

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



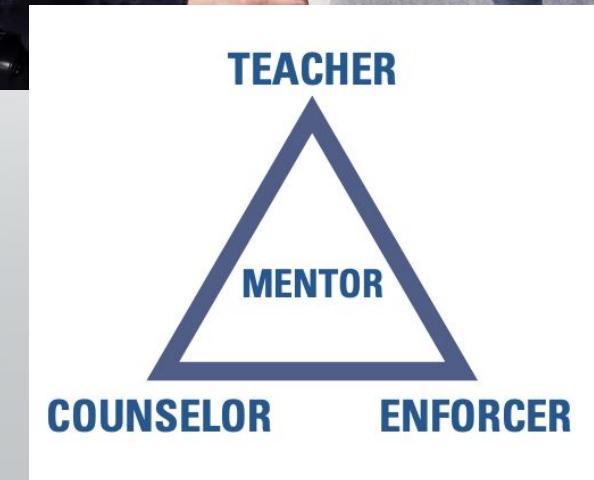
- School Resource Officers

- 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

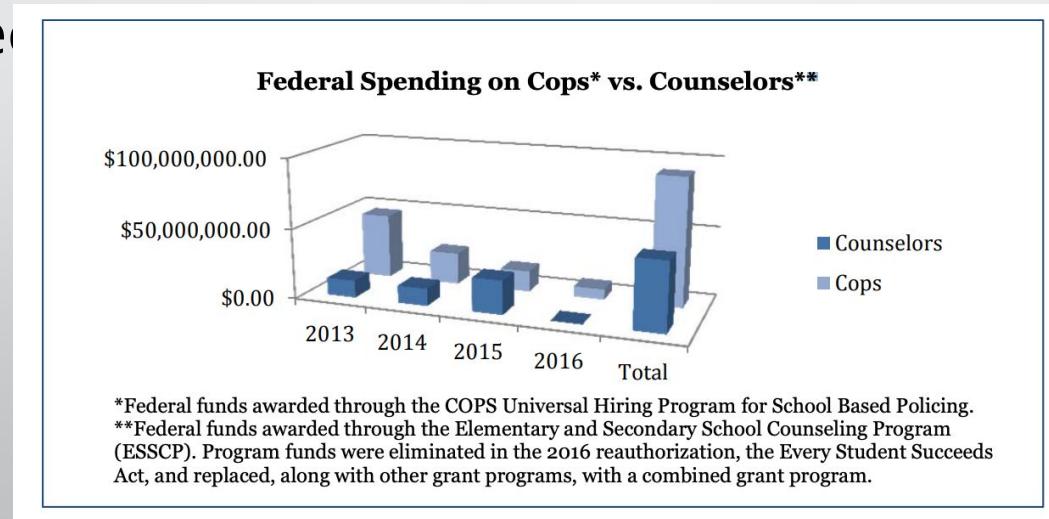
- **Professionals who are specially trained to address students' needs**

- 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 that helps support families and students' needs 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

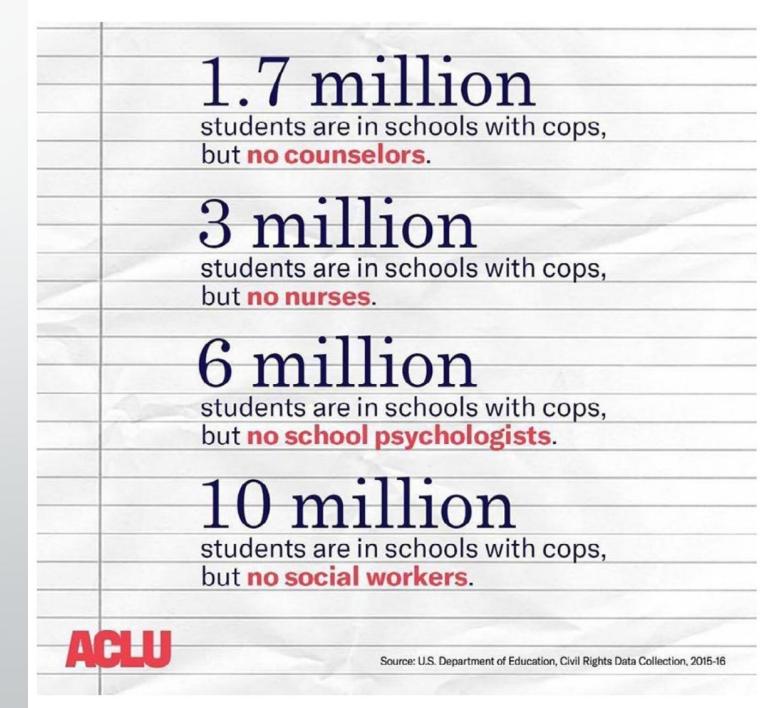


- Do SROs make schools safer?
 - No clear data to suggest that adding SROs reduces crime rate
 - Not enough evidence to conclude impact on mass shootings
- Do additional School-Based Mental Health services make schools safer?

- Improved attendance rates
- Lower rates of suspension/discipline incidents
- Lower rates of expulsion

SROs vs SBMH

- Several states based academic standards on SROs as school workers
- 5 states employ more SROs than school nurses

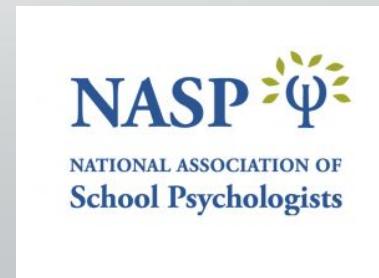


● Recommended ratios of students to SBMH

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

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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