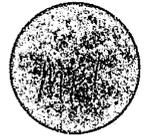


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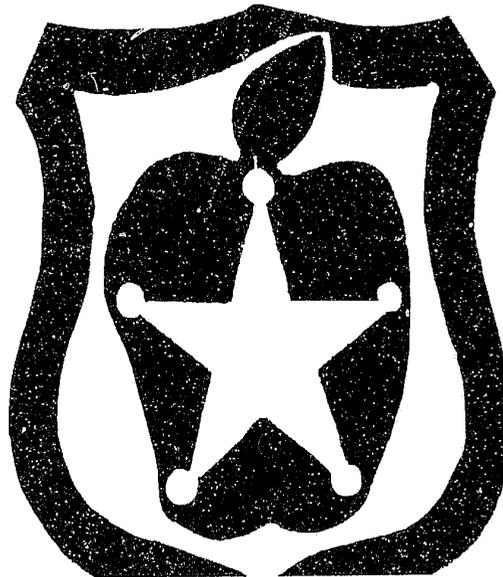
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# SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER



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**SCHOOL VIOLENCE.  
LET'S GET IT OUT OF OUR SYSTEM.**

North Carolina Center for the Prevention of School Violence  
3824 Barrett Drive, Suite 303 Raleigh, NC 27609  
1-800-299-6054 • (919) 571-4954 • FAX 919-571-4957

## THE PROBLEM

As society's problems have grown and become more complicated, so have the problems in our schools. Juveniles, 12-15 years of age, are **six and one half** times more likely to be victims of violent crime at school than they are in a parking lot. The number jumps to twelve and one half times more likely for them to become victims while in school as opposed to being victimized in a business establishment. Our communities and the activities which occur in those communities, both legal and not, reflect what occurs in our schools, and our schools reflect the community. To illustrate this problem the 1994 North Carolina Annual Report On School Violence (N.C. Department of Public Instruction) states:

- 6,897 students were involved in incidents on school property as offenders and 1,447 students were victimized;
- 815 staff members were reported as victims; and
- 2,081 individuals (students, staff and outsiders) were arrested in connection with the occurrence of a specific unlawful act(s) on school property.

Schools have become microsocieties of the surrounding communities and, as such, they have all the problems and needs of those communities. This includes the need for effective law enforcement. Thus, we find the need for the **School Resource Officer (SRO)**.

## THE HISTORY

The first SRO program was started in Flint, Michigan, in the late 1950s. Its goal was to improve relations between law enforcement officers and juveniles. Officers were assigned to the schools full-time where they served as teachers and law-related counselors. The program became the model for other municipalities across the country, and it has shown positive results through the years.

In 1963, Tucson, Arizona, began its program in the middle schools and later expanded it to the high schools. In 1968, Los Angeles established its program and found great success as did Tulare, California. Although little improvement was found in student attitudes toward the officers, there was major success in decreasing the rate of juvenile crime in the schools where the officers were visible. The arrest rates decreased by 52% in two years at the Tulare schools. Because of these results, the program was continued.

During the 1969-1970 school year, the Miami Police Department started the first program in Florida. Evaluations showed the program to be effective. Three years later the Orlando Police Department started a pilot program. That program proved to be

effective in reducing crime and improving attitudes toward law enforcement. It was this program that served, for the most part, as the model for the North Carolina SRO experience.

## **THE NORTH CAROLINA SRO HISTORY**

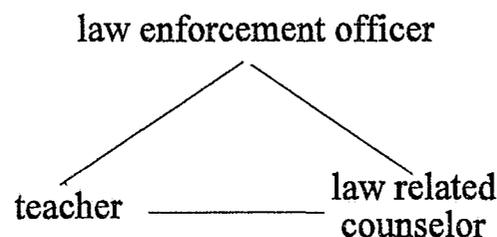
The Charlotte Police Department created a program in 1971 to ease racial tensions and to correct a negative police image. There was no enforcement action taken by the police in the schools. The emphasis was solely on community involvement. A second SRO program was created in 1980 and would become a specialized unit with the emphasis on safety and positive police programs. Unfortunately, each officer was required to cover 10-11 schools. It was not until 1993 that a sufficient number of officers were assigned to the unit to allow each officer to be responsible for one high school.

Forsyth County (Winston-Salem) has the longest continuing SRO program in North Carolina. Since 1974, SROs have been in all the high schools. In 1992, SROs were placed in the middle schools. This program has proven extremely successful in reducing incidents of violence and educating students to realize there are alternatives to resolving conflicts other than through violent means.

Other successful SRO programs have been established in Cumberland, Guilford, Iredell, Montgomery, Pitt, Robeson, Rowan, Tyrell and Wilson counties just to name a few. At this time there are over 170 SROs in North Carolina trained under what has become known as the "Florida Model."

## **THE PROGRAM**

The School Resource Officer program places a law enforcement official in a school full time to provide a variety of support programs and services to the students and staff. The underlying role of the SRO is based on what is known as the "Triad Concept." This approach incorporates the SRO serving as a law enforcement officer, a teacher and a law-related counselor.



The role of SROs vary somewhat from school to school. Their duties, based on the above triad, include such activities as instructing classes on law-related education, drug and alcohol prevention, and life skills programs. This is in addition to their law enforcement role.

As a law enforcement officer, the SRO is directly involved in pre-delinquency identification and developing a positive supportive relationship with the students. This allows students in the school to view the SRO in a more positive light. This is similar to the concept of the beat officer, popularly known today as "Community Policing." This allows the officer to work with the same group of people all the time. The SRO gets to know the individual student in his/her assigned school as well as his/her particular needs and problems. On the other side, the students get to know the SRO as something more than a person in a uniform "that is there to arrest someone who may have committed a crime."

As a teacher, the SRO will find there are many classes in which law-related education is appropriate and incorporates well with the subject(s) being presented by the classroom teacher. An SRO is trained in the law and has an unique perspective when applying that training in a classroom setting. Often this perspective and information source is one that young people do not have but most definitely need. The SRO is an excellent resource who can help dispel myths which young people often have concerning the practical application of the law.

As a law-related counselor, the SRO serves as a resource to the students. Students may find the SRO is the first person with whom they are comfortable in approaching with a personal, scholastic, family or law-related problem. The SROs are trained in detecting signs of extreme stress that might lead to more severe problems. The SRO has a broad referral list of professionals who can give the attention needed depending upon the circumstances of the case. The SRO is often the first line of contact for students with a wide range of problems, and they are skilled to know what resource to refer them to.

## RESOURCES

There are several sources of training that law enforcement officers will find available in North Carolina. The North Carolina Justice Academy offers the basic *School Resource Officer Training Course* several times during the year at their campus in Salemburg, N.C. The goals of the course are to provide the participant:

- with the history, philosophy and basic skills necessary to serve as a School Resource Officer;
- with instruction in juvenile law, counseling skills, the development of a referral network and the ability to identify and deal with exceptional children; and
- with the knowledge of current education issues, practices and adolescent stress.

Additional information on this program may be obtained by contacting:

Hank Snyder  
Course Coordinator  
North Carolina Justice Academy  
P. O. Box 99  
Salemberg, North Carolina 28385  
(910) 525-4151

The Cumberland County Sheriff's Department, in collaboration with the North Carolina Center for the Prevention of School Violence, has established an in-service training program for School Resource Officers. The week-long program teams an experienced SRO with an inexperienced (intern) officer from an outside department. The participant will observe the officer and be introduced to all facets involved in the daily operation of a successful SRO program. The program is designed to lend **practical** application to the Basic SRO program offered in Salemberg and is available to officers who have recently attended or those who intend to complete the Basic SRO program within the current school year.

Additional information on this program may be obtained by contacting:

Douglas M. Robinson, II  
Technical Assistance Specialist  
North Carolina Center for the Prevention  
of School Violence  
3824 Barrett Drive, Suite 303  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27609  
(800) 299-6054

The North Carolina Association of School Resource Officers was formally established in July 1994. The Association's purpose is to provide a network among North Carolina's SROs to "disseminate, share, advise and coordinate information on the value of qualified law enforcement officers to teach students on the principle of good citizenship and community responsibility as well as working to reduce school violence and enhancing acceptable social behavior. Additional information on the Association may be obtained by contacting:

SGT. Kenneth Williams, President  
North Carolina Association of  
School Resource Officers  
131 Dick Street  
Fayetteville, North Carolina 28301  
(910) 323-1500

If you would like information on starting a School Resource Officer Program in your school, please contact your local Sheriff or Police Chief.

## A SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM:

### WHAT IT IS, WHAT IT COSTS, WHAT IT PROVIDES, AND WHO BENEFITS AND HOW

**WHAT IT IS:** A School Resource Officer (SRO) Program places officers in schools in an effort to create and maintain a safe learning environment for our youth. In its most successful format, it is at its foundation **community-based**. It reflects a **comprehensive community focus** which integrates the officers, the SROs, stationed in the schools with the existing network of resources in the community. The SROs are more than police officers in schools. The schools are their communities, and the officers in an SRO program fulfill three roles as they act as a resource for their communities--the schools:

- they first and foremost are **law enforcement officers** whose primary purpose is to "keep the peace" in their communities so that students can learn;
- secondly they are **counselors** who provide guidance to students and act as a link to support services both inside and outside the school environment;
- and thirdly they are **teachers** who provide the schools with an additional resource by sharing their expertise in the classroom.

Beyond these identified roles and, perhaps most importantly, SROs are **positive role models** for many youth who are not exposed to such role models in today's society.

**WHAT IT COSTS:** Although costs will vary from community to community for such a program, **general costs** associated with an SRO program include:

- **personnel costs**
- **training and its associated travel costs**
- **supply and equipment costs**
- **administrative costs.**

Because many of these costs already exist for the community regardless of whether an SRO program exists, the additional costs of such a program may be much less than those categories suggest and essentially involve **opportunity costs** or a **redirection of resources** with the placement of already existing and trained officers into the schools rather than the expenditure of additional monies.

**WHAT IT PROVIDES:** The bottom line associated with an SRO program is **threefold**:

- it is a mechanism through which **safe learning environments** can be created and maintained;
- it provides the **community with an efficient, effective program**;
- and it **saves money** because the approach associated with it is one of prevention.

**WHO BENEFITS AND HOW:** Everyone! Specifically:

- **students** benefit because their schools are **safer**, they have **another resource** available to them, and they are exposed to **positive role models**;
- **parents** benefit because their children are in **safe learning environments** and they have an **additional resource**;
- **teachers and school administrators** benefit because they are working in **safer environments** and they have **another resource** available to them;
- **law enforcement** officials benefit because they are better able to **serve and protect** their **communities** in an **efficient, effective, and community-based** way;
- the **court system** benefits because much of the **time and money savings** associated with SROs are incurred by the court system;
- **taxpayers** benefit because their tax dollars are being used in an **efficient, effective** way which has **cost savings** associated with it;
- the **community** benefits because the **community foundation** of the program brings the community together and allows it address its own needs in a **comprehensive, successful** way.