Frequently Asked Questions: School Resource Officer Program

1. **What is a School Resource Officer (SRO)?**

A School Resource Officer (SRO) is a highly trained law enforcement officer who is stationed within a school environment to ensure the safety of students, staff, and the school community. This police officer is in uniform and is armed. SROs serve as a bridge between law enforcement and the school, focusing on building positive relationships and maintaining a secure learning environment.

2. **Do school resource officers contribute to a school-to-prison pipeline?**

No. Carefully selected, specially trained school resource officers who follow NASRO's best practices do not arrest students for disciplinary issues that would be handled by teachers and/or administrators if the SROs were not there. On the contrary, SROs help troubled students avoid involvement with the juvenile justice system. In fact, wide acceptance of NASRO best practices is one reason that the rates of juvenile arrests throughout the U.S. fell during a period when the proliferation of SROs increased (see To Protect and Educate: The School Resource Officer and the Prevention of Violence in Schools).

3. **SROs and the Relationship with ICE**

New York State has issued numerous guidance documents and letters that have indicated that SROs are not to be involved with any immigration enforcement. Specifically, in an August 29, 2019 letter from the NYS Attorney General Letitia James, which is at this link https://p1232.nysed.gov/sss/documents/oag-sed-joint-guidance-ice-sros-in-schools.pdf, AG James states that schools have an obligation to educate students who reside in their boundaries, regardless of their immigration status. SROs are not to perform any task or duty that has a chilling effect on interrogation of a student in order to determine the student’s immigration status could expose the district to liability. Additionally, the SRO’s access to education records (unless accessing same as a school official, as defined about), would be a violation of FERPA. If the SRO is accessing education records as a school official, they would be prohibited from disclosing same to a federal immigration agency.
4. Can an SRO obtain information from a minor without the presence of a parent, guardian, or attorney?

District policy prohibits police from questioning a student except under limited circumstances (search or arrest warrant, probable cause that a crime was committed on school property or an invitation from school officials), but in all instances, the parent should be notified with the opportunity to be present and if the parent cannot be reached, the questioning should not occur.

5. Will the SRO be a School Official in the Port Chester School District? Will the SRO administer consequences or discipline for students?

No. The SRO will not be a school official in our district. Administrators will make decisions regarding all student infractions.

6. How many SRO will serve the Port Chester School District?

At this time, the District is working with our police departments of Port Chester and Rye Brook to have a total of two officers serve as the District’s SRO’s. One will be assigned to our elementary schools and one will be assigned to our Middle School and High School.

7. What qualities should our SRO’s have?

The main qualities that have been shared as priorities for our community, expressed by our community are as follows:

- Bilingual
- Highly trained to work in/with a diverse community with students, staff, parents, and community
- Bias Trained
- Collaborative
- Dedicated to our district and community.

8. What are the main responsibilities of a School Resource Officer?

SROs have a range of responsibilities including enhancing school safety and security, providing education and mentoring to students, intervening in crises, conducting law-related education, and participating in community-building activities.

9. How does the presence of an SRO contribute to school safety?

SROs work closely with school administrators to develop and implement security protocols, respond to potential threats, and conduct safety drills. Their visible presence acts as a deterrent to potential incidents and provides a sense of security for students and staff.
10. **How will SROs interact with students?**

SROs will engage with students through presentations, workshops, and informal discussions on topics such as bullying prevention, drug awareness, and personal safety. They strive to establish positive connections and act as approachable role models.

11. **Are SROs specially trained for working in schools?**

Yes, SROs undergo specialized training that equips them to handle the unique challenges of a school environment. This training includes crisis intervention, de-escalation techniques, understanding adolescent behavior, and promoting a safe and inclusive atmosphere.

12. **What is the selection process for SROs?**

SRO candidates are carefully selected based on their experience, training, and ability to connect with students. A rigorous screening process, background checks, and interviews ensure that the chosen officers are a good fit for the school community.

13. **How will the effectiveness of the SRO program be measured?**

The effectiveness of the SRO program will be evaluated through various means, including feedback from students, staff, and parents, as well as data on school safety incidents. Regular assessments will guide ongoing improvements to the program.

We hope this FAQ provides a comprehensive understanding of a School Resource Officer program.

**PROPOSED School Resource Office TIMELINE from Port Chester and Rye Brook Police**

**June/July**
- SRO selection process by RB/PC police departments.
- Negotiations with police unions (if necessary)
- Development of IMA between PC School District and RB/PC villages
- Parent focus group meetings with police (if needed)

**August**
- Continue SRO selection process if needed.
- Continue development of IMA between PC School District and RB/PC villages
- SRO training in Syracuse (8/28 - 9/1)

**September/October**
- Approval of IMA by PC School District, RB/PC village board of trustees

**November/December**
- Orientation meetings with school principals, staff

**January 2024**
- Begin program