

Quality of Life Ad Hoc Committee

Report and Recommendations on Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's School Resource Deputy Program

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Los Angeles County Sheriff
Civilian Oversight Commission

Working for transparency with respect to the Sheriff's Department



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INTRODUCTION

The Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission (Commission) through its Quality of Life Ad Hoc Committee (Committee) sought to study the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's (LASD) School Resource Deputy (SRD) program due to recent high-profile use of force incidents^{1,2} and several reports indicating racial disparities of students.^{3,4} The OIG's June 2022 report detailed how "Black high school aged youth in Lancaster were contacted by law enforcement, arrested, cited, suspended, and expelled at disproportionately higher rates than other racial groups."⁵ These incidents raise concern about the presence of deputies in schools and whether SRDs are being appropriately utilized by schools: a concern that the Committee shares with the community.

As an initial matter, it is vital to understand the role of an SRD, which is also commonly referred to as School Resource Officers (SRO). SRDs should be carefully selected, full-time, sworn law enforcement officers who are specifically trained in school-based law enforcement and crisis response. In addition, to be effective, SRDs should be familiar with community-oriented policing concepts.⁶ Further, an SRD could provide school security and assist in identifying physical changes in the environment that may reduce crime in or around the school.⁷ SRDs are usually assigned to secondary schools; however, with the occurrence of several high-profile school shootings, SRDs are now commonly assigned to elementary schools as well. The SRD program in schools is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding or a contractual obligation (Agreement) entered into by a law enforcement agency and a school district.⁸ The Agreement should detail the program's goals, including the roles and responsibilities of the parties.⁹

It is important to note that school security officers (SSOs) are mentioned several times throughout this document. SSOs are private security hired by the school, are not associated with LASD, and tend to work in an observe and report function.¹⁰ According to California Education Code Section 38001.5, SSOs shall be provided with training to enable them to deal with the increasingly diverse and dangerous situations near public schools to ensure the safety of pupils, staff, and the public.¹¹

This report provides the full Commission with the Committee's proposed recommendations to help improve the SRD program and consequently the service LASD provides to the community.

¹ Los Angeles Times. (2021). Video shows deputy slam Lancaster student to the ground at school. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-10-08/sheriffs-deputy-body-slam-antelope-valley-teen>

² ABC News. (2021). Florida teen body-slammed by school resource officer 'traumatized,' family says. Retrieved from <https://abcnews.go.com/US/florida-teen-body-slammed-school-resource-officer-traumatized/story?id=75582344>

³ National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives. (2021). School Resource Officers and Racial Disparities in School Discipline and Juvenile Justice Referrals. Retrieved from <https://www.npscoalition.org/post/school-resource-officers-and-racial-disparities-in-school-discipline-and-juvenile-justice-referrals>

⁴ Jaime E. Hernandez, Ed.D & Associates, Inc. (2023). Investigation Into Various Compliance Complaints Against the Antelope Valley Union High School District. Retrieved from https://www.disabilityrightsca.org/system/files/file-attachments/May%202023%20AVUHSD%20Final%20Report_Hernandez.pdf

⁵ L.A. County OIG. Allegations of Racial Disparities in Contacts with High School Students. June 15, 2022. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3MZL00H>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services. (2022). Guiding Principles for School Resource Officer Programs. Retrieved from https://www.nasro.org/clientuploads/resources/e032218006_-_SRO_Guidelines_v2.pdf

⁸ National Association of School Resource Officers. (2021). Best Practices School Resource Officer Program Recommendations. Retrieved from https://www.nasro.org/clientuploads/NASRO_BestPractices21.pdf

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ WKRN. (2023). Law enforcement versus security guards: the difference between SROs and SSOs. Retrieved from <https://www.wkrn.com/news/tennessee-politics/the-difference-between-school-resource-officers-and-school-safety-officers/>

¹¹ California Legislative Information. (2023). California Education Code Section 38001.5-Security Departments. Retrieved from https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC§ionNum=38001.5.

BACKGROUND

In the early 1990s, there was a sharp increase in gun violence in schools resulting in injuries and mass casualties similar to the 27 people wounded and 15 deaths at Columbine High School.¹² Los Angeles County suffered its own mass shooting on November 14, 2019 when two students were killed and three injured at Saugus High School.¹³ The increase in school violence prompted many individuals, including school officials and parents, to identify measures to address crime in schools and create a safe learning environment. In 2019, the U.S. Department of Education reported that more students were becoming afraid of being attacked or harmed at school.¹⁴ To address safety concerns, some schools implemented protective measures such as conducting threat assessments, developing safety plans, and increasing the use of SRDs.

At the October 21, 2021, public meeting, the Commission deliberated the presence of deputies in Antelope Valley schools.¹⁵ Los Angeles County Inspector General Max Huntsman discussed his office's monitoring efforts related to SRDs in the Antelope Valley and advised the Commission that the Board directed the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to monitor LASD's SRD program renewal contracts. There were also community calls for school districts to develop policies outlining when students ought to be arrested and who should authorize the removal of a student from campus as well as calls for the complete removal of SRDs from campus.¹⁶ An LASD representative advised that they provide 15 SRDs for police services on campuses and regular patrol services¹⁷ and that deputies with specialized training are assigned to a campus full time to allow relationship building with staff and students.

On June 28, 2022, LASD requested that the Board of Supervisors approve their SRD program contract with various school districts for a term of five years from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2027.¹⁸ LASD advised that the SRD program consisted of 1 sergeant, 1 bonus deputy, and 35 deputies from 10 patrol stations to provide full time law enforcement services to contracting school districts. Some of their services include, preventing school violence, helping provide a safe learning environment, and providing public safety.¹⁹ The Board approved the SRD program boilerplate contract, but shortened the timeframe of the contract to two years from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024, and directed the OIG to review LASD's contacts with all school districts for the 2021-2022 school year to determine if similar racial disparities exist outside of Lancaster and to publicly share their findings.²⁰

Subsequently, at the April 20, 2023, Commission meeting, OIG's Chief Deputy Dara Williams provided an update of their findings.²¹ Chief Deputy Williams pointed out that LASD provided SRD services to 16 schools in the 2019-2020 school year and that the SRDs made 812 contacts

¹² Ibid.

¹³ NBC4. (2019). Parents of Two Students Killed in Saugus High School Shooting File Lawsuit. Retrieved from <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/investigations/two-families-killed-in-saugus-high-school-shooting-file-lawsuit/2467490/>

¹⁴ US Dept. of Education. (2022). Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021. Retrieved from <https://bis.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/iscs21.pdf>

¹⁵ Civilian Oversight Commission. 10/21/2021 Meeting Minutes. Retrieved from https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/commissionpublications/agenda/1115158_MeetingMinutes10-21-21Final.pdf

¹⁶ Cancel the Contract Antelope Valley. Presentation to the Commission on 10/21/2021. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/CanceltheContractAVpresentationtoCOMMISSION10.21.2021.pdf>

¹⁷ Civilian Oversight Commission. 10/21/2021 Meeting Minutes. Retrieved from https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/commissionpublications/agenda/1115158_MeetingMinutes10-21-21Final.pdf

¹⁸ LASD. (2022). Board Letter Approval of School Law Enforcement Services Agreement for School Resource Deputy Program. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/169348.pdf>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. (2022). Motion By Supervisors Holly Mitchell and Hilda Solis: Improving School Climate and Safety. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/170355.pdf>

²¹ Civilian Oversight Commission. 4/20/2023 Meeting Minutes. Retrieved from https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/commissionpublications/agenda/1141752_COMMISSIONMeetingMinutes4-20-23.pdf

with students: 21 with grade school students, 166 with middle school students, and 625 with high school students.²² She also reported that SRDs made more contacts with Black and Latino students than any other racial group and that, in Lancaster, Black students were contacted disproportionately higher in comparison to their percentage of school enrollment. After summarizing their April 18, 2023, report,²³ Chief Deputy Williams concluded that “improving the specificity of the terms and conditions in SRD contracts regarding the roles and responsibilities of the SRD and the process of student referral to SRDs is warranted to ensure that the potential bias of school officials is accounted for and to limit the County’s liability.”²⁴

SCHOOL SAFETY IN CALIFORNIA

The California Department of Education found that schools that are safer and more supportive of their students have better academic performance.^{25,26} To ensure that students are safe, secure, and peaceful in school, many schools follow California’s Education Code Section 32282.1, which addresses School Safety Plans and provides clear guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of SROs.^{27,28}

In California, a number of law enforcement agencies, including Orange County Sheriff’s Department, have established and maintained policies for their SRD programs to ensure a safe learning environment for students.²⁹ The Orange County Sheriff’s Department’s policies provide their SRDs with a description of the program’s goals and objectives, related authority, chain of command, duties and responsibilities, training requirements, and an explanation of school enforcement.³⁰ Moreover, the Fremont Police Department has a public website featuring the SRD program, which provides access to the SRD’s name and email address, annual reports, and a section where SRD complaints or commendations can be submitted.³¹

LASD initiated their SRD program in 1998 to provide enhanced school safety, quick response to emergencies, and build positive relationships.³² Their SRD program services 11 school districts and 125 schools.^{33,34} LASD unit commanders conduct interviews and review deputies’ employment history prior to selecting SRDs.³⁵ Desired qualifications include a strong interest in, and experience working with young people, maturity, and the ability to understand and excel in their role in an educational environment.³⁶ According to LASD, the deputies who participate in the SRD program are required to take a 40-hour SRD training course with specialized

²² OIG. Presentation to Commission. 4/20/2023. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/OIGSRDPresentationforCOMMISSION4.19.2023.pdf>.

²³ OIG. (2023). Report Back on Improving School Climate and Safety (Item No. 20, Agenda of June 28, 2022). Retrieved from https://assets-us-01.kc-usercontent.com/0234f496-d2b7-00b6-17a4-b43e949b70a2/6e218997-05d1-4bd1-a6aa-6e0573d153c6/Report%20Back%20on%20Improving%20School%20Climate%20and%20Safety_Final.pdf

²⁴ OIG. Report Back on Improving School Climate and Safety. 4/18/2023. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3JK3jrQ>.

²⁵ California Safe and Supportive Schools. (2014). School Climate & Academic Performance Across California High Schools. Retrieved from https://data.calschls.org/resources/S3factsheet3_API_20120716.pdf

²⁶ California Safe and Supportive Schools. (2014). Positive School Climate: A Hallmark of Academically Successful Schools. Retrieved from https://data.calschls.org/resources/S3factsheet6_positiveclimate_20130904.pdf

²⁷ CDE. (2022). Comprehensive School Safety Plans. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/vp/cssp.asp>

²⁸ California Legislative Information. (2015). California Education Code Section 32282.1: School Safety Plans. Retrieved from https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=32282.1.&lawCode=EDC

²⁹ Orange County Sheriff’s Department. (2021). School Resource Officer Program. Retrieved from <https://ocsheriff.gov/sites/ocsd/files/2021-05/Policy%20415%20School%20Resource%20Officer%20Program.pdf>

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Fremont Police Department. (2023). School Resource Officers (SRO). Retrieved from <https://www.fremontpolice.gov/about-us/special-operations-division/school-resource-officers-sro>

³² LASD. (2023). LASD SRD Presentation. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/LASDSRDPowerPoint07272023.pdf>

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ LASD. (2023). LASD SRDs Per Station. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/SRDsPerStation.pdf>

³⁵ LASD. (2023). SRD and UOF Response. Retrieved from https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/SRD_UOF09.20.23.pdf

³⁶ Ibid.

curricula.^{37,38} Currently, LASD does not provide SRD information or a description of the program on its website. The Committee has identified the access of information about the SRDs and the program as an area for improvement.

ACTIONS OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE AD HOC COMMITTEE

The Commission created a Committee on January 19, 2023, to (1) identify and consider how LASD's presence in and behavior towards the community and stakeholders affects the community's quality of life and (2) make recommendations to LASD to improve accountability and transparency within their organization. The members of the Committee are Commissioners Dr. Luis S. Garcia, Irma Hagans Cooper, and Hans Johnson who are supported by Commission staff members Daniel Delgadillo, Tracy Jordan, and Ingrid Williams.

On June 21, 2023, the Committee met and, after a presentation by staff, determined that LASD's SRD program warrants review because of the many public comments received at Commission meetings regarding concerns with deputies on school campuses and media accounts of inappropriate deputy contacts with students of color.

The Committee and staff conducted the following actions in preparation for this report:

1. Gathered and analyzed data and media reports associated with SRDs
2. Submitted a request to LASD regarding SRD policies, procedures, and related data
3. Conferred with LASD regarding their SRD program
4. Hosted roundtable discussions with school districts, community organizations, and individuals
5. Hosted an educational virtual conference series on the SRD program
6. Requested and received community comments both on the Commission's website and at monthly Commission public meetings
7. Collaborated with County stakeholders and partners

❖ Youth Engagement

The Committee collaborated with the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission (HRC) Transformative Justice team to engage youth who had been affected by SRDs in their schools. HRC interviewed students to understand their perspective and experience regarding SRDs and school safety. HRC shared the students' experiences with the Committee to include in this report.

Of the students interviewed, most had a negative view of SRDs and believe that they should not be on school campuses. Below is a sampling of the comments the students made during their interviews with HRC:

- SRDs are intimidating when they wear their full gear including bullet proof vests
- SRDs do not have friendly conversations with students and most of their conversations are aggressive
- SRDs make some students feel targeted for being themselves and/or for their appearance
- SRDs cause unnecessary problems or problems to escalate
- SRDs antagonize students to get a reaction from them

³⁷ LASD. (2023). LASD SRD Presentation. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/LASDSRDPowerPoint07272023.pdf>

³⁸ LASD. (2023). Updated School Resource Officer 40-Hours Course Outline. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/UpdatedSchoolResourceOfficer40-HoursCourseOutline.pdf>

- SRDs do not help mediate situations that arise

During the interviews, some students praised SSOs, stating that SSOs are approachable, friendly, not intimidating, try to establish relationships with students, and make sure students are safe. They did not state if the SSOs carries a firearm. Further, students do not understand why their campus has both SSOs and SRDs.

Also, some students who shared feedback expressed concern that the principal and/or school administration defers discipline matters to SRDs too often. The students believe that the principal should try to get to the core of the issues that arise rather than resort to discipline in the form of detention or suspension, which they believe does nothing to prevent the issues from recurring.

Finally, the students were asked to provide recommendations to improve school safety and create a better learning environment. Below is a sampling of their recommendations:

- Remove SRDs from school campus and only have SSOs
- Perform background checks on SRDs for prior uses of force to ensure they are safe to work around students
- Offer programs to address mental health for students
- SRDs should be more approachable and should build relationship with the students
- SRDs should be more visible around campus like SSOs
- Principals/school administration should talk to students when issues arise rather than rapidly dispense discipline.
- Principals/school administration and SRDs should teach students conflict resolution skill

❖ Educational Conference Series on Deputies in Schools

The Commission hosted a series of virtual educational conferences³⁹ that focused on LASD's SRD program. All three sessions were moderated by Commissioner Luis S. Garcia, who is a statewide behavioral health/mental health consultant and a clinical social worker. Nearly 250 individuals attended the virtual conferences, which delivered information to the community from experts and advocates in the field. The conferences also provided an opportunity for the community to ask questions to the panelists and engage in a discussion about the purpose, need, and best use of SRDs.

The first session was held on July 27, 2023, and focused on providing a background and overview of the SRD program. The panel of experts discussed the SRD program's creation, purpose, and ideas for improvements. Speakers included LASD Sergeant Mourad Kabanjian;⁴⁰ Office of Violence Prevention Deputy Director Kelly Fischer;⁴¹ Co-Chairs of Cancel the Contract Raquel Derfler and Raycine Ector;⁴² and OIG Chief Deputy Dara Williams.

The second session was held on July 31, 2023, and focused on the goals of the SRD program, maintaining safety in schools, best practices for selecting SRDs, and balancing safety and equity of deputy/student contacts in schools. Speakers included Lynwood Unified School

³⁹ Commission Email promoting the virtual Conference series. 07/19/2023. Retrieved from <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/CALACOUNTY/bulletins/365a93d?reqfrom=share>.

⁴⁰ LASD. Presentation to the Commission's conference. 7/27/2023. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/LASDSRDPowerPoint07272023.pdf>

⁴¹ L.A. County Public Health Office of Violence Prevention. Presentation to the Commission's conference. 7/27/2023. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/OVPPresentationCOMMISSIONPanelonSRDs7-27-23.pdf>

⁴² Cancel the Contract. Presentation to the Commission's conference. 7/27/2023. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/CTCAV-COMMISSIONPresentation-July272023.pdf>

District Board of Education President Gary Hardie, Jr.;⁴³ California School Resource Officers Association Board Member Salvador Arias; Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles Associate Supervising Attorney Chelsea Helena;⁴⁴ Dr. Jaime E. Hernandez;⁴⁵ and L.A. County Anti-Racism, Diversity, & Inclusion initiative Senior Analyst Cesar Sanchez.⁴⁶

The third and final session was held on August 3, 2023, and centered on outcomes and accountability. The panelists discussed school security and how school districts, school campuses, parents, students, and LASD can work toward improving the SRD program to ensure better outcomes for students. The panelists also highlighted best practices for hiring and maintaining appropriate staff, including security and other services. Speakers included Antelope Valley High School teacher Barron Gardner;⁴⁷ National Association of School Resource Officers President Rudy Perez; Los Angeles County Office of Education Project Director II Jewel Forbes;⁴⁸ and ACLU Senior Policy Counsel Amir Whitaker.⁴⁹

❖ Community and School District Feedback

The Commission has long heard from the community during its monthly public meetings about concerns with SRDs, including racial disparities and use of force incidents. Thus, in July 2023, the Commission began gathering community feedback regarding LASD’s SRD program and the assignment of SRDs on school campuses. The Commission created an opportunity in both English and Spanish for the community to submit a public comment on the Commission’s website and promoted the opportunity for public comment via social media, mass email⁵⁰ blast and at public meetings attended by staff. The Commission received over 1,100 public comments from community members.

All written public comments⁵¹ received can be viewed on the Commission’s website. Below is a sampling of the public comments received:

Supervisory District	Written Public Comments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an LAUSD parent, I do not believe that my child or his peers are safer with the presence of police and/or Sheriff's deputies in schools. Yes, for the safety of the children and the school staff there should be metal detectors, deputies onsite and Children Social Workers, like me, ready to stand in. It would be amazing to have deputies on campus.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sheriff targets us on the streets, and now they get to have access to our children to target them. No way! Deputies need to be assigned to schools, not only for security purposes but to allow the deputies to build a positive relationship/perception of law enforcement with students.

⁴³ Lynwood Unified School District. Vice President Gary Hardie, Jr.'s presentation to the Commission's conference. 7/31/2023. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/LynwoodGaryHardiePresentation2023.pdf>

⁴⁴ Referrals to School Resource Deputies in the Antelope Valley Union High School District. By Dr. Jaime Hernandez and Chelsea Helena, NLSLA. Presentation to the Commission's conference. 7/31/2023. Retrieved from https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/Dr._JaimeHernandezandChelseaHelena.pdf

⁴⁵ Investigation Into Various Compliance Complaints Against the Antelope Valley Union High School District. By Jaime E. Hernandez, Ed.D. & Associates, Inc. May 2023. Retrieved from https://www.disabilityrightscsa.org/system/files/file-attachments/May%202023%20AVUHS%20Final%20Report_Hernandez.pdf

⁴⁶ Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion. By Cesar Sanchez. Presentation to the Commission's conference 7/31/2023. Retrieved from https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/ARDIPresentation_7.31.2023.pdf

⁴⁷ Barron Gardner II. Presentation to the Commission's conference. 8/3/2023. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/BarronGardnerschoolofficerspresentation8.3.2023.pdf>

⁴⁸ Redefining the Narrative. Reimagining the Role of Law Enforcement on School Campuses. By Jewel Forbes. 8/3/2023. Retrieved from https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/LACOE_SchoolResourceOfficers8.3.2023.pdf

⁴⁹ Deputies in Schools. By Dr. Amir Whitaker. 8/3/2023. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/ACLUSR-D-SRObyAmirWhitaker.pdf>

⁵⁰ What do you think about deputies in schools? Email Blast. 7/11/2023. Retrieved from <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/CALACOUNTY/bulletins/3641b38?reqfrom=share>

⁵¹ Written Public Comment related to LASD Deputies in Schools 7/11/2023-8/14/2023. Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/WrittenPublicComment-DeputiesinSchoolsAugust2023.pdf>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No! They don't have enough deputies on the streets for the communities, train the people from the community to provide for safety and monitor our schools.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you remove law enforcement from campus that is irresponsible and moronic. Kids could die! • Their presence in campus is a positive experience for most kids. • Deputies on campus are an absolute must in today's world. They keep the campus and children safe.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should not be any gang member deputy sheriff in our schools! • I want Sheriff's Deputies in schools. • There should be added security around schools, but there should not be deputies in schools.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputies who work on our school campuses are a very important part of keeping our students and campuses safe. We need them. • I 100% support having deputies providing security at the schools. My son graduated last year from Saugus, after the shooting we had a hard time getting him back on campus. The only thing that helped him was knowing he was safe with the deputies on campus. • I do not think this is a good idea. If LASD already has problems slamming people around and inflicting their will on others, how do you think this will pan out for helpless kids trying to learn?

The Commission contacted more than 50 school district administrators and more than 300 community members to arrange roundtable discussions related to the SRD program. From July 21 to August 7, 2023, six roundtable discussions were conducted, which included 32 people from eight school districts and nine community organizations.

Below is a sampling of the feedback we received from school district administrators:

Centinela Valley Union High School District

- The City of Hawthorne Police Department provides an SRO to one school in the district, and it is committed to the SRO program
- A teacher or school staff must call the school office before an SRO/SRD is dispatched, which is part of the policy and procedure
- LASD provides SRD services to the other campuses in the district and has done so for 16 years
- SRDs and SSOs must comply with the Education Code, which outlines how certain incidents should be handled and outlines a dual process

Hilda Solis Learning Academy High School

- LAUSD has an SSO who is an unarmed employee of the Los Angeles School Police Department who receives additional training and equipment enabling them to provide support for school safety
- Administrators call the school police when needed

Lawndale

- There is a good relationship between students and the SRD
- Parents feel safer with SRDs on school campus
- The administration is the first contact to de-escalate an incident



Picture: Parks After Dark Resource Fair at Bethune Park on July 28, 2023.

Palmdale School District

- Currently, there are five SRDs and 14 SSOs, costing approximately \$1.21 million
- The State of California requires security guards to be trained in nonviolent training to de-escalate a situation
- The agreement with LASD is intended to meet Goal 4 of its strategic goals, to “create and support safe, affirming, equitable and enriched globally competitive school

environments for participatory, restorative, inclusive and culturally and linguistically responsive learning and interaction for students”

Paramount

- There were no negative comments from the parents regarding SRDs on school campus
- The SSO’s presence helps to calm situations

Sulphur Springs Union School District

- School safety is the top priority for the school district
- Campuses have a close relationship with their assigned SRDs
- The presence of SRDs provides comfort to staff, families, and students

Temple School District

- The district does not have an official SRD, but they are looking into a budget to fund it
- Administration handles the discipline, and the school contacts LASD’s Temple station if necessary

William S. Hart Union High School

- School district advocates having SRDs in schools
- The district holds town halls with SRDs during the school year on campus safety
- The first responder during the Saugus shooting in November 2019 was the SRD
- SRDs establish authentic relationships with students and act as mentors, counselors, disciplinarians, and interventionists

The community organizations that provided feedback included representatives from:

1. Cancel the Contract
2. California Conference for Equality and Justice
3. Community Response System of South Los Angeles
4. Crittenton Services for Children and Families
5. Dangerman Education Foundation
6. Equal Justice Society
7. Long Beach Office of Youth Development
8. Monrovia Arcadia Duarte Town Council
9. National Association African American Parents and Youth
10. Neighborhood Legal Services

To solicit additional community input, the Commission hosted round table discussions regarding the presence of SRDs in schools. A recurrent comment heard from community members was that students are treated like criminals instead of kids who make mistakes. Community members raised concerns that SRDs on school campuses could have a negative impact on students, cause higher rates of fear and anxiety, and disproportionately impact students of color and people with disabilities.

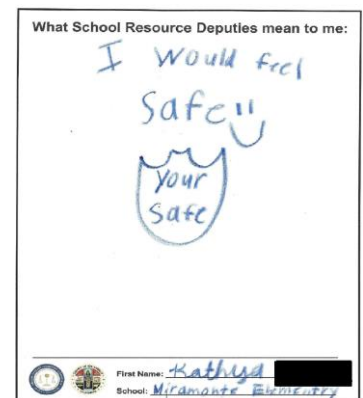
Regarding the Agreement between school districts and LASD, several participants stated that they believe it is too broad and overreaching and that school administrators must have clear procedures and protocols for when to involve an SRD. Community members also stated that SRDs should not be involved in minor disciplinary behavior. Instead, teachers and/or school administrators should address discipline for nonviolent behavior. Further, community members

advised that anytime an SRD is involved with a student, the parents should be notified immediately, at a minimum prior to questioning if possible.

On the other hand, community members who advocated for SRDs believed that having an SRD program provided a sense of safety for students and faculty. In addition, this group states that where SRDs treat students with respect and compassion, are visible on campus, and communicate often with parents, they are successful at building positive relationships with the students, administrators, parents, and the community at large.

Additionally, Commission staff had the opportunity on July 28, 2023, to attend the Parks After Dark Resource Fair at Bethune Park and received feedback from the community, including from young people. Below is a sampling of the feedback received from the community:

- SRDs keep our schools safer from unexpected intruders and makes me, as a parent, feel safer as well (Parent-Lawrence Moore Academy)
- I would like an SRD at my school (Youth-KIPP Corazon Academy)
- My daughter attends school and many things happen, so I would like to see SRDs at least at dismissal time (Parent-Edison Middle School)



❖ Collaboration with County Partners

The Commission has met and collaborated with several County partners to obtain information about their work related to LASD’s SRD program. LASD, the OIG, the Department of Public Health’s Office of Violence Prevention (OVP), and the Los Angeles County Office of Education participated in the virtual conferences hosted by the Commission. OVP provided the Commission with an update regarding their work with their *“Enhancing School District Capacity to Protect Student Safety”* program.⁵² OVP emphasized that this program strives to support school districts by advancing student well-being, aligning County resources, and enhancing effective and innovative safety practices that some districts have already implemented. In April and August 2023, OVP provided training for new LASD SRD trainees. The training covered OVP’s public health approach to violence prevention, OVP’s goals, and current efforts on school safety, followed by question and answer session and solicited SRD trainee’s feedback on school safety priorities.

The Committee collaborated with the County partners listed below to share information and discuss improvements to LASD’s SRD program.

1. Office of Inspector General
2. Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department
3. Human Relations Commission
4. Office of Violence Prevention
5. Department of Youth Development
6. Los Angeles County Office of Education
7. Probation Oversight Commission

⁵² Los Angeles County Dept. of Public Health Office of Violence Prevention. (2023). Enhancing School District Capacity to Protect Student Safety (Item 13, Board Agenda of July 12, 2022). Retrieved from <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/170899.pdf>

ASSESSMENT

The feedback gathered from school districts and the community indicates that most school districts and communities prefer to have an SRD available to their campus for the limited purpose of safety. The community expressed a strong desire for SRDs not to be involved in discipline and to find solutions to the disproportionate contacts and uses of force with students of color. While LASD's SRD program appears to meet the needs of schools, there are areas where improvement is required.

Based on the responses received from all participants, it is apparent that educators and school administrators must refrain from involving SRDs in matters that are non-life threatening. Too often, frustrated educators or administrators use SRDs as the first resort for discipline rather than the last. The feedback received indicates that schools and districts that had other support programming, such as counselors, mental health support, and mentors, did not revert to SRDs for non-safety matters. In short, SRD programs developed in accordance with national best practices have the best opportunity to meet the expectations of all stakeholders.⁵³

In 2021, the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) issued SRO Program Recommendations. Some of their recommendations include:⁵⁴

- The Agreement between the law enforcement agency and a school district should include topics such as defining the roles and responsibilities of the SRD, formal school discipline procedures, and expectations when a decision is made to take enforcement action.
- Qualifications for SRDs, including that the selected officer should have at least three years of law enforcement experience, have a demonstrated willingness to engage with youth to develop positive relationships, and have good verbal communication skills.
- The SRD should build positive relationships with students, staff, administrators, and the community and should receive proper supervision.
- SRDs should complete a foundational school-based law enforcement course to learn: how to empower youth; youth social and emotional development; supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion among other areas; and within one year of completion of the basic course, the SRD should complete an advanced course, which will enhance their knowledge and skills to collaborate with school administrators for crime prevention strategies and to better understand the causes and solutions of school violence.

Many of the recommendations provided by NASRO are consistent with the recommendations in the OIG's April 18, 2023, report on "Improving School Climate and Safety."

⁵³ National Association of School Resource Officers. (2021). Best Practices School Resource Officer Program Recommendations. Retrieved from https://www.nasro.org/clientuploads/NASRO_BestPractices21.pdf

⁵⁴ Ibid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing and analyzing data and documents to create this report, the Quality of Life Ad Hoc Committee recommends that the Commission adopt the following:

Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors:

1. Examine and modify LASD's SRD program Agreements, effective 2024, to include the recommendations in the OIG's report,⁵⁵ which are supported by the NASRO best practices⁵⁶ and the Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles, which include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. A clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the:
 - i. SRD
 - ii. School district
 - iii. School site
 - b. Requirement for:
 - i. Qualifications and training of SRDs
 - ii. SRD assigned hours in and around school locations
 - iii. A system of SRD performance monitoring that is available to the public
 - c. Requirement that:
 - i. SRD should only respond to school staff calls for service relating to student conduct suspected of being criminal conduct
 - ii. SRDs should be prohibited from handcuffing or restraining a student with zip ties on a school campus unless necessary to address a violent situation
 - iii. SRDs should be prohibited from using Category 2 or Category 3 force, as defined by the LASD Manual of Policy and Procedures section 3-10/038.00, including but not limited to pointing or firing a gun, head strikes, or from using pepper spray, mace, less-lethal projectiles, or tasers on school campus unless necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to students, school staff, SRDs or other persons
 - d. Requirement for quarterly SRD reports by school with statistics regarding the school site SRD program services and operations and include, but not limited to:
 - i. Describe SRD program services for school site
 - ii. Publish data on all SRD contacts with students including number of, types, and outcomes of contacts and/or interactions with minors
 - iii. Root cause of contacts and/or interactions, if known
 - iv. Preventive action and/or restorative justice practices used

Recommendations to LASD:

2. Collaborate with the Department of Youth Development and the Department of Public Health Office of Violence Prevention to establish an SRD policy to promote restorative justice practices to minimize interactions and arrests for minor offenses in accordance with the Education Code Section 32282.1.

⁵⁵ OIG. (2023). Report Back on Improving School Climate and Safety (Item No. 20, Agenda of June 28, 2022). Retrieved from https://assets-us-01.kc-usercontent.com/0234f496-d2b7-00b6-17a4-b43e949b70a2/6e218997-05d1-4bd1-a6aa-6e0573d153c6/Report%20Back%20on%20Improving%20School%20Climate%20and%20Safety_Final.pdf

⁵⁶ Ibid.

3. Collaborate with the Office of Inspector General in the development of an SRD program portal on LASD's main public website to be effective in 2024 that includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - a. Name of SRDs
 - b. SRD school assignments
 - c. SRD contact information
 - d. SRD policies with:
 - i. Goals and objectives of the SRD program
 - ii. Duties and responsibilities of deputies
 - iii. Training requirements
 - iv. Minimum assignment requirements
 - v. Expectation for the decision to take enforcement action
 - e. A link to LASD's complaint and commendations portal
 - f. SRD annual reports
4. Coordinate with each assigned school to develop and improve the relationships with parents and students, effective 2024, by:
 - a. Providing schools with LASD developed brochures for distribution to parents that explains SRD:
 - i. Duties and responsibilities
 - ii. Training requirements
 - iii. Expectation for the decision to take enforcement actions
 - iv. How to file complaints or commendations
 - b. Making SRD quarterly reports available and receiving feedback from parents and students at:
 - i. Back to school night
 - ii. Open House
 - iii. Parent Teacher Association
 - iv. School Town Halls
 - v. Related school events
5. Develop an annual LASD SRD report to post on the website and submit to the Commission by no later than the last week of July of each year, effective 2024. The report should include, but not be limited to:
 - a. Overview of the SRD program
 - b. Organizational chart for the operation
 - c. Breakdown of the number of SRDs and their assignments
 - d. Statistics on the SRD program services and operations
 - e. Overview of efforts to develop and improve relationships with parents and students during the year
 - f. Statistics on the number of SRD contacts with students, including demographic information, reason for contact, and outcome
 - g. Statistics on complaints and commendations received related to the SRD program with:
 - i. Type (e.g., use of force, etc.)
 - ii. Number (e.g., monthly totals by school, etc.)

Upon the Commission approving the recommendations, they will be forwarded to LASD and the Board of Supervisors. Staff will continue to monitor this matter and report back when necessary.