

Austin Police Department

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Revision date: or as necessary	Section VI – PATROL DUTIES	Page: 1 of 7
Title: SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER – GUIDELINES Minn. Stat. 626.8482		Application: All Personnel

PURPOSE:

The primary purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines which define the relationship between law enforcement agencies and the schools utilizing school resource officers (SRO). It will further facilitate the understanding of this relationship with regards to criminal matters and law enforcement situations, which will arise at the local school level.

The goal of the SRO programs is to provide safe learning environments, provide valuable resources to school staff members, foster a positive relationship with students and develop strategies to resolve problems that affect our youth with the goal of protecting all children, so they can reach their fullest potential.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- The SRO employed by the Austin Police Department should be carefully selected, thoroughly trained, and appropriately equipped to fulfill their role within the school community. The SRO should actively engage in early prevention and early intervention educational programs that focus on and support student needs.
- SROs shall be specially trained in the principles and standards identified in Minn. Stat. 626.8482, Subd. 4 which recognize the unique role of an SRO to foster positive relationships, open communication and mentorship while providing a safe and constructive environment for students, staff and visitors in the school setting.
- SROs are expected to recognize and consider alternatives to formal criminal referrals such as diversion and restorative justice programs where possible and as appropriate for the incident, the involved students and families, victim(s) and the larger school community.
- When a criminal incident also involves a violation of school rules, SROs should consider referral of the matter to school authorities in lieu of formal criminal referral, as appropriate for the incident, the students and families involved, the victim(s) and the larger school community.

- Nothing in this policy should be construed as limiting any other duty or responsibility imposed on peace officers; the expectation that peace officers will exercise professional judgment and discretion to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the public when carrying out their duties; or creates a duty for school resource officers to protect students, staff, or others on school grounds that is different from the duty to protect the public as a whole.

DEFINITIONS:

- A. **School:** An elementary school, middle school, or secondary school, as defined in section 120A.05, subdivisions 9, 11 and 13.
- B. **School resource officer:** A licensed peace officer who is assigned to work in an elementary school, middle school, or secondary school during the regular instructional school day as one of the officer's regular responsibilities through the terms of a contract entered between the peace officer's employer and the designated school district or charter school.
- C. **Positive School Climate:** A school environment that makes students feel safe, supported and welcome.
- D. **Developmentally appropriate practices:** Means individualized, responsive care that is appropriate for the child's age, cultural context, disability status and personality.
- E. **Great bodily harm:** As defined in Minn. Stat. 609.02 Sub. 8 means bodily injury which creates a high probability of death, or which causes serious permanent disfigurement, or which causes a permanent or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ or other serious bodily harm.
- F. **Prone restraint:** As defined in Minn. Stat. 121A.58 and for purposes of this policy, prone restraint means placing a child in a face down position.
- G. **Custodial arrest:** A custodial arrest is the actual physical restraint of a person and subsequent detention. Custodial arrest may occur with or without a warrant depending on the circumstances.
- H. **De-escalation:** Refers to the methods and actions taken to decrease the severity of a conflict, whether physical or verbal in nature.

PROCEDURE:

- A. **General contractual requirements:** The law enforcement agency's contract with a school district or charter school shall define the SRO duties in compliance with Minn. Stat. 626.8482, Subd. 2.

1. Additional issues to be addressed in contract. The contract between the parties:
 - a. Must address a mutually agreed upon policy regarding the use of plain clothes, modified uniforms, and other changes to SRO attire with the goal of fostering a positive school climate, facilitating the establishment of positive relationships with students, and promoting open communication.
 - b. Shall articulate the role, if any, of the school district in the selection, vetting and retention of the SRO.
 - c. Should address how the SRO will be informed of school district resources available to school staff to assist with de-escalation of conflicts in school, e.g. specialized crisis teams, mediation opportunities, etc.; and
 - d. Shall establish a public notification process so that an SRO will be present in the schools.
2. A school district or charter school may contract with a school resource officer's employer for the officer to perform additional duties.

B. Fostering a Positive School Climate and Constructive Relationships:

1. SROs should consider establishing a presence at times that allows opportunities to build connections and relationships.
2. SROs should establish connections based upon mutual trust and respect while encouraging communication.
3. SROs are a resource for educating students on what concerns should be reported to a responsible adult.

C. SROs work in collaboration with the schools to provide Campus Safety Training:

1. Use developmentally appropriate practices that take into consideration differences in culture, language, trauma and an individual's disabilities.
2. Use methods that help ensure school safety and security, focusing on safety over violence.
3. Encourage students to ask questions about school safety.

D. Crisis Intervention and De-escalation:

1. SROs are often required to make assessments of rapidly evolving situations, analyze potential responses and act upon various levels of safety concerns. Crisis intervention and de-escalation strategies should be used whenever possible in response to crisis or safety

situations. The safety of the individual, SROs, school staff, students, and others present should not be compromised during de-escalation tactics.

2. SROs should understand and use developmentally appropriate principles of evidence-based crisis intervention and de-escalation strategies. These strategies include, but are not limited to:
 - Be empathetic and non-judgmental
 - Respect personal space
 - Use non-threatening nonverbal communication
 - Avoid challenging questions
 - Allow time for decisions

E. Use of Force:

1. SRO use of force is governed by and will comply with Minn. Stats. 609.06 Authorized Use of Force; 609.066 Authorized Use of Deadly Force by Peace Officers; 626.8475 Duty to Intercede and Report; and the Law Enforcement Agency Use of Force Policy.
2. Specific tactics and strategies to minimize uses of force or the use and duration of prone restraint or physical holds of students:
 - Employ de-escalation techniques, the least restrictive physical intervention strategies, as reasonable, for addressing conflicts in schools as identified in the training required under Minn. Stat. 626.8482, Subd. 4. and use only that amount of force that reasonably appears necessary given the facts and circumstances perceived by the officer at the time of the event to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose.
 - Consistent with training after any use of force, the SRO shall assess the condition of the student and render aid as needed including restoring the student to a non-prone position as soon as possible,
3. Additional considerations for SROs when using force as allowed in Minn. Stat. 609.06 in a school situation should include:
 - a. Immediacy and severity of the threat to officers or others.
 - i. Potential for injury to officers, students, and others
 - b. The conduct of the individual being confronted, as reasonably perceived by the officer at the time.
 - c. Officer/individual factors (e.g. age and/or maturity, physical size and/or abilities).
 - d. The individual's ability to understand and comply with officer commands
 - i. The effects of suspected drug or alcohol use.
 - ii. The individual's mental state or capacity.
 - iii. The student's education plan or accommodations, if known.
 - e. Proximity of weapons or dangerous improvised devices.
 - f. The degree to which the individual has been effectively restrained and his/her ability to resist despite being restrained.

- g. The availability of other reasonable and feasible options and their possible effectiveness (Minn. Stat. § 626.8452).
 - h. The immediate need for intervention versus allowing time and distance for additional de-escalation.
 - i. Seriousness of the suspected offense or reason for contact with the individual.
 - i. Training and experience of the officer.
 - j. Whether the individual appears to be resisting, attempting to evade arrest by flight, or is attacking the officer.
 - k. The risk and reasonably foreseeable consequences of escape.
 - l. Whether the conduct of the individual being confronted no longer reasonably appears to pose an imminent threat to the officer or others.
 - m. Prior contacts with the individual or awareness of any propensity for violence.
 - n. Any other exigent circumstances.
- 4. When a criminal incident also involves a violation of school rules, SROs should consider referral of the matter to school authorities in lieu of formal criminal referral, as appropriate for the incident, the students and families involved, the victim(s) and the larger school community.
 - 5. SROs should exercise age-appropriate practices when interacting with children, and developmentally appropriate practices with youth and individuals known to have physical, mental health, developmental or intellectual disabilities recognizing that the individual's disability may affect their ability to understand or comply with commands from SROs

F. Arrest considerations:

- 1. As much as is reasonably practical, SROs should seek alternatives to formal criminal referrals such as diversion and restorative justice programs where possible and as appropriate for the incident, the students and families involved, victim(s) and the larger school community.
- 2. Custodial arrests in school should be avoided if reasonably practical. If a custodial arrest is necessary because of exigency or public safety considerations, the arrest should be made in a non-communal area away from the view of other students if practicable.
- 3. When reasonably practicable, appropriate school staff should be notified prior to and/or present during the custodial arrest of a student.

G. Training:

- 1. Except as provided for in paragraphs G.2., G.3., and G.4. below, beginning September 1, 2025, a peace officer assigned to serve as a school resource officer must complete a training course that provides instruction on the learning objectives identified in Minnesota Statutes, section 626.8482, subdivision 4 prior to assuming the duties of a school resource officer.

2. A peace officer who has completed either the School Safety Center standardized Basic School Resource Officer Training or the National School Resource Officer Basic School Resource Officer course prior to September 1, 2025, must complete the training mandated under paragraph G.1. above before June 1, 2027. A peace officer covered under this paragraph may complete a supplemental training course approved by the board pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 626.8482, subdivision 4, paragraph (b), to satisfy the training requirement.
3. Whenever practicable, it is preferable that a peace officer completes the training required under this section prior to filling the role of SRO.

However, if an officer's employer is unable to provide the required training course to the officer prior to the officer assuming the duties of a school resource officer, the officer must complete the required training within six months of assuming the duties of a school resource officer. The officer is not required to perform the duties described in Minnesota Statutes, section 626.8482, subdivision 2, paragraph (a), clause (4) or (5), until the officer has completed the required training course. The officer must review any policy adopted by the officer's employer pursuant to section 626.8482, subdivision 6 before assuming the other duties of a school resource officer and must comply with that policy.

4. An officer who is serving as a substitute school resource officer for fewer than 60 student contact days within a school year is not obligated to complete the required training or perform the duties described in Minnesota Statutes, section 626.8482 subdivision 2, paragraph (a), clause (4) or (5), but must review and comply with any policy adopted pursuant to subdivision 6 by the law enforcement agency that employs the substitute school resource officer.
5. An SRO will complete a refresher course at a minimum of once every three years.
6. For each school resource officer employed by an agency, the chief law enforcement officer must maintain a copy of the most recent training certificate issued to the officer for completion of the training mandated under this section.

H. Data practices:

1. The contract between the school district and the law enforcement agency must address data practices policies and procedures. These procedures and policies shall identify the education records that can be shared with the law enforcement agency generally and with the SRO specifically and for what purposes.
2. Law enforcement records that contain student and parent data that are maintained by the law enforcement agency shall be governed by the agency's data practices policy and in compliance with the requirements of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minn. Stats., Chapter 13, and Minnesota Rules, parts 1205.0100-1205.2000.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

Supervisors of the department are responsible for ensuring that this and all policies of this department are followed. Deviations from this or any other policy are permitted within the scope of authority granted to all members of this department; however, the deviation must be reported in accordance with policy.

Chief David McKichan

Date