



# SRO Work Group



Arlington  
Public  
Schools

# REPORT AND

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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## SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER WORK GROUP REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Arlington Public Schools thanks everyone who participated in the School Resources Officer (SRO) Work Group and invested their time in the process to review our current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Arlington County Police Department (ACPD). This report provides a summary of the work performed by the SRO Work Group and recommendations that APS proposes to implement moving forward.

### SRO Work Group Charge and Background

The Arlington Public Schools SRO Work Group was established in December 2020 to address community concerns expressed to the School Board and Superintendent regarding the relationship between the Arlington County Police Department (ACPD) and Arlington Public Schools, and to re-imagine how we can best serve our students, families, schools and Arlington County.

**The Arlington Public Schools Mission is, “to ensure all students learn and thrive in safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments.” The purpose of the Arlington Public Schools (APS) School Resource Officer (SRO) Work Group is to evaluate and examine APS’ partnership with Arlington County Police Department (ACPD) and specifically to review our longstanding practice of SROs in schools. This examination may result in reinventing, limiting, or terminating the SRO and school partnership in Arlington in support of APS’ Mission, following the review and assessment of current practices, research, data, and community input.**

The Work Group was convened by the Superintendent’s Chief of Staff, Brian Stockton, and met over the course of five months, December – May 2020. The Work Group consisted of 40 members who represent Arlington Public Schools student demographics and include members of

advisory groups, students, parents, ACPD representatives, and staff, to help ensure a diverse and inclusive working group.

They divided into four subgroups with specific areas of focus: Education and Mentorship; Law Enforcement; Mental Health Behavior and Substance Abuse; and Physical Security and Emergency Response. APS appreciates the time the SRO Work Group invested in the process. Their recommendations are being used to inform and improve the way our school division interacts with SROs moving forward.

The Superintendent’s recommendations to the School Board, outlined in this report, are based on the input from the community and SRO Work Group. Arlington Public Schools values our ongoing partnership with the Arlington County Government and ACPD and looks forward to the many ways this partnership will continue to benefit our youth and schools.

### SRO Work Group Recommendations

The recommendations from each of the four subgroups within the SRO Work Group clearly highlighted common themes and key areas of focus for APS to best utilize SROs to serve students and schools. The consensus among the work group participants is that the way SROs function<sup>1</sup> in our schools today should not be the future of the SRO program in Arlington County. The Work Group believes that SROs should continue to be a resource to schools, but should not be stationed<sup>2</sup> in schools. Instead, the non-enforcement support duties performed by SROs in schools should be performed by APS staff.

The Work Group’s recommendations chart a course for implementing those changes, working with APS students, staff and community members to provide safe, healthy and supportive school environments. Some of the key findings and recommendations will need to be assessed further and will result in written guidance, while others will be driven by data and

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[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human\\_rights\\_magazine\\_home/civil-rights-reimagining-policing/ending-school-contracts-with-law-enforcement/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/civil-rights-reimagining-policing/ending-school-contracts-with-law-enforcement/)

<sup>2</sup> <https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/08-2020/sros.html>

measurable goals established by APS in collaboration with our partners as we move forward. As we make these changes, transparency and open dialogue will be a key attribute to ensure the trust built during this process continues.

### Superintendent's Recommendations

The following are the Superintendent's recommendations to the School Board based on input received from the community and the SRO Work Group through this process. **The Superintendent's primary recommendation is to no longer have a daily SRO presence in schools and to redefine APS' relationship with the ACPD to ensure continued school safety.** The non-enforcement support duties performed by SROs in schools will be performed by APS staff, especially since SROs perform a lot of duties that are outside of their law enforcement duties while stationed inside the schools.

The goal is to ensure APS students, staff, and families continue to feel and remain safe by utilizing established mechanisms for ACPD to assist with creating safe school practices for any threat that may arise, and that requires police support and presence in the schools, either by statute or by activities that would require a police response.

These are the steps we are committed to exploring and implementing as we reimagine<sup>3</sup> our SRO program, as many states have done since 2020, to continue our relationship with ACPD in a **mutually beneficial, student-centered, and trauma-informed manner**:

- Station School Resource Officer Units in a location outside of individual APS schools.
- Ensure APS students, staff, and families continue to feel and remain safe by utilizing current mechanisms for ACPD to assist with creating safe school practices for any internal or external threat that may arise, and require

police support and presence in the schools, either by statute<sup>4</sup> or by activities that would require a police response.

- Develop a standardized process to continue using the SROs across the County for educational programming<sup>5</sup> and to serve as liaisons in line with Virginia statutes and best practices.
- Develop a standardized training program for APS staff and administration on how best to intervene in incidents as school administrators and to use SROs only as needed in support of what is required by the Commonwealth of Virginia and within the parameters of the policies and procedures that will be impacted by the guidance coming from the School Board and the Office of the Superintendent.
- Develop in collaboration with ACPD and our community partners a training program that will enhance and inform the important aspects of working with students, and some emotional, cultural, and community supports and interventions. We will focus on research-based, student focused ways on the best methods to engage with students to decrease the likelihood of any negative impacts by implementing non-enforcement contacts to build trust with students.
- Create a regular, transparent mechanism for collecting and sharing data regarding the SRO program and progress toward the agreed upon goals on an annual basis, at a minimum, with clearly defined measures of success, while ensuring student and family privacy<sup>6</sup> is protected with the primary goal of enhancing community trust and accountability.
- Establish a mechanism within the school framework for sharing data in a manner that is student centered and non-enforcement related to assist students, families and APS to ultimately support students that may be experiencing external events that are manifesting themselves

<sup>3</sup>

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/jeremy.kittredge/viz/SROUpdate/Dashboard1>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.justice4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/sros-in-va-6-17-2020.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sjpd.org/community/community-services/school-liaison>

<sup>6</sup> <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/faq/does-ferpa-distinguish-between-school-resource-officers-sros-and-other-local-police-officers-who>

in the school environment to ensure students have the necessary resources and supports they need.

- Explore other jurisdictions that have re-branded or re-imagined the SRO role and increased student and community engagement, while decreasing the enforcement aspect of the SRO program to accomplish the goal of relationship building with ACPD in the community, primarily with youth and communities of color, outside of having a permanent physical presence in the schools.
- Collaborate with other Arlington County family-based resources to cross-train and potentially co-locate the SRO team so they can serve a cross-functional role within the community and schools as deemed appropriate and in line with the APS Strategic Plan that is consistent with other Arlington County goals for ACPD that benefits APS
- Explore creating a best practice school justice model<sup>7</sup> to continue to research, the best way to collaborate with ACPD and use the SRO position to further the goals of APS and the County while adapting to the needs of our students and community in a thoughtful and informed manner, with research<sup>8</sup>, and examples from other cities and national organizations that specialize in education, justice, school safety, youth outreach, law enforcement, community engagement, and child development, trauma, mental health/well-being, equity, and the impact of race and education.

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<sup>7</sup><https://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/Community%20Advisory%20Boards%20final%204.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://law.stanford.edu/stanford-lawyer/articles/selective-de-policing-stanford-law-team-proposes-new-routes-to-public-safety-in-racially-diverse-communities/>

## Changes Resulting from the Superintendent's Recommendations

APS will continue its long-standing relationship with ACPD which will continue to benefit students and schools. The following changes will be implemented beginning in the 2021-22 school year based on the Superintendent's recommendations:

- Moving forward, APS and ACPD will collaborate to determine the best method of providing law-enforcement services to schools and ACPD officers will be based at a location in close-proximity to schools.
- In the event of an emergency or for law-enforcement needs, ACPD will provide police services as needed.
- The services of SROs will be reimagined to meet the needs of students, staff, and the APS community.
- ACPD will continue to provide training to students and staff as needed with the hope of implementing the recommendations of the SRO Work Group.
- The name of the SRO program will be changed to reflect the new support role they will be providing to students and staff. (e.g. Juvenile Response Group or Youth Resource Officer).

As APS continues to explore the possible implementation of the work group's recommendations, the goal is to keep this as a dynamic process that will continue to evolve as needed. As APS begins to solidify the MOU, curriculum, APS training, and collaboration with ACPD, the school division will be working closely with our community members to gain insight and for continued transparency.

Several jurisdictions around the Country, over 20 states and locally (i.e., Richmond, VA; Charlottesville, VA; Montgomery County<sup>9</sup>, MD; Alexandria<sup>10</sup>, VA; Newport News, VA), are exploring the roles<sup>11</sup> of SROs, and many are making changes<sup>12</sup> to their SRO program. Some are discontinuing the program, while others are re-allocating funds, and other school divisions are re-imagining the roles of their SROs, which is the direction APS is moving, as APS is committed and determined to build a unique SRO role that is unique to Arlington.

The continued support of the members of the SRO Work Group and the broader Arlington community will be needed as we proceed with these changes. APS is focused on and will continue to develop strategies around the findings and recommendations of the SRO Work Group where appropriate to further strengthen and improve the school division.

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<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/04/09/how-we-are-reimagining-public-safety-montgomery-county/>

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<https://alexandrialivingmagazine.com/news/alexandria-ends-school-resource-officer-SRO-program-ACPS/>

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<https://washingtondailies.com/washington/prince-georges-county-to-keep-cops-in-schools-bucking-national-trend/>

12 <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2021/04/25/police-presence-berkeley-high-schools>

## APPENDIX: STUDENT RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

### School Counselor Ratios

**Elementary School: 1:375**

**Middle School: 1:325**

**High School: 1:300**

- The Code of Virginia address the minimum staffing ratios for school counselors.
- For the 2021-22 school year, APS added 10.8 FTE elementary school counselors due to ratio changes in the Code of Virginia.
- The current staffing level of middle and high school counselors meets the VDOE staffing level guidance.
- School counselors spend 80% of their day or more directly counseling students.

### Substance Abuse Counselors

APS currently has seven Substance Abuse Counselors (SACs) who support elementary, middle, and high schools. SACs provide services and interventions designed to enhance the social, emotional, and academic success of students by helping to address:

- Support for students, staff, administrators, and parents, to address the issues related to substance use so that students may continue their education;
- Early intervention;
- Universal prevention activities;
- Psychoeducational class presentations (grades 5-10; and as requested with other high school grade levels);
- Consultations;
- Community presentations;
- Collaboration; and
- Crisis intervention.

### Student Discipline & Rights

**APS will:**

- Hire a Student Behavior and School Climate Coordinator who will assist with implementing restorative justice for the school division.
- Offer three restorative practice training sessions throughout the 2021-22 school year for all administrators and staff, including: Restorative Mindset, Basic Circle Training, & Restorative Justice in Education.
- Contract with a restorative justice organization that will conduct a resource mapping of all APS secondary schools and host monthly Community of Practice meetings to review restorative justice skill building and implementation.
- Develop a restorative justice strategic implementation plan to begin the 2022-23 school year.
- Improve rights and responsibilities education for students and families.