

USD116 School Resource Officer Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Providing safe, welcoming, and inclusive learning environments is a top priority for the Urbana School District. Our goal is to foster a climate of support and respect and instill a sense of community among students, families, and staff in safe school communities. Following several concerns regarding safety and security during the 2018-19 school year, in August 2019, the newly hired Superintendent requested the Board of Education formalize our current model of two full-time SROs at both our middle school and high school. The Board of Education and Administration formalized this request through an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Urbana during the 2019 school year ending in June 2022.

- **What is a School Resource Officer (SRO)?**

A school resource officer, by federal definition, is a career law enforcement officer with sworn authority who is deployed by an employing police department or agency in a community-oriented policing assignment to work in collaboration with schools.

Source: [*National Association of School Resource Officers \(NASRO\)*](#)

The primary goal of the SRO program is to maintain a safe learning environment and build positive relationships with our school communities. The SRO's presence will reduce and prevent school-related violence, acts of physical aggression, and weapon-related incidents. SROs will accomplish this by establishing trusting relationships and open lines of communication with students, parents, and teachers.

- **Why does Urbana have SROs?**

Like many school districts, SROs foster positive relationships between youth and the police, strengthen police-community connections and support safe learning environments by protecting students and staff from high-threat situations that either start inside the school or from the outside community. SROs are trained specifically to work with students and intervene only in specific high-threat situations, such as when a weapon is brought into a school, or a big fight breaks out.

- **What is the history of the UPD School Resource Officer in Urbana?**

The first recognized SRO began acting as an SRO in December of 1993. Prior to creating the Intergovernment Agreement (2019), there had been eight other SROs. Some of the SROs had short tenures; others were particularly long.

The SRO had previously always been a police officer assigned to the criminal investigations division as a detective. The detectives assigned as the SRO always also had their own caseload, which was comprised of both adult and juvenile cases. During these years, the detective/SRO was a part of the rotation as the on-call detective and was subject to callouts at other unpredictable times. Historically, the school resource officer was no more than a half-time position in the schools and a half-time position working the caseload as mentioned above. That time split has varied based on the needs of the schools and the department.

Prior to an approved Intergovernmental Agreement, for 25 years, the SRO position at UPD was 100% funded by the City of Urbana (i.e., salary, benefits, training, overtime, equipment, and vehicles). During the 2019-2022 school year, USD116 100% funded the costs of the SRO program, with reduced costs during the COVID shutdown months and the year of remote learning (2020-21), where students were learning from home.

The District moved from a .5 SRO/Detective position at the request of the Interim Superintendent in 2018, following a significant increase in the severity of physical confrontations between students and assaults against the teachers attempting to break up the altercations.

- **How many SROs are in USD116?**

USD116 has two School Resource Officers (1 at UMS/1 at UHS) assigned to the building during each school day. The SROs are Urbana Police Department employees.

If the formal agreement is approved, the current SROs intend to return for the 2022-2023 school year and remain in their roles for the full term of the new agreement. However, if either SRO were to resign their position, the positions would be posted, and interested UPD officers would participate in an intensive review and interview process. School district personnel and building administrators would be involved in that interview process.

- **How often do USD116 administrators meet with SROs?**

The current principal and or designee at each school will serve as the point of contact for their school. On a daily basis, SROs will collaborate with school and district administrators on many issues, including the disposition of various situations they may encounter. Their ultimate responsibility is to carry out their duties as police officers, but they are an integral part of the teams at both UMS and UHS.

The UHS SRO and Assistant Principal Blixen meet daily. The SRO meets with the entire UHS Admin Team weekly (including administrators and Student Interventionists (SIs)).

The UMS SRO and UMS admin meet formally weekly. Additionally, they meet on an ongoing basis/daily as needed.

SROs are part of our District Administrative Cabinet Team, District Crisis Planning Team, and District Threat Assessment Team, and they attend monthly meetings with all District admin in attendance.

They are also part of each school's respective Crisis Teams.

- **Does USD116 use SROs for student behavior issues?**

USD116 SROs do not engage in behavior matters with students. USD116 administrators and staff manage and are responsible for student discipline issues. See the USD116 Board Policy Manual (Student Behavior 7:190) for more information.

The SROs collaborate with school administration on arrest decisions and divert youth from the criminal justice system whenever possible and appropriate.

- **Does a parent/guardian get notified if a student is suspected of illegal activity and is questioned by an SRO?**

Yes, Illinois School Code requires law enforcement officers, school resource officers, or other school security personnel to notify parents/guardians and take reasonable steps to include parents/guardians or school mental health professionals when detaining and questioning students on school grounds.

- **Why doesn't USD116 use the money it spends on SROs to fund more social workers? ([see in District SEL positions](#))**

The District currently has a comprehensive student support program in place at both UMS and UHS. In the last five years, the District has increased the number of social workers at both schools and created a new position, clinical professionals (CPs), at both schools. Before and since COVID, the district has increased the number of student relations positions and the number of Student Engagement Advocates (SEAs). Unfortunately, this past year we have experienced a decrease in the support available due to unexpected resignations, staff members currently on leave, and a lack of qualified staff filling open positions throughout the 21-22 school year. We hope that we are able to hire and fill vacant positions and return to fully staffed Student Support Teams at both schools for the 22-23 school year.

- **Why do some people not want SROs in schools?**

The concern with having police officers in schools is that it may set up a "school-to-prison pipeline," particularly for African American males, by criminalizing student behavior, increasing their chance of ending up in prison. In addition, there is the concern that tensions between police and communities of color can spill into the schools, despite the best efforts to prevent or decrease these conflicts in and outside of school.

- **Has the recent increase in gun violence in the community for youth under age 18 caused an increase in the school to prison pipeline for Urbana's secondary schools?**

No. While we have seen the incidents of Urbana youth's access to guns quadruple in the last three years, we have not seen this same increase in our SRO student contacts with law enforcement.

The State's Attorney data for the years prior to our formal agreement indicates the following for Urbana Youth under the age of 18 charged with possession of a gun or use of a gun (w/a .5 SRO):

- In 2017, 7 young people were charged
- In 2018, 5 young people were charged
- In 2019, 18 young people were charged

Since the District finalized the SRO agreement with 2 full-time SROs:

- In 2020, 13 young people were charged
- In 2021, 7 young people were charged
- In 2022, 8 through May 3, 2022

Before 2019 data (5 years with .5 SRO/Detective)

In 5 ½ years prior to 2019, 0 (zero) Urbana students were sentenced to the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice or the Illinois Department of Corrections.

In 5 ½ years prior to 2019, Urbana Middle School and Urbana High School have had the following arrests for school-related incidents on school property:

33 total school-related arrests

24 of which were taken directly to the Youth Assessment Center (YAC)

9 of the remaining 33 were taken to the Juvenile Detention Center (JDC)

6 of those 9 taken to JDC after further review were taken to the Youth Assessment Center

The final 3 school-related incidents ended as follows:

2 students were charged by the State's Attorney's Office

1 student was not charged by the State's Attorney's Office

2019-2022 data (Current model with 2 full-time SROs)

UHS

15 incidents generating police reports

- 10** were Youth Assessment Center Referrals
- 1** was an arrest at school
- 4** were arrests off campus

UMS

14 incidents generating police reports

- 10** were Youth Assessment Center Referrals
- 1** Youth Assessment Center Transport
- 3** were arrested at school (result of a group fight involving parents and students)

Total for both schools from 2019-2022

29 total school-related arrests

- 21** were Youth Assessment Center referrals or transports

Of the remaining reports 8 police reports generated

- 8** were taken to the Juvenile Detention Center (JDC)
- 3** were charged by the State's Attorney's Office

- **Could USD116 just have security guards instead of UPD police officers to fill the SRO role?**

Using security guards instead of police officers is a possible model that could be adopted; however, the USD116 Administration prefers working with SROs because they are better trained and qualified than security guards in handling high-threat situations. Security guards are also limited in the degree to which they can intervene in high-threat situations since they cannot arrest individuals when and if such occasions become necessary from inside the school or from the outside community. Since security guards do not have a direct and formal connection to the community, they cannot adequately serve the larger function of building positive relationships and instilling a sense of belonging between students, staff, the community, and the police.

- **What evidence exists that SROs are valuable?**

Researchers at Canada's Carleton University conducted a two-year study of an SRO program in the Regional Municipality of Peel. In [their 2018 report](#), they concluded that for every dollar invested in the program, a minimum of \$11.13 of social and economic value was created. The report lists numerous benefits of the program, including:

- Prevention or minimization of property damage in the school and surrounding areas.

- Prevention of student injuries and even death due to violence, drug overdoses, etc.
- Reduction of the need for schools to call 911.
- Reduction of the likelihood that a student will get a criminal record.
- Increase the likelihood that students (particularly those with mental health issues) will get the help they need from the social service and health care systems.
- Increase in feelings of safety among students and staff.

• **How are other School Resource Models in Champaign County staffed? Do most schools in Champaign County have SROs?**

Nationally and locally, the use of SROs is common practice, with some districts even having their own police department. The National Association of SROs recommends an SRO per capita ratio of one officer per 1,000 students or one per school building.

School Resource Officer Program - Champaign County Data

Best practice - 1 SRO to 1,000 students

<u>Agency</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Population</u>
Champaign County Sheriff's Office	St. Joseph-Ogden High School / Prairie View Ogden Junior High School	1255 students
Champaign County Sheriff's Office	Unity High School	516 students
*Champaign Police Department	Edison Middle School	763 students
*Champaign Police Department	Franklin Middle School	693 students
*Champaign Police Department	Jefferson Middle School	787 students
*Champaign Police Department	Central High School	1392 students
*Champaign Police Department	Centennial High School	1338 students
Mahomet Police Department	Middletown Prairie, Lincoln Trail, Mahomet Jr. High, Mahomet High School	3170 students
Rantoul Police Department	Eastlawn, Pleasant Acres, Northview, Broadmeadow Elementary Schools, JW Eater Junior High School	1654 students
Rantoul Police Department	Rantoul Township High School	779 students

Urbana Police Department	Urbana Middle School	920 students
Urbana Police Department	Urbana High School	1178 students
Agency	Number of SROs, Total Number of Students in SRO Staffed Schools	Per Capita Ratio
Champaign County Sheriff's Office	2 SROs, 1771 students	1 : 885 students
*Champaign Police Department	5 SROs, 4,760 students	1 : 952 students
Mahomet Police Officer	1 SRO, 3170 students (MHS = 975)	1 : 3170 District
Rantoul Police Department	2 SROs, 2,433	1 : 1,216 students
Urbana Police Department	2 SROa, 2098 students	1 : 1,049 students

Updated 4/2022

*Champaign, Unit 4, temporarily suspended the School Resource Officer Program for the 2021-22 school year due to police staffing shortages within the Champaign Police Department. October 2021, Unit 4 hired a private security firm with a cost of \$559,224 for the remainder of the school year. December 2021, they hired a Director of Security and School Safety to oversee the private security firm.

Unit 4 is renewing its school resource officer program for the 2022-2023 school year. The Board has approved up to \$350,000 for their program next year. The District is also exploring its own in-house security force.

• What training have our SROs received?

All Urbana police officers must:

- Pass the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certification.
- Have a 2- or 4-year degree or equivalent military service, plus receive 2-9 months of additional training.
- To remain certified, SROs must do 16 hours of continuing education every year.
- SROs also go through 8 to 24 hours of training each year to familiarize themselves with Urbana programs such as special education, positive school-wide engagement, social-emotional learning, and equity efforts.

If approved, our SRO will continue to attend at least four classes, in addition to in-house, on-the-job training by experienced SROs:

<https://nasro.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/NASRO-Basic-Course-Description-and-Outline.pdf> (Basic)

<https://nasro.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/NASRO-ADVANCED-SRO-COURSE-CONTENT-OUTLINE-AND-OBJECTIVES.pdf> (Advanced)

<https://nasro.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/AMHT-SRO-Course-Outline-and-Objectives.pdf> (Mental Health)

1. State of Illinois Juvenile Officer Course/Certification (40 hours). This course is required for officers that frequently deal with crimes involving juveniles.
2. NASRO Basic SRO (40 hours). It includes training on:
 - a. school-based law enforcement
 - b. ethics
 - c. SRO as teacher/guest speaker
 - d. understanding students with special needs
 - e. SRO as informal counselor/mentor
 - f. social media/cyber safety
 - g. understanding the teen brain
 - h. violence and victimization
 - i. sex trafficking of youth
 - j. school law
 - k. developing successful relationships with diverse students
 - l. youth trends/drugs on school culture
 - m. threat response
 - n. school safety
 - o. crime prevention
3. NASOR Advanced SRO (24 hours). It includes training on:
 - a. leadership and working effectively with the school community
 - b. legal updates
 - c. interviewing skills for SRO
 - d. technology and social media online-based investigations
 - e. threat assessment
 - f. incident command system for schools
 - g. crime prevention
 - h. skills assessment of SRO
4. Adolescent Mental Health Training for SRO (12 hours). It includes training on:
 - a. understanding adolescent development
 - b. adolescent mental health disorders and treatment
 - c. crisis intervention and de-escalation
 - d. SRO roles and responsibilities
 - e. family support
 - f. connection to resources