

It is not uncommon for a SRO to be asked the question: **What do you do all day?**

A School Resource Officer has a diverse role in the school and community and has many duties and responsibilities.

We have defined a School Resource Officer as a sworn officer assigned to a school on a long-term basis **trained to perform three major roles: law enforcement officer, law-related counselor, and law-related educator**. In addition, the officer works in collaboration with the school and the community as a resource for safety and security issues.

As a law enforcement officer, the **school becomes the officer's patrol**. The SRO assists the school administration in maintaining a safe and secure environment. School administrators benefit from the SRO's training, knowledge, and experience in handling situations. The SRO provides a highly visible presence to deter or identify trespassers on campus. In addition, SROs provide a service to the surrounding community by addressing concerns such as loitering, stop signs or speeding in school zones.

SROs are responsible for investigating violations of criminal law. An SRO's sworn duty to enforce the law does not contradict the need for the SRO to be a positive role model, but rather supports it. **It is essential for an SRO to endorse high moral standards and use good judgment and discretion**. Through this, students learn and understand what a professional police officer does.

It is important to note that SROs are not school disciplinarians. SROs are not involved in investigating school rule violations, such as a student cheating on a test. Violations of school rules are the responsibility of the principal and faculty.

The role of law-related counselor should not be unfamiliar to an SRO. Police officers conduct street level law related counseling on a regular basis. For example, a victim of domestic violence is given information on how to obtain a protective order or an officer may attempt to mediate a dispute between two neighbors. Officers are frequently called upon to help resolve problems that are not necessarily criminal matters.

Similarly, guidance counselors will call upon the SRO to assist in conflict mediation efforts. Parents may seek information from the SRO if they suspect their child may be experimenting with drugs or alcohol. Students will ask the SRO for advice concerning recent events. Many times, students will just want someone to talk to about problems they are experiencing and the SRO can act as another caring adult in the school building who works to find positive solutions for young people.

SROs will have contact with a majority of students in a school. SROs can serve as a resource for educators in the sharing of their experience and expertise as a law-related educator when they are invited into the classroom as guest speakers. Classroom presentations by an SRO complement the school's curriculum, as well as give the SRO the opportunity to interact with

students and discuss law-related issues. The contact the SRO has with students in the classroom is a positive learning experience.

Law-related education is designed to promote responsible citizenship and give the student a better understanding of how our legal system works. As a police officer, the SRO offers the student real life examples of how the criminal justice system operates. The SRO brings their experience into the classroom in order to educate the student on the role of police in a free society.

SROs support school wide efforts to educate students on the consequences of unacceptable behavior, both in the school and in the community. In addition, the SRO works to educate students in crime prevention and personal safety. Teachers and SROs can create lessons that can complement the school curriculum in almost every subject area.

In addition to supporting the faculty in the classroom, the SRO has the opportunity to provide other educational activities to the entire school community. The SRO provides crisis and emergency training to the faculty and staff. The SRO will also conduct informational presentations to parent groups concerning emerging drug trends their children may be exposed to. The SRO may speak to school clubs about driver safety issues. The SRO's law related educational efforts can only be limited by their imagination.

SROs are “responsible for safety and crime prevention in schools.” They help train and educate school staff members and students, develop safety plans and serve as a liaison between schools and outside agencies, in addition to enforcing laws.

"The number one priority in the school is the safety and protection of the students and staff. That's the reason, the number one reason, that school resource officers are in the school. The second part of that is building those relationships with those students, bridging that gap."

Neidig, who has worked in the school for four years, **says building relationships, trust and respect between SROs and students is especially crucial.** "I've gotten to know, not just students, but their families and their siblings and you really get a good understanding of what's going on in that student's life and that's important ... especially when you get to know their families and their background. You'll know why students sometimes act the way they act and being able to be right on top of that has been successful in preventing fights or crimes or maybe an attempted suicide or something like that."

Most of all, **Neidig argues that SROs are instrumental in times of crisis.** "Having an officer in the school on location and able to get first-hand, concise and accurate information to the responding officers to these types of situation is crucial (to) stopping an active assailant."