



Connie S. Compton  
Sheriff

## School Resource Officer (SRO) Program

### Memorandum of Understanding

Between

The Rappahannock County Sheriff's Office

And

The Rappahannock County Public Schools



Dr. Shannon L. Grimsley  
Superintendent of Schools

August 2023

### Introduction

The expectation for a prosperous future for all citizens of Rappahannock County depends greatly upon our ability to properly educate our children. Effective schooling requires a safe, secure, and peaceful environment to encourage learning. Consequently, the Rappahannock County Sheriff's Officer in collaboration with the Rappahannock County Public Schools, conducts the School Resource Officer Program, maintains safety, order, and discipline throughout the school environment. This program is intended to ensure that no student's right to receive an education is abridged by violence, disruption, or fear.

The Rappahannock County Sheriff's Office has assigned two deputies to the SRO program that will have concurrent responsibilities in our high school and elementary school. With daily interaction between the school's administrators and the School Resource Officer, it is important to establish, maintain, and update specific guidelines and procedures that direct the SRO program. This Memorandum of Understanding clarifies the roles of the School Resource Officer and School Administrators and the scope of their authority. The success of the program relies upon the effective communication between the SRO, the principal, and the staffs of both agencies. While refinements to this Memorandum of Understanding may become necessary in the future, they may not be implemented without written concurrence of both parties.

### Duties & Responsibilities

#### School Resource Officer

A. The School Resource Officer (SRO) is a sworn Rappahannock County Sheriff's Office Deputy assigned to provide law enforcement expertise and resources required to assist the school staff in maintaining safety, order, and discipline. The SRO will be considered an active member of the administration team in the Rappahannock County Public Schools. Administrative disciplinary measures normally imposed upon students for violations of law or school policy, committed against a staff member, such as insubordination or assault, will be equally applied by school administrators in similar situations involving a student and a SRO.

B. The SRO shall assume primary responsibility for handling all calls for service and coordinating the response of other police resources to the schools. Pursuant to Section 22.1-280 of the Code of Virginia, all criminal activity that comes to the attention of the principal or school staff shall be reported immediately to the Sheriff's Office. In an emergency situation, the school shall call 911 and also notify the SRO. In non-emergency situations, the school should notify the SRO or call the non-emergency Sheriff's Office number, 540-675-5300, if the SRO is not available. Information that is not of an emergency nature may be held for action by the SRO upon his or her return to duty.

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Any criminal enforcement action taken by the SRO which results in the charging of a student with a crime will be supported by the principal and/or the school employees by their appearance in court when necessary to provide testimony essential to the case.

The school shall provide a work area for the SRO that is equipped with a telephone. It is recommended that the area have a locked storage facility or cabinet for securing contraband recovered in the school by staff. The SRO shall be responsible for arranging for the destruction of any illegal substances that will not be used for prosecution.

The school system shall provide in-service training, when available, to the SRO in areas that will increase the effectiveness of the deputy and his/her ability to accomplish their duties and responsibilities.

### **Law Enforcement Investigations and Questioning**

The SRO has been given the authority to stop, question, interview, and take law enforcement action without prior authorization of the principal or contacting parents. With certain exceptions, the investigation, and **questions of students during school hours or at school events should be limited to situations where the investigation is related to the school.** Investigations and questioning of students for offenses not related to the operation of, or occurring at school would occur in such situation where, for example, delay might result in danger to any person, flight from the jurisdiction by a person suspected of a crime, or destruction of evidence.

The principal shall be notified as soon as practical of any significant enforcements events.

The SRO shall be advised by other Sheriff's Office Deputies of all investigations that involve students enrolled in the Rappahannock County Schools.

### **Arrest Procedures**

School Resource Officers are expected to be familiar with school rules and their application within the school system. Routinely, rule infractions will not be handled as violations of law, but rather referred to the principal for action. Any questions related to the enforcement of rules versus laws within the schools should be discussed with the principal. This specifically applies to general standards of conduct.

The following procedures will be adhere to where arrests of students or staff become necessary:

1. The arrest of a student or employee of the school with a warrant or petition should be coordinated through the principal and accomplished after school hours, whenever practical.
2. Persons whose presence on school grounds has been restricted or forbidden or whose presence is in violation of the **Code of Virginia** should be arrested for trespassing.
3. Arrest of students or staff during school hours or on school grounds shall be reported to the principal as soon as practical.

### **Search and Seizure**

C. The SRO's duty schedule will be determined by the Sheriff or Chief Deputy, but will generally be arranged to provide coverage throughout the school day including peak arrival and departure times before and after school. Whenever possible, the SRO will be visible patrolling the exterior and interior ground, particularly during opening and closing of school and during the lunch periods.

D. The SRO shall wear the regulation Sheriff's Office uniform and operate a marked Sheriff's Office cruiser while on duty unless otherwise authorized by the Sheriff or Chief Deputy for a specific purpose. The SRO provides a visible deterrent to crime while bringing a positive impression of the Sheriff's Office to students and staff in a non-confrontational setting.

E. The SRO shall also be responsible to assist with training for the school administration in law enforcement and related matters. Information about crime trends and changes to the **Code of Virginia** shall be disseminated to the school administrative staff to assist them in effectively providing a safe school environment.

F. The SRO may become involved in the school's curriculum and provide instruction that will enhance the students' understanding of the Sheriff's Office. However, responding to incidents or conducting investigations will always take precedence

G. The SRO shall be responsible for monitoring cultural and social influences and activities in an effort to identify emerging youth gangs. Gang prevention and early intervention strategies will be coordinated with the School Superintendent or her/his designee.

H. When it is in the best interest of the Sheriff's Office and the schools, SRO's may make formal presentations to, or participate in, school based community organization meetings such as Parent Teacher Association meetings. All such participations must be approved by the School Superintendent and Sheriff. Similar requests to participate in focus groups, panel discussions, mentoring programs, etc., must also be approved by the Superintendent and the Sheriff.

I. A critical element of the SRO program is an open relationship and strong communication between the principal and the SRO. Each SRO shall meet weekly, or more frequently if necessary, with the assigned school principal for the purpose of exchanging information about current crime trends, problem areas, cultural conflicts, or any other area of concern that may cause disruption at the schools or within the community.

J. Other duties and responsibilities of the SRO include:

- Proper disposal of illegal substances recovered by the school not needed for criminal prosecution.
- Attending and providing testimony at school disciplinary hearings, upon request.

## **Sheriff**

The Sheriff shall ensure that open lines of communications are in place between the schools and the Sheriff's Office. A weekly meeting with SRO shall be arranged and the Sheriff shall meet with the school principals at least biannually. A mid school year meeting should also be conducted between the Sheriff and Superintendent to evaluate the SRO's performance and identify any developing issues. Additional meetings between the Sheriff, Superintendent, and principals may be held as events require.

## **School Principal**

It is the responsibility of the principals to facilitate effective communications between the SRO and the school staff. The principal of the school shall meet on a weekly basis with assigned SRO. This meeting shall not be delegated to other administrative staff on a regular basis.

The SRO shall assume primary responsibility for handling all calls for service and coordinating the response of

School officials may conduct searches of student's property and person under their jurisdiction when reasonable suspicion exists that the search will reveal evidence that the student has violated or is violating either the law or the rules of the school. The standard for the search is reasonable suspicion.

The SRO shall not become involved in administrative (school related) searches unless specifically requested by the school to provide security, protection, or for the handling of contraband. These searches must be at the direction and control of the school official. At no time shall the SRO request that an administrative search be conducted for law enforcement purposes or have the administrator act as his or her agent.

Any search initiated by an officer shall be probable cause and, when required, a search warrant should be obtained. Stop and frisk will remain an option when there is a reasonable suspicion that a criminal offense has been committed, and/or that the suspect may be armed.

### **Administrative Hearings**

The SRO shall attend suspension and/or expulsion hearings upon request for the school principal. The deputy shall be prepared to provide testimony on any actions that were taken by him or student conduct that he/she witnessed. The SRO shall make available any physical evidence that is relative to the event. Unless otherwise arranged, it will be the responsibility to the SRO to transport and safeguard any physical evidence, such as a weapon, that is needed at the disciplinary hearing. The SRO shall not provide any official Sheriff's Office document or juvenile record to the school or expulsion hearing officer. As a general rule, release of such information is prohibited by the **Code of Virginia** unless such documents are subpoenaed by the schools through the appropriate court. Upon receiving a subpoena for official records, reports, or documents for an administrative school hearing, the Sheriff shall be notified and provided a copy of the subpoena before the close of business that day. Any action on the subpoena shall be coordinated between the Sheriff, the Commonwealth Attorney, and the SRO.

### **Release of Student Information**

The **Code of Virginia Section 22.1-287**, grants full access of any records concerning any pupil enrolled in a school to law enforcement officers seeking such information in the course of their official duties.

### **Release of Sheriff's Office Information**

Consistent with the basis tenants of the relationship between the School Principal and the SRO described in this **Memorandum of Understanding**, open communication is essential to its effectiveness. The SRO should exchange information with the school system principal regarding students' involvement in criminal activity in and around the school. This shall be limited to that which directly relates to and contributes to the safe school environment. The SRO shall not make any official document, Sheriff's Office report, or criminal record available to the school or its staff. In compliance with the **Code of Virginia**, the Juvenile Court notifies the School Superintendent of Petitions against school students for selected offenses. The School Hearing Officer, in turn, notifies the appropriate school principal in each case. Any exchange of information will be in accordance with all applicable laws.

### **Conclusion**

This policy represents mutually agreed goals and objectives of the Rappahannock County Sheriff's Office and The Rappahannock County Public Schools for the School Resource Officer Program

This endeavor is a partnership between education and law enforcement to support a collaborative, problem solving approach to the epidemic growth of violence in schools nationwide. Regular meetings shall be conducted between the Sheriff's Office and school administrators to support this partnership.

This Memorandum of Understanding will remain in force until such time as either party withdraws from the agreement by delivering a written notification of such rescission to the other party. It shall be reviewed annually and amended as necessary to meet the needs of the signatory agencies.

This Memorandum of Understanding shall not be construed to create or substantiate and right or claim on the part of any person or entity which is not a party hereto.

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**Memorandum of Understanding**

**Between**

**The Rappahannock County Sheriff's Office**

**And**

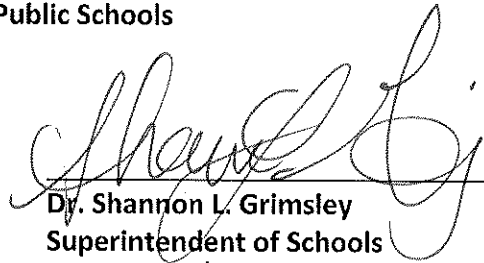
**The Rappahannock County Public Schools**



**Connie S. Compton**  
**Sheriff**

8/11/22

**Date**



**Dr. Shannon L. Grimsley**  
**Superintendent of Schools**

8/11/22

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