The IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center creates four types of documents: Model Policies, Considerations documents, Concepts & Issues Papers, and Need to Know one-page summaries. Typically, for each topic, either a Model Policy or a Considerations document is created, supplemented with a Concepts & Issues Paper. This file contains the following documents:

- **Considerations**: Offered as an alternative to the bright-line directives found in a Model Policy. Instead of providing exact policy language, the Considerations document outlines items that agencies should address and provides options that agencies should examine when developing their own policies on the topic.

- **Concepts & Issues Paper**: Designed to provide context and background information to support the Considerations document for a deeper understanding of the topic.
School-Police Partnerships

I. PURPOSE

This document is intended to provide agencies with items for consideration when developing policies, procedures, and interagency agreements pertaining to law enforcement engagement with students and school staff. Considerations should include utilizing school resource officers (SROs), providing a safe environment, developing relationships, conducting investigations, taking enforcement actions, counseling, and other school interactions.

II. POLICY

Agencies should develop a policy statement to briefly and concisely explain to agency personnel, the school district, and the public the law enforcement agency’s policy on school-police partnerships, to include the use of SROs and law enforcement response, protocols, and interactions when providing services at schools and during school events.

Agencies, in collaboration with schools or school districts, should also consider developing an interagency agreement that defines the roles and responsibilities for school safety teams that includes early intervention, behavioral threat assessments, information sharing, and the establishment of resources to assist parents and students.1

Sample: It is the policy of this agency to facilitate positive relationships with school officials, students, and parents. As such, school resource officers (SROs) shall participate in safety planning, respond to the needs of students, and conduct investigations and other related law enforcement activities on school property in conformance with accepted legal practices and in recognition of the authority and responsibility of school officials to manage the school environment. It is not the policy of this agency to enforce administrative rules on behalf of school officials.

III. DEFINITIONS

Behavioral Threat Assessment: Proactive targeted violence prevention effort, to include identifying students of concern; assessing their risk for engaging in or being subjected to violence or other harmful activities; and identifying intervention strategies to manage that risk.2

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1 For school-based law enforcement agencies, in lieu of an interagency agreement or memorandum of understanding, policies and procedures should be developed that include the items discussed herein.
School Resource Officer (SRO): A career law enforcement officer with sworn authority who is deployed by an employing law enforcement agency or school district in a community-oriented policing assignment to work in collaboration with one or more schools and function as a school-based law enforcement officer.

School Safety Team: A multidisciplinary team intended to conduct an audit to review safety conditions, which may include behavioral threats and institutional security. This team may also be referred to as a school safety audit committee and may include officials from the following groups:

- Law enforcement
- Fire departments
- School administration
- Local community services

Tactical and Emergency Response Plans: Safety and tactical evacuation plans designed to prepare law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and school staff for violent and hazardous events at or near a school. These plans may be used for active shooter, aggressive behaviors, bomb threats, hazardous threats, and fires.

National Incident Management System (NIMS): NIMS guides all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to work together to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from incidents. NIMS provides stakeholders across the whole community with the shared vocabulary, systems, and processes to successfully deliver the capabilities described in the National Preparedness System. NIMS defines operational systems, including the Incident Command System (ICS), Emergency Operations Center (EOC) structures, and Multiagency Coordination Groups (MAC Groups) that guide how personnel work together during incidents. NIMS applies to all incidents.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Principles: CPTED involves collaboration with law enforcement officers, architects, city planners, landscape and interior designers, and resident volunteers to create a safer physical environment in which a community can operate. The goal of CPTED is to reduce crime by designing an environment that promotes positive human behavior. The National Crime Prevention Council implements CPTED principles through training tailored to a specific community’s needs.

School to Prison Pipeline: The school to prison pipeline is the name given to a national trend where juveniles are unnecessarily funneled out of school systems and into the criminal justice systems. Often attributed to the integration of sworn law enforcement officers in schools, this pipeline focuses solely on punishment, discipline, and criminalization of student behavior rather than providing the appropriate educational and counseling services that some vulnerable populations of children may need.

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2 See the IACP Policy Center Model Policy, Concepts & Issues Paper, and Need to Know document on Active Shooters at https://www.theiacp.org/resources/policy-center-resource/active-shooter.


IV. PROCEDURES

A. Interagency Agreements/Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)  

The first step in instituting a school-police partnership should be the creation of an interagency agreement. This agreement should outline:

1. Whether SROs will be utilized and, if so, what specific services will be provided.
2. Scope of law enforcement actions, such as
   a. School searches, to include the use of specially trained canines
   b. Investigations, to include interviews and interrogations
   c. Arrests on school property or at school events.
3. Creation of and establishment of the roles and responsibilities of a school safety team.
4. Response to critical incidents or emergencies, for example tactical and emergency response plans.
5. Limitations of the SRO’s role. For example, SROs should not be involved in student discipline.
   Outsourcing school disciplinary functions to law enforcement exposes juveniles unnecessarily to the criminal justice system, resulting in harsher punishments and an increased likelihood to be exposed to the system again. It has also been frequently cited that this “school-to-prison” pipeline disproportionately effects African American students.  
6. Reporting procedures to be followed by all stakeholders to ensure consistent and accurate documentation.
7. Procedures for conflict resolution.
9. The duration, modification and revision, and termination of the MOU.
10. Legal contingencies.
11. Arrangements for the use of equipment and facilities.
12. Communications plan, to include notification procedures, equipment (radio/phone), and contact information.

B. School Resource Officers (SROs)

If the decision is made to utilize SROs, agencies and school districts should consider:

1. SRO duties, which may include but not be limited to:
   a. School safety planning
   b. Informal counseling
   c. Behavioral threat assessments
   d. Conducting investigations
   e. Enforcing jurisdictional laws
   f. Being involved in school and community extracurricular activities
   g. Serving as an emergency first responder

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8 For school-based law enforcement agencies, the items in this section should be included in policies and procedures. For more information, see the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA), 3.1.1 (LEI), Contractual Agreements for Law Enforcement Services: Written Agreement for Services Provided, https://www.calea.org/node/11406.

School-Police Partnerships

Considerations

h. Providing age-appropriate law-related instruction

2. SRO selection criteria, to include:
   a. Motivation for accepting assignment
   b. Demonstrated interest in youth, such as participation in youth-focused activities (e.g., coaching, volunteering)
   c. Age
   d. Educational background
   e. Required experience, such as a specific number of years of service
   f. Commendations and/or disciplinary record
   g. Physical ability to perform job functions - this may exclude officers who are on modified or light duty
   h. Interpersonal communication skills
   i. Capability to work with limited oversight
   j. Problem-solving and analytical skills, effective discretionary decision-making
   k. Knowledge of:
      i. Applicable laws and statutes, to include those related to schools, juveniles, and applicable education codes/acts
      ii. Relevant search and seizures laws
      iii. Community policing principles

3. SRO training, including:
   a. Positive behavioral intervention techniques and support practices. This may be accomplished using situational and/or simulated training.
   b. Mental health awareness.
   c. Tactical emergency response.
   d. Cognitive development.
   e. Critical incident procedures.

C. Safe Environment

As part of the partnership, law enforcement agencies and school districts should strive to provide a safe environment for students. This can be accomplished through:

1. Developing relationships, such as those between:
   a. SROs and students
   b. The law enforcement agency the school district and/or the school district and the parents.

2. Conducting a security assessment on the management and design of a community and school based on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.10

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3. Developing tactical and emergency response plans in collaboration with appropriate stakeholders. Consider utilizing the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) National Incident Management System (NIMS) as a primary source for uniform development of these plans.\textsuperscript{11}

4. Assessing and offering recommendations regarding school safety policies.

5. Providing an anonymous tip or text line for reporting criminal activity or threats.

6. Establishing or adopting an existing suicide and bullying prevention hotline. Where feasible, this should be accomplished in partnership with school mental health professionals.

7. Creating a listing of available resources for referral purposes.

D. Behavioral Assessments

If a jurisdiction will conduct behavioral assessments, guidelines should be drafted indicating:

1. Involved personnel, such as members of a behavioral assessment team

2. Necessary training, to include training related to mental health and students with special needs

3. Resource referrals and services available

4. Policies and procedures regarding at-risk individuals

E. Enforcement Actions

As part of the interagency agreement, law enforcement agencies and school districts should address the situations where SROs or other officers are required to take enforcement actions. This may include procedures related to:

1. Contacting:
   a. Students
   b. The SRO and/or school administrator
   c. Parents or legal guardians

2. Conducting investigations, to include:
   a. Searching persons and/or property-specific search protocols may include those related to:
      i. Searches of a student by a teacher or other school official
      ii. Searches of a student’s effects
      iii. Strip searches\textsuperscript{12}
      iv. Scope of search
   b. Interviewing and/or interrogating students\textsuperscript{13}
   c. Using specially trained canines

3. Responding to crimes committed:
   a. On school property
   b. Off school property involving a student

\textsuperscript{11} For more information on NIMS, see FEMA’s “NIMS Doctrine Supporting Guides & Tools,” https://www.fema.gov/nims-doctrine-supporting-guides-tools#.

\textsuperscript{12} See Safford Unified School Dist. #1 v. Redding, 531 F. 3d 1071 (9th Cir. 2008), and its related U.S. Supreme Court case Safford Unified School Dist. #1 v. Redding, 557 U.S. 364 (2009). See also the IACP Policy Center Considerations document on Strip Searches at https://www.theiacp.org/resources/policy-center-resource/strip-and-body-cavity-searches.

\textsuperscript{13} See the IACP Policy Center documents on Interviewing and Interrogating Juveniles at https://www.theiacp.org/resources/policy-center-resource/interviewing-and-interrogating-juveniles.
4. Arresting or removing students from school property,
5. Using force, and
6. Acting as an emergency first responder.

F. Training

Agencies should address the types and frequency of training necessary to sustain the school-police partnership.

1. Training should be developed and provided to the following groups:
   a. SROs
   b. School staff
   c. Students
   d. Additional stakeholders

2. Training should focus on:
   a. Safety protocols, such as those related to any emergency or hazard situation
   b. Tactical and all hazards emergency response plans\textsuperscript{14} including information regarding the National Incident Management System (NIMS). For example, critical topics could include but are not limited to:
      • The Incident Command System (ICS)\textsuperscript{15}
      • Standardization of emergency response language\textsuperscript{16}
   c. Applicable legislation and legal updates
   d. Interacting with children and juveniles.

\textsuperscript{14} This may include but is not limited to training related to response to natural disasters, active shooter, CBRNE, bombs, and hostage situations.

\textsuperscript{15} See the IACP Policy Center’s Model Policy on the Incident Command System (ICS), which references the standardized National Incident Management System (NIMS), at https://www.theiacp.org/resources/policy-center-resource/incident-command/---:text=ICS%20may%20be%20utilized%20for%20the%20stabilization%20of%20the%20incident.

Every effort has been made by the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center staff and advisory board to ensure that this document incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. However, law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that the formulation of specific agency policies must take into account local political and community perspectives and customs, prerogatives, and demands; often divergent law enforcement strategies and philosophies; and the impact of varied agency resource capabilities, among other factors. Readers outside of the United States should note that, while this document promotes procedures reflective of a democratic society, its legal basis follows U.S. Supreme Court rulings and other federal laws and statutes. Law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions, and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered and should, therefore, consult their legal advisor before implementing any policy.

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IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center

Concepts & Issues

Updated: June 2020

School-Police Partnerships

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of the Document

This paper is designed to accompany the Considerations document on School-Police Partnerships published by the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center. This paper provides essential background material and supporting documentation to provide a greater understanding of the recommendations and guidance provided in the Considerations document. This material may be of value to law enforcement executives in their efforts to develop their own policies that meet the requirements and circumstances of their communities and their law enforcement agencies.

This paper is designed to provide agencies with items to consider when drafting their policies and interagency agreements concerning school-police partnerships. The goal is to offer general guidance on ways to deal with the public school in a manner that will serve the legitimate interests of law enforcement without unduly interfering with the interests of education. These efforts carry the additional benefit of promoting overall community-police cooperation.

B. Background

Effective school-police partnerships, to include school resource officer (SRO) and school-based law enforcement programs, enhance school safety by deterring students’ fighting, making threats, and bullying and make it easier for school administrators to maintain order. For example, one multiagency, community-based program successfully reduced offending behavior and victimization, reduced truancy rates, provided a safer school environment, and provided improvements in educational attainment. Research shows that law enforcement presence in schools makes students and school staff feel safer and deters acts of violence. Other benefits include the prevention of student

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1 Some jurisdictions utilize school-based law enforcement officers who are employed by the school district. In these cases, policies and procedures should be developed in lieu of interagency agreements or memorandums of understanding.
2 Barbara Raymond, Assigning Police Officers to Schools, Problem-Oriented Guides for Police, Response Guides Series no. 10 (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, July 2013), 8-9.
3 Raymond, Assigning Police Officers to Schools, 9.
4 Raymond, Assigning Police Officers to Schools, 10.
injuries, a reduction in the likelihood that a student will get a criminal record, and an increased likelihood that students, including those affected by mental illness, will get help from social service and healthcare systems.5

Moreover, when agencies partner with schools, they gain an increased understanding of crime in schools and can use this data to work toward systematic, long-term approaches to reducing youth and school crime. They are also better equipped to plan for school emergencies. Given the wide application and strong impact of school-police partnerships, agencies should consider how to best implement these programs in their schools.

Law enforcement officers assigned to school resource or liaison programs are often called upon to serve in a wide variety of counseling, arbitration, instruction, enforcement, and quasi-enforcement activities. Rather than focusing solely on enforcement activities, law enforcement agencies are encouraged to take a more holistic approach to interacting with and fostering relationships with students, especially considering the importance of engaging with youth in a way that is mindful of their psychology, potential mental health or developmental differences, or trauma.6

By investing in these efforts while the individual is a juvenile, law enforcement agencies can help forge relationships that will enhance community policing efforts into the individual’s adulthood.

In order to conduct these activities, the law enforcement agency, in general, and the officers, in particular, must have an understanding and appreciation of the rights and interests of school personnel and students. Under such circumstances, officers must have some guidance on how to balance their legitimate law enforcement interests and responsibilities to the community with the valid interests of school officials to maintain an effective educational environment.

While school-police partnerships boast the potential for positive benefits, one concern of the use of SROs is the possibility of school disciplinary actions being inappropriately allocated to law enforcement. This outsourcing of discipline to the criminal justice system has potential consequences associated with introducing juveniles early on in their lives to the justice system. Termed the “school-to-prison pipeline,” it has been suggested that this effect may disproportionately affect minority students, particularly African American youths.7

Introducing SROs to schools may facilitate this school-to-prison pipeline. Shifting matters that would otherwise be handled by school administrators to law enforcement officers may create unnecessary exposure of youth to the criminal justice system. While there is little research in the effect that SROs have on this school-to-prison pipeline, it is an important consideration and underscores the importance of clearly establishing the responsibilities and limitations of SROs and other school officials.8

II. PROCEDURES

A. Interagency Agreements/Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)9

The first step in developing a school-police partnership is to identify the relevant stakeholders, such as school personnel and parents, and discuss the overall scope, goals, and parameters of the partnership. These discussions can be aided by emphasizing the shared goals among the stakeholders, such as keeping students safe to promote successful learning. These discussions should include considerations regarding:

5 Linda Duxbury and Craig Bennell, Assigning Value to Peel Regional Police’s School Resource Officer Program (Ottawa, ON: Carlton University, 2018), https://ir.library.carleton.ca/pub/17310/sprott-peel-full-study.pdf.
7 http://www.justicepolicy.org/news/11809
8 For more information on the school-to-prison pipeline and how it relates to school resource officers, see https://crim.sas.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/2015-5.1_Owens_Pipeline%281%29.pdf
9 For school-based law enforcement agencies, the items in this section should be included in policies and procedures.
The amount of time and resources expected of each partner;
The framework for information exchange and data protection;
Child protection policies;
Governance structure, including that the agency maintains control over its personnel;
Procedures for working with other agencies, including law enforcement and others that provide services for children and young people;
Utilization of SROs and the goal of their use, including clearly defined targets;
Providing a safe environment;
Developing and maintaining relationships, both between stakeholders and between the law enforcement agency, students, and parents; and
Specific procedures, such as those related to conducting investigations and taking enforcement actions and relevant communication plans.\(^\text{10}\)

Once decisions have been agreed upon by all stakeholders, the partnership should be officially documented through the use of an interagency agreement or MOU. The goal of the MOU is to outline the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder. Specifically, this agreement should:

- Specify whether SROs will be utilized and, if so, what specific services will be provided. As previously stated, SROs can serve in a variety of functions, to include counseling and mentoring.
- Clearly document any limitations of the SRO’s role. For example, SROs should not be involved in student discipline.
- Clearly define the procedures for law enforcement actions that may be conducted on school property or at school events. This may include:
  - School searches and whether specially trained canines will be used;
  - Investigative protocols, including those related to interviews and interrogations; and
  - Arrest protocols.
- Determine procedures for conflict resolution.
- Document financial agreements between the parties.
- Identify records that will be maintained regarding the services provided.
- Clarify the duration, modification, and termination of the MOU, including a procedure for revisions of the agreement.
- Identify legal contingencies.
- Make arrangements for equipment and facility use.\(^\text{11}\)

Stakeholders should also discuss the creation of a school safety team. This multidisciplinary team is intended to conduct audits to review safety conditions in the school setting, which may include behavioral threats and institutional security. This team may also be referred to as a school safety audit committee and may include officials from law enforcement agencies, fire departments, school administration, counselors or mental health professionals, and local community services groups.

In addition to the school safety team, stakeholders should develop a comprehensive response protocol to critical incidents or emergencies. This may include the creation of safety and tactical evacuation plans designed to prepare

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\(^{10}\) Barbara Raymond, *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Response Guides Series.*

\(^{11}\) For more information, see the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA), 3.1.1 (LEI), *Contractual Agreements for Law Enforcement Services: Written Agreement for Services Provided*, https://www.calea.org/node/11406. For sample MOU agreements, see the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) membership resources at https://nasro.org/.
law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, school staff, and students for violent and hazardous events at or near a school. These plans may be used for active shooter, aggressive behaviors, bomb threats, hazardous threats, and fires.12

Finally, the agreement should provide guidance to ensure that all stakeholders are following the same guidelines for reporting to ensure consistent and accurate documentation. This will better guide future discussions when determining the needs of each stakeholder and provide insight on how the existing partnership is functioning. This may include establishing common definitions and/or descriptions for use by all parties.13

After the interagency agreement or MOU is in place and functioning, the stakeholders should plan to meet often to ensure the partnership is refined and maintained by continuous assessment. By scheduling frequent meetings, conducting annual school climate surveys, tracking school crime statistics, and analyzing the emergency response plan in the aftermath of targeted school violence incidents, stakeholders can determine whether goals are being met and if adjustments to the partnership are needed.

B. School Resource Officers (SROs)

**Types of SROs.** Each SRO assignment represents a collaborative effort by officers, educators, students, parents, and the community. While many SROs are career law enforcement officers with sworn authority, they may staffed at a school either full- or part time, and may work in one or more schools. The most common types of SROs are officers employed by the jurisdiction’s law enforcement agency, to include local law enforcement agencies and sheriff’s agencies or officers employed or contracted directly by the school district. Additionally, some school districts may employ private security guards or retired officers. These individuals are not SROs and are not the focus of this discussion. However, they may perform similar duties and functions and may be seen as SROs by the students and community

**Duties.** As part of the development of the interagency agreement/MOU, the scope of the SRO’s duties should be established. Potential duties may include but not be limited to participating in school safety planning; providing informal counseling; performing behavioral threat assessments; conducting investigations; enforcing jurisdictional laws; fostering relationships with students, teachers, and school administrators; participating in school extracurricular activities; serving as an emergency first responder; and providing age-appropriate law-related instructions, such as those related to drug awareness and the dangers of interacting with strangers. Regarding SRO involvement in investigations, limitations should be established to ensure that the officer’s time and attention are not unduly diverted from other school-based duties. Procedures should be developed outlining the process for transitioning the investigation from the SRO to a separate investigator.

Where possible, the SRO’s duties should address specific safety concerns. SROs should not engage in routine classroom management and instead ensure that minor offenses are addressed through the school’s discipline system rather than through arrest. It should be the goal of both the agency and school administrators to divert students from involvement in the juvenile justice system whenever possible.14

**Selection Criteria.** Each law enforcement agency should determine the criteria it will use to select SROs. When making this decision, the agency should consider:

- **The officer’s motivation for accepting the assignment.** Officers should express a desire to improve the lives of students while providing a supportive environment.

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12 See the IACP Policy Center Model Policy, Concepts & Issues Paper, and Need to Know document on Active Shooters at https://www.theiacp.org/resources/policy-center-resource/active-shooter.

13 For instance, in the United States, this may be dictated by state code.

• *Whether the officer has a demonstrated interest in youth.* This may include participation in youth-focused activities, such as coaching or volunteering. This indicates previous experience and a level of familiarity with the unique challenges of interacting with youth.

• *Minimum age.* It is recommended that agencies establish a minimum age requirement to ensure that they have the requisite maturity level necessary for the position.

• *Educational background.* Agencies may wish to require a relevant college degree or minimum number of college credit hours.

• *Experience required for the position.* This is usually translated into a specific number of years of service but may also include particular assignments.

• *Whether the officer has received any commendations.* Conversely, this should also include a review of the officer’s disciplinary record. Any notations regarding improper conduct should be a serious factor when determining suitability for the position.

• *Whether the officer is physically able to perform the required job functions.* This may exclude officers who are on modified or light duty who would not be able to adequately react to a crisis situation.

• *The officer’s knowledge level,* especially as it relates to applicable laws and statutes related to schools, juveniles, and education codes or acts; relevant search and seizure laws; and community policing principles.

• *Interpersonal communication skills.* It is important that the officer displays empathy and emotional intelligence and is able to communicate effectively with a diverse body of students as well as their parents and school officials.

• *Decision-making skills.* SROs will be expected to make fair and effective discretionary decisions. Problem-solving and analytical abilities may aid in these judgements.

**SRO Training.** SROs should receive specialized training prior to beginning their assignment. This training may include interacting with juveniles, child and adolescent development, and policing the teenage brain.15 Because of the unique ways adolescents process and respond to situations, it is important to train officers to adapt their responses and use alternatives to arrest whenever possible. Training topics may also include community policing in schools; sexual misconduct; recognizing and responding to bullying; responding to mental health crises; cultural sensitivity; fluency and linguistic differences; youth diversion programs; mental health; working with students with disabilities; legal issues; safe school preparation; Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design; and teaching and classroom management strategies, including presenting law enforcement–related content in an age-appropriate manner.16

**C. Providing a Safe Environment**

One of the key goals of school-police partnerships should be to provide a safe and supportive environment to students. This extends beyond physical safety, such as developing tactical and emergency response plans, to include emotional and psychological safety, such as identifying and addressing signs of bullying. This overall safety goal can be accomplished through the development of relationships on several levels: between the SROs and students; the law enforcement agency and the school district; and the law enforcement agency and/or the school district and the parents or legal guardians. By establishing these early in the partnership process and continually fostering their development, stakeholders can better communicate with each other and define strategies for providing the safe environment.

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In an effort to promote trust with students, SROs should consider learning student’s names, talking to students casually and expressing interest in their lives, establishing a presence by visiting classrooms, and explaining that their role is to keep students safe. Trusting relationships between students and SROs can be crucial to student safety; in 81% of planned incidents of targeted school violence, others knew about the attack ahead of time. Many students do not report because they are fearful of negative repercussions, don’t believe the threat is real, or don’t know whom to advise. Strengthening these relationships, building trust, and teaching students what to look for and whom to come to prior to an incident are effective strategies to proactively respond to potential school violence.

One aspect of creating a safe environment is ensuring that SROs are trained in positive behavioral intervention techniques and support practices. This can be accomplished using situational and/or simulated training. Students may experience challenges that come to the attention of teachers, counselors, staff members, and other students. These can include issues such as family violence, child abuse and exploitation, sexual assault, mental illness, divorce, homelessness, and bullying. If left unchecked, these issues can manifest in a number of ways, including aggressive or self-destructive behavior. Working in conjunction with a school safety team, actions can be taken to intervene and provide support and assistance as needed.

**Physical Safety.** To address the physical safety of students and school faculty, the stakeholders should conduct a physical security assessment. This assessment may be based on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, which attempt to reduce opportunities for crime through urban and environmental design. CPTED may be used to conduct threat, risk, and physical security assessments as well as crime management and crime displacement.

The primary focus of a physical security assessment is to provide law enforcement, fire and emergency services, medical responders, and schools with a database of tactical school safety plans. The safety plans provide emergency service responders with critical decision-making options by providing predetermined school site management and tactical information for evacuations. These tactical plans assist in efficient resource allocation and time management skill sets. The safety plan’s application is not limited to high-risk/low-frequency incidents; its design is intuitive for any emergency involving schools to include but not limited to:

- Aggressive/hostile threat within a school;
- Natural disasters;
- Fires;
- Bomb threats;
- Weapons of mass destruction involving chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive (CBRNE) materials; and
- Missing children.

These emergency plans may include tactical assessments using Geographic Information System (GIS) imagery that identifies the following information:

- Reconnaissance of school, noting
  - Entrances,
  - Alternate entrances, and
  - Office location.

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18 CPTED may also be known as Designing Out Crime or defensible space. For more information, please visit the International CPTED Association website at http://www cpted.net/.

• Approach routes, to include primary and secondary approach to school to enable a tiered response;
• Traffic control points such as the
  o Primary/secondary perimeter,
  o Command post, and
  o Staging area.
• Evacuation and assembly concerns, specifically
  o Designated assembly manager(s) and assembly area(s)
    ▪ for students and staff that are large enough to house the population of the school and located in areas north, south, east, and west of the school to allow for various options.
    ▪ for media, situated at a distance from the school; and
    ▪ for parents, kept at a distance from school to avoid a perimeter breach.
  o High-threat evacuation routes from the school to each assembly area, including:
    ▪ preferred route offering the most concealment and cover for the students as they evacuate, especially when an aggressive/hostile threats exist; and
    ▪ task managers placed along the route to assist with evacuation.
  o Low-threat routes from school to each assembly area – these routes are the fastest from the school with no concern for concealment/cover, such as during a fire/natural disaster.
  o Medical triage areas\(^\text{20}\)
    ▪ with staff, trained in physical and psychological first aid services, to treat injured students; and
    ▪ that have the ability to transport supplies, if needed, to the triage itself or other areas.

All tactical information should then be assessed and correlated, creating an individual school safety plan. The response plans should be individually tailored to meet the needs of each school; no two plans are alike. The GIS maps are used to capture the tactical data for responding emergency personnel.

The second component to any successful safety plan is the collection of identifying information of the school’s infrastructure. Some preliminary factors to consider when collecting specific information about a school for a safety plan can include:
• General information about the building, such as the physical address;
• Floor plans and building information, such as:
  o Internal and external building description, including the:
    ▪ number of classrooms;
    ▪ hours of operation;
    ▪ number of floors;
    ▪ number of portables; and
    ▪ location of portables.
  o Building schematics, to include:
    ▪ location of hard copy blueprints/fire plan;
    ▪ fire escapes;

\(^{20}\) For more information regarding School Emergency Operations Plan, see FEMA’s sample plan at https://training.fema.gov/programs/emischool/el361toolkit/assets/sampleplan.pdf.
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- master key/swipe and location;
- main access doors;
- rooftop access;
- elevator(s) location, if applicable;
- construction of doors and walls; and
- type of classroom door locks.

  - Key areas of interest, to include:
    - fire alarm panel;
    - main telephone panel;
    - public address system and directions for use; and
    - video cameras, to include location and remote accessibility options.

  - Hazardous areas, such as:
    - main gas shutoff;
    - electrical room;
    - maintenance and/or custodial rooms;
    - boiler room;
    - location of emergency power system;
    - type of emergency power system;
    - emergency power and locations where provided;
    - science labs; and
    - chemical storage rooms.

- School population, including:
  - Type of grade levels in school;
  - Number of staff;
  - Number of students; and
  - Number of students with any physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities.

- Contact information for:
  - Principal(s);
  - Groundskeeper/janitor;
  - Bus company or school transportation authority; and
  - School board.

In addition, law enforcement agencies should offer to assess and provide input on existing school safety policies. A mechanism should also be put in place for both students and school officials to report criminal activity or threats. This may be in the form of an anonymous tip or text line.

**Emotional and Psychological Safety.** Bullying is a pervasive concern among juveniles. According to one study, which compiled data from 144 different countries and territories, about one-third of youth have experienced bullying in school.\(^{21}\) Another study stated that nearly one in five high school students reported being bullied on school property.

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in the last year. The school-police partnership should take an active stance against bullying and provide information and resources to students with the goal of reducing this behavior. However, even with reduction efforts, the behavior will continue, and identification should become a key objective of SROs. SROs should help students learn to resolve conflict in nonviolent ways. Schools and law enforcement agencies should establish, or adopt an existing, suicide and bullying prevention hotline. Whenever feasible, this should be accomplished in partnership with school mental health professionals. In addition, information regarding resources for students who are victims, and even perpetrators, of bullying should be readily available.

**Student Training and Education.** Law enforcement should also consider providing safety training to students. Training topics may include how to react to an active shooter incident or other crisis situations, such as natural disasters, CBRNE, bombs, and hostage situations; mental health awareness; bullying and internet safety; and the importance of reporting dangerous behavior. The SRO, in conjunction with school staff, can serve as an excellent resource in reinforcing this information through their daily interactions with students.

**Parent/Guardian Notification.** If any sort of notification needs to be made to a parent/guardian regarding the safety of their child, it should be done in a private setting. A counselor or other mental health practitioner should be present, if possible.

### D. Behavioral Threat Assessments

In addition to a physical safety plan, a multifaceted threat assessment approach provides a proactive means for a school to create and maintain an environment where all members feel safe. The primary purpose of this assessment is to identify indicators that suggest when a student or situation may be moving along a pathway to violence and intervene to decrease risk, prevent injury to self and/or others, and develop an appropriate management plan.

As part of the overall commitment to student safety, SROs should be trained to recognize signs and symptoms displayed by individuals affected by mental illness or who are in crisis and should receive guidance on how to assist these individuals. Similar training should also extend to students with special needs, such as those with physical and/or intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Behavioral threat assessments include proactive targeted violence prevention efforts, such as identifying students of concern; assessing their risk for engaging in or being subjected to violence or other harmful activities; and identifying intervention strategies to manage that risk. For instance, schools and SROs should also be aware of the impact of mental illness and life-changing events on a student’s psychological state. A recent analysis of data from averted and completed acts of school violence indicates that “[a] majority of perpetrators who completed attacks had a history of being treated for one or more mental health issues or development disorders, including depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), delusions, suicidal thoughts or behavior, attention

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23 National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, Preventing Youth Violence.


deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Many of the individuals involved in averted attacks were also treated for mental health issues, including depression and anxiety.27 The same report also found that the overwhelming majority (94 percent) of perpetrators of completed attacks experienced or witnessed some kind of life changing event, such as a breakup, separation, or divorce; move; abuse; and/or financial stress or job loss.28

In response to this, the report recommends that schools should “establish threat assessment procedures with trained personnel who can investigate potential threats, train the staff and students in warning signs, and provide multiple channels of communication for employees and students to report their concerns.”29 It also states that “[t]hough it may seem like common sense that threats of violence need to be taken seriously, in multiple situations people reported their concerns only to have them dismissed. Not every threat is meant seriously, but every threat needs to be taken seriously.”30

E. Enforcement Actions

While prevention and support should be goals of the school-police partnerships, it is likely that SROs or other law enforcement personnel will be required to perform enforcement actions on school property or at school-sponsored events. As part of the interagency agreement/MOU, the law enforcement agency and the school district should address these situations and develop agreed upon guidelines to be followed. These should take into account existing agency policy and applicable legal considerations.

Contacts. When enforcement actions are necessary, protocols that are consistent with applicable jurisdictional law and agency policy should be in place for how and the manner in which officers should contact students. Agency policy should also address situations where law enforcement officers other than SROs must perform enforcement actions on school property or at a school-sponsored event. This should include contacting the SRO and/or the school administrator as soon as possible. Finally, a plan should be developed for contacting parents or legal guardians in these situations. It should be decided who is responsible for conducting the notification and in what situations it is necessary.

Searching Persons or Property. Policies should be developed for conducting searches of students and property, to include the defined scope of the search.31 Officers should be aware of any legal standards and existing policies related to searches of juveniles and should establish whether property is under the control of the school, such as lockers, or the students themselves.32 Specific guidance should be provided for whether the search is conducted by a teacher or other school official versus law enforcement. Strip searches and searches using specially trained canines should also be addressed.

Interviewing and Interrogating Students. Officers should follow established agency policy regarding interviewing and interrogating juveniles.33 The seriousness of the crime and the particular circumstances of the situation will dictate whether such interviews or interrogations are conducted within the school or whether they can be deferred until the youth can be contacted at home, at an alternative location after school hours, or otherwise summoned or contacted.

29 Langman, and Straub, A Comparison of Averted and Completed School Attacks, 18.
32 See the Appendix for a U.S.-based legal discussion of searches.
Agencies should develop procedures for officers to follow when there is an overriding need to conduct such interviews or interrogations within the school setting as part of an investigation. This may include requesting that an appropriate school official summon the student to an office, separate school room, or other appropriate private setting so that questioning can be conducted.

Agencies should determine whether requests from school officials who wish to be present during the interview will be honored. Agency policies should also address whether parents or legal guardians should be notified and/or allowed to be present during the interviews. In general, it is recommended that this be allowed unless an overriding interest of the investigation would be unduly compromised and/or a protected privacy interest would be breached. However, when permission is granted to the school official and/or parents or legal guardians, these individuals should be notified diplomatically that their role may only be one of observation. They should not interject comments or in any other manner interfere with the interview. They should also be cautioned that the privacy interests of the youth and the integrity of the investigation require that information revealed in the interview be kept confidential.

It is suggested that agency policy prohibit or at the very least discourage enlisting schoolteachers, officials, or other employees to conduct interviews of students for purposes of gathering information for a law enforcement investigation. Agencies should also consider prohibiting officers from asking school employees or suggest to teachers, administrators, or others that they make inquiries or conduct any fact-finding activities regarding students if officers intend to use or reasonably believe that the information may be used as part of a criminal investigation. School officials who are enlisted by law enforcement to act in these or similar capacities constructively become agents of the law enforcement agency, and any information they obtain is subject to due-process limitations that may affect its admissibility in a criminal or juvenile court proceeding. However, officers should not be precluded from asking school officials about information they may already have concerning students in their charge.

**Responding to Crimes.** While the school-police partnership should focus on proactive measures to prevent crime, there may be some instances where a reactive approach to a crime that is committed is necessary. Law enforcement agencies should develop guidelines for officers who are responding to crimes committed on school property or off school property involving a student.

**Arrests or Removal of Students from School Property.** In general, law enforcement officers should follow their agency policy regarding conducting arrests. As part of the interagency agreement/MOU, the agency and school officials should discuss any deviations from the agency’s standard policy, such as the preferred location for the arrest and any notifications to be made prior to an arrest. For instance, in exigent circumstances and/or where an arrest is planned (e.g., when officers are attempting to act swiftly and with assurance that the suspect will not be forewarned), prior contact with school administrators may be inadvisable. The nature and severity of the offense in question and the anticipated reaction of the suspect are among the many factors that must be weighed. Where time permits and related factors dictate, officers may plan to make the arrest after school hours in a location that provides more suitable control. When there is an indication or suspicion that officers may encounter resistance that may require use of force and potentially endanger other students or teachers, and absent exigent circumstances, it is recommended that arrests be made in a controlled takedown setting off school property.

Whether officers contact a school official prior to or following the arrest, no youth under the immediate supervision of the school should be removed from the school premises unless a responsible school official is notified. Such notification may be made concurrently with the arrest or within a reasonable period of time following the arrest. In general, schools are responsible for notifying the student’s parents, guardian, or other responsible adult concerning the whereabouts of their child. However, officers should notify responsible adults or parents in a manner and in a timeframe consistent with agency policy on handling juvenile offenders.

**Use of Force.** Generally, juvenile arrestees should be handcuffed, and officers should follow their agency policy in this matter. However, if circumstances permit, the application of handcuffs and a search of the individual prior to transport may be deferred until after the youth has been physically escorted off the school premises.
**Acting as an Emergency First Responder.** An SRO should be prepared to respond in the capacity of a sworn law enforcement officer in the event of an emergency.

**F. Training**

Training should be a key component of the school-police partnership. All stakeholders should be involved in the development of the training to help ensure that each agency or group is familiar with the focus and responsibilities of the others. Training should also be provided to students and parents or legal guardians outlining the partnership in general and selected procedures, as applicable. Specific training should focus on safety protocols, such as those related to any emergency or hazard situations; tactical and all hazards emergency response plans; and applicable legislation and legal updates. Law enforcement officers working with youth may also benefit from specialized training covering topics such as cultural sensitivity and linguistic differences, adolescent development, youth diversion programs, mental health, and working with students with disabilities. The types of frequency of the training should be documented in the interagency agreement/MOU.

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34 This may include, but is not limited to, training related to response to natural disasters, active shooter, CBRNE, bombs, and hostage situations.
APPENDIX: UNITED STATES CASE LAW

A. Interviewing Students Who Are Victims

Officers should be guided by agency and school policies and procedures that have been established for interviewing student victims.

B. Interviewing Students Who Are Suspects

Students who are subjected to a custodial interrogation by law enforcement are entitled to advisement under *Miranda*. When interviewing a child who is a suspect, law enforcement officers must consider the age of the child in determining whether the child should be considered in custody for purposes of requiring a *Miranda* advisement. In *J. D. B. v. North Carolina*, the Supreme Court found that “[i]n some circumstances, a child’s age would have affected how a reasonable person in the suspect’s position would perceive his or her freedom to leave. That is, a reasonable child subjected to police questioning will sometimes feel pressured to submit when a reasonable adult would feel free to go.”

According to the Supreme Court, “[s]o long as the child’s age was known to the officer at the time of police questioning or would have been objectively apparent to a reasonable officer, its inclusion in the custody analysis is consistent with the objective nature of that test.”

C. School Searches by School Officials

The leading cases dealing with searches by school officials are *New Jersey v. T.L.O* and *Safford Unified Sch. Dist. #1 v. Redding*. In those cases, the Supreme Court set forth general principles governing searches of students by school officials.

- The Fourth Amendment applies to searches on school premises by school officials.
- Probable cause is not required; reasonable suspicion is sufficient. This means, that no warrant is required for searches by school officials. The lesser standard for school searches can “be described as a moderate chance of finding evidence of wrongdoing.” The reasonable suspicion may relate either to criminal activity or to a violation of school rules.
- The test of the legality of the school officials’ search is its overall “reasonableness.” The issue is not just whether there was reasonable suspicion prior to the search; the question is the overall reasonableness of the school officials’ action. In *T.L.O.*, the Supreme Court said “[A] search of a student by a teacher or other school official ... will be permissible in its scope when the measures adopted are reasonably related to the objective of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction.”

- As it relates to strip searches, the “concern to limit a school search to reasonable scope requires the support of reasonable suspicion of danger or of resort to underwear for hiding evidence of wrongdoing.”

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36 *J. D. B.*, 564 U.S. at 275.
39 This apparently remains true even though, under *T.L.O.*, school personnel are now considered to be governmental officials for purposes of search and seizure. Although they are now governmental officials for this purpose, school personnel are still not regarded as law enforcement officers or subject to the same requirements as law enforcement officers.
40 *Redding*, 557 U.S. at 371.
41 *T.L.O.*, 469 U.S. at 341.
42 *T.L.O.*, 469 U.S. at 341–42.
before a search can reasonably make the quantum leap from outer clothes and backpacks to exposure of intimate parts.”

D. School Searches by Law Enforcement

*T.L.O.* applies only to searches conducted by school officials. When the search is conducted by law enforcement officers, different standards apply. *T.L.O.* and other cases have established that school officials, although subject to the Fourth Amendment, may search based upon suspicion only, subject to the “reasonableness” standard. *T.L.O.* did not address the question of what standards apply when a school search is conducted by law enforcement, but it is generally accepted that when law enforcement officers enter a school to conduct a search, they are subject to the full range of Fourth Amendment requirements applicable to other searches by law enforcement: probable cause, the need for a warrant, and similar requirements. The fact that a school is involved does not appear to alter the necessity for law enforcement officers to comply with these requirements.

**Searches by school officials with law enforcement officers.** If a search is conducted by school officials with the active participation of law enforcement officers, the full range of Fourth Amendment protections still apply. The same is true if the search is conducted by school officials at the behest of law enforcement. The school officials would then most probably be considered the agents of the law enforcement agency, and, as in other areas of the law on search and seizure, searches by agents of a law enforcement agency are subject to full Fourth Amendment protection.

**Permissible school searches by law enforcement.** The applicability of the full range of Fourth Amendment constraints to law enforcement officers in the school setting does not mean officers may never search a school or a student without a warrant. The same exceptions to the probable cause and search warrant requirements that apply to non-school searches are, in general, equally applicable in the school setting.\(^{44}\)

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\(^{43}\) *Redding*, 557 U.S. at 377.

\(^{44}\) See, e.g., *In re Donaldson*, 269 Cal.App.2d 509, 75 Cal. Rptr. 220 (1969) student’s locker was not under his exclusive control, but rather was jointly controlled by school officials.