

Frequently Asked Questions - Armed Security Officers

Why is East Lyme B.O.E. considering the armed security officer (ASO) position within our school district?

The East Lyme B.O.E. has engaged in lengthy discussions and research with Superintendent Newton and new Director of Safety and Security, Don Hull. After realizing that our police department will not be able to immediately continue the School Resource Officer program and the desire to enhance our safety and security options, it was recommended by Mr. Hull and Superintendent Newton that we consider the ASO position as many of our surrounding school districts have done. ASO's would be one part of a broader school safety plan that focuses on prevention, preparedness and quick response in the unlikely event of a serious emergency.

What are the guidelines or requirements for an Armed Security Officer?

The hiring of an ASO is governed by state law, C.G.S. 10-244a:

Sec. 10-244a. Employment of persons to provide security services in a public school while in possession of a firearm. (a) For the school year commencing July 1, 2013, and each school year thereafter, no municipality or local or regional board of education may employ or enter into an agreement, as described in subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of section 53a-217b, with any person, other than a sworn member of an organized local police department or a retired police officer as provided in subsection (b) of this section, to provide security services in a public school if such person will possess a firearm, as defined in section 53a-3, while in the performance of his or her duties.

(b) A municipality or a local or regional board of education may employ or enter into an agreement with a retired police officer to provide security services in a public school if such retired police officer is a qualified retired law enforcement officer, as defined in 18 USC 926C, as amended from time to time. Such retired police officer shall receive annual training pursuant to section 7-294x and shall successfully complete annual firearms training provided by a certified firearms instructor that meets or exceeds the standards of the Police Officer Standards and Training Council or 18 USC 926C, as amended from time to time. Such retired police officer shall not be subject to the licensing requirements of part II of chapter 534.

(c) For the purposes of subsection (b) of this section, "retired police officer" means (1) a sworn member of an organized local police department who was certified by the Police Officer Standards and Training Council and retired or separated in good standing from such department or a sworn member of the Division of State Police within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection who retired or separated in good standing from said division, (2) a sworn federal law enforcement agent who retired or separated in good standing from such federal law enforcement service and who meets or exceeds the standards of the Police Officer Standards and Training Council for certification in this state, or (3) a sworn officer of an organized police department in another state who was certified under standards that meet or exceed the standards of the Police Officer Standards and Training Council for certification in this state and who retired or separated in good standing from such department.

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Who will these armed security officers be and what will happen to the security team members who are currently working at the schools now?

Mr. Hull was an armed police officer for over 30 years and in our schools for nine years, he would be one of five security team members that currently work for the school district that would be eligible to become an ASO. The five security team members that currently work for our district each have over 20 years of law enforcement training and experience, all have retired in good standing. Exact details of the implementation and deployment of ASOs are not shared for obvious security concerns.

What is the difference between a School Resource Officer (SRO) and an Armed Security Officer (ASO)?

SROs are active, sworn law enforcement officers currently employed with the local police department and have full powers of arrest and defined roles through an agreement with the local school boards.

ASOs are retired local or federal police officers that are employed by the school district to provide armed security services.

What are the training requirements for ASO's?

All our security team members complete all the state mandated required training as employees of the East Lyme school district. In addition to that they would be required to complete the state mandated training for armed security officers at the Connecticut Police Officers Standards and Training Counsel. The annual firearms training course would be controlled and completed by the East Lyme Police Department.

Would the ASOs always carry a firearm?

Yes. ASO's carry secured, department approved firearms in accordance with state law and district policy. Firearms are to be holstered, concealed, and controlled at all times.

There would still be unarmed security team members working in the district.

How do security team members and possibly ASO's interact with students?

All security team members are a part of the multi-layered school community support system. They are encouraged to build positive, respectful relationships with all members of our school community. Their role includes being visible, approachable, and supportive while maintaining professional attention to all safety and security concerns.

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Would ASO's be the only safety measures in place?

No. East Lyme Public Schools have a multi-layered approach to school safety and security. ASO's would be an enhancement to the many components of our school safety and security plans.

Some, but not all-inclusive list of other safety components include:

- Mental health and counseling support
- Controlled building access
- Emergency drills and training
- Threat assessment teams
- Anonymous reporting systems
- Emergency operation plans
- Collaboration with local law enforcement and emergency services

How does this ASO program support student and staff well-being?

The goal is not only protection but prevention. ASO's and security team members work alongside our district leaders, counselors, administrators and teachers to identify potential concerns early and help ensure the school community feels safe, supported and respected at school.

Is it a requirement that school districts have armed security officers?

No, state law does not mandate armed security officers. However, local and regional boards of education are required to provide a "safe school setting," and many choose to meet this obligation by employing armed security personnel. The decision is made at the local level.

Has data and information from the region been considered?

Yes, the East Lyme Board of Education has examined what other schools in our region have in place as well as across the state.