

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM

The School Resource Officer (SRO) Program in Baltimore County Public Schools is just one of many programs, plans, and strategies secondary school administrators employ to ensure safe and orderly learning environments in their schools. First piloted in the 1998-99 school year, the SRO Program began with two officers stationed at Milford Mill Academy and Pikesville High, located in the northwest section of Baltimore County. In the years the program has been in existence, it has expanded to include middle schools and all high schools and, to date, has assigned over 50 officers to secondary schools throughout the county.

The School Resource Officer Program is a collaboration between the Baltimore County Police Department and the Baltimore County Public Schools. The School Resource Officers' Agreement, which delineates roles and responsibilities, is updated yearly and distributed to each school principal and SRO. The role of the SRO is threefold: law enforcer, law-related education resource, and counselor/mentor on law-related issues. All School Resource Officers are also given a copy of the *Baltimore County School Resource Officers' Handbook* which includes Baltimore County Public Schools' protocols.

In order to serve as an SRO, a police officer must complete 48 hours of training which is provided for them by the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). The officer must participate in the interview process and be accepted by the principal team of the school to which he/she will be assigned full time. Once assigned to a school, the SRO is expected to acknowledge school protocol, maintain contact and positive relationships with the police precinct resources, and meet with the school principal and police department officials to assess and determine the effectiveness of his/her role and the program. School staffs and students evaluate the SRO program yearly by completing an SRO survey. It is encouraged that the school's staff give input to the SRO supervisor for the SRO's bi-yearly performance evaluation.

The presence of the SRO on a school's campus is an effective tool in promoting positive behavior, curbing disruptive behavior, and deterring crime and violence. The SRO is responsible for promoting positive relationships among local law enforcement agencies, students, and the community at large; educating students about destructive decisions, including those related to DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education); helping to maintain a safe and orderly school environment; and enforcing the law.