



School Resource Officer

What is a School Resource Officer (SRO)?

School Resource Officers are proactive school-based law enforcement officers who rely on positive relationships between officers and students. These relationships build trust between SROs and the student body, reduces school safety issues, and promotes perceptions of safety.¹

An SRO can fulfill a variety of roles such as; preventing and responding to school-based crime; fostering positive relationships among law enforcement, educators, and youth; and promoting a positive school climate. The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) advocates for SROs to fulfill a “triad” role encompassing three primary functions: educator, informal counselor, and law enforcer.¹

The Role of an SRO

Informal Counselor: An SRO can act as an informal counselor for students. Students can talk to SROs about both formal and informal issues and challenges they are facing. Through offering support, an SRO builds positive relationships with students. This allows the SRO to recognize problems early. By identifying these problems, an SRO can assist in putting intervention efforts in place early. This can prevent future problems without escalating to arrests.¹ An SRO can utilize Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) when students are in crisis. YMHFA is a program offered by the Bureau of Student Wellness in the New Hampshire Department of Education that teaches about warning signs of people between 12 and 18 in age who are in crisis (BSW).²



Educator: An SRO can teach both students and faculty within a school. They teach subjects such as; bullying prevention, gang resistance, and drug/alcohol resistance. The SRO also provides information to school staff about when and how to intervene with students. In addition, an SRO provides advice and education on emergency planning, prevention, and response.¹

Law Enforcer: As a sworn law enforcement officer, an SRO has the training and ability to act in a law enforcement capacity. This includes making arrests and providing emergency response on the school grounds. This cuts down on response time to the school during an emergency. The SRO's knowledge of the building and the people in it also helps during these emergencies, as it can provide valuable insight for first responders.¹

Behavioral Intervention Teams (BIT): “A BIT is a multi-disciplinary group whose purpose is to support its target audience (students, employees, faculty, staff, community, workplace) via an established protocol designed to help detect early indicators of the potential for disruptive conduct, self-harm, and the risk of violence





to others” (NaBITA).³ Given the vital role that SROs play in the school, SROs are important members of a school BIT. Their role as an informal counselor combined with their experience as a law enforcement officer gives them valuable insight into threat assessment and student lives.

Surveys of educators, students, officers, and community members suggest that school-based law enforcement programs are popular and perceived as effective. Respondents report that officers can do the following:¹

- Increase feelings of safety among students, teachers, and administrators.
- Deter aggressive behavior, and empower staff to maintain order and address behavioral issues in a timely fashion.
- Diminish classroom time spent on discipline and behavioral disruptions.
- Improve school safety and reduce school-based crime.
- Increase the likelihood that students report witnessing a crime and help reduce community-wide criminality.
- Improve relationships between law enforcement and youth.

SRO’s also...

- Act as a liaison to local police department and other emergency services (fire, emergency medical services, homeland security, etc.).
- Can be a great classroom speaker on the topic of law enforcement and the court system.
- Bring special NH safety events and contests to the school. (Seatbelt Challenge, LE torch run, fatal choices, NH alcohol poster design contest, RAD, DARE, LEEP, ALICE, ADD, Stop the Bleed, etc.)

References

- 1 - Thomas, B., Towvim, L., Rosiak, J., Anderson, K. *School Resource Officers: Steps to effective school-based law enforcement* (Rep.). (September 2013). National Center Brief. Retrieved June 2019 from <http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/SRO%20Brief.pdf>
- 2 - Bureau of Student Wellness (BSW). Youth Mental Health First Aid. New Hampshire Department of Education. Retrieved July 31, 2019 from https://www.nhstudentwellness.org/uploads/5/3/9/0/53900547/ymhfa_-_overview.pdf
- 3 - National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA). Behavioral Intervention Team Consulting. (n.d.). Retrieved July 31, 2019, from <https://www.nabita.org/>

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