

Models of Campus Policing

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Models of Campus Law Enforcement

This article reviews various campus law enforcement models that have been used by primary and secondary public and private schools, as well as institutions of higher learning. It is informative for law enforcement professionals, as well as the general public, to understand these models in more detail, to include how they developed, as well as the duties and responsibilities of each of the models. In general, the public has a general idea of what the typical law enforcement officer's responsibilities are and, if asked, they will likely be able to list a litany of those duties. However, the same cannot always be said of the campus law enforcement officer. While some of the responsibilities of the campus officer are virtually the same as the typical law enforcement officer, there are also other responsibilities, which are discussed in more detail in this article because they are not as well known. These activities range from the relatively simple tasks of speaking duties at PTA meetings, speaking to other groups of students, teachers, and parents, and to the more serious task of preparing planned-responses to bomb threats or terrorists activities on campus. While the security and safety of campus, student, and staff are the primary focus of all of the models that will be reviewed, there are also these other important and unique functions and responsibilities that campus policing organizations are required to provide as a part of campus policing.

Primary and Secondary School Models:

The first model that will be discussed is the dedicated school district law enforcement organization. This type of school district police officer is employed directly by the school system, specifically to provide services to that particular school district. These school district police officers are comparable to any other law enforcement organization, in regards to their jurisdictional responsibilities; their services focus on the typical law enforcement needs of the campus that they serve. For example, the typical dedicated campus law enforcement organization will respond to any law enforcement related problem that may arise on the campus or in the immediate area surrounding the campus. There are also other administrative duties which are required of the campus law enforcement organization, as is typical of any regular police department. On occasion, these offices may also be asked by school administrators to enforce school rules and policies; however, this can be a point of contention for campus law enforcement officers who see their own responsibilities as primarily based upon the enforcement of laws, general safety of the campus environment and other service related functions that are typical of the services provided by regular law enforcement officers.

One of the purposes of a study conducted by this author of Texas school district policing organizations in 2003 was the development of a list of duties and responsibilities of the typical school district police officer. This study, which originally was completed to identify Texas school district police officer tasks for training needs, may also be used by any organization who may be interested in developing a more comprehensive job description for campus law enforcement officers. The list of competencies that are given in the table below of school district police officer competencies (or tasks) provides a snapshot of the typical duties and responsibilities of a school district police officer. Although these results were determined from questionnaires of Texas school district police chiefs and their officers, this list of competencies (tasks) should be valid for any school district or university police department in the United States. The results are reviewed here because the information compiled in this study may also be utilized for those interested in a quick snapshot of the duties and responsibilities of school district and university police officers. In addition to the training needs that may be identified, these same results can also be used to validate job descriptions utilized by campus law enforcement organizations who designed their job description based upon these competencies.

School District Police Officer Competencies-Type of Activity and Description of Task

Disturbance:

- Disturbance of classroom activities.

- Disruption of school activities.

- Disruption of transportation.

- Dispersing and controlling crowds at sporting events.

- Dispersing and handling disorderly juvenile groups.

Service Activities:

- Assist in school crossing duties.

- Advising and mentoring children (on and off campus).

- Patrolling schools and district property.

- Notification of criminal activity off campus.

Traffic and Vehicle Activities:

- Issuing moving violations on or near school grounds.

- Assisting motorists on school grounds.

Miscellaneous Non-Criminal Activities:

- Speaking to parent groups (PTA's, etc).

- Presentations to faculty groups.

- Presentations to student groups.

- Making contact with juvenile offenders.

- Handling irate parents on school grounds.

- Assisting/conducting fire drills.

- Emergency Preparedness.

- Assisting faculty in non-criminal disciplinary actions.

- School records checks of students.

- Security meetings with faculty.

- Enforce student code of conduct regulations.

- Hallway security monitoring.

Lunchroom security monitoring.
Duties Involving Crime and Crime Related Activities:
Bomb threat calls at school.
Domestic disturbances involving parents, teachers, children or visitors.
Drug usage/overdose on school grounds.
Arrest due to administrative searches.

Note: Competencies compiled by the researcher with assistance of a group of subject matter experts (SME's) from Conroe, Houston, Katy and Spring (Texas) ISD Police Departments.

Hybrid school district police

The hybrid school district law enforcement organization's officers have virtually the same duties, responsibilities and authority of the dedicated school district policing organization. The primary difference here is who actually employs the law enforcement officer. For example, the police officer who is assigned to a campus may actually be employed by the local police or sheriff's department, but they report for duty to a specific school facility where they have been assigned to work by their employing agency. In the literature, these officers are often referred to as School Resource Officers (SRO).

To get a better historical picture of how many officers have been assigned to SRO duties, a study completed in 1999 indicated that 30% of local police departments had about 9,100 full time school resource officers assigned to schools in their jurisdiction (Hickman & Reaves, 1999). Without argument, this number has increased greatly today, as more law enforcement organizations and school districts have come to the conclusion that it is better to have an officer assigned to the schools full time, as opposed to having local patrol officers assigned to take calls-for-service at schools on an as-needed basis.

A search for a more specific definition of school resource officer found several various definitions, some agreeing on the tasks and responsibilities of the officer, while others appeared to not include important tasks of the officers within their short definition. Perhaps the clearest explanation comes to us from the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, which defined a school resource officer as: A career law enforcement officer, with sworn authority, deployed in community oriented policing, and assigned by the employing police department or agency to work in collaboration with schools and community-based organizations to: (a) address crime and disorder problems, gangs, and drug activities affecting or occurring in or around an elementary or secondary school; (b) develop or expand crime prevention efforts for students; (c) educate likely school-age victims in crime prevention and safety; (d) develop or expand community justice initiatives for students; (e) train students in conflict resolution, restorative justice, and crime awareness; (f) assist in the identification of physical changes in the environment that may reduce crime in or around the school; and (g) assist in developing

school policy that addressed crime and recommend procedural changes. (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2010)

Yet another description of the School Resource Officer model, as supported by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office), the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), Corbin and Associates, and the Center for the Prevention of School Violence (CPSV), stated that they expected SROs to engage in three types of activities: law enforcement, teaching, and mentoring (Finn, Shively, McDevit, et al., 2005).

In addition, another model that has been utilized has a combination of dedicated school district police (certified law enforcement officers) assisted by the addition of non-sworn security officers. Typically, what is found regarding responsibilities of each of these parties is that the dedicated school district police officer will respond directly to any law enforcement related issue, as directed by their superiors or by a dispatcher, and they may make on-site arrests for any violations of state law or local ordinances. On the other hand, the primary duties of school security officers are essentially the same as those found in the private sector, which is to observe and report any incidents or problems to the proper authorities. They may also be assigned other administrative duties by the campus, such as traffic control, hallway monitoring or to serve as a deterrent to illegal activities that occur during meals in the cafeteria. It should be noted that these duties and responsibilities of the security officer are just an example of the many duties and responsibilities expected of these officers.

Benefits of Dedicated School Police Officers

Some of the benefits of having dedicated school district police officers were discussed in an article by Peter Finn (2006) that appeared in the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin:

1. **Reduced workload:** Prior to SRO's being assigned directly to the schools, the local law enforcement agency often found itself sending officers to the schools to handle minor problems several times a day, effectively taking up quite a bit of the local patrol officers time responding to calls at these schools. One analysis of 911 calls that was completed in 1999, before the SRO program began and then once again in 2001, after the SROs were assigned directly to the schools, one sheriff department determined that SROs handled 280 calls in 2001, thereby freeing deputies for other duties (Finn, 2006). It has also been suggested that by having officers on the school campus, it can have an impact on the number of incidents at the school because the officers mere presence provides a deterrence against crime and disorder.

2. **Improve Image Among Juveniles:** In the past, administrators stated that they noticed improved attitudes and behaviors of young people towards police officers, which effectively increased crime reporting by those juveniles.

3. Create better police-school relationships: It is also been reported by law enforcement organizations at school districts that they have noted an improved collaborative atmosphere between their law enforcement organization and the schools administration. In the past it was noted that some principals and superintendents would not notify law enforcement officials about potential issues with students and staff, fearing the problems would make them appear to the schools stakeholders (employees, students, students families, etc.) that they do not have “full control” of their campuses. Of course by not notifying law enforcement of these criminal acts any investigative process or complaint that followed may be negatively impacted.

4. Enhance agency reputation: Finn’s (2006) review also found that SROs actually enhance the agency’s image in their communities when officers are assigned directly to the schools. In effect, enhancing the agency’s reputation in the community has a positive effect on the officers assigned to that department, as well as the department’s administration, as the schools administration are held responsible for any type of incidents that may occur on the school’s campus. Additionally, assigning SROs directly to the school can also have a positive effect on the campus as a whole, as it is easier to conduct the business of education if a campus feels safe from criminal activities.

Higher Education Policing

In order to get a greater understanding of law enforcement services for higher education on campuses, the U.S. Department of Justice performed a survey of four-year institutions of higher learning with a student population of over 2500. This survey resulted in a report from over 600 campus law enforcement agencies and indicated that over three-fourths of these agencies used sworn police officers, while the remainder utilized non-sworn personnel (Reaves & Goldberg, 1995). Historically campus policing on college campuses has been in existence in various forms since the first police officers were assigned to Yale University in 1894, which was implemented after bloody riots and confrontations between students and police led the community and the university to recommend that two full time officers of the New Haven Police Department be assigned to the campus full time (Reaves, Goldberg, 1995) . The report by Reaves and Goldberg (1995) also found that by far, the hiring requirements for sworn officers were more stringent and they were also required to have more training (academy and in-service types of training) than the non-sworn personnel (security personnel) who also are (and have been) assigned to many campuses across the nation. These security guard duties and responsibilities can be compared to those reviewed in the section on dedicated school district police officer and hybrid school district police officer.

Higher education policing can be described as following closely to the dedicated school police officer model, which has been previously discussed. These officers are also predominantly state certified police officers and have full arrest authority, both on the campus and in the immediate area surrounding the campus. While one might note that the majority of these officers are state certified law enforcement officers and can make arrests anywhere in the state for a violation of state law, the typical campus policing

organization usually restricts its officers to respond to campus incidents in the immediate area because it may affect the safety and security of their clients, who are generally considered to be the students, employees, and visitors to the campus. This is usually due to many of these college and university campuses are located within cities or towns and near areas with typical vehicular and foot traffic that may be passing through or in the immediate vicinity of the campus. There are also usually numerous businesses that service the campus and while a university police department does not have direct responsibility for off-campus businesses, many of their clients, such as the students and staff, will patronize these enterprises as they travel back and forth across a campus. If there are any type of law enforcement related problems in or around the vicinity of these businesses, the university the police department may deem it necessary to respond as a public service, at least until the local police department can arrive.

Conclusion

The need and value of campus based policing is evident when a review of the literature is conducted. One of the main questions for school district executives to answer is to ascertain whether to employ their own campus based officers, such as in the dedicated school based model – or whether to employ a hybrid based model, such as using municipal officers or sheriff's deputies who are trained as school resource officers. Factors that may help determine which model of policing is appropriate for a particular school district will include the aggregate student population, funding sources and existing relationships with the municipal and/or county law enforcement agency that has had a historical jurisdictional responsibility for handling campus based incidents. No matter which model is implemented, school executives will have to develop school based policies on how campus based police officers will handle criminal and non-criminal incidents.

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