

Purpose, Mission, and Role

A School Resource Officer (SRO) is a commissioned law enforcement officer in the state of Washington with sworn authority to make arrests, deployed in community-oriented policing, and assigned by the employing police department or sheriff's office to work in schools to address crime and disorder problems, gangs, and drug activities affecting or occurring in or around K-12 schools.

The mission of the North Thurston Public Schools SRO program is to improve school safety and the educational climate at the school. The role of the SRO on campus typically involves three parts: educator, informal counselor, and law enforcer. The focus of any SRO working in the district is to keep students out of the criminal justice system when possible. The SRO shall be integrated into the school community through participation in faculty and student meetings and assemblies as appropriate. SROs shall support a positive school climate by developing positive relationships with students, parents, and staff, and by helping to promote a safe, inclusive, and positive learning environment. The SRO is a valuable team member of School Based Threat Assessment Teams, which are preventative in purpose.

The primary responsibility for maintaining proper order and conduct in the schools resides with school principals or their designee, with the support of other school staff. This may include minor violations of the law occurring during school hours or at school activities. The SRO program does not diminish the district's authority and shall not be used to attempt to impose criminal sanctions in matters that are more appropriately handled within the district. Principals or their designee maintain order and handle all student discipline matters consistent with policy and procedures regarding student discipline. SROs appropriately interact with students informally to reinforce school rules.

Teachers and school administrators may ask an SRO to intervene if a student's presence poses an immediate and continuing danger to others or an immediate and continuing threat of material and substantial disruption of the educational process or in other emergency circumstances.

As a general rule, law enforcement activity should take place at a location other than school premises. However, there are circumstances where formal law enforcement intervention/activity at school is warranted and may be conducted by an SRO. These law enforcement activities may include interviews and interrogations; search of a student's person, possessions, or locker; citations, filing of delinquency petitions, referrals to a probation officer, actual arrests, and other referrals to the juvenile justice system.

The SRO duties do not extend to immigration enforcement and the SRO will not inquire into or collect information about an individual’s immigration or citizenship status, or place of birth. Neither will the SRO provide information pursuant to notification requests from federal immigration authorities for the purposes of civil immigration enforcement, except as required by law.

Agreement, Training, and Program Review

The district will adopt an agreement with local law enforcement agencies and annually review the SRO program using a process that involves parents, students and community members. Law enforcement agencies are responsible for training their employees, including SROs, therefore, the law enforcement agencies will confirm in the agreement that SROs have been trained in all the topics required by law. Additionally, the agreement will include a process for families to file complaints related to the district SROs and a process for investigating and responding to complaints. The agreement will incorporate an annual collection and reporting of data regarding calls for law enforcement service and the outcome of each call. In addition, the agreement will also incorporate the SRO’s duties and the limitations thereof consistent with this policy, other related governing policies, and the governing regulations.

- Legal References:
- RCW 10.93.160 – Immigration and Citizenship Status
 - RCW 26.44.030 Interviews of children
 - RCW 26.44.050 - Abuse or neglect of child — Duty of law enforcement agency or department of social and health services — Taking child into custody without court order
 - RCW 26.44.110 Information about rights — Custody without court order — Written statement required — Contents
 - RCW 26.44.115 Child taken into custody under court order — Information to parents
 - RCW 28A.300.640 - 645 – School based threat assessment program
 - Chapter 28A.320.124 – School resource officer programs
 - 20 U.S.C. 1232g Family Education Rights and Privacy Act

Adopted: December 8, 2020 North Thurston Public Schools
Board of Directors