



School Discipline Consensus Project

Survey of National Association of School Resource Officers Members

The debate on school safety that has been playing out in newspapers, legislatures, and school districts across the nation has been keenly focused on the role of police and security personnel in schools. Although the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut amplified the voices in the debate and sparked some immediate policy and funding responses, many of the complex issues that relate to the broader role of officers in schools remain unresolved or lack informed, cross-systems responses that meet education and public safety goals.

To help address these issues, National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) Executive Director Mo Canady has been serving as an advisory group member 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 better managing student behaviors, improving students' academic outcomes, reducing their involvement in the juvenile justice system due to minor offenses, and promoting safe and productive learning environments.¹

To help understand school-based officers' concerns, barriers to success, policies, and practices, a link to an online survey was emailed to the more than 3,000 NASRO members in June 2013. The more than 440 responses to the NASRO-CSG Justice Center survey have provided useful background for the final project report and have helped identify additional questions and issues for the larger group of advisors to explore further. The results provide insights into how NASRO members perceive SRO roles, selection, training, supervision, and other issues related to police in schools.

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

Highlights from the survey findings include the following:

- Surveys were sent to all NASRO members. There were 444 respondents representing 49 states.² Although most respondents were SROs from municipal police agencies, there were also school district agency officers, trainers and supervisors of SROs, chiefs and command staff overseeing SROs, and a small number of school administrators and others engaged with policing functions in schools.
- Most respondents indicated that the placement of officers in schools was either the result of a collaboration between the individual school, school district, and local police agency or that all public middle or high schools in their districts have a school-based officer. More than half of the respondents reported having a formal process for determining the placement of officers in schools. Respondents reported that the indicators most often used to determine if an officer is needed in a particular school include the following:
 - Proactive community-based policing strategy desired
 - Reports of crime in the school
 - Parents or students request an officer
 - Perceived drug or crime problems in or around school
 - Teachers or administrators request an officer
 - High-profile incident
 - Funding becomes available

Other factors include the decision to place officers in all schools or all secondary schools in a district, repeat calls to 911, size and attendance rates of the student population, and the presence of a DARE officer.

- About 70 percent of respondents had an MOU. The most common subjects covered in the MOU included communications between school and police agency; who selects and pays officers; who supervises and evaluates officers; and legal issues such as mandatory reporting and questioning, searching, or arresting a student. About one-third of the respondents did not know what their MOU covers. A broad range of additional issues were covered in the MOUs, including training and cross-training; ticketing, arrest, and limits on arresting for minor offenses; security at events; in-classroom instruction/crime prevention; crisis management; and others.
- The majority of school-based officers receive training beyond what is required by POST or a general school orientation. Most indicated basic training was between 31 and 40 hours. Some of the most common topics include: active shooter training and critical incident management, school safety planning, classroom instruction, working with children and child development, trauma, rights of students and victims, working with school administrators, investigation protocols, and information sharing and legal issues. Some respondents also trained on issues related to the disproportionate impact on particular populations, crisis intervention, bullying, suicide intervention, and others.
 - The majority of responding members had received NASRO training followed by local/regional academy and in-house training.

² Note that not every respondent answered every question. There were 49 states represented by the respondents and one respondent from the Virgin Islands. Hawaii and DC were not represented.

- The greatest barriers to training were funding and time to train officers, as well as training availability/location, timing of start date with training availability, and cooperation/understanding from administrators or staff.
- Some respondents also indicated ongoing advanced training, including training offered by NASRO.
- The majority of responding members indicated that the activities school-based officers should NOT conduct are enforcing the school code of conduct and ticketing students.
- Although some responding members indicated that they do not have effective alternatives to out-of-school suspension, expulsion, or arrest, other respondents reported the existence of student support teams, restorative justice programs in and out of the school, diversion/treatment/education programs, in-school counseling/administrator referrals, and court programs.
- The top three challenges for school-based officers were reported as school personnel misunderstanding officers' roles as disciplinarians, and others' misunderstanding their role; students' previous negative encounters with police; and answering to multiple supervisors. Also challenging was feeling disconnected from their local agency and misunderstanding by other officers of what they do.

Suggested citation: Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Survey of National Association of School Resource Officers Members" (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, July 2013).

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

To receive updates on the school discipline project, register at <http://csgjusticecenter.org/subscribe/> and indicate your interest in "youth" issues.