



2023-07

THE NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION RECOGNIZES THE NEED FOR SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS IN SCHOOLS TO MITIGATE THREATS AND TO BUILD TRUST BETWEEN STUDENTS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

WHEREAS, the National Sheriffs' Association acknowledges School Safety as a priority in our nation's counties, parishes, cities, etc., and acknowledges that America's schools are a critical infrastructure and key assets to our communities; and

WHEREAS, enhancing the physical security of school facilities and improving incident response are priorities while hardening (layered security) and making each classroom and our schools a protected space; and

WHEREAS, physical security measures are only one aspect of protecting students and faculty at America's schools, it is paramount that additional measures are taken and implemented; and

WHEREAS, school resource officers in schools have been found to enhance the security of schools and those students, faculty, and others who may be in the school on a daily basis; and

WHEREAS, our nation continues to see an increase in devastating school shootings by violent actors; and

WHEREAS, historically, approximately 17% of active shooter incidents (as defined by the FBI) have taken place in K-12 schools (from 2000-2014). These attacks target our most vulnerable population. For most states throughout the country SROs are limited to High Schools and Jr. High Schools, leaving elementary schools without protection; and

WHEREAS, the "Run, Hide, Fight" method is also taught, however, much of our school student population is incapable of effectively using this method due to their age and size. In short, our children are incapable of effectively responding to an attack on their own, and need the protection of an SRO in every school; and

WHEREAS, in the U.S. Secret Service's 2019 study "Protecting America's Schools" a ten-year study of past school attacks was conducted. One astonishing statistic that resulted from this study is that in the past decade, there was not one single school shooting that was resolved by a law enforcement response from off campus. In other words, police response from the community outside of the school did not arrive in time 2(SRO) present is unquestionably the best measure to ensure the quickest response possible to stop the killing; and

WHEREAS, having an SRO in every school will greatly increase the odds that law enforcement will learn about a potential attack before it happens, and be in a position to mitigate and intercede to prevent the attack¹; and

¹ The 2002 U.S. Secret Service Study "The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative" found that in 81% of the incidents they studied at least one person had information that the attacker was thinking about or planning the school attack. In 59% of the incidents, more than one person had information about the attack before it occurred. In nearly all these cases, the person who knew was a peer, friend, schoolmate, or sibling. An adult had information about the idea or

WHEREAS, the FBI's School Shooter Quick Reference Guide states that 93% of school attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the attack that caused others to be concerned. In the 2019 Secret Service study, they found that every attacker in their analysis exhibited concerning behaviors prior to the attack. In all but two of the cases, this behavior was displayed at school. An SRO who is trained to recognize these behaviors would be in a position, based on his/her assignment within the school to personally observe these behaviors, and interact with the student body to develop rapport with the students that would make them feel comfortable reporting concerning behavior when observed by them. Further, 95% of the attacks were carried out by "current students." An SRO in place at every school would be in the vital position to know and be aware of students who are displaying problematic or concerning behavior. These are the students who are attacking the schools 95% of the time; and

WHEREAS, at the elementary school level, most attacks are from persons who come to campus from elsewhere (not students) to kill the most vulnerable. An SRO in place at elementary schools would not only serve as a deterrent to and immediate protection in response for elementary school attacks, but would also be a key figure in the social development of these young children. An SRO that properly integrates and engages with these young students can have a significant impact into the future when these children enter middle and high school. If they are comfortable and trusting of law enforcement due to their positive interactions with them in an elementary school setting, then they would be more likely to report potential attackers to the SROs in future school settings; and

WHEREAS, the use of Threat Assessment and Threat Management Teams has long been shown to be the most effective means to prevent these tragedies from happening in the first place. These teams should be in place within every school district and/or school. An SRO in every school would have a substantially positive impact on the threat assessment process in schools, and would ensure that students of concern who have been assessed are being properly managed. Students move from grade to grade or school to school, the SRO would be in a position to make sure that a positive "hand-off" takes place with the SRO at the next school. We cannot allow students who are at risk of becoming attackers to fall between the cracks. Law enforcement must be involved in this process, and an SRO at each school is a natural fit for this important duty²; and

WHEREAS, an SRO at each school who is focused on student engagement would be much more likely to obtain advanced notice of a potential problem; and

WHEREAS, there is no single cause for school attacks. That being said, the 2002 Secret Service study found that in 61% of the cases studied, revenge was the motive. This revenge was in response to some perceived wrong or adverse interpersonal interaction. Many of these students were the victim of persistent and severe bullying³; and

WHEREAS, in the 2019 Secret Service study it was discovered that 80% of the school attackers were bullied, and that of that number 57% were bullied in a persistent pattern that lasted for weeks, months, or years. This highlights the need for school climates that encourage students to share concerns, and for the schools to address and correct this behavior. An SRO at each school could have a meaningful impact on

plan in only two cases. What do we derive from this information? First, that it is frequently the case that another student knows about a planned attack, and second, that the information about the planned attack is not being reported to law enforcement.

² The key to a good threat assessment/management team is that its members be from a diverse set of positions and backgrounds. One of the key positions, particularly in the schools, is an SRO to represent law enforcement in this process.

³ Bullying is not "the" cause of school attacks, but is certainly "a" cause amongst others. All too often this type of severe bullying is not properly addressed by school administration. An SRO in every school would put in place a means to address this type of behavior and prevent victimization of students.

school culture/climate, and in the reduction of and appropriate response to bullying; and

WHEREAS, while the above noted points relate to school attacks, there is much more that goes on in the lives of school students where an SRO could have a positive impact. An SRO would be in a position to learn of sexual harassment or sex crimes, to learn about abusive or dangerous home environments, to learn of students who are despondent and may be contemplating suicide, to learn of students who have experienced a major loss or trauma. The list could certainly go on, but the positive impact of an SRO in each school goes far beyond the protection that individual would provide to the student body;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the National Sheriffs' Association establishes that School Resource Officers shall be appropriately trained and certified as peace officer according to the post certified standards within their jurisdiction. Furthermore, the School Resource Officers shall maintain annual training as is appropriate to maintain school safety and mitigation of threats to students, faculty, and staff. They shall be present in every school to address the threat of active shooters and to establish trust between students and law enforcement as part of our critical infrastructure; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the National Sheriffs' Association Urges Congress, State Legislatures and County Governments to appropriate funding necessary to allow America's communities to enhance safer schools and follow recommended practices as recommended by the National Sheriffs' Association.