



School Resource Officers Issue Brief

Background

According to data analysis done by The Washington Post on gun violence in U.S. schools, there have been more than 130 shootings at elementary, middle, and high schools since the year 2000. An estimated sixty people have been killed and sixty people wounded in elementary school shootings during this time period. Although the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in December 2012 accounts for many of these incidents, seven other states have had elementary school shootings since 2000. Because high schools have higher statistics for school shootings, safety measures have been more thoroughly implemented in these schools.¹ Elementary and middle schools, especially in North Carolina, do not have the equivalent resources and school safety personnel as high schools.

Following the February 2018 school shooting in Parkland, FL North Carolina House Speaker Tim Moore appointed the House Select Committee on School Safety. The committee worked with educators, mental health professionals, law enforcement, and local governments and school systems to improve the safety of public schools.² In their Final Report to the 2018 Session, the House Select Committee on School Safety reinforced the importance of school resource officers (SROs) by recommending that the General Assembly expand school safety grants for SROs and require officer training standards and reporting.³

North Carolina's Center for Safer Schools defines an SRO as "a certified law enforcement officer who is permanently assigned to provide coverage to a school or set of schools." These officers are responsible for taking on the role of a law enforcement officer, a law-related counselor, and a law-related education teacher.⁴

The 2018 state budget grants the Superintendent of Public Instruction to use up to \$12 million in recurring funds as grants to public elementary and middle schools to employ and train SROs. The SRO training must be provided by a community college, local law enforcement agency, or the North Carolina Justice Academy and should include information on the social and cognitive development of students in elementary and middle school.⁵ The 2018 budget supplemented \$5 million to the existing \$7 million (adding up to \$12 million) in funds for SROs.⁶ As of the spring of 2018, North Carolina only had 1,167 SROs employed, which is less than half of the number of public schools in the state. It is estimated that North Carolina would need \$84.4 million annually

¹ Bump, Philip, "Eighteen years of gun violence in U.S. schools, mapped," *The Washington Post*, February 14, 2018.

² Leslie, Laura, "Moore to create school safety committee", *WRAL News*, February 16, 2018.

³ House Select Committee on School Safety, *Final Report to the 2018 Session of the 2017 General Assembly of North Carolina*, December 2018.

⁴ Public Schools of North Carolina, *Center for Safer Schools: For School Resource Officers/Law Enforcement*.

⁵ S.L. 2018-5, sec. 7.27.(e)

⁶ The Joint Conference Committee Report on the Base and Expansion Budget, SB 99, May 28, 2018.

to implement the National Association of School Resource Officers' (NARSO) recommended ratio of assigning one SRO to each school.⁷

The \$12 million grant for elementary and middle school SROs was part of the total \$35 million that was granted to all schools statewide for school safety programs for the 2018-19 fiscal year. This \$35 million supports the expansion of the following:

- the anonymous tip line,
- provisions for students in crisis,
- school safety training,
- safety equipment, and
- school mental health personnel.⁸

According to the most recent report by the NARSO, the trend of juvenile arrests has decreased congruently with the expansion of SRO programs. The implementation of a team approach across all fifty states can account for the estimated 50% decrease of juvenile arrests between 1994 and 2009. This team approach promotes the idea that interagency collaboration allows for broader understanding of creating statutory provision that encourages the welfare of children. Because each state mandates that children attend school, the NARSO believes that these states should also understand the value of providing the funds for well-trained SROs in their schools.⁹

NCSBA Position

NCSBA believes that the General Assembly should provide the appropriate funding to have a full-time resource officer in each school. Additional pay, training, and education should be provided for this unique law enforcement position. The current funding does not allow North Carolina to get remotely close to the NARSO's recommended ratio of one SRO for each school.

NCSBA agrees with the proposed statute changes that were presented by the Governor's Crime Commission in December 2018. The commission recommends that each North Carolina school receive full funding to employ an SRO, provide that SRO with the necessary equipment, and evaluate SRO programs. It is also believed that SROs are a necessary component to multifaceted approaches of making schools safer.¹⁰

⁷ FRD and NCDPI, *School Safety Personnel Summary*, April 2018, <https://www.ncleg.gov/documentsites/committees/House2017-190/Student%20Health%20Working%20Group/4-23-18%20Meeting/Information%20Requests/School%20Safety%20Personnel%20Summary.pdf>

⁸ The Joint Conference Committee Report on the Base and Expansion Budget, SB 99, May 28, 2018.

⁹ Maurice Canady, Bernard James, and Dr. Janet Nease, "To Protect & Educate: The School Resource Officer and the Prevention of Violence in Schools", *National Association of School Resource Officers*, 2012.

¹⁰ NCDPI, *GCC Special Committee on School Shootings*, December 6, 2018.