

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the School Resource Officer vary from school to school. A diverse range of duties can be incorporated into the SRO job description. Some functions served by the SRO include: law enforcement officer, public safety specialist, community liaison and problem solver, law-related educator, and positive role model.

1. Law Enforcement Officer - Although a less performed role, the SRO is still a law enforcement officer with the authority and duty to handle crimes and make arrests when necessary. It is important to differentiate between school code of conduct violations and crimes. SRO's should not be involved in code of conduct violations, but should take the lead on criminal violations. Part of this role is also the responsibility to serve as a liaison between the school and the local police department.

2. Public Safety Specialist - The SRO should be aware of current research on effective strategies for increasing school safety, and assist the school in implementing research-based strategies. The SRO should be involved with discipline policies, school safety assessments, physical safety of the school, crisis and emergency management planning, crime prevention or intervention, and other safe school planning processes.

3. Community Liaison and Problem Solver - Many problems require change within or assistance from the community. The SRO should be aware of community resources and contacts that can be helpful in solving a problem. Some community resources of which the SRO should be aware include: mental health services, substance abuse assessment and treatment providers, child protective services, runaway shelters, domestic violence services, and family counseling agencies.

4. Law-Related Educator - Law-Related Education is designed to teach students the fundamentals and skills needed to become responsible citizens in a democracy. Law-Related Education teaches social competence, problem-solving skills, a sense of autonomy, and reinforces high expectations for youth and positive peer norms. This should be a fun and interesting class with field trips, community service projects, visits from juvenile justice representatives, classroom participation, and mock trials or public performances.

5. Positive Role Model - One of the most influential roles held by the SRO is that of being a positive role model to students. Students often seek approval, direction and guidance in informal interactions with an SRO that they trust. Some ways for the SRO to be a positive role model include: setting limits by being clear about what is

acceptable and unacceptable; setting an example; being honest; being consistent with students, staff and parents; encouraging responsibility; and showing respect for students. The SRO should always try to maintain a professional appearance; be visible and accessible; take concerns seriously and follow through with commitments to take action; participate in and support school functions; maintain a relationship with students' parents; and maintain a relationship with faculty and school administration.