ISSUE BRIEF

August 2013

School Resource Officers: Recommendations for Maximizing School Safety and Minimizing Risks to Ohio Children

Introduction

In December 2012, Edward Ward, an advocate for school discipline reform and current student at LaSalle University in Chicago, testified before the United States Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights in a hearing entitled, "Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline."[1] Edward offered the Senators a disquieting view of the role school discipline policies generally, and police officers in schools specifically, had on his experience as a high school student:

> I grew up on the West Side of Chicago, where I attended and graduated from Orr Academy High School. My high school seemed like its own personal prison. From the moment we stepped through the doors in the morning, we were faced with metal detectors, x-ray machines and uniformed security. Upon entering the school, it was like we stepped into a prison.[2]

While this equipment seems starkly out of place in an environment that is intended to support the intellectual growth and personal development of future leaders, the role of adults in reinforcing this dehumanizing culture is particularly disturbing. In Edward's testimony, he describes the school's "very tense" environment where school security officers, "whose only purpose seemed to be to serve students with detentions or suspensions," filled the halls.[3] He goes on to explain the role police officers also played in that tense environment.

> While the security guards constantly threatened to discipline students, the police officers stationed at my school were even more aggressive. Most Chicago public high schools have 2 on-duty police officers present. Our school even had a police processing center so police could book students then and there. The officers don't get any special training to be in the school so they don't treat us like we are misbehaving; they treat us like we are committing crimes. I remember when a fight broke out between two young women and the police were called. While trying to break up the fight, the police grabbed one of the young women and slammed her to the ground numerous times although there were no weapons involved in the altercation. Every time there was a fight the police would step in and handcuff students even in cases where there was no weapon. Some would be sent to the police station in the school, a few or some never came back to school after that.[4]

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Edward Ward testifying at the United States Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the school-to-prison pipeline in December 2012.

Edward's experience with school-based policing should cause widespread alarm about the ways that discipline and school security policies and their implementation are undermining the educational mission of our schools and failing to support the healthy growth and development of young adults. His words of warning are all the more salient given recent increased interest in school-based policing.

Two days after Edward's testimony in the United States Senate, 20 young children and six adult educators were killed by a gunman at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. The tragic Newtown shooting has pushed the issue of school safety into the national spotlight, perhaps overshadowing Edward's testimony and the impact of his statements. School Resource Officers (SROs), police officers who are assigned to work in schools,[5] have been at the center of discussions as communities debate how to protect children from violence in schools.

Shortly after the Newtown shooting, the National Rifle Association issued a call to do "whatever is necessary to put armed police officers in every school."[6] A few weeks later, President Obama announced a plan "to protect our children and our communities by reducing gun violence."[7] The President's plan proposes $150 million for school districts and law enforcement agencies to hire School Resource Officers, school psychologists, social workers, and counselors.[8]

In the wake of President Obama's recommendations, child advocacy organizations and community groups across the country have joined together to explain why the tragedy of Newtown must not be used to advance policies and practices such as those highlighted in Edward's Senate testimony. As Edward's account of his high school compellingly shows, the decision to bring more police into schools should be made with extreme caution, so as not to exacerbate the Cradle to Prison Pipeline® and risk pushing more students out of school in the name of school safety.[9]

This issue brief is directed at Ohio school districts that have SROs or are considering them. It seeks to provide guidance about how they can be used most effectively, often together with other strategies to improve school climate. First, the brief cautions that adding SROs, if special steps are not taken, can contribute to a negative school climate and to the Cradle to Prison Pipeline®, especially in communities like Edward's. If used as disciplinarians, SROs can set children on a path to school failure and early, unnecessary contact with juvenile and criminal justice systems. For communities that will decide (or have decided) to include SROs in their school safety plans, this brief provides information about promising model practices and policies that can minimize the risks too often inherent in school-based policing and help school-based police officers contribute to a positive, productive learning environment where student success is supported.

The Importance of Positive School Climate in Preserving School Safety and Supporting Student Success

Despite the horrific nature of school shootings, children are safer in school than in almost any other place.[10] The absolute best way to promote and preserve school safety is for community stakeholders, parents, students, and school staff to work together to build a positive school climate that minimizes police intervention[11] and emphasizes positive, preventive approaches to school discipline, reserving suspension and expulsion for only the most serious offenses that endanger students or staff.

Children learn best when they attend and remain in school. They thrive in environments that foster respect and in which adults develop strong relationships with students and take an active role in teaching and modeling appropriate conflict resolution strategies, practices that prevent bullying, and other positive social skills.[12] Thus, any consideration of reforms related to school safety must be based on research and data that show what works most effectively with children and youth. A school with police officers who are not trained in child development and who have no or limited experience with or knowledge about how to interact positively with young people works against the goal of engaging students for academic and personal success.

Research shows that a positive school climate helps to promote academic achievement, school success, effective violence prevention, healthy student development, and teacher retention.[13] School climate refers to both school life (for example, safety, relationships, teaching and learning) and larger organizational patterns (for example, fragmented or cohesive, healthy or unhealthy, conscious or unrecognized).[14] Introducing police officers into the school environment affects school climate, and its impact can be profoundly negative, especially if executed without careful thought, planning, and a clear understanding of the limitations and expectations at the outset. To this end, the recommendations set forth by the Interdisciplinary Group on Preventing School and Community Violence serve as a useful set of principles for all communities to consider when discussing the addition of School Resource Officers.[15] These recommendations include not intensifying security in schools, but instead increasing school and community access to mental health supports and integrated services that address needs and identify threats. Communication among stakeholders that emphasizes well-integrated programs that are balanced, effective, and well-monitored is key.[16] School police officers, if present, must be part of that integrated, positive approach.

School Resource Officers in Ohio and Nationwide

According to the Ohio School Resource Officers Association, School Resource Officers are trained to fulfill three roles: (1) law enforcement officers whose primary purpose is to keep the peace in schools; (2) law-related mentors who provide guidance to students, parents, and administrators; and (3) law-related teachers who share expertise in the classroom.[17] Proponents of SROs point to several positive roles for SROs. They might provide an extra safety net in schools, provide boundaries and expectations for students, parents, and teachers, and serve as positive role models and educators on law-related topics.[18]

As the role of SROs is being defined, their number is growing. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, the number of SROs across the country increased about 38 percent between 1997 and 2007.[19] About 75 percent of Ohio's more than 600 school districts currently have at least one SRO.[20] Whether the past decade's increase nationally in SROs has been beneficial for students overall, however, is a matter of debate.

After the school shooting incident at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado in 1999, many schools in Colorado increased police presence in their school buildings. Following these changes, Colorado saw increasing numbers of students arrested in school, mostly for relatively minor offenses unrelated to weapons.[21] Education and school discipline reform advocates have pointed out that as the use of highly punitive zero tolerance school discipline policies and the corresponding presence of police officers in schools have increased, more and more children are being pushed out of school and into the nation's juvenile and criminal justice systems.[22] It is crucial that communities considering adding or expanding the use of SROs in their schools understand and discuss this disturbing trend.

Unintended Consequences: How SROs Can Exacerbate the Cradle to Prison Pipeline

The term Cradle to Prison Pipeline® refers to the criminalization of children, especially children of color and low income children, at increasingly young ages.[23] A Black boy born in 2001 has a one in three chance of going to prison in his lifetime; a Latino boy has a one in six chance.[24] Many of the policies and practices that lead to these startling outcomes happen in our schools. The use of zero tolerance policies in student discipline and the use of police officers to patrol schools, ostensibly to ensure student safety, have exacerbated the Cradle to Prison Pipeline® in Ohio.[25]

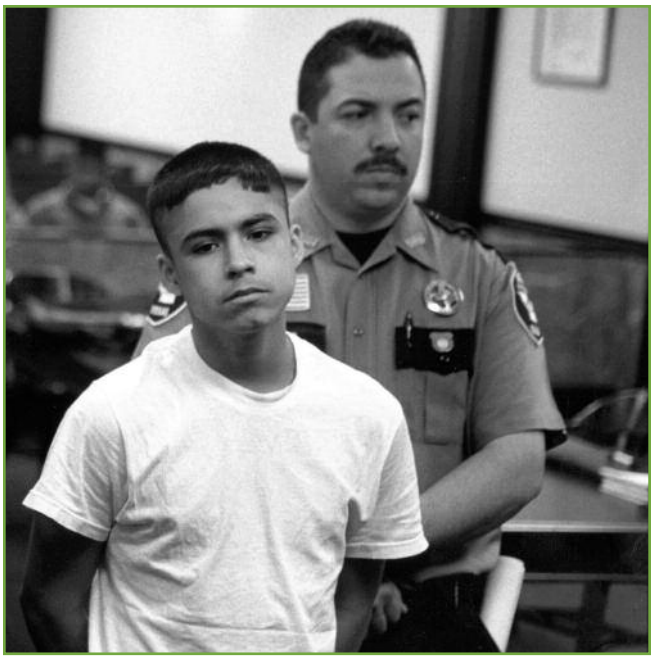
Zero tolerance policies are automatic and harsh punishments for a wide range of student infractions, including non-violent disruptive behavior, truancy, dress code violations, and insubordination.[26] Even when school policies don't impose automatic suspensions for specific behaviors, the culture of overzealous exclusionary discipline policies fostered by the zero

tolerance philosophy has created a situation in which children are being removed from school for increasingly minor behavior issues.

An October 2011 report from the National Education Policy Center found that only five percent of suspensions nationally were for weapons or drugs, while the other 95 percent were for "disruptive behavior" or an ambiguous "other" category.[27] According to the Ohio Department of Education, only six percent of out-of-school suspensions during the 2010–11 school year involved weapons or drugs.[28] Schools that frequently remove children from school for disciplinary reasons are also likely to show increased numbers of arrests of students in school. The presence of police officers in school buildings often exacerbates that problem. Nationally, hundreds of thousands of students are arrested or given criminal citations at schools each year.[29]

Police officers are often brought into schools for the purpose of improving students' and educators' sense of security, but when schools fail to establish clear boundaries separating serious offenses requiring police intervention from school discipline issues that should be handled by educators and specially trained school staff, officers can overstep their role.[30] SROs are becoming "zero tolerance disciplinarians" and arresting youth for disruptive rather than dangerous behavior.[31] Although there is no single national set of data setting out every arrest by SROs or police officers in the nation's schools, multiple data sets show that as the presence of law enforcement officers in schools has increased over the past decade, arrests and referrals to the juvenile justice system have also increased.[32] **In a three year study of 13 schools with a School Resource Officer and 15 schools without an SRO in a Southeastern school district with urban and suburban characteristics, a professor at the University of Tennessee found that the schools in the study with SROs had nearly five times the number of arrests for disorderly conduct as schools without an SRO, even after the study controlled for the level of economic disadvantage of the school.**[33]

School-based arrests of children for disorderly conduct and other non-violent offenses simply should not happen.



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But they are happening in Ohio. In Toledo Public Schools during the 2009–2010 school year, for example, approximately 648 students were arrested under Toledo's Safe School Ordinance,[34] which allows for students to be arrested and charged for disruptive behavior in school. Of those 648 students, 552, or 85 percent, were Black, even though only approximately 48 percent of students enrolled in Toledo Public Schools are Black.[35] Schools must implement more effective and appropriate responses to prevent and address student behavior in a way that avoids arrest and is not racially disproportionate. School safety, and a positive school climate, are critical for students to learn, grow, and develop and should be priorities for school administrators, parents, students, and the community as a whole. Unnecessary student arrests do not serve that purpose.

There is ample evidence that SROs can create, rather than prevent, a fearful environment in schools.[36] Many children, especially children of color, have had powerfully negative interactions with the police in their neighborhoods, which makes the presence of police officers in schools, for the stated purpose of student comfort and safety, particularly unsettling. This is exacerbated by the fact that youth of color are more

likely to attend schools that are patrolled by SROs.[37] Additionally, the kinds of relationships children have with adult authority figures greatly impact their relationships and social interactions going forward, especially for children who fail to develop secure attachments to loving, protective caregivers when they are very young.[38] Fearful environments in schools fail to help children learn how to develop meaningful relationships with adults in the school environment, a missed opportunity for students in need of positive relationships. It also is true that school climates that project an expectation that students will behave poorly become self-fulfilling prophecies: students have less reason to respect each other or adults in the school when the expectation is that they will misbehave.[39]

These facts further reinforce the need for caution when considering adding SROs to school buildings. Communities must discuss how the use of overly harsh student discipline and the presence of police officers in schools have exacerbated the Cradle to Prison Pipeline® in Ohio and should discuss whether adding SROs to their buildings will be counterproductive to their overall goal of improving school safety by fostering a negative school climate. In too many cases, the primary impact of SROs in schools has been to push more young people out of school. Communities that consider adding SROs, therefore, should also engage in discussions about reducing exclusionary discipline practices like suspension and expulsion, and eliminating, to the extent permitted by law, [40] zero tolerance policies in their schools. Only if SROs are part of a larger strategy to build a positive school climate and reduce the push out of students from school will the effort be more likely to result in a net positive for all children.

Models and Promising Practices: Minimizing Negative Impacts and Maximizing Positive Impacts

Schools that create positive school climates by implementing positive, preventive approaches to discipline[41] and fostering respectful relationships between adults and students rarely have a need for police intervention into incidents on their campuses.[42] However, if School

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Resource Officers are being used in a school or school district, there are particular strategies school districts and communities should implement to maximize their potential impact on positive school culture. With proper resources and support, School Resource Officers can play an important role in fostering a positive school climate.

To do it right, it is important to engage early in the process with input from and communication with as many community stakeholders as possible, including parents, students, teachers, school staff, and representatives from the juvenile justice system and child advocacy community. Communities should also seek written memoranda of understanding between the school district and police department that clarify limitations and expectations on the part of both. Successful adoption and implementation of SRO programs typically include robust community engagement and participation in the process.

Lessons from Promising Model SRO Programs

Limit the Role of SROs in Disciplinary Matters, Except for Those Involving Guns or Drugs

All of the promising model SRO programs across the country have as a common premise the clear delineation of what duties are and are not under the purview of SROs. As explained in this brief, when an SRO takes on

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the role of school disciplinarian, the larger goal of a positive school climate is significantly undermined and children are not set up to succeed. It is critically important to establish the difference between routine disciplinary incidents, which do not warrant an SRO's involvement, and firearm or serious drug incidents that might warrant law enforcement intervention.

Encourage SROs to Consider the Individual Circumstances Involved

The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute's publication *First, Do No Harm: How Educators and Police Can Work Together More Effectively to Keep Schools Safe and Protect Vulnerable Students* provides an instructive example of the benefits of SROs taking a more individualized, less punitive approach to students involved in a school altercation rather than an automatic zero tolerance approach focused solely on stopping and controlling the situation. The sample list of questions below that the SROs might ask when confronting two girls fighting at school demonstrate differences between the two approaches.[43]

This first list exemplifies the more individualized, less punitive approach:

- Are the girls fighting in school to be safe?
  - [O]fficers perceived that many fights occurred in school because youth hoped officers would referee the fights and break them up before they became dangerous.
- Are any of these girls known to be special education students or experiencing severe problems at home?
- Is anyone injured?
- What is the severity of the injuries?

- Don't I know you?
  - 'Frequent flyers' (students who were frequently in trouble in school) got less benefit of the doubt and fewer opportunities to explain themselves.
- What's the subtext of the fight?
  - Is one of these girls resisting gang recruitment? Is there a boy involved? Is there bullying? Is one girl a victim of the other?[44]

These questions use the zero tolerance approach, focused solely on stopping and controlling the incident:

- The rule is no fighting in school:
  - Is this a first fight for the girls involved?
  - If so, clerk magistrate summons.
  - If not, arrest.
- How severe is the fight?
  - Can we charge for assault and battery with dangerous weapon or aggravated assault & battery with serious bodily injuries?
  - Were weapons used?[45]

A subjective and individualized, rather than an automatic and ill-informed, assessment of the situation is essential to informing consequences and interventions. By training officers to respond with an individualized assessment first, and establishing clear guidelines and a shared understanding of how and when officers will respond with summons or arrest, schools and SROs set up officers, students, and the system for better results and fewer referrals of students to the community's juvenile justice system.

Implement Judge Teske's Positive Student Engagement Model for School Policing

Judge Steven Teske of Clayton County, Georgia helped his community create an SRO Protocol in 2008 after he grew tired of seeing so many cases come before him from area schools that should not have resulted in court involvement.[46] When the use of SROs in Clayton County was on the rise, school-based offenses rose from 46 incidents in 1995 to more than 1,400 in 2004.[47] Over 90 percent of the cases were misdemeanors.[48] At the same time, Clayton County experienced a decrease in its high school graduation rate and an increase in juvenile crime.[49] To address these problems, Judge Teske brought together members of the community, including educators, police, counselors, mental health professionals, the local NAACP, parents, and students to discuss how to better handle minor behavior problems in schools. After nine months, the stakeholders created a new protocol for how SROs in the schools would operate, which included two memoranda of understanding addressing the interests of all stakeholders: one focused on reducing suspensions, expulsions, and arrests, and the other on developing alternatives to suspension and arrests.[50]

Judge Teske's model SRO protocol has reduced school-based referrals to juvenile court in Clayton County by over 80 percent since 2004. "Now instead of making arrests, police issue warnings for first offenders. Repeat trouble means workshops or mediation. Only then may a student land in court. For chronic offenders, a system of care is in place to help resolve underlying problems."[51] Judge Teske's approach is now being replicated across the country with technical support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative and is referred to as the "Positive Student Engagement Model for School Policing."[52]

Judge Teske believes that SROs can play a positive role in creating and fostering a positive school climate, but only if they have proper training and support.[53] When SROs are specially trained in adolescent development, crisis intervention and fostering positive relationships with students, they can prevent crime, effectively address serious situations, and serve as positive role models for young people.[54]

Put All the Pieces Together as the Denver Public Schools Did

In February 2013, Denver Public Schools signed an intergovernmental agreement with the Denver Police Department that significantly changed the role police play in local schools.[55] Driven in part by the Denver-

based parent and youth organization Padres y Jóvenes Unidos,[56] the agreement explicitly delineates and limits the role police officers play in Denver schools and provides due process protections for parents and students who are impacted by discipline policies. The agreement revamps the school district's discipline code, redefining and recategorizing student offenses in a way that separates behaviors better suited for in-school discipline from those requiring police intervention.[57] The agreement requires SROs to have additional training, provides the community the opportunity to offer input for supervision of campus policing, and limits the SROs' role to prevent them from becoming disciplinarians in the school.[58] A copy of the intergovernmental agreement is available for download on the Advancement Project website.[59]

Make Reform Part of a Comprehensive Plan to Change the State's Juvenile Justice and School Discipline Practices

The State of Connecticut has completely changed its juvenile justice system over the course of twenty years, and an integral part of that effort has been a concomitant effort to reduce school suspensions and expulsions and school-based arrests. In 1992, Connecticut's detention centers were overcrowded, unsanitary, and most of the children exposed to these conditions were not accused of serious offenses.[60] Because so many school arrests are for minor behavior issues, reducing arrests at school for routine and non-serious behavior was identified as one of many goals of the comprehensive juvenile justice reform effort in Connecticut.[61] In 2007, the Connecticut legislature passed a bipartisan law limiting a school's use of out of school suspensions only to "youth who threatened school safety or disrupted the school's educational mission so severely that removal was essential."[62] In addition, nine school districts in Connecticut have signed memoranda of understanding with local police, including school-based police, aimed at reducing arrests at school for low-level misbehavior.[63] These school districts and police partnerships have received support from Connecticut's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee to support their work.[64]

In 2009, Connecticut launched the School-Based Diversion Initiative, which promotes mental health treatment instead of discipline or juvenile court involvement for students with emotional disturbance. Evaluation has found that the program decreased the number of students arrested and reduced subsequent misbehavior problems. [65]

Finally, in 2011, Connecticut juvenile courts began routinely rejecting referrals involving youth for very minor behavior. According to the Justice Policy Institute, of the first 221 cases that came before the courts after that policy went into place, more than half involved school arrests.[66] Connecticut is also now collecting statewide data on school arrests, hoping that better information, combined with better policies and practices, will reduce the phenomenon of children being removed from school and funneled into the juvenile justice system.

Recommendations

As explained earlier in this brief, the best practice for most schools, based on data about school discipline and arrest rates in schools in which School Resource Officers are placed, is to decline to introduce SROs into the school environment. Instead, resources and efforts should focus on building a positive school climate, implementing preventive and positive approaches to discipline, and building a culture of respect and communication between students, school staff, and parents. If communities choose to introduce or have already chosen to introduce SROs into their schools, it is important that special efforts be made to incorporate the SROs into the school climate in a positive way. The three recommendations below will help ensure that SROs are a positive part of school culture and do not contribute to school pushout and the Cradle to Prison Pipeline® crisis.

1. Every School District with SROs Should Have a Written Memorandum of Understanding

One of the common characteristics of every model SRO program is a document, often called a memorandum of understanding (MOU), that clearly sets out the duties

and boundaries SROs will follow in particular school settings.[67] Such a document helps "to ensure that law enforcement, school officials, and the communities they serve have a shared understanding of the goals of the SRO program, and that these officers receive the necessary support and training prior to their deployment."[68] Community participation is critical in developing an MOU will ensure that all impacted parties, including teachers, parents, and students, buy into the rules and responsibilities spelled out in the document and agree to monitor its implementation.

Having in place a written agreement or MOU is so central to the success of an SRO program that some states require schools to adopt MOUs with the police officers who will serve in their buildings. The Pennsylvania legislature, for example, adopted a state mandate in 2010 that requires all school districts and local law enforcement agencies that place SROs in school to adopt MOUs.[69] In December 2011, the Pennsylvania State Board of Education adopted a model MOU in accordance with the 2010 state law.[70] The Pennsylvania model MOU is missing some crucial elements that would make it a better model for improving positive school climate. It does, however, cover issues that protect the school and students, as well as the SRO, by clarifying certain policies, procedures, and rules. For example, the MOU covers when information from student records may be shared with SROs and what procedures are to be followed when an incident involves a student with a disability. The Denver Intergovernmental Agreement that was agreed to in February 2013 specifies due process protections for parents and students, such as notifying parents as soon as possible when their children are ticketed or arrested and that questioning of students must be done, when possible, at a time that least impacts their schooling.[71]

An effective MOU makes clear the roles and responsibilities of SROs

SROs should be able to distinguish a disciplinary infraction from criminal behavior. School administrators must retain responsibility for disciplinary interventions. The example below suggests how to do that in an MOU:

> Absent a real and immediate threat to student, teacher or public safety, incidents involving public order offenses including disorderly conduct; disturbance/disruption of schools or public assembly; trespass; loitering; profanity; and fighting that does not involve physical injury or a weapon, shall be considered school discipline issues to be handled by school officials, rather than criminal law issues warranting formal law enforcement intervention (e.g., issuance of a criminal citation, ticket, or summons, filing of a delinquency petition, referral to a probation officer, or actual arrest).[72]

An effective MOU establishes a data collection and reporting system to monitor the activities of SROs

MOUs must provide for clear communication and transparency regarding what SROs are doing and constant evaluation of how things are working. It is recommended that the MOU require SROs to report on their activities.[73] Without an accurate report, the school, the police, and the public cannot assess the programs properly.[74] For example, the MOU should include language requiring collection of data:

The school district and relevant law enforcement agency shall maintain annual publicly available data, without disclosing personally identifiable information, documenting the following:

- Number of incidents resulting in a juvenile arrest for conduct on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event, broken down by school; offense; arrestee's age, grade level, race, sex, and disability status; and disposition/result;
- Number of incidents resulting in other forms of law enforcement intervention—including searches and seizures by SROs; questioning by SROs; issuance of a criminal citation, ticket, or summons; filing of a delinquency petition; and referral to a probation officer—for juvenile conduct on school grounds or at a school sponsored event, broken down by

school; offense or reason; type of law enforcement intervention; juvenile's age, grade level, race, sex, and disability status; and disposition/result;
- Number of suspensions or other disciplinary consequences imposed on students, broken down by school; offense/infraction; student's age, grade level, race, sex, and disability status; and disciplinary consequence imposed;
- Regulations, policies and protocols governing the SRO program;
- Budget information for the SRO program including funding and expenditures;
- Number of SROs deployed to each school;
- Training materials for SROs; and
- Number and types of complaints lodged against SROs.[75]

An effective MOU must include a grievance procedure for parents, students, and school staff to submit complaints about the activities of SROs.

MOUs must also include some provisions for parents, students, and school staff to submit complaints, orally or in writing, about abuses or misconduct by SROs, and set in place a process by which such complaints will be heard and acted upon independently. The MOU should include details such as the right of parents to submit complaints in their native language. Additionally, complaints should be investigated and resolved quickly, for example, within 30 days, and allow for consequences for SROs found to have committed abuse or misconduct, such as additional training or suspension from duty.[76]

An effective MOU must specify minimum selection requirements for SROs

MOUs should set forth specific criteria for selecting individuals to serve as SROs. Qualities that make sense in this context include caring about and liking children, communicating well, having the ability to teach or the willingness to learn how to teach, and the flexibility to work with school administrators. Moreover, SROs should not be rookie officers.[77] Children need and deserve to be served by well-trained, well-prepared officers who choose to work in schools because they genuinely care about children and want to ensure their safety and academic and personal success.

An effective MOU must set forth a training program for SROs

It is also necessary to include a section on training in the MOU. Minimum training requirements should include a minimum number of hours pre-service, with an additional requirement for annual in-service training on topics including child and adolescent development and psychology, positive behavior interventions and supports, conflict resolution, restorative practices, disabilities and mental health, and cultural competency.[78] To support and encourage application of this training, the MOU should also include a clear statement promoting non-punitive approaches to student behavior and a positive school climate. For example:

The School Resource Officer shall be familiar with and trained in all programs adopting non-punitive approaches to discipline available in the school district. If a school has implemented a specific program designed to improve overall school climate or respond to student behaviors in specific ways, the SRO shall participate in all trainings associated with that program.[79]

2. SROs Must Receive Extensive and On-Going Training

Although the above cites to the need to include SRO training in the MOU between the school district and the police department, the need for extensive and on-going training is significant enough to warrant its own separate recommendation as well. Police officers are typically trained to deal with adult perpetrators on the street, not children in school. Because SROs engage in different jobs from a typical patrol officer, it is important for SROs to be properly trained to work in the school setting. At the most basic level, the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) offers a 40-hour training

A good MOU should, at a minimum:

- differentiate between disciplinary misconduct, which is to be handled by the school, and criminal offenses, which should be handled by the SRO or other law enforcement;
- understand and respect the rights of the children;
- be transparent and accountable;
- define the role of the SRO, also keeping in mind the educational mission of the school;
- provide for minimum and recommended training requirements;
- promote non-punitive approaches to student behavior;[80] and
- specify that arrest may only be used as a last resort. [81]

course.[82] This course consists of eight hour trainings for five days. It is "designed to benefit school administrators working with law enforcement and any law enforcement officer working with youth, or in an educational environment."[83] The Ohio School Resource Officers Association offers a similar-sounding 36-hour basic training seminar.[84] Like the NASRO program, the Ohio course is spread over five days. The curriculum includes topics such as major responsibilities of SROs, Ohio School Laws, Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), and tips on integrating an SRO in a school environment."[85] These options for a mandatory pre-service training prior to SROs beginning a school placement are certainly worth consideration.

A crucial feature of training for SROs, though, is that training regimes must be on-going in addition to any pre-service courses. Experts have suggested 10 hours annually as a minimum.[86] Training topics must also include, in addition to the basic course, information about child development, adolescent psychology, cultural competence, and other information specific to children and the school environment. Strategies for Youth offers a variety of training courses for SROs, focusing on developing explanations for normative teen behaviors, cultural issues affecting youth/adult interactions, strategies for asserting authority and getting compliance from teens without arrest or use of force, and recognizing and addressing implicit bias. These topics are all part of Strategies for Youth's course on "Policing the Teen Brain in School."[87]

3. The Roles of the SRO Must Be Clearly Defined and Support the Creation of a Positive School Climate With Ongoing School and Community Engagement and Oversight

Schools need to establish how much time SROs should spend in each of their roles (i.e., law enforcement, counselor, teacher). It is important that schools establish a good balance between all roles. This is something that is unique to each school district and to each building within a district, of course. A U.S. Department of Justice case study of 19 School Resource Officer programs in 2005 demonstrated that each school studied had a different way of distributing officers' time amongst their roles.[88] How those roles and officers' time is divided depends largely on the needs of each community, but discussion of the balancing of officers' time and focus should be focused at all times on fostering a positive school climate. SROs can and should play a role in helping to educate students and staff about restorative practices, conflict resolution programs, peer mediation, teen courts, and other ways to involve students in reflecting on behavior and how student behavior should be taught, managed, and modeled in schools.

Conclusion

Every child deserves a school that is warm, welcoming, and filled with learning. In an effort to ensure that schools are safe places for children to learn and teachers to teach, we cannot sacrifice those things we know to

be good for children and their development. Without special training and attention, School Resource Officers should not be included in school or district safety plans because they pose a greater threat to the positive development of students than they offer in real or perceived safety. Efforts must be made to maximize the value of additional adults in the school building committed to the well-being of children.

For most children, schools remain among the safest places to be, and fortunately, school shootings are still a very rare occurrence. It is not only possible but absolutely necessary that decisions made about the safety and security of children in school do not further undermine already frayed relationships and drive children away from school, directly or indirectly. There are definite risks to young people when police officers are brought into school environments, although the right training and clear differentiation between law enforcement duties and school administrators' and educators' discipline and classroom management responsibilities can minimize those risks.

This issue brief has not addressed the economic cost of bringing SROs into schools, either with or without the appropriate training, support, and preparation. Bringing in officers in a responsible way, however, carries with it additional costs both in school staff time and resources. Moreover, the decision to include police officers at a school likely detracts from spending available for far more effective interventions and supports, particularly those most likely to contribute to a positive school climate and student learning.

School safety decisions must involve all stakeholders in a school community, particularly parents and students. and must be directed at building positive school climates. Together, we must commit to ensuring that all children in every school have the best possible chance to remain in school and graduate prepared to contribute to Ohio's economy and communities. This issue brief is intended to contribute to this community dialogue by providing a useful introduction to the issues communities should consider in deciding whether to bring SROs into their schools and recommendations for how to do so responsibly, with a clear focus on what will help Ohio children succeed.

Endnotes

[1] *Ending the School to Prison Pipeline: Hearing Before the S. Comm. on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights*,112th Cong. (2012) (testimony of Edward Ward), *available at* http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/pdf/12-12-12WardTestimony.pdf.

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[6] David Nakamura & Tom Hamburger, *Put Armed Police in Every School, NRA Urges*, Washington Post, Dec. 21, 2012, *available at* http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-12-21/politics/35950179_1_gun-regulation-national-school-shield-program-gun-violence.

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[18] *Id.*

[19] *Bureau of Justice Statistics*, Local Police Departments 1997, 2000, 2003, and 2007, using the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) survey, *available at* http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=71; *see* Amanda Petteruti, *Education Under Arrest: The Case Against Police In Schools*, Just. Pol'y Inst. 1, 1 (2011), *available at* http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/educationunderarrest_fullreport.pdf (citing U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics).

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[21] Advancement Project, *supra* note 9, at 4.

[22] *See Test, Punish and Push Out: How "Zero Tolerance" and High Stakes Testing Funnel Youth Into the School-to-Prison Pipeline*, Advancement Project 1, 3 (2010), *available at* http://b.3cdn.net/advancement/d05cb2181a4545db07_r2im6caqe.pdf; *see also* Johanna Wald & Daniel J. Losen, *Defining and Redirecting a School-to-Prison Pipeline*, New Directions for Youth Dev., 9, 10 (2003) (noting that zero tolerance policies are behind the increase in "the number of students suspended annually from school since 1974 (from 1.7 million to 3.1 million)" and "the enactment of new laws mandating referral of children to law enforcement authorities for a variety of school code violations") (citation omitted).

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[25] Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, *Zero Tolerance and Exclusionary School Discipline Policies Harm Students and Contribute to the Cradle to Prison Pipeline®*, 1, 7 (2012), *available at* http://www.cdfohio.org/assets/pdf-files/issue-brief-zero-tolerance.pdf; *see also The Facts About Dangers of Added Police In Schools*, The Sent'g Project 1,1 (2013), *available at* http://www.njjn.org/uploads/digital-library/The-Facts-About-Dangers-of-Added-Police-in-Schools_The-Sentencing-Project.pdf (Adopting zero tolerance policies and adding police officers in schools leads to "unnecessary involvement in the justice system for youth").

[26] Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, *supra* note 25, at 1.

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[30] *Id.*

[31] Petteruti, *Education Under Arrest*, *supra* note 19, at 13.

[32] *Id.*

[33] *Id.* at 15; *see* Matthew T. Theriot, *School Resource Officers and the Criminalization of Student Behavior*, 37 J. Crim. Just. 280, 280–87 (2009).

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[35] This data was obtained from the Lucas County Juvenile Court.

[36] *Id.* at 19.

[37] *See* Petteruti, *Education Under Arrest*, *supra* note 19, at 22 (Students of color "attend schools with greater levels of surveillance, police presence, and zero tolerance policies.").

[38] *What is Attachment?*, Attachment Treatment & Training Inst., *available at* http://www.attachmentexperts.com/whatisattachment.html; *see* Marta Laupa, *Children's Reasoning About Three Authority Attributes: Adult Status, Knowledge, and Social Position*, 27 Developmental Psychology 2, 321–29 (1991).

[39] *See* Bruce Simmons-Morton, et. al., *Student-School Bonding and Adolescent Problem Behavior*, 14 Health Educ. Research 1, 99–107 (1999); Megan Marshall, *Examining School Climate: Defining Factors and Educational Influences*, Georgia State Univ. Center. for Sch. Safety, Sch. Climate and Classroom Mgmt. (2004), available at http://education.gsu.edu/SchoolSafety/download%20files/whitepaper_marshall.pdf.

[40] In the issue brief *Zero Tolerance and Exclusionary School Discipline Policies Harm Students and Contribute to the Cradle to Prison Pipeline®*, *supra* note 25, Children's Defense Fund-Ohio advocates amending Ohio's statewide zero tolerance statute, RC 3313.534, to eliminate the statewide mandate that schools enact zero tolerance policies for "violent, disruptive, or inappropriate behavior."

[41] *See* Johanna Wald & Lisa Thurau, *Taking School Safety Too Far?: The Ill-Defined Role Police Play in Schools*, Educ. Wk., Feb. 22, 2010, available at http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/02/24/22wald.h29.html?tkn=UMPFYKxBS5qhfDNuWUX98T7cQIGVJQlfEw6K&cm (explaining how the presence of police officers in schools in most school districts results in more arrests of students because educators and school police officers do not work out or articulate their separate roles).

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[46] *Ending the School to Prison Pipeline: Hearing Before the S. Comm. on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights*,112th Cong. (2012) [hereinafter *Hearing*] (testimony of Steven Teske), *available at* http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/pdf/12-12-12TeskeTestimony.pdf; *see* Donna St. George, *Judge Steve Teske Seeks to Keep Kids with Minor Problems Out of Court*, The Washington Post, Oct. 17, 2011, *available at* http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-10-17/lifestyle/35280676_1_school-discipline-student-discipline-russell-skiba.

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[58] *Id.*

[59] *Intergovernmental Agreement between Denver Public Schools and Denver Police Department*, ADVANCEMENT PROJECT & PADRES UNIDOS, *available at* http://b.3cdn.net/advancement/e746ea2668c2ed19b3_urm6iv28k.pdf .

[60] Richard Mendel, *Juvenile Justice Reform in Connecticut: How Collaboration and Commitment Have Improved Public Safety and Outcomes for Youth*, JUST. POL'Y INST. 1, 5 (2013), *available at* http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/jpi_juvenile_justice_reform_in_ct.pdf.

[61] *Id.* at 3.

[62] *Id.* at 25; 2007 Conn. Acts 07-66, Substitute for Raised H.B. No. 7350 (Reg. Sess.).

[63] Mendel, *supra* note 60, at 3.

[64] *Id.*at 25.

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[72] *Id.* at 12.

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[75] Kim & Geronimo, *supra* note 68, at 19–20.

[76] *Id.* at 20–21.

[77] Finn, et al., *supra* note 67, at 35.

[78] *Id.* at 25.

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[80] *Id.* at 7.

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CDF Mission Statement

The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

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