

School Resource Officers Work Group Recommendations

School Resource Officers Work Group



APS



ACPD

June 3, 2021

Arlington Public Schools





SRO Work Group Charge

Arlington Public Schools Mission is, “to ensure all students learn and thrive in safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments.” The purpose of the Arlington Public Schools (APS) School Resource Officer (SRO) Work Group is to evaluate and examine APS’ partnership with Arlington County Police Department (ACPD) and specifically to review our longstanding practice of SROs in schools. This examination may result in reinventing, limiting, or terminating the SRO and school partnership in Arlington in support of APS’ Mission, following the review and assessment of current practices, research, data, and community input.



Advisory Leaders

The SRO Work Group was led by the following Advisory Leaders:

- Brian Stockton, APS Chief of Staff
- Dr. Juliette Shedd, SRO Work Group Facilitator
- Marcia Thompson, Legal Expert



SRO Work Group Members

MEMBER NAME		ROLE	MEMBER NAME		ROLE
Peter	Anderson	Teacher	Heba	Mahmoud	Parent/Guardian
Uyanga	Batsukh	Parent/Guardian	Michelle	Marrero	Teacher
Jennifer	Bauer	Parent/Guardian	Elizabeth	McHugh	Parent/Guardian
Michelle	Best	Parent/Guardian	Scott	McKeown	Administrator
Lauren	Brice	Community/Other	Anita	McLinton	Parent/Guardian
Monique	Brown-Bryant	Parent/Guardian	Kathleen	McSweeney	Community/Other
Tonya	Chapman	Community/Other	Vladimir	Olic	Parent/Guardian
Mike	Chick	Parent/Guardian	Lisa	Pellegrino	Teacher
Caitlin	Davies	Teacher	Kolleena	Perry	Teacher
Katie	Deal	Parent/Guardian	Aura	Rojas	Parent/Guardian
Melisa	Esposti	Parent/Guardian	Maggie	Slye	Parent/Guardian
Elizabeth	Fabrizio	Parent/Guardian	Sharon	Solorzano	Teacher
Catherine	Han	Administrator	Ronda	Stewart	Parent/Guardian
Endia	Holmes	Community/Other	Tauna	Szymanski	Parent/Guardian
Carolyn	Jackson	Administrator	Gabriela	Uro	Community/Other
Daryl	Johnson	Administrator	Ana Sofia	Uro de Leon	Community/Other
Sherrice	Kerns	Parent/Guardian	Janeth	Valenzuela	Community/Other
Eleanor	Lewis	Teacher	Symone	Walker	Parent/Guardian
Eric	Lotke	Community/Other	Jenny	York	Teacher
Elaine	Maag	Parent/Guardian	James	Younger	Community/Other



Recommendation Development Process

- Over the past five months, the SRO Work Group met once a month to discuss the relationship between APS and the Arlington County Police Department (ACPD).
- The SRO Work Group listened to presentations from various community groups and staff about the role of SROs in schools.
- The SRO Work Group included four subgroups
 - Education & Mentorship
 - Law Enforcement
 - Mental Health, Behavior & Substance Abuse
 - Physical Security & Emergency Response
- Each subgroup included one SRO who served as an information resource for the subgroup.



School Resource Officer Subgroup Recommendations



Mental Health & Substance Abuse Subgroup

Primary Recommendation:

While there may be a role for School Resource Officers (SROs) or the police department in schools, that role does not include SROs in secondary schools as a security or law enforcement presence. The role of SROs should not include a routine onsite daily presence in secondary schools as a security force and should not include any regular involvement in school discipline.

Dissenting Recommendation:

One member of the group believed that rather than remove SROs from the schools, ACPD should invest in more robust training for SROs, especially in the area of mental health and interacting with students who have disabilities.



Mental Health & Substance Abuse Subgroup

Alternative Recommendations:

- Formation of a Juvenile Response Group that is on call for juvenile offender incidents throughout the County.
- Implement school discipline and training standards that will provide the tools and require staff to fulfill some of the functions that have been done by SROs.
- Improve the ratio of school counseling and mental health staff to students by hiring additional staff.
- Develop a robust restorative justice program for APS to help address long-term discipline disparities.

Primary Recommendation:

First, SROs are not required to be stationed within APS schools in order to fulfill any education or mentorship functions. Secondly, the education and mentorship functions at issue can and should be undertaken by professional educators and APS staff.

Dissenting Recommendation:

The two subgroup members who voiced support for keeping SROs stationed in schools expressed a desire to define and standardize the connections between SROs and APS curriculum in health, social studies, and driver's education. These members also mentioned that having SROs in schools allows the SROs to have casual interactions and build positive relationships with youth.

Alternative Recommendations:

- Educate students and families on their rights, responsibilities and consequences when it comes to police interactions.
- Establish a student and family education plan that provide information on rights and responsibilities issues at multiple and specific touchpoints along the K-12 timeline.
- Partner with defense attorneys and/or juvenile justice providers to participate in educating students and families on legal issues.
- If SROs were to be removed, the County should prioritize the health and safety of students by focusing on other resources to support students.



Physical Security Subgroup

Primary Recommendation: ACPD could still provide adequate support to students and schools, even if they are not stationed in the schools.

Dissenting Recommendation: The subgroup was divided on whether or not to keep SROs in schools.

Alternative Recommendations:

- ACPD could train staff on threat assessments, trafficking, etc.
- ACPD could designate cruisers to patrol the grounds and perimeter of school facilities during high traffic times and/or special events.
- ACPD could also designate rapid response teams for each school and conduct drills to prepare for emergencies.
- ACPD should provide APS with the number of minutes it takes to respond to each school once called because data was not available on response times.
- The ACPD Chief of Police and APS Superintendent could have monthly check-in meetings to discuss any unique needs that APS has with law enforcement, and to maintain a strong relationship.



Law Enforcement Subgroup

Primary Recommendation:

The primary relationship should be support. ACPD should provide APS with support when needed to keep students and staff safe and enforce the law. A full-time ACPD presence on school campuses is not needed to achieve this goal.

Dissenting Recommendation:

Community opinions are split on law enforcement, with as much negative as positive. Some people feel safer with law enforcement present – but some people feel quite the opposite.



Law Enforcement Subgroup

Alternative Recommendations:

- APCD can be invited for educational presentations and community building activities.
- ACPD should be available when called upon, like for any other place in the county.
- The functions SROs currently play relating to counseling, coaching, and mentoring do not require law enforcement and might be better served by people with different training who present themselves differently on campus.
- ACPD will hopefully maintain a cadre of officers with a focus on juveniles, perhaps former SROs or people with additional training for handling youth.
- Any future MOU needs to make clear *where and when* ACPD has jurisdiction during their regular duties.
- To the degree APS administrators use SROs to support school administration, schools may benefit from additional senior personnel nearby or additional professional development for current staff.



Overall Work Group Recommendations



SRO Work Group Primary Recommendations

- Revise the roles of ACPD in the schools to emphasize functions that can only be performed by law enforcement. Several of the subgroups noted the SROs as capable, willing adults in schools who are taking on a variety of roles that do not specifically require a law enforcement officer to handle.
- The subgroups are recommending that where a law enforcement office is not required, APS invest in additional staff, training, and support for other professional staff to meet those needs.
- Focus in the MOU on functions that have mandatory reporting requirements or mandated collaboration on security functions between APS and ACPD.
- Ensure continued participation of ACPD members as coaches, mentors or in informal roles-as appropriate for any member of the community to participate in the support of the development of APS students, without specific access or engagement because of a role as an SRO.
- Consideration of measurable goals for the collaboration and a process to review results related to those goals.



SRO Work Group Alternative Recommendations

- Provide additional staff training to ensure consistency in how discipline processes are handled and when law enforcement officers are called to support school staff.
- Invest in additional professional support staff to bring ratios to recommended minimums in mental health and substance abuse areas.
- Prioritize implementation of a robust school-based restorative justice program.
- Implement a rigorous education plan for students and families on law enforcement and the legal system's interactions and rights.
- Provide a clear delineation in the MOU and reinforce through staff training how information about police involved incidents that impact APS students is transmitted to the appropriate school staff needed to support students with wraparound services. This training should be for APS Administrators and ACPD about state privacy laws and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) privacy regarding sharing of information occurring outside of school.



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