

School Resource Officer Model Policy

Selection, Training, and Evaluation

CRS § 24-31-312



I. Purpose:

The purpose of a successful school resource officer program is to build positive and trusting relationships between law enforcement and students. This document is meant to provide school administration and staff, as well as law enforcement agencies a model policy for the selection, training and evaluation of a School Resource Officer (SRO). The recommendations outlined in this policy have been designed to guide the collaborative development of a school resource officer program, while acknowledging the importance of local circumstances and youth development. This policy is composed of recommendations and are not mandatory changes imposed on any local entity.

This model policy fulfils the mandate in CRS § 24-31-312.

II. Scope:

The scope of this document is intended to encompass the Selection and Training of School Resource Officers. This policy is available for use to all law enforcement agencies in the State of Colorado.

III. Definitions:

School Resource Officer: The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) defines a School Resource Officer as “a carefully selected, specifically trained, and properly equipped full-time law enforcement officer. This officer will be trained in school-based law enforcement, working in a school using community-oriented policing strategies.”

Memorandum of Understanding:

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) should be established between the operating law enforcement agency and the school district. This document will assist in developing program goals and evaluating the program to assess the success in meeting identified goals. This document should address defining roles and responsibilities, including proper procedures for formal school discipline, and define the roles and expectations related to the

decision to take enforcement action. Other considerations include chain of command, sharing of information, hours on campus, and day to day duties.

Community-Oriented Policing:

Community-oriented policing emphasizes proactive problem solving in a systematic and routine fashion. Rather than responding to crime only after it occurs, community policing encourages agencies to proactively develop solutions to the immediate underlying conditions contributing to public safety problems. In this case, the community is the school.

NASRO Triad Model:

This model says that an SRO will be expected to be **a Law Enforcement Officer, Public Safety Educator, and Informal Counselor/Mentor.**

IV. Model Policy:

Documentation of Selection Process:

It is a best practice to develop a clearly defined, and documented, process for the selection of an SRO. The agreed upon process should be outlined in the agency/school administration MOU.

Prerequisites/Experience:

Anyone applying for this position should do so voluntarily.

The peace officer selected should have a minimum of three years of patrol experience. This will allow the candidate to establish a record of professionalism, confidence in their work, and understanding of their agency's policy and procedure.

Special consideration should be given to applicants who have demonstrated prior experiences or positive involvement with youth

activities outside of the scope of their employment, e.g., coaching, tutoring.

An incoming SRO should “shadow” the current SRO for a period of one to two weeks to gauge suitability for the position.

When evaluating candidate experience during SRO selection, consideration should be given to experience with communities that are similar to the student enrollment, such as ethnicity, race, urban/rural, and faith backgrounds. Consideration should be given to the student enrollment, cultural and minority representation, special education programs, and English as a Second Language (ESL) student population. Experience with the full range of cultures and backgrounds in the school is ideal where possible and more likely to result in successful SRO placement, relationships, and community- oriented policing.

Selection Panel:

When practicable, the selection panel should include representation from the law enforcement agency (SRO sergeant or member of command staff), district administration, school administration, and a student body representative. Including someone from the school can help ensure the personality of the SRO is compatible with the school community.

The selection panel should make sure it has a transparent process in place in which the perspectives of the stakeholders listed above are incorporated. Such a process is a key component in building and maintaining trust.

Qualities and characteristics:

When looking for the ideal candidate, the NASRO Triad Model is the national best practice. The candidate should be able to handle the responsibility of being a **law enforcement officer, public safety educator, and informal counselor/mentor**. *Ability as a law enforcement officer is a necessary but not independently sufficient attribute for anyone holding this role.*

The selection panel should determine the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other qualifications a prospective SRO should have. Objective grading standards should also be determined to guide the selection committee in assessing candidates utilized to assist the committee in selecting candidates.

An example of a question to pose to a potential candidate may be "What do you know about the NASRO Triad Model?"

If the candidate has no knowledge of the Triad, this obtains the lowest score. If the candidate is able to articulate the three parts of the Triad, but have no further knowledge, this obtains a mid-range score. If the candidate is fully versed with the Triad, and able to go into detail of what each "arm" is, the candidate would obtain a high score.

The candidate should have the ability, willingness, and drive to communicate effectively with students, parents, administration, school staff, and their own agency administration.

The candidate should have the ability to establish relationships with the full range of students that may be encountered inside the school community. These relationships can include coaching, mentoring, or involvement in after school activities.

Consideration should be given to the candidate's ability to work as a pro-active officer. Part of the work is dealing with issues before they become a crisis. An SRO should help build an environment in the school that promotes trust so that students come to the officer first, before larger issues evolve. This may be determined through analysis of the candidate's work history, and previous performance evaluations, along with community perception and trust.

It is best practice to incorporate a brief oral presentation from the candidate. This will help determine their ability to speak in public, organize their thoughts, construct an articulate presentation, and think on their feet. The candidate should be able to speak on multiple different topics, to multiple different groups based on varying circumstances in a school environment.

These topics may include crime prevention, social media, school safety, decision making, and laws pertaining to students/youth.

Training After Appointment:

It is highly recommended that the selected candidate completes the 40-hour NASRO Basic SRO training program. Strong consideration should be given to the completion of this course as a pre-requisite to starting the assignment. There is also an Advanced NASRO course that would be highly beneficial to an agency's SRO program.

According to a National Survey on Drug Use and Health (The Cochrane Collaborative Nov 2011), mentoring programs are shown to be an effective way to improve behavioral, social, emotional, and academic outcomes in adolescents. To build a strong **informal counselor/mentor**, a suggestion is *Adolescent Mental Health for the School Resource Officer*, a class offered through NASRO. This will help the officer learn about adolescent brain development, as well as understanding mental and behavioral health in youth. Training should also be provided focusing on emotional resiliency and general practices for strong mental health. Empowering youth, supporting social and emotional development, while advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion are important components of effective training as well.

To maintain their skills as a **law enforcement officer**, the officer should remain active in continuing education. Suggested areas of interest may be staying proficient in constitutional, state, and local law. Interview and interrogation techniques, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), armed/single officer response, and advocacy within the juvenile system.

Training suggested for building a strong **public safety educator** would include the ability to present to students on at least: crime prevention, social media awareness and online safety, school safety, decision making, and laws pertaining to youth. The officer should be able to create their own lesson plans in these topics and deliver presentations.

SRO Evaluation Procedure

The SRO's direct agency supervisor should handle the evaluation of the officer. The school administrator who oversees the SRO program should also be given the opportunity to offer feedback of the officer's performance, which could include feedback from students. This will help foster a strong relationship between the agency/officer and the school.

If an officer is receiving favorable evaluations from the agency and the school, the officer should be allowed to continue in their role without a defined rotation date. Strong SRO's can be hard to find and train, and for that reason, arbitrary term limits are not advisable.