BEST PRACTICES FOR POLICING IN K12 SCHOOLS
SLEP MEETING – JULY 19, 2022

Prepared for Alexandria City Public Schools

THE HANOVER TEAM

Marriam Ewaida, Ph.D.
Managing Director of K12 Professional Services

Dr. Marriam Ewaida has over 15 years of practical and research experience in the K-12 sector. She has extensive training and experience working with culturally and linguistically diverse students, providing staff professional development, developing and aligning curriculum, and managing staff. Dr. Ewaida currently works to design and manage research initiatives for K-12 school districts around the country. Her research interests include critical literacy, equity and social justice-oriented action projects, diverse youth, literacy resilience, program evaluation, action planning, and teacher professional development. Dr. Ewaida currently serves as an adjunct faculty at George Mason University and continues to teach, publish and present on topics related to culturally sustaining pedagogy, teacher professional development, and curriculum implementation. At Hanover, she has been intricately involved in supporting program evaluation, strategic planning, and equity initiatives for members across the country by facilitating workshops and developing and managing a research agenda that leverages a mixed methodological approach to supporting those initiatives.

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Kenya Shujaa, M.A.
Research Consultant, K12 Professional Services

Kenya Shujaa is a trained anthropologist and social services provider who has over 14 years of practical experience in the K-12 sector. She has extensively worked with diverse student and parent populations, including serving on school Curriculum and Climate committees in the Philadelphia School District, developing and implementing a school-based case management model for at-risk students and families, advocating for students in the juvenile court system, leading parent and community outreach, creating and overseeing service learning and social and emotional learning initiatives, as well as developing academic curriculum. She has also served as an adjunct faculty at Widener University and Community College of Philadelphia.

Kenya currently oversees and develops Qualitative Research at Hanover's K-12 Division. Recent research topics include school safety and security, diversity, equity, and inclusion, social and emotional learning, and equity in special education.

SCOPE OF WORK

PURPOSE:

- To understand the role of SROs in schools and the impacts of policing more broadly on school environment (i.e., culture and climate) and student outcomes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1) What are common structures of school resource officer (SRO) programs?
2) What are the roles and responsibilities of school resource officers in K12 schools?
3) What are the implications of having SROs in schools across districts? Specifically, what are the effects of SROs on the school environment and student outcomes?

KEY RESEARCH CONSULTED

- Peer reviewed studies (<10 years)

- National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO)

- Brookings Institution

- American Enterprise Institute

- US DOJ Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)

- Annenberg Institute at Brown University

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KEY FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH

KEY FINDING #1

School districts and law enforcement agencies use memoranda of understanding (MOUs) to structure SRO programs. MOUs spell out expectations for all participants in an SRO program, including schools, law enforcement agencies, and individual SROs, and establish clear boundaries for the role of SROs to prevent SROs from assuming inappropriate responsibilities such as supporting student discipline. Districts and law enforcement agencies should carefully examine relevant laws and regulations when drafting MOUs to ensure compliance with legal requirements.

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE MOU'S

Should be developed in collaboration with key stakeholder groups and reviewed annually

- Documents the SRO duties and program mission

- Identifies partner roles and responsibilities

- Prohibits SROs from engaging in school disciplinary incidents, enforcing school codes of conduct, or addressing typical student behavior that can be safely and appropriately handled by school officials

- Defines reporting and data collection requirements

- Requires annual assessment of SROs

- Provides for effective training on various school-related topics

- Outlines supervision of the SRO(s) named in the MOU

KEY STUDIES, RESOURCES, AND DATA TO CONSIDER

- **Lesley (2021)** – An analysis of MOUs for SROs at seven districts in South Carolina finds that each district's MOU authorizes SROs to intervene in student disciplinary cases where state law prohibits SRO involvement.

- **US Department of Education** – Online rubric that provides checklists for districts to use as they develop or revise existing MOU's:
  - sro-local-implementation-rubric.pdf (ed.gov)

- **US Department of Justice COPS Office** – Annual evaluations should consider the following data:
  - Law enforcement referrals and court involvement for students, disaggregated by race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, and disability
  - All incidents involving SROs
  - Feedback from SROs, administrators, teachers, students, families, and community members

KEY FINDING #2

In effective SRO programs, SROs fulfill educational and counseling functions in addition to providing law enforcement services. The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) recommends adopting a **Triad Model** in which SROs serve as law enforcers, teachers, and informal counselors, while the U.S. Department of Justice's recommended roles for school counselors supplement the Triad Model with a role in emergency planning.

Law Enforcer

Educator

Informal Counselor

KEY FINDING #3

SROs should not support day-to-day discipline for non-criminal behavior. The U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) recommends that policies governing SRO programs specify that SROs do not respond to any event which would not require a 911 call in the absence of an SRO. School policies and training for SROs should emphasize that SROs are not to support student discipline or refer students to the justice system for behavior that could be addressed more effectively through school disciplinary processes.

KEY STUDIES, RESOURCES, AND/OR DATA TO CONSIDER

Study	Summary
Lawson (2021)	Study of school resource officers in Virginia finds that job duties for resource officers outlined in MOUs largely align with the TRIAD model: • 64.1% of survey respondents whose role includes supervising school resource officers believe that resource officers receive request to support non-criminal disciplinary issues once a week or more.
Curran (2019)	Study drawing on focus groups with SROs, school staff, and families at two anonymous school districts: • SROs overwhelmingly report that they do not participate in student discipline. • SROs did report substantial involvement in activities related to discipline, such as warning students of potential consequences for misbehavior, delivering verbal reprimands, reporting student misbehavior to school administrators, or being physically present when administrators delivered disciplinary sanctions.

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KEY FINDING #4

Some studies suggest SROs appear to reduce some forms of violence in schools, and that they impact stakeholders' perceptions of school climate and safety.

KEY STUDIES, RESOURCES, AND/OR DATA TO CONSIDER

Study	Summary
Sorenson (2021)	Uses data from the introduction of SROs to middle schools in North Carolina between 2005 and 2009 to examine the effects of SROs on a variety of student outcomes, including the number of violent incidents reported by schools to the state education agency. • Presence of an SRO decreases the number of reportable violent incidents by 38 percent.
Stephens (2021)	A survey of students, parents, staff members, and community members at Wake County Public School System in North Carolina: • Respondents agree that SROs increase their sense of safety at school
Curran (2021)	Study drawing on surveys and focus groups with students in 25 schools across two anonymous districts: • 76% of survey respondents indicate that the presence of an SRO increases their sense of safety in school.

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KEY STUDIES, RESOURCES, AND/OR DATA TO CONSIDER

Study	Summary
Thierot (2016)	Study using a survey of 1,956 middle and high school students in an anonymous school district to examine the effect of interactions with SROs on students' self-reported sense of safety at school. • No significant relationship between students' sense of safety and the number of interactions they reported with SROs. • African American students were significantly more likely to report feeling unsafe at school than students from other racial backgrounds.
U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection	Schools that receive federal grant funding to support SROs report higher rates of gun incidents than other schools, but lower incidents of other forms of violence such as fighting and threats.

KEY FINDING #5

Empirical studies of SROs suggest that law enforcement referral rates increase in schools where SROs are present; however, SROs themselves do not account for the majority of law enforcement referrals for minor or status offenses. Research presents mixed findings on the relationship between exclusionary discipline and the presence of SROs.

KEY STUDIES, RESOURCES, AND/OR DATA TO CONSIDER

Study	Summary
Sorenson (2021)	The presence of SROs increases rates of exclusionary discipline, with large increases in rates of in-school and out-of-school suspensions and smaller but still significant increases in expulsion rates and referrals for arrest. • The presence of SROs increases rates of chronic absenteeism
Sorenson, Shen, and Bushway (2021)	The presence of an SRO increases the number of long-term student suspensions and expulsions by 68 percent. • SRO in a middle school increases the number of juvenile court referrals for misdemeanor complaints by 14 percent but decreases the number of referrals for felony complaints by 25 percent.
Jaydani (2019)	Review of the empirical literature on policing in schools concludes that findings on the effects of police officers in schools on exclusionary discipline range from no significant effect to a significant increase in exclusionary discipline associated with police in schools, with no studies finding that police presence reduces the rate of exclusionary discipline.

KEY FINDING #6

Several studies find that disproportionalities in law enforcement referrals and school disciplinary sanctions for historically marginalized students increase in schools with SROs.

KEY STUDIES, RESOURCES, AND/OR DATA TO CONSIDER

Study	Summary
Crosse (2022)	Study using data from a federal grant program that increased SRO staffing in California finds that disciplinary referrals for Black and Hispanic students increased in schools that increased SRO work hours with grant funding.
Sorenson (2021)	Study finds that the effect size of SROs on in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion rates for Black students is roughly twice the effect size for White students. • Significant increase in grade retention rates for Black students in schools with SROs.
Sorenson et. al (2021)	Study finds that the presence of SROs increases disproportionalities in disciplinary outcomes for male students and students with disabilities.
Redfield & Nance (2016)	Review of research on the school-to-prison pipeline by the American Bar Association: • African American and American Indian-Alaska Native students are disproportionately subject to arrest or law-enforcement referrals in schools,.

ARE THERE ANY FINAL QUESTIONS OR THOUGHTS?

Thank you.

CONTACT

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