

# School Safety

Approaches to Creating a  
Safer School Environment

## Guiding question:

- Are schools better served by adding armed SROs or alternative approaches?



# Possible School Safety Team Members:

- School Based Mental Health Professionals:

- Guidance Counselors
- School Nurses
- School Psychologists
- Social Workers



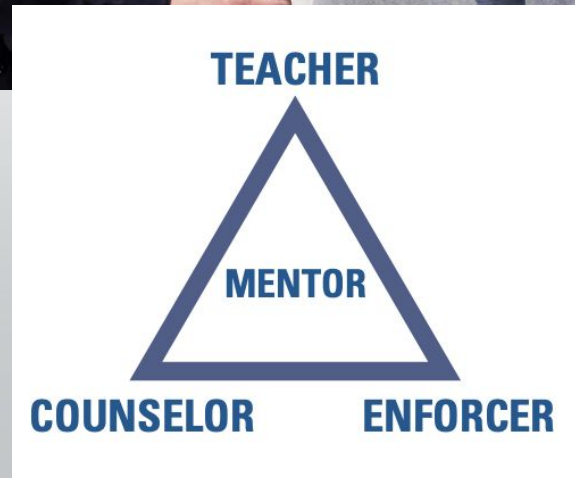
- School Resource Officers

- Sworn law enforcement officials: police officers, school peace officers, etc.



# School Resource Officers

- Sworn law enforcement officers who possess the authority to *arrest* students
- What do they do?
  - National Association of School Resource Officers explains: “Triad” Concept
    - Law Enforcement Officer
    - Educator
    - Informal Counselor





# School Based Mental Health Workers

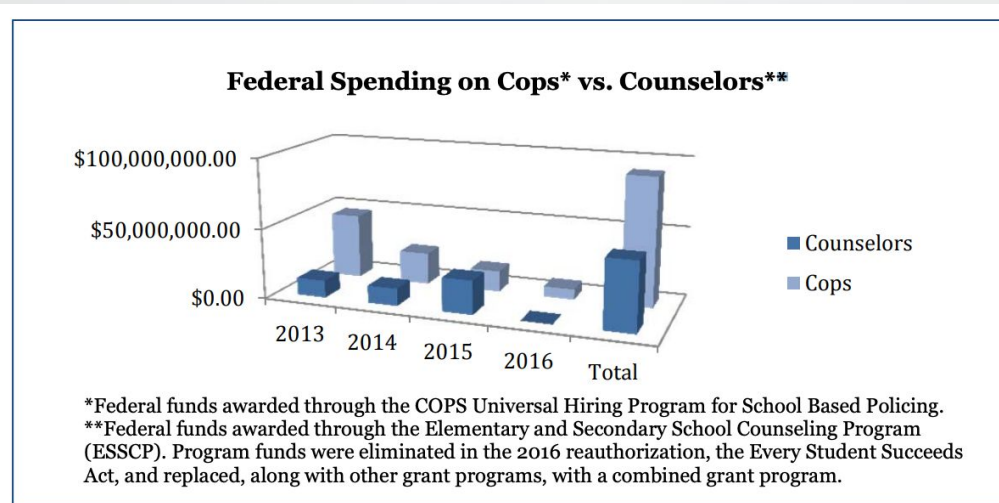
- **Professionals who are specially trained to address students' needs**

- School Nurse: Qualified health care professional; provides physical & mental health support
- Guidance Counselor: Professional staff member with specialized training in school climates
- School Social Worker: Certified professional that helps support families and students' needs
- School Psychologist: Licensed professional with specialized training in childhood behavior & development



# Allocation of resources

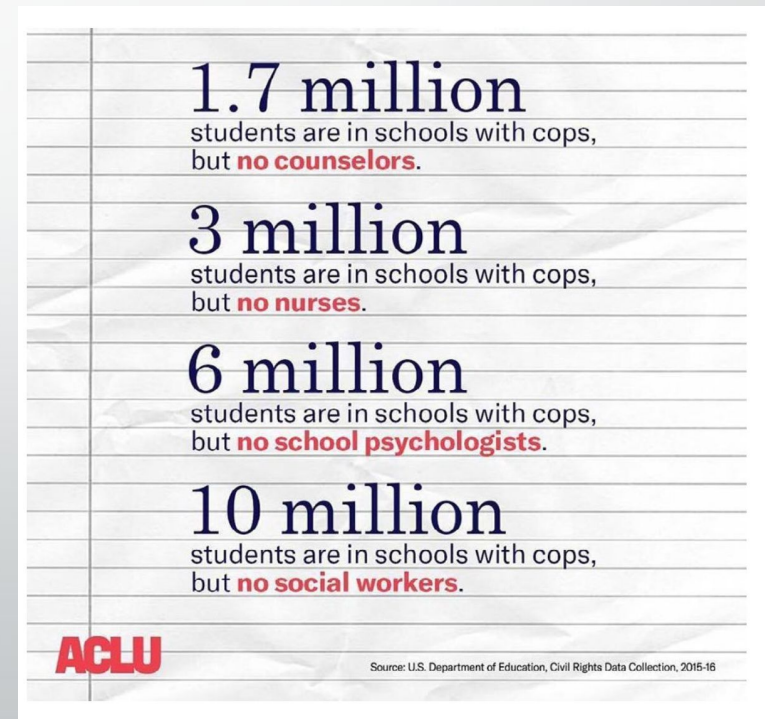
- Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants & state grants to create and SRO programs
- Police funding in schools has increased despite shortage of SBMH
- Since 1999 – 2015: Students seeing law enforcement increased from 54 to 70 percent; During the same time, number of guidance counselors in school only increased



- Do SROs make schools safer?
  - No clear data to suggest that adding SROs reduces crime rate
  - Not enough evidence to conclude impact on mass shootings
- Do additional School-Based Mental Health services make schools safer?
  - Improved attendance rates
  - Lower rates of suspension/discipline incidents
  - Lower rates of expulsion

### SROs vs SBMH

- Several states have a criminal justice SRO and graduation rates are improved
- 5 states employ more SROs than school nurses

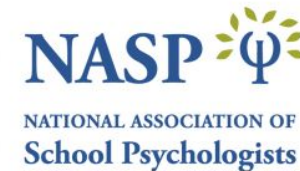


## • Recommended ratios of students to SBMH

- Guidance Counselors – 250:1 (American School Counselor Association)
- Social Workers – 250:1 (School Social Worker Association of America)
- School Psychologists – 500-700:1 (National Association of School Psychologists)
- School nurses – 750:1 (American Nurses Association)

## • National Averages: Student-to-SBMH Professionals

- Students-to-Counselors: 441:1
- Students-to-Social Workers: 2,106:1
- Students-to-Psychologists: 1,526:1
- Students-to-Nurses: 936:1





# Adding SROs: Expectations vs Reality

## Justification for SROs

- Less than 4 percent of surveyed police officers and school principals cite violence levels as justification for hiring SRO
- Law enforcement: “Disorder”
- School principals: “National media attention about school violence”
  - ED Report (2018): “nearly 240 school shootings” in 2015-16

## Realities of SROs in schools

- Data indicates less than 30 school shootings that year
- Black students 3 times as likely to be arrested as white students; Students with disabilities 2.9 times as likely to be arrested
- Responsibilities and relationships with SRO not clearly defined
  - 18 states have *no laws* on SRO training/certification
  - Only 13 states require a MOU/MOA

### WHAT DOES SCHOOL CRIME LOOK LIKE?

CRIMINAL CHARGE	STUDENT BEHAVIOR
Disrupting school	Spraying perfume; <sup>201</sup> fake burping; <sup>202</sup> fake fart spray; <sup>203</sup> fake fart spray (again); <sup>204</sup> fake fart spray (and again); <sup>205</sup> refusing to change a t-shirt depicting a hunting rifle; <sup>206</sup> not following instructions; <sup>207</sup> criticizing a police officer <sup>208</sup>
Disorderly conduct	Kicking a trashcan; <sup>209</sup> cursing; <sup>210</sup> refusing to leave the lunchroom; <sup>211</sup> arguing; <sup>212</sup> documenting bullying <sup>213</sup>
Assault	Throwing a paper airplane; <sup>214</sup> throwing a baby carrot; <sup>215</sup> throwing skittles; <sup>216</sup> fake fart spray (one more time) <sup>217</sup>
Weapons	Science experiment (volcano); <sup>218</sup> science experiment (clock); <sup>219</sup> paring knife; <sup>220</sup> children’s knife <sup>221</sup>
Battery on a police officer	Five year-old with ADHD had a tantrum <sup>222</sup>
Terroristic threats	Eight year-old with a disability made a threatening statement to a teacher <sup>223</sup>
Drug possession	Carrying a maple leaf <sup>224</sup>
Petit larceny	Taking a milk carton <sup>225</sup>
Felony forgery	Buying lunch with a fake \$10 bill <sup>226</sup>
Indecent exposure	Wearing saggy pants <sup>227</sup>

# Considerations for Adding SROs

## Recommendations from ED / DOJ (2016)

- Create sustainable partnerships and formalize MOUs among school districts, local law enforcement agencies, juvenile justice entities, 1 and civil rights and community stakeholders.
- Ensure that MOUs meet constitutional and statutory civil rights requirements.
- Recruit and hire effective SROs and school personnel
- Keep your SROs and school personnel well trained
- Continually evaluate SROs and school personnel and recognize good performance.



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