifying parents and legal guardians upon a school-based arrest of the student.

VI. Physical Restraint by School Personnel

Physical restraint refers to restricting a student's ability to freely move his or her torso, arms, legs, or head. The term physical restraint does not include a physical escort, such as temporary touching of the arm or other body part for the purpose of inducing a student who is acting out to walk to a safe location.

Physical restraint by school personnel is used in accordance with the Regulations Governing the Use of Seclusion and Restraint in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Virginia (8VAC20-750), and related local school board policies. Every effort should be made by school personnel to prevent the need for the use of restraint. Physical restraint should not be used except by school personnel trained in the use of physical restraint as required by the school division.

School personnel should act to de-escalate situations that are causing, or have the potential to cause, disruptions to the school environment and/or are violations of the student code of conduct where appropriate. If physical intervention is necessary, the action shall be reported promptly to the school administrator and the rationale for the action shall be fully documented.

VII. Physical Intervention by School Resource Officers

An SRO should not be involved in the physical restraint of a student unless there is a clear and imminent threat to safety. As sworn law enforcement officers, SROs may intervene to de-escalate situations.

Physical intervention by SROs is undertaken in accordance with policies and operational procedures of the PD/SO and state law regarding physical intervention and use of force by a law enforcement officer. If an SRO is involved in the use of restraint or physical intervention, the action should be reported to the school administrator and the SRO's supervisor and the rationale for the action should be fully documented.

SROs should be aware of the Regulations Governing the Use of Seclusion and Restraint in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Virginia (8VAC20-750) and related local school board policies and may attend training offered by the local school system on their use of seclusion and restraint by school personnel. However, SROs should continue to operate by the policies and operational procedures of the PD/SO and state law regarding physical intervention and use of force by a law enforcement officer.

Additionally, if the SRO physically intervenes with a student, the SD and PD/SO should coordinate to ensure that reasonable effort is made to inform the parents or legal guardians of such student on the same day as the occurrence of the physical intervention.

KEY STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

I. Crime Reporting

§ 22.1-279:3:1 of the *Code of Virginia* (effective 7/1/2022) requires the reporting of certain acts to school authorities; reporting of certain acts by school authorities to parents; and reporting of certain acts by school authorities to law enforcement.

A. Reports shall be made to the division superintendent and to the principal or his designee on all incidents involving:
   1. Alcohol, marijuana, a controlled substance, an imitation controlled substance, or an anabolic steroid on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity, including the theft or attempted theft of student prescription medications;
   2. The assault and battery that results in bodily injury of any person on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity;
   3. The sexual assault, death, shooting, stabbing, cutting, or wounding of any person, abduction of any person as described in § 18.2-47, or 18.2-48, or stalking of any person as described in § 18.2-60.3, on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity;
   4. Any written threats against school personnel while on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity;
   5. The illegal carrying of a firearm, as defined in § 22.1-277.07, onto school property;
   6. Any illegal conduct involving firebombs, explosive materials or devices, or hoax explosive devices, as defined in § 18.2-85, or explosive or incendiary devices, as defined in § 18.2-433.1, or chemical

bombs, as described in § 18.2-87.1, on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity;

7. Any threats or false threats to bomb, as described in § 18.2-83, made against school personnel or involving school property or school buses; or

8. The arrest of any student for an incident occurring on a school bus, on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity, including the charge therefor.

B. Except as may otherwise be required by federal law, regulation, or jurisprudence, each principal:

1. Shall immediately report to the local law-enforcement agency any incident described in subdivision A 1 that may constitute a felony offense;

2. Shall immediately report to the local law-enforcement agency any incident described in subdivisions A 3 through 7, except that a principal is not required to but may report to the local law-enforcement agency any incident described in subdivision A 4 committed by a student who has a disability;

3. May report to the local law-enforcement agency any other incident described in subsection A that is not required to be reported pursuant to subdivision 1 or 2; and

4. Shall immediately report any act enumerated in subdivisions A 1 through 5 that may constitute a criminal offense to the parents of any minor student who is the specific object of such act. Further, the principal shall report whether the incident has been reported to local law enforcement pursuant to this subsection and, if the incident has been so reported, that the parents may contact local law enforcement for further information, if they so desire.

Pursuant to §§§ 16.1-260(G), 19.2-83.1(B), and 22.1-279.3:1, law enforcement agencies and/or intake officers are required to notify the division superintendent if a student is arrested for certain offenses or subject to a petition alleging that the student committed certain offenses. Division superintendents who receive such reports are required to report the information to the principal of the school in which the student is enrolled.

As a general practice, SROs should notify the principal as soon as practical of any significant law enforcement events occurring at or in association with the school (e.g., at a school bus stop or off-campus activity, during or outside school hours). No SRO or school administrator will be required to file delinquency charges in response to any such activity.

II. Threat Assessment

Threat assessments will be conducted in accordance with local school board policies adopted as required by the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-79.4 and, in general, consistent with model procedures and guidelines published by the DCJS Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety and other appropriate practices.

Pursuant to § 22.1-79.4 each division superintendent shall establish, for each school, a threat assessment team that shall include persons with expertise in counseling, instruction, school administration, and law enforcement **and (effective 7/1/2022), in the case of any school in which a school resource officer is employed, at least one such school resource officer**. SROs serving as members of threat assessment teams (including as school officials with a legitimate education interest, as defined by FERPA and as discussed above) may assist in the monitoring of subject students as well as determining the need, if any, for law enforcement action.

III. School Safety Audits

School safety audits will be conducted annually as required by the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.8 to assess school safety conditions in schools. SROs, in collaboration with school administrators, will conduct school inspection walk-throughs using a standardized checklist developed by the Center for School and Campus Safety. SROs and the PD/SO should collaborate in other school safety audit mandates set forth in the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-279.8, including school crisis, emergency management, and medical emergency response planning and preparation, **and (effective 7/1/2022) as part of each such audit, the school board shall create a detailed and accurate floor plan for each public school building in the local school division or shall certify that the existing floor plan for each such school is sufficiently detailed and accurate.**

REVIEW OF MOU

Effective July 1, 2020, per an amendment to the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-280.2:3 "school boards and local law enforcement agencies shall review and amend or affirm memorandums of understanding at least once every two years, or at any time upon the request of either party". Further, "each school board shall ensure the current division memorandum of understanding is conspicuously published on the division website and provide notice and opportunity for public input and discussion during each memorandum of understanding review period."

Quarterly meetings should be conducted throughout the year between the SD point of contract and PD/SO point of contact to support successful implementation of the partnership. This MOU remains in force until such time as either party withdraws from the agreement by delivering a written notification of such withdrawal to the other party at least 45 days prior to the date of withdrawal.

Signed:

Chief of Police/Sheriff   Superintendent of Schools

Date   Date

Appendix A

Graduated Intervention and Responses, Additional Resources

In developing the School-Law Enforcement Partnership MOU, the School Division and Law Enforcement Agency are encouraged to develop alternative responses and educational programming for school-based misconduct in order to divert youth from unnecessary involvement with the juvenile justice systems.

In addition to the *Virginia School-Law Enforcement Partnership Guide and Program Standards*, these resources may be helpful in developing your SRO program best practices.

Guiding Principles for School Resource Officer Programs **(March 2022)**
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice
https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/2022ProgramDocs/chp/SRO_Guiding_Principles.pdf

NASRO School Resource Officer Program Recommendations **(July 2021)**
National Association of School Resource Officers
https://www.nasro.org/clientuploads/resources/91667_NASRO_Best_Practices_FINAL.pdf

SECURe – Safe, School-based Enforcement through Collaboration, Understanding and Respect Rubrics **(2016)**
U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice
https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/sro/SRO_State_and_Local_Policy.pdf

School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding: Fact Sheet **(Nov. 2021)**
U.S. Department of Justice, COPS Office
https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/2021AwardDocs/chp/SRO_MOU.pdf

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
1100 Bank Street, Richmond, VA 23219
www.dcjs.virginia.gov