



## JUSTICE CENTER THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

### **School Discipline Consensus Project Survey of Major Cities Chiefs Association Members**

There has been a long tradition of placing police officers in schools as mentors, educators, crime prevention agents, and critical incident planners, among other roles. Yet in recent years, the debate has intensified about officers' proper functions in schools, the scope of their enforcement responsibilities in a school setting, and their effectiveness in increasing school safety. The questions related to whether officers' presence in school unnecessarily increases referrals to the juvenile justice system has been at the center of this debate. The tragedy at Newtown has strengthened efforts to address these issues as major cities and small towns alike consider placing more police in public schools. There is a surprising lack of research and consensus, however, on how officers can effectively serve schools in ways that balance safety and crime prevention needs with maintaining a welcoming learning environment in which students can feel positively connected to school.

To help address these issues, Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCC) Executive Director Darrel Stephens has been leading a multidisciplinary police advisory group for the national School Discipline Consensus Project. The Consensus Project is administered by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center in coordination with the Supportive School Discipline Initiative launched by the U.S. Attorney General and the U.S. Secretary of Education in July 2011. It is supported by a public-private partnership that includes the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the NoVo Foundation, The California Endowment, and The Atlantic Philanthropies. The project will culminate in a comprehensive report that will provide policy and practice recommendations and implementation guidance on such issues as the role of police officers in schools, improving students' academic and personal outcomes, reducing students' involvement in the juvenile justice system due to minor offenses, and promoting safe and productive learning environments.<sup>1</sup>

To help understand school-based officers' responsibilities, practices, concerns, and barriers to successful program implementation, all MCC members were emailed a link to an online survey in August 2013. The 39 responses to the survey have provided useful background for the final project

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the School Discipline Consensus Project, visit <http://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/projects/school-discipline-consensus-project/>.

report and have helped identify promising practices and remaining challenges.<sup>2</sup> The results provide insights into how MCC members perceive the role of school resource officers (SROs), selection, training, supervision, and other issues related to police in schools.

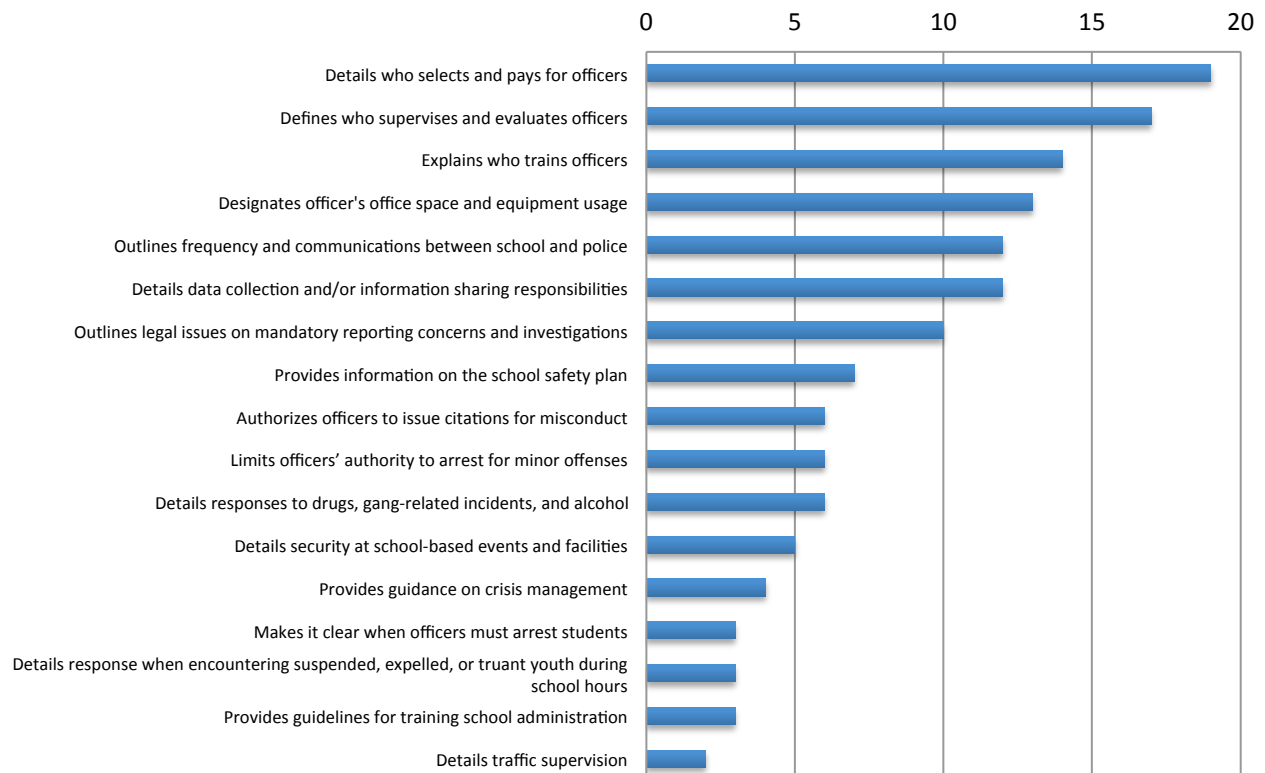
Highlights from the survey findings include the following:

- There were 39 respondents representing 19 states and Canada.
- More than 80 percent of respondents reported that their agency currently assigns officers to be based in schools. Nearly 40 percent of respondents have a school district police agency in their jurisdiction.
- Of the 12 respondents that indicated they had an MOU between their agency and a school district police agency, the most common subjects covered in the MOU included who has jurisdiction for investigating crimes committed on school campuses and information-sharing provisions. The types of information shared between municipal law enforcement agencies and school district police agencies included serious crimes and intelligence regarding schoolwide or student safety threats. Many respondents reported that the MOU also included provisions for critical incident management jurisdiction and authorized the placement of officers from both the municipal and school district agency in schools. One MOU also included access to the police agency's Juvenile Division and report-writing program.
- A question about the challenges that municipal police agencies face when working with school district agencies received 13 respondents, with 3 reporting no challenges. The remaining 10 respondents reported that information sharing was the greatest challenge, but also flagged issues such as inconsistent standards for making arrests and training officers assigned to schools. Other challenges reported include concerns about overlapping jurisdictions, ticketing or arrests for minor student misconduct, and issues regarding agency investigations.
- Benefits of having a school district police agency were described by 13 respondents as including a reduced need for patrol response calls and a constant police presence in schools. Some respondents reported that they benefitted from specialized on-campus investigations, coordinated responses with school administrators, and assisted responses from officers who report to the school district police agency. According to one respondent, "The benefit of having a School District Police Department is the ability to address the concerns of the educational environment and the needs of the students on a full-time basis."
- More than 70 percent of all respondents reported having an MOU between their police agency and the school district in their jurisdiction.

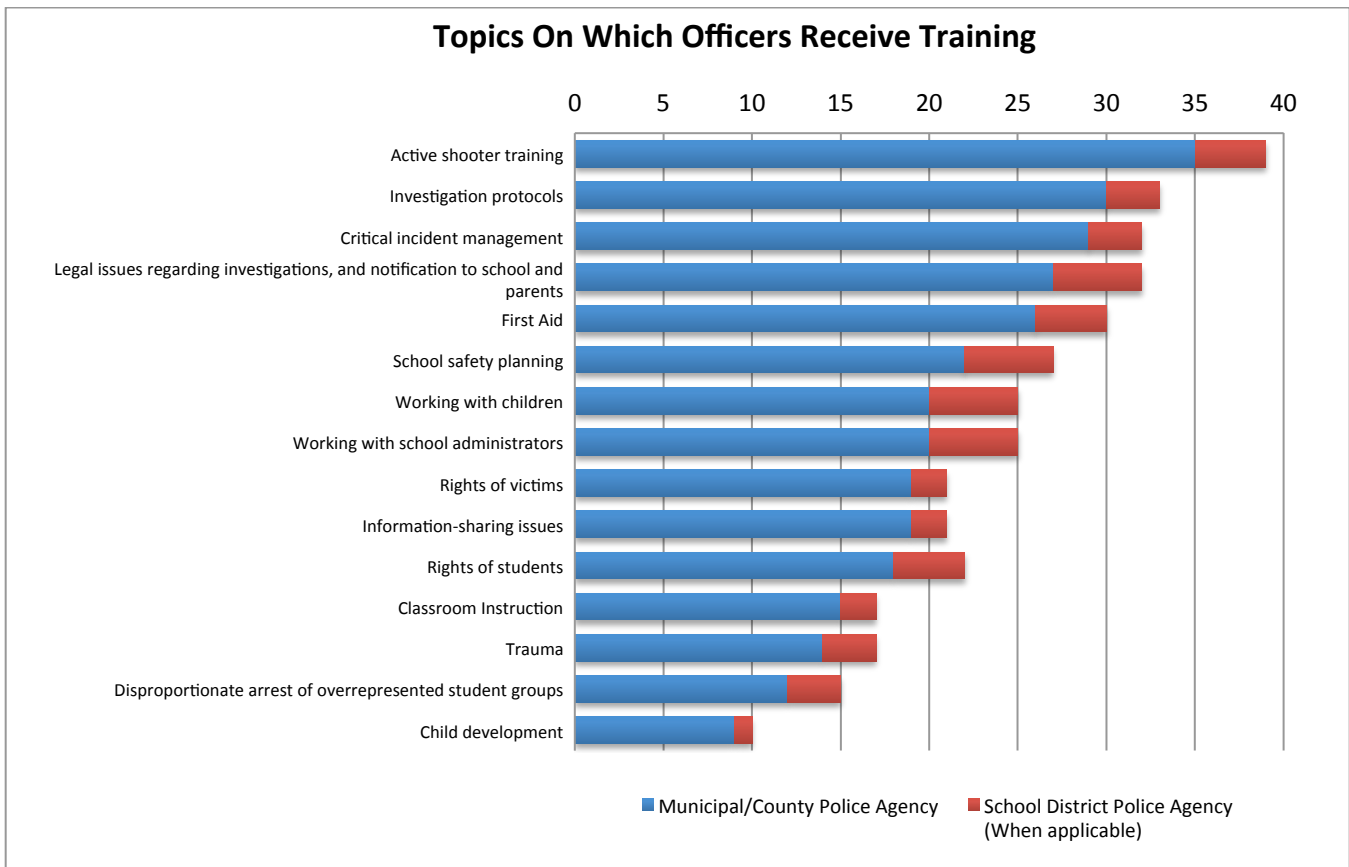
---

<sup>2</sup> Because the survey yielded multiple responses from several of the same cities, 37 agencies were represented. The MCCA members are chiefs and sheriffs of the 66 largest law enforcement agencies in the United States, the 9 largest in Canada and 1 in the UK. They collectively serve 82.5 million people. See <https://www.majorcitieschiefs.com/>.

## Most Common Elements Reported in the Memorandum of Agreement



- Of 35 respondents, 31 reported having school-based officers that receive training beyond what is required by Peace Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) or a general school orientation. Of those aware of the length of training, most indicated basic training was between 31 and 40 hours. Training was longer than 40 hours as reported by 6 respondents and as less than 20 hours by 6 respondents. Comments suggest that training can vary by police agency and may include mandated training under safe school grants, Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT), crisis intervention training, and even include additional bike training.



- Of 33 respondents, more than half reported that advanced school officer training is more than 10 hours and offered on an annual basis. Twelve reported less than 10 hours of training (provided mostly periodically) and seven reported no advanced training. Comments suggest that training varies by police agency and may include additional training such as Strategies for Youth training or firearms training.
- Almost 60 percent of respondents reported that training was provided in-house. A breakdown of external training providers in descending order are:
  - National Association of School Resource Officers
  - A private contractor
  - A state SRO organization
  - A state public safety department or agency
  - A local or regional police academy
  - Regional community policing institute or other police agency
- About 88 percent of responding members (29 of 33 respondents) indicated that their agencies use school-based arrests, calls for service, and other data to engage in problem solving with school officials.

Comments revealed that much of the information shared relates to school safety committee work and other potential threats to the school community. Additional feedback demonstrated that information is also being shared with school administrators to solve problems and to reduce students’ contact with the juvenile justice system. For example,

“Due to the school to prison pipeline, we stay away from the disciplinary process. We do engage in problem-solving techniques.”

“We have within the last year begun to look at our contributions to arrests, the schools’ [contributions], and disparities and are having these conversations, which led to our diversion program.”

- The majority of respondents reported having information-sharing policies with school officials. Comments indicate information-sharing provisions in the MOU include student information, truancy data, arrest data, and other disciplinary information.

Suggested citation: Council of State Governments Justice Center, “Survey of Major Cities Chiefs Association Members” (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, September 2013).

Thanks are extended to all those MCC members and their staff who took time from their busy schedules to complete the survey.

To receive updates on the Justice Center’s school discipline work, register at <http://csgjusticecenter.org/subscribe/> and indicate your interest in “youth” issues.