The author(s) shown below used Federal funds provided by the U.S. Department of Justice and prepared the following final report:

National Assessment of School Resource Officer Programs

Final Project Report

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Table of Contents

Final Project Report

With support from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office), through a cooperative agreement with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Abt Associates conducted a National Assessment of School Resource Officer (SRO) programs.

Introduction

There has been a growing interest in placing sworn police officers in schools as SROs to improve school safety. However, when this project began in May 2000, little was known about SRO programs (appendix A identifies the principal published and selected unpublished discussions of SRO programs, and related data on school safety, that we examined). The purpose of the National Assessment was to identify what program "models" have been implemented, how programs have been implemented, and what the programs' possible effects may be. To obtain this information, ***Abt Associates conducted a nationwide survey of established and relatively new SRO programs and collected implementation data by telephone and on site from 19 SRO programs***.

Three subcontractors assisted in collecting, analyzing, and reporting the data:

- The Center for Criminal Justice Policy Research at Northeastern University,
- The Justice and Safety Center, College of Justice and Safety, at Eastern Kentucky University, and
- the Center for the Prevention of School Violence in North Carolina.

Two consultants assisted Northeastern University in collecting and analyzing the data:

- Timothy Bynum, School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University, and
- Scott Decker, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

This report describes the activities the project team conducted for the National Assessment and summarizes the study findings. The report has five sections, which follow the chronology of the project:

- **Mail Survey**—a summary of the methodology and findings of the first significant project task.
- **Selection of Study Sites**—a review of the site selection criteria and the sites selected.
- **The Site Visits**—a description of the preparation for, goals, and conduct of the site visits.
- **Modifications to the Research Methodology**—a description of the change from an outcome study to a process evaluation for the large new sites and the reasons for the change.
- **Data Analysis and Findings**—a summary of the methodology and findings of the five other reports prepared under the project.

The report concludes with appendixes providing protocols and other materials used in the project.

In addition to this Final Project Report, the study produce five other reports:

1. The *National Survey of SRO Programs and Affiliated Schools* summarizes the results of 322 responses to a mail survey of law enforcement agencies with SRO programs and 108 responses from affiliated schools.

2. An *Interim Report: Fear and Trust* summarizes preliminary impressionistic observations concerning (a) perceptions of fear about campus safety among school administrators, faculty, and students among 15 of the 19 sites and (b) trust in the police among these groups in the 15 sites.

3. *Case Studies of 19 School Resource Officer (SRO) Programs* provides in-depth descriptions of each program's history, SROs, program activities, and program monitoring and evaluation.

4. *Results of a Survey of Students in Three Large New SRO Programs* presents the results of a survey of nearly 1,000 students designed to identify the relationship between perceptions of safety and the SRO program.

5. *Comparison of Program Activities and Lessons Learned among 19 School Resource Officer (SRO) Programs* compares the 19 programs in terms of seven key dimensions, with a focus on lessons learned: choosing a program model; defining specific SRO roles and responsibilities; recruiting SROs; training and supervising SROs; collaborating with school administrators and teachers; working with students and parents; and evaluating SRO programs.

Mail Survey

The first significant project task involved conducting a mail survey of SRO programs and affiliated schools, primarily to document the nature of existing SRO programs and to help guide site selection for the site visits. A separate report submitted in May 2001 to NIJ, "Report on the National Survey of SRO Programs and Affiliated Schools," provides a detailed account of the survey methodology and results of the survey. A brief summary of the methodology and findings follows.

Mail Survey Methodology

Using the 1999 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) database and the list of COPS Office 1999 grantees, during the summer of 2000 we sent a survey to a random sample of 454 law enforcement agencies with SRO programs, stratified by department size and age. Efforts to increase the response rate included sending postcards to 226 programs that had not returned their surveys after a month and then telephoning programs that did not return their surveys in response to the postcards. Surveys were eventually returned by 322 agencies (71 percent).

The survey instrument's 29 questions (see appendix B) addressed five principal areas:

(1) administrative information (e.g., who funds the program);
(2) nature of school safety problems at the participating schools (e.g., bullying);
(3) activities of SROs (e.g., teaching crime awareness classes);
(4) community policing (e.g., groups involved in the collaboration); and
(5) evaluation (e.g., types of data routinely collected).

In September 2000, we mailed a second survey (see appendix C), similar in content to the law enforcement survey, to 295 schools that the responding law enforcement agencies identified in their survey responses. During the week of October 30, 2000, we telephoned 214 schools and faxed every school that had not returned its survey asking it to do so. A total of 108 schools eventually returned the school surveys (37 percent).

Summary of Results of the SRO Survey

The results of the mail survey indicated that *there is tremendous diversity in structure and activities* among the responding programs (e.g., number of full-time SROs, number of schools served). At the same time, *in some respects there is considerable similarity* among responding programs (e.g., law enforcement oversight of the program, provision of specialized training for SROs). Other noteworthy findings included the following.

- Most programs receive funding from more than one source, with the local law enforcement agency by far the most common single source of funding (70 percent of programs).

- The average program serves five schools. Eighty-five percent of programs serve high schools, 65 percent middle schools (grades 6-8), 47 serve elementary schools (K-5 or K-6), and 35 percent junior high schools (grades 7-9).

- In general, most SROs engage in several—often many—distinct and very different activities. For example:
  -- SROs in over three-quarters of the programs engage in up to 10 different kinds of law enforcement activities, from patrolling school facilities to issuing citations.
  -- SROs in over half the programs advise school staff, students, or families.
  -- SROs in at least half the programs focus on teaching students about drugs, legal issues, safety education, crime awareness, and conflict resolution.

- SROs programs spend an average of 20 hours per week on law enforcement activities, 10 on advising or mentoring, 5 on teaching, and 6 to 7 on other activities combined. However, SROs from different programs spend very different percentages of time on law enforcement versus advising versus teaching.

The survey results also showed that *the vast majority of responding schools expressed considerable satisfaction with their programs*. The following observations based on the survey results were also noteworthy.

- While it might be thought that elementary schools are least in need of SRO programs, nearly half the programs surveyed serve elementary schools.

- Many programs are currently addressing many more school safety problems than they were originally established to address.

- It appears that many SROs engage in activities for which they have not been trained, including mentoring and teaching.

- Most programs fail to collect important process and outcome evaluation data.

Several of these observations pointed to areas to explore further during the site visits. The survey also helped us to identify sites to visit as part of the study.

Selection of Study Sites

The second principal project task was selecting 20 programs to study in depth through on-site visits and, as needed, telephone callbacks. We planned to include five of each of the following types of programs in the study:

- large established programs;
- large new programs;
- small established programs; and
- small new programs.

We defined "large" SRO programs as those operated by law enforcement agencies with 100 or more sworn officers and "small" programs as those operated by agencies with less than 100 officers (the Bureau of Justice Statistics' definitions for large and small agencies). As these definitions indicate, "large" and "small" do not, as might be expected, refer to the law enforcement agency's number of SROs but rather the size of the agency. This was because the LEMAS database did not provide information about the number of SROs in each agency. As a result, we used agency size as a "proxy" for SRO program size because we anticipated (correctly) that by selecting agencies with a range of sworn officers we would end up with programs with a range in the number of SROs because larger law enforcement agencies serve jurisdictions with larger numbers of schools and therefore could be expected to have more SROs than smaller agencies.

We defined "established" programs as those that had been in existence at least since 1995—the median length of time for all large established programs that returned the survey (53 percent were established before 1996). The definition of "new" that we used was that the site had not reported the placement of SROs in schools in the past on the 1999 Bureau of Justice Statistics' LEMAS survey and the site was the recipient of a 1999 COPS Office Cops in Schools grant.

Site Selection Process

We used different methods for selecting each of the four different categories of programs.

Large Established Programs

As part of the mail survey of SRO programs (see above), we mailed the survey questionnaire to 119 large law enforcement agencies (100 or more full-time sworn officers) that the LEMAS database indicated had active SROs. With one exception (see below), the 81 agencies that returned the survey represented the pool of candidate sites for inclusion in the study.

Based on our review of the survey responses, we eliminated from consideration:

- agencies with only a verbal agreement with the participating schools, since these programs were not as likely as programs with written contracts or memorandums of agreement to have an effective program, and

- agencies established since 1995, since these programs failed to meet the median length of existence among the large established programs that returned the survey.

We applied the following criteria to the remaining programs.

- *Regional balance.* We selected agencies that were located in different regions of the country, including the Far West, Mid-West, Southwest, and South. We did not find any eligible agencies in the East (most either had only a verbal agreement with the school system or were recently established). Regional diversity was important for ensuring that agencies that wished to replicate a program could find one described in our study reports which they felt was similar to their own. Geographic diversity would also help take into account local peculiarities that might facilitate or hamper the success of an SRO program.

- *Type of agency.* We wanted to include at least one sheriff's department so that other sheriff's departments would feel represented in the study. In addition, police departments and sheriff's departments might have different implementation and operational problems that it would be important for us to identify.

- *Agency size.* Again, for purposes of representativeness, we selected agencies that had different numbers of sworn officers, ranging from 114 to 1,285. In addition, law enforcement agencies with different sworn strength might have different implementation and operational problems that it would be important for us to identify.

- *Type of problem(s) targeted.* We chose agencies that reported they were addressing different types of discipline and crime problems, ranging from gangs to truancy to drug use. Selecting agencies that were addressing the same problem might have limited the generalizability of the study findings to that one problem. With one exception (see below), we also selected programs that reported that their SROs divided their time among law enforcement, teaching, and mentoring.

- *Other considerations.* Several agencies provided us with particularly promising data, suggesting that they were well administered and monitored, and suggesting that the programs could provide the type of information we would need for our report.

We recommended one program for inclusion in the study that had not returned a survey but with which we were already familiar. We included the program because it had a large number of SROs and was a good example of largely law enforcement model (SROs did relatively little teaching and mentoring, and they were not stationed in the schools— they responded to dispatcher requests to go to a school in their assigned clusters).

Large New Programs

In 1999, the COPS Office awarded Cops in Schools grants to 40 large law enforcement agencies (100 or more full-time sworn officers). We used these grantees as the initial pool for selecting sites to include in the study. To guide our recommendations for sites to include in the study, we reviewed the 35 applications that the COPS Office forwarded to us that the agencies had submitted for SRO funding. Even though the programs received their grant award notices in 1999, the COPS Office had found that it generally takes up to a year for an SRO to be deployed under its hiring grants. As a result, we expected to be able to collect baseline data at any of these programs.

Based on our review, we eliminated nine programs that wanted to use COPS Office funding to *add* SROs to an existing SRO program. We eliminated another program that proposed to use COPS Office funding to *maintain* existing SROs. We reasoned that these sites would not be able to provide us with "lessons learned" about setting up an SRO program. They could, of course, provide information retrospectively about the implementation process, but we would already be visiting 10 established programs that would be able to provide that information.

We applied most of the same criteria to the 25 large new programs that we applied to the large established programs except that we added the following three criteria:

- *Responded to the mail survey.* We sent our SRO mail survey to 10 large, new COPS Office grantees. Six agencies returned the survey. Other considerations being equal, we gave greater preference to agencies that returned our SRO survey under the assumption that these agencies were motivated to cooperate with the data collection that the study would require.

- *Strength of community policing.* We examined the proposals to ensure that the agencies were proposing activities for SROs that would go beyond routine law enforcement duties to include the type of educational and mentoring activities, and problem solving strategies, that are more likely to make them effective as well as conform to the COPS Office mission.

- *Previous relationship with the schools.* We gave increased weight to agencies that reported in their COPS in Schools proposals they already had a close and productive relationship with the schools. These relationships might indicate that the agencies took their responsibilities for working with the schools seriously, which would augur well for the success of their SRO programs.

Small Established Programs

Our initial pool for these sites consisted of programs representing law enforcement agencies with fewer than 100 officers that had reported in the LEMAS survey that they had an established SRO program. We intentionally selected the candidate sites only from North Carolina because the State was one of the first to experiment with SRO programs. In addition, there was an organization in the State that was interested in partnering with us on the study (the Center for the Prevention of School Violence) and could make available local researchers who could effectively collect data from departments and schools in rural areas and small towns better than we might have been able to given the center's credibility throughout the State (e.g., extensive experience working with local schools) and its knowledge of the State's SRO programs.

The Center for the Prevention of School Violence identified the sites and alternative sites (that we recommended to NIJ) based on criteria similar to those we used to select large established programs, such as regional balance, type of agency, agency size, and types of problems addressed.

Small New Programs

Our initial pool for small new sites consisted of programs that had not reported having an SRO program previously and that were recent recipients of Cops in Schools grants. We chose all the small new program candidates from Kentucky because the State had recently made a concerted effort to implement SRO programs statewide, and a sizable number of small rural departments in the State had received COPS Office grants in comparison with rural departments in other states. In addition, as in North Carolina, there was an organization (the Justice and Safety Center, College of Justice and Safety at Eastern Kentucky University) in the State that was interested in partnering with us on the study and could make available credible and experienced local researchers.

The College for Law Enforcement at Eastern Kentucky University selected the programs based on criteria similar to those we used to identify large new programs, including the regional location of the site, the nature of the intervention, the relationship between the school and the police department, and the size and type of the agency. A timely COPS in Schools training conference provided an opportunity for the college to bring together all potential sites for the purpose of explaining the project, soliciting participant comment, and assessing their interest in participating in the study.

Site Selection Recommendations

Based on the application of our criteria, we provided our recommended 20 programs to NIJ in April 2001. We also provided a list of alternative programs in case NIJ rejected one or more of our recommended sites or in the event that initial calls we placed to the preferred sites led us to believe that one or more of these agencies was not, in fact, suitable for inclusion in the study or was reluctant or unwilling to host a site visit.

Indeed, one site in Kentucky did refuse to participate, and we were able to replace the site with the next choice on our list of recommended sites. In addition, because one of the large new sites rejected its COPS Office grant, we had to exclude it, too, from the study.

However, by the time this site had turned down the grant, it was too late to substitute another site. As a result, we included only four large new sites in the study, for a total of 19 SRO programs (5 large established, 4 large new, 5 small established, and 5 small new).

In order to preserve the sites' anonymity, we have not identified the sites by name in this report. However, the matrix on the following page identifies selected characteristics of the 19 programs. As shown, 1 agency is located in the Northeast, 2 are in the Midwest, 12 are in the South, 1 is in the South Central, 2 are in the Southwest, and 1 is in the Far West. There was a disproportionate number of programs in the South because all 5 of the small established programs came from South Carolina and all 5 of the small new programs came from Kentucky.

As the matrix shows, 10 agencies were police departments and 9 were sheriff's departments. The number of sworn officers in the 19 law enforcement agencies ranged from 4 to about 1,000. Four agencies had between 4 and 20 officers; five agencies had between 21 and 50 officers; six agencies had between 51 and 150 officers; and four agencies had more than 150 officers—two had between 151-250 and two had between 900 and 1,000. The number of full-time SROs in each program ranged from 1 to 37, with 8 programs employing 1 to 3 SROs; 7 programs employing 4 to 6 SROs; and 4 programs employing 9 or more SROs. There was considerable variation in the grade levels each program served; however, 2 programs stationed SROs only in junior and senior high schools, and 3 programs served just high schools. SROs in 6 programs served elementary schools (spending most of their time, however, with the middle and high schools "fed" by these elementary schools).

Selected Characteristics of the 19 Programs						
Type of Program	Region	Type of Police Agency	Number of Sworn Officers	Number of SROs	Number and Grade Levels of Schools Served	Year Began
Large Established	South	Police	51-150	4	3 junior	1995
Large Established	Midwest	Police	51-150	5	5 junior	1995
Large Established	South	Sheriff	151-250	9	4 high 2 junior 8 middle	1995
Large Established	Southwest	Police	900-1,000	21	21 middle 65 elementary	1962
Large Established	Far West	Police	150-250	15	70 schools[a]	1993
Large New	South Central	Sheriff	51-150	6	2 high 2 middle 3 elementary	2001[b]
Large New	Northeast	Police	51-150	3	1 high 2 middle	2001[b]
Large New	Southwest	Police	900-1,000	37	18 high 20 middle	2001[b]
Large New	Midwest	Sheriff	51-150	5	5 high 6 middle 18 elementary	2001[b]
Small Established	South	Police	21-50	1	1 high	1996
Small Established	South	Police	21-50	3	1 high 2 middle	1993
Small Established	South	Sheriff	21-50	4	2 high 3 middle	1994
Small Established	South	Sheriff	21-50	4	2 high 2 middle	1993
Small Established	South	Sheriff	21-50	4	2 high 2 middle	1994
Small New	South	Police	75-150	2	1 high 2 middle 2 elementary	1999
Small New	South	Police	1-20	2	1 high 1 middle 11 elementary	1999
Small New	South	Sheriff	1-20	1	1 high	2000
Small New	South	Sheriff	1-20	1	1 high	2000
Small New	South	Sheriff	1-20	1	2 high 1 middle	1999

[a] SROs are assigned to clusters of K-12 schools, not to a single school.
[b] However, these programs had had officers posted part time in the schools for many years—see the discussion in the text under "Modifications to the Research Methodology."

Visiting the Sites

Below, we describe the goals of the site visits, preparation for going on site, and the visits themselves.

Goals of the Site Visits

Abt Associates project staff, along with staff from our three subcontractors—Northeastern University, Eastern Kentucky University, and the Center for the Prevention of School Violence—visited each program at least twice. The three primary goals of the site visits were to:

1. document SRO program planning, implementation, and current activities;
2. assess the level of community policing woven into SRO programs and any lessons learned; and
3. identify perceptions of SRO program effectiveness and, where possible, secure local process and outcome data for analysis.

To achieve these goals, site staff:

- conducted an initial "focus group" with all the significant program participants primarily to achieve a consensus on the program's origins and history;
- interviewed program participants and key stakeholders formally and, when possible, informally (e.g., over lunch, riding in the SROs' cruisers, while shadowing the SROs), including School Resource Officers, local law enforcement administrators, nonsworn school security staff, school district superintendents, school board members, principals and assistant principals, teachers, and local government officials (e.g., mayors, city council members);
- met in every site (except for the large established sites due to a miscommunication) with small groups of teachers in the faculty lounge or over lunch, and with students in one or two classrooms, to ask about the SRO program and their perceptions of its effects (these were convenience samples, of course, designed to give only a qualitative snapshot of some of the perceptions of these two groups about the SRO programs and their effects);
- administered surveys to students at the large new programs;
- collected hard copy and electronic data, such as SRO progress reports and program public relations materials; and
- observed SROs' daily activities for at least one full day by shadowing at least one SRO around the campus (and off campus, as needed—for example, when the SRO took a student to the jail for fighting).

In programs that served multiple schools, we either singled out one school for intensive investigation or examined in detail a few schools the program served, choosing schools

that were considered by program administrators to have implemented the program most comprehensively and effectively.

Site Visit Planning

We developed a site visit preparation and activities protocol to guide site visit staff in planning and conducting their visits (see appendix D). The planning instructions covered three areas: setting up visits with the sites, planning the visits, and scheduling site activities.

We also developed site interview guides (see appendix E) that addressed eight areas:

1. program planning,
2. program implementation,
3. the current program,
4. meetings with groups of students and teachers,
5. an observation checklist for shadowing the SROs,
6. changes in policies and procedures that might influence outcomes,
7. implementation process and outcome data, and
8. site demographic information.

Site Visits

The matrix on the following page indicates when each site was visited, the number of project staff who went on each visit, how may days each site visit lasted, and the total number of days and person days staff spent at each site. As shown, we spent a total of 198 person days on site (between two and three project staff went on most of the visits), or the equivalent of almost 40 work weeks.

There were no difficulties with the site visits except delays on the part of some agencies in scheduling the visits and the need for us to schedule them when school was in session. Every site was accommodating in hosting the program staff and facilitating the interviews with and observations of the SROs.

		Selected Information about the Site Visits			
Site	**When Visited**	**Number of Site Visit Staff per Visit**	**Duration of Each Site Visit**	**Total Number of Days On Site**	**Total Person Days on Site**
Large Established	Oct. 15-17, 2001 May 1-2, 2002	1 1	3 days 2 days	5 days	5 days
Large Established	Sept. 26-28, 2001 May 21-22, 2002	1 1	3 days 2 days	5 days	5 days
Large Established	Aug. 28-30, 2001 May 14-15, 2002	1	3 days 2 days	5 days	5 days
Large Established	Oct. 24-26, 2001 April 16-18, 2002	1	3 days 2 days	5 days	5 days
Large Established	June 4,6,7, 2001 May 2002	1 1	3 days 2 days	5 days	5 days
Large New	Mar. 28-29, 2002 Nov. 18-19, 2002	3 2	2 days 2 days	4 days	10 days
Large New	Nov. 5-9, 2001 Dec. 13-14, 2001 Mar. 20-21, 2002 Nov. 4-5, 2002	1 3 3 2	5 days 2 days 2 days 2 days	11 days	21 days
Large New	Sept. 6-7, 2001 Mar. 6-8, 2002 Dec. 2-4, 2002 Jan. 21-23, 2003	2 5 3 2	2 days 3 days 3 days 3 days	11 days	34 days
Large New	Jan. 30-31, 2002 Oct. 21-25, 2002	3 2	2 days 5 days	7 days	16 days
Small Established	Nov. 30, 2001 Nov. 8, 2002	2 2	1 day 1 day	2 days	4 days
Small Established	Oct. 15-16, 2001 Nov. 4-5, 2002	3 2	2 days 2 days	4 days	10 days
Small Established	Nov. 5-6, 2001 Oct.30-Nov.1,2002	3 2	2 days 2 days	4 days	10 days
Small Established	Oct. 29-30, 2001 Oct. 29-30, 2002	3 3	2 days 2 days	4 days	12 days
Small Established	Nov. 7-8, 2001 Nov. 12, 2002	2 2	2 days 1 day	3 days	6 days
Small New	Nov. 26-27, 2001 May 6-7, 2002	2 2	2 days 2 days	4 days	8 days
Small New	May 7-8, 2001 Dec. 3-4, 2001 May 1-2, 2002	2 2 2	2 days 2 days 2 days	6 days	12 days
Small New	May 9-10, 2001 Dec. 5-6, 2002 May 13-14, 2002	2 2 2	2 days 2 days 2 days	6 days	12 days
Small New	May 2001 Dec. 5-6, 2001 May 13-14, 2002	2 2 2	2 days 2 days 2 days	6 days	12 days
Small New	May 2001 Feb. 21-22, 2002 May 16-17, 2002	2 1 1	1 day 2 days 2 days	5 days	6 days
TOTAL	**6/4/01 – 1/ 31/04**	**2-4 visits**	**1-5 days**	**102 days**	**198 days**

Modification to the Research Methodology

The original study design called for a pre/post impact evaluation of the four large new programs selected for examination. However, as explained below, for reasons beyond anyone's control, the impact evaluation could not be implemented.

First, as noted above, in selecting new sites for inclusion in the study, we used a definition of "new" that required that (1) the site had not reported the placement of SROs in schools in the past on the Bureau of Justice Statistics' LEMAS survey and (2) the site was the recipient of a 1999 Cops in Schools grant. Since these sites were new, we planned to implement pre/post surveys of school students to measure potential changes in perceptions about the SRO program. As noted above, even though the programs received their grant award notices in 1999, the COPS Office had found that it generally takes up to a year after award for a law enforcement agency to deploy its officers as SRO. As a result, we expected to be able to collect baseline data from all of these programs.

However, during the initial telephone calls and site visits to the large new sites, while the law enforcement agencies and schools reported that they had indeed received Cops in Schools awards in 1999, they also reported that they had had police officers stationed part time in the schools for 2-1/2 to 25 years teaching various classes (e.g., Drug Abuse Resistance Education [D.A.R.E.], Gang Resistance Education and Training [G.R.E.A.T.]) and mentoring students. Furthermore, most of the "new" SRO officers were the same individuals who had already been working in the schools for several years. Finally, after the grant award the SROs often continued performing many of the same activities that as regular officers they had been conducting previously.

Under these circumstances, the site program supervisors said that a pre/post survey would not make sense without significant changes in personnel posted to the schools or, in some cases, in the officers' responsibilities, because a survey could not link or attribute any change in attitudes toward the officers, fear of crime, or reductions in crime and student suspensions to SRO program effectiveness. Administrators, staff, and students had already become familiar with having officers in their schools for a number of years, and,

in some cases, the officers would not be assuming significant new responsibilities that could have been expected to generate any changes in measures of program effectiveness.

In conjunction with NIJ and the COPS Office, we decided to still include these "new" sites in the study because selecting, recruiting, arranging to visit, and visiting substitutes for these programs would have involved a significant delay in the project as well as the need for additional funds. Furthermore, we had every reason to believe that most other large "new" sites we screened for inclusion as replacement programs in the study would likewise have had police officers in the schools prior to the SRO program who performed activities similar to the activities that the "new" SROs were expected to perform and were in many cases the same officers.

A second problem arose with regard to conducting a pre/post impact evaluation of the large new SRO programs. The original research design assumed the administration of the surveys would be based on "passive" informed consent, whereby parents of students would be asked to indicate their opposition to their children's participation and, in the absence of such opposition, informed consent would be assumed. However, Abt Associates' Institutional Review Board (IRB) unexpectedly required that we use "active" consent for the survey. Of particular concern to the IRB was that asking students about past victimization and fear of crime in the schools could have negative emotional effects. Using active consent necessitated that we secure student and parental written assertions of their understanding of the risks associated with the surveys as well as their willingness to participate. Securing these assertions would have greatly increased the amount of time and effort required to ensure even modest response rates.

As a result, we proposed to NIJ and the COPS Office that we abandon the use of a pre/post design and the associated implementation of an impact evaluation in the large new sites because the design and implementation lacked scientific validity and financial feasibility. Instead, we proposed to intensify our efforts with the large new sites to develop especially rich case studies. We further proposed to conduct a single-point-in-time survey involving questioning students.

After meeting with NIJ and the COPS Office in November 2001 to discuss this plan, we submitted a written justification for the proposed modification in January 2002 and engaged in a conference call at NIJ's request to discuss the justification in April 2002. In June 2002, NIJ requested a full-line item budget for the Office of the Comptroller in support of the modification. We submitted the budget in July and received the Grant Adjustment Notice in August 2002 approving the methodology and budget modifications.

Data Analysis and Findings

There were two rounds of data analysis and reporting, the first occurring after the first set of site visits and the second occurring after the second (and in some cases third or fourth) set of site visits.

Interim Report: Trust and Fear

For our contractually mandated interim report, NIJ and the COPS Office requested us to summarize our preliminary impressionistic observations concerning (1) perceptions of fear about campus safety among school administrators, faculty, and students and (2) trust in the police among these groups in the 19 sites. The COPS Office was particularly interested in the perceptions of students, school administrators, and other local stakeholders concerning the effects that SRO programs appear to have on fear of crime in the schools. Declines in fear of crime and increased trust in the police are among the principal goals of many if not most SRO programs.

In order to investigate these two issues, the COPS Office and NIJ asked that we attempt to measure these perceptions during the course of the administration of a local survey in each of the four large "new" jurisdictions that had recently received Cops in Schools grants. While these surveys would not be administered until the fall of 2002 and the findings would not be analyzed until the winter, the two agencies expressed interest in our preparing interim observations based on our initial round of site visits to the 19 jurisdictions.

Data Analysis

The interim report represented the combined experience of Abt Associates, the Center for the Prevention of School Violence, and Eastern Kentucky University. Subjective and perceptual information concerning these two potential program effects—fear of crime and trust in the police—were collected during the course of the first round of site visits. The full interim report identifies the types of individuals we interviewed during the site visits whose perceptions (when offered) formed the basis for the report's findings.

Caution should be used in interpreting the observations presented in the interim report and summarized below since they were not based on systematic data collection protocols or instruments. In addition, the findings reflected subjective perceptions of fear and trust on the part of program participants. Furthermore, for respondents to suggest SROs reduced fear in the schools required an admission that students, faculty, administrators or all three were fearful before the SRO program began. For many reasons, some respondents may have been unwilling to report that their schools had once been unsafe or that students and teachers felt they were unsafe. As a result, they may have been reluctant to suggest that the SRO program had been influential in increasing their schools' safety or reducing their schools' climate of fear. Finally, our observations were also very preliminary because we had conducted only one round of site visits and had not yet implemented the surveys of students in the large new programs (see above).

Summary of Findings

A brief synopsis of the full interim report's findings follows.

> Large Established Sites. Among those respondents who were willing to give an opinion about whether the SRO program has increased trust in the police, all felt it has done so. No respondent reported that the program had failed to increase trust. However, when asked for empirical evidence of increased trust, most were able to provide anecdotal evidence at best. The same consensus, and lack of definitive evidence, pertained to the question of whether the program reduced fear in the schools. With regard to both questions, many respondents felt that concrete evidence of the program's effectiveness in increasing trust or reducing fear was lacking and, therefore, were unwilling to offer an opinion. In addition, as several respondents pointed out, other changes (e.g., curfews, student uniform policies) occurred just before the initiation of the SRO program or during its operation that compromised any attempt to attribute positive effects to the program alone.

Large New Programs. There was no systematic attempt to measure fear of crime or trust in the police during the initial site visits to the large new sites because questions on the perceptions of these two variables were planned for inclusion in the 2002 surveys of students with presentation of the findings in the final technical report (see below).

Small Established Programs. Overall, the preliminary subjective assessments of the effects of SRO programs were positive across the five small established programs. Generally speaking, trust was reported to increase over time, and the SROs' presence and activities were felt to contribute to a sense of security in the schools.

Small New Programs. Faculty and staff expressed near universal trust in the SROs in their sites. Across all five sites, administrators and faculty reported feeling safer since the SRO programs were implemented. Several said that they did not want to work in a school without an SRO again. Students were also generally supportive of the notion that schools were made safer by an SRO's presence, and most students who expressed an opinion said that as a result they were less fearful.

The respondents in the small established and new sites were more willing than the respondents in the large established sites to express an opinion on the issues of trust in the police and fear in the schools. This discrepancy may have occurred because in the small sites respondents could gain a fairly accurate picture of the effects of the program since SROs were posted in only a few schools, whereas in the large sites the programs were so large that few individual respondents had the ability to generalize about trust and fear across so many schools. There may also have been more events taking place in the large sites than in the small sites that could have affected perceptions of trust and fear independently of the SRO programs. As a result, respondents in the large sites may have been reluctant to attribute any perceived changes in fear and trust to the SRO programs.

Case Studies of 19 School Resource Officer (SRO) Programs

We prepared and submitted to NIJ a report that presented case studies of each of the 19 programs included in the National Assessment.

Data Analysis

Information used in the preparation of the report included:

- the results of the site visit interviews, focus groups, and observations;
- telephone interviews conducted after the site visits to obtain information not available during the site visits (e.g., because a respondent was sick or the data were not yet available); and
- program materials the sites sent us, such as data sets, memorandums of agreement, SRO monthly progress reports, minutes of school board meetings, and public information materials.

We decided to provide separate case studies for each of the five large established and four large new programs since these initiatives were generally complex. By contrast, we merged the write-ups on the five small established programs into a single "case study" that provided a summary of each program followed by a "cross-site" discussion of key features. We took the same approach in reporting on the small new programs. We used this format for the small sites because, as small programs, the sites' lack of complexity precluded the need for a lengthy description of each one.

Abt Associates prepared the case studies on the five large established programs; Northeastern University prepared the case studies of the four large new programs; the Center for the Prevention of School Violence prepared the case studies on the five small established programs; and Eastern Kentucky University together with Abt Associates prepared the five small new case studies.

Summary of Findings

Large Established Site One

Large Established Site One, a largely middle class town with a population of 75,000, is located about 25 miles northwest of a large metropolitan area in the Mid-West. The local school district, which includes Large Established Site One and six other towns, consists of 22 elementary and 5 junior high schools (no high schools). Three of the district's 5 junior high schools are in Large Established Site One.

After a pilot test in 1995 involving placement of an SRO in one of Large Established Site One's three junior high schools, the school district placed a second and then third SRO in each of the town's other two junior high schools.

Program Planning and Costs
Planning and implementation of the SRO program proceeded relatively smoothly. The most serious problems related to planning involved disagreements between the school district and the Large Established Site One police department related to using retired officers as SROs, arming the SROs, and working in civilian clothes. Problems related to implementing the program included local school administrators' misconception that SROs were supposed to focus on law enforcement and disciplining students.

Until recently, the school district tapped into its Tort and Immunity Fund to pay for the program, enabling the police department to replace the SROs with new officers. The cost to the school district for the three SROs' salaries in fiscal year 2002 was $193,296.

The SROs
Together, the principal and assistant principal, health teacher, and the police department's SRO supervisor interview applicants whenever an SRO position opens up. The school makes the final selection in consultation with the police department's SRO supervisor. While initially SROs learned their responsibilities by trial and error on the job, today they are trained thoroughly before they begin their new assignment.

Program Activities
With the exception of interviews with school district and police department supervisors, all of the observations and interviews for this case study were conducted at one Large Established Site One junior high school chosen for intensive study. This sample school had a 2001-2002 enrollment of about 700 seventh and eighth grade students. Three quarters of the students were white, 3.6 percent African American, and the rest Asian and Hispanic. Low-income families made up 3.5 percent of the community. In 2002, the school's SRO was in the last year of his four-year rotation.

The SROs in all three Large Established Site One junior high schools devote an estimated 10 percent of their time to law enforcement, 30 percent to advising students, faculty, and

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administrators, 40 percent to classroom teaching, and 20 percent to other activities (e.g., paperwork). From the outset, the school district has considered teaching and mentoring equally if not more important than the SROs' law enforcement responsibilities.

- *Law Enforcement:* Most SROs make only a few arrests a year because of a low crime rate in the schools, the program's focus on mentoring and teaching, and the juvenile court's discouraging of referrals of minor cases. Instead, SROs sometimes assign students to perform community service in the schools. Teachers, parents, and students, like school administrators, sometimes refer matters directly to the SROs that may involve criminal behavior.
- *Teaching:* Each SRO teaches the G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training) curriculum to all seventh graders as well as classes on other topics. In addition to teaching G.R.E.A.T., the SRO at the intensively studied junior high school teaches classes on sexual harassment, babysitting, shoplifting, gangs, driving under the influence, drugs and alcohol, fingerprinting, and the law. Teachers leave a note in his mailbox with requests and dates for him to teach specific topics. Just as the school district intended, a teacher confirmed that the SRO " is like another staff person."
- *Mentoring:* The SROs are constantly available to students for informal chats and serious conversations about problems. The SROs also engage in activities, such as jogging with the track team, where they act as role models. The SRO's office at the intensively studied junior high school is crowded between classes and during all four 20-minute lunch periods with students who want to chat.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

The program keeps extensive and meticulous qualitative and quantitative records, including a detailed monthly summary form completed by each SRO. The head of the police department's juvenile division supervises the SROs, making sure they complete the activity forms properly, observing them teach, and meeting with them individually.

While there is no empirical evidence that the SRO program is effective in reducing crime in the schools, there is promising evidence of its effectiveness.

- Smoking and possession of cigarettes, and gang activity, appear to have declined.
- Students report that they and their parents feel safer because of the SROs' presence.
- Students in focus groups report small but positive changes in attitude toward the police. Several knowledgeable individuals also report that the SRO program has increased trust in the police department.

The program's planners and current administrators were as interested in the SROs' mentoring and teaching roles as in providing security, and all observers report that the officers are effective in these two roles.

The community's support for the program was indirectly confirmed when a budget crunch forced the school board in 2002 to discuss laying off teachers—and the idea of dropping or cutting back the SRO program was never even raised.

Large Established Site Two

Large Established Site Two, with a 2002 population of over 500,000, encompasses more th[...] square miles in a State in the Southwest. The police department has nearly 1,000 sworn of[...] while the principal school district within the city has over 50,000 students. Begun in 1962 [...] single SRO, Large Established Site Two's SRO program now has one full-time SRO servi[...] each of 19 of the city's 21 middle schools (one SRO serves two middle schools).

Program Planning and Costs
The police department pays the entire cost of 18 of the SROs and will pick up the cost of the other 3 SROs currently funded with a U.S. Department of Justice COPS in Schools grant. The only source of ongoing dissension is school administrators' concern that the officers are not available enough at the schools—in part because each one serves up to six feeder elementary schools as well as a middle school and works a four-day week.

The SROs
In addition to fixed criteria for becoming SROs, the program prefers candidates with some college education. Several years ago, the program provided incentives to become SROs (take-home cruisers, four-day week, five percent pay increase) because few officers were applying for the posting. SROs take the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) 40-hour basic course as it becomes available, and they receive on-going in-service training, as well.

Program Activities
On average, SROs spend about 25 percent time on law enforcement, 38 percent advising, 25 teaching, and 12 percent on other activities. Over time, they have been spending more time on education and less on enforcement.
- *Law Enforcement:* SROs are responsible for making arrests (generally for drug possession, threats, and fights) and preventing crime (through teaching, dealing with rumors, and cruiser patrols around the schools).
- *Teaching:* Most SROs spend considerable time in the classroom, including teaching the G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training) curriculum and other topics ranging from Halloween safety to animal cruelty.
- *Mentoring:* SROs mentor students, especially by talking with students who have gotten into trouble—sometimes establishing ongoing relationships that last two or three years. SROs are also expected to engage in extracurricular activities that afford the opportunity to mentor students outside of school.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation
While the school district collects a great deal of information about school crime, levels of fear, and suspensions, these data cannot be used to evaluate the impact of the SRO program largely because of the program's longevity. However, two knowledgeable school district administrators feel the program has increased trust in the police.

Large Established Site Three

Large Established Site Three, with a population of 100,000 and encompassing over 2,000 square miles, is located in the South. Begun in 1995, the Large Established Site Three SRO program includes 9 SROs, one each in the county's three high schools, an alternative school, two junior high schools, a "troublesome" middle school, and two who rotate among seven other middle schools.

The sheriff's department has 250 sworn personnel, including 100 correctional officers. About half of the county's 20,000 students are eligible for the Federal Government's free and reduced cost lunch program.

Program Planning and Costs

In 1995, the county established a zero tolerance policy for fighting because of frequent physical altercations—including riots—in some schools. Under the policy, police may arrest and take any student caught fighting to the sheriff's office or jail where a parent must post a $250 bond that is returned after the student performs community service and attends a conflict resolution course. The SRO program was initiated shortly after to enforce the policy and reduce the fighting. Everyone considers the zero tolerance policy and the SRO program to be inseparable: neither one would be effective without the other.

The single most difficult problem getting the program going was disagreement between SROs and local school administrators over the officers' authority to arrest and handcuff students—at one point, an SRO threatened to arrest a principal if he interfered with the officer's arresting a student. By contrast, the relationship between the sheriff's office and school district has always been constructive.

The school district pays the SROs' salaries at two schools (approximately $65,000) and splits the cost with the sheriff's office at the other four schools ($100,000 per agency).

The SROs

A group of command officers decides whom to invite to become SROs. The officers are trained but sometimes not until they have been in a school for several months.

Program Activities

There is no description of the SROs' responsibilities because they vary depending on what each principal wants the SRO do to. However, SROs average spending about 10 percent of their time on enforcement, (much more when the program began), 60 percent mentoring, 10 percent teaching, and 20 percent on other activities.

- *Law Enforcement:* As fights among students declined, the SRO program's law enforcement focus shifted to addressing problems primarily related to drug dealing and possession. Some SROs also enforce discipline. The SROs prevent crime through their presence, tips from students about impending problems, and informally mediating disputes among students.

- *Teaching:* SROs teach several times a month, such as classes as part of a school's law studies course and classes on self defense designed to prevent fights.
- *Mentoring:* SROs spend considerable time mentoring students, and their offices are typically full of students. Some SRO also mentor parents.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation
The school district and police department collaborate in supervising the SROs. Neither party evaluates the program's effectiveness. However, several crimes appear to have declined since the SRO program was instituted, especially fighting, as evidenced in particular by the significant increase in fights that occurred when SROs were pulled out of the schools for eight months due to a budget shortfall. Several individuals felt that the program could take significant credit for a declining level of fear in the schools and an increasing trust in the sheriff's office.

According to the sheriff's department's SRO supervisor, "The voters like it [the SRO program]. People call me 30 times a month thanking an SRO for helping their kid." If there were a budget problem, it would be difficult to end the program.

Large Established Site Four

Large Established Site Four, with a population of 50,000—about half minority—is a county seat about 50 miles from a major Southern city. The site's police department has about 150 sworn officers. There are three K-12 school districts in the site. The site's SRO program, begun in 1995, serves the one junior high school in each district.

Program Planning and Costs
After attending a school safety conference, a police lieutenant and school district deputy superintendent, sold on the SRO concept, set up the program. The police department saw—and still envisions—the program as a means of improving the public's image of police and, as a result, enabling officers to do their work more effectively. School district administrators supported the program because of chronic fighting at some schools.

School administrators' uncertainty about the SROs' role, need for the SROs to be constantly availability, and concerns about the officers' authority to decide whether to arrest were the principal sources of friction when the program began. Over time, these problems were ironed out and most SROs now work productively with their schools.

The police department pays the entire cost of the SROs' salaries and fringe benefits, representing about $160,000.

The SROs
Currently, the police chief and captain pick the SROs. However, few officers typically apply for openings because of disincentives involved in the position. While the SROs are eventually adequately trained, some receive the training only after going on the job.

Program Activities
- *Law Enforcement:* Fighting and gang activity have been the SROs' major focuses in terms of their law enforcement role. However, both activities have diminished considerably. SROs' enforcement efforts are helped by parents, program directors, and students who tell them about planned or actual criminal activity.
- *Teaching:* Currently, the SROs devote more time to teaching than to either law enforcement or mentoring. The SROs' most time-consuming teaching responsibility is the G.R.E.A.T (Gang Resistance Education and Training) program, which can take up to one quarter of their time for many weeks.
- *Mentoring:* SROs spend considerable time talking impromptu or by appointment with students who ask for help. Extracurricular activities include after-school tutoring, attending athletic events, and participating in neighborhood meetings.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation
Program monitoring is conducted largely through SRO written reports. Quantitative and anecdotal evidence suggest that the program may have reduced student misconduct, including fights and gang activity, and increased trust in the police department.

Large Established Site Five

Large Established Site Five serves a 50-square-mile jurisdiction in the Far West with about 200,000 residents. The police department has over 200 sworn officers. The city's public schools are organized into elementary and secondary school districts of 20,000 and 30,000 students each. The police chief initiated the program in 1993 with two SROs, increasing the number over time to 18 SROs. SROs are assigned to clusters of schools based on geographic grouping rather than grade level.

Program Planning and Costs
The biggest misunderstanding with school administrators was about what the SROs do. Elementary school principals complained when the officers were not present when fights broke out because the officers were at the middle and high schools—yet the elementary school district was sharing the cost of the officers. An occasional ongoing problem is that schools sometimes call for an SRO to handle minor problems that supervisors feel teachers and administrators should be handling.

The elementary and secondary school districts share about half of the $2,078,821 cost of the program with the police department.

The SROs

The department announces each new SRO opening by e-mail and hard copy in every eligible officer's mailbox. School administrators are involved in interviewing and selecting SROs as members of the interview panels.

Every new SRO rides along with an experienced SRO for two weeks. SROs attend COPS in Schools or 40-hour basic SRO training as soon as training becomes available.

Program Activities

The SROs spend on average about 60-65 percent of their time on law enforcement, 25–30 30 percent mentoring, and 5-10 percent teaching.

- *Law Enforcement*: SROs provide full law enforcement coverage to all public schools in the city. School administrators call the department's dispatch center when they need an SRO. While on patrol in the neighborhoods, the SROs also pick up truants.
- *Teaching:* SROs generally do not teach regularly scheduled classes at the secondary school level except for four SROs who teach G.R.E.A.T. at the middle schools each year. SROs teach an annual "Safety on Site (SOS)" three-class course to all 5th grade students.
- *Mentoring:* Because of a number of constraints, SROs do not do as much mentoring as supervisors would like. However, SROs visit campuses to try to get acquainted with kids. The department purchased 11 bicycles for the SROs in part to increase the officers' opportunities to interact informally with students.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Two supervising sergeants visit schools to observe SROs interact with students and administrators; review SROs' crime reports; hold a daily special morning roll call; and call special meetings every six months to redistribute and discuss updates of the SROs' roles and responsibilities. The elementary school district examines relevant outcome data over time.

A number of program participants suggested that the program is likely to have created increased trust in the police and reduced student fear in many of the schools. An informed program participant felt that the SROs were a tremendous deterrent to student misconduct.

Despite considerable support for the program among many school administrators, with increased fiscal constraints school district administrators will be considering whether to discontinue or reduce their share of program costs in 2004-2005.

Large New Site One

Large New Site One, a county in South Central United States, has a population of over 600,000 and occupies approximately 700 square miles. The county seat has just over a half million residents, 35 percent minority. The sheriff's office, with law enforcement authority throughout the county, has 130 sworn officers. The office's School Resource Officer program began in 1999 with five full-time SROs working in two highly dissimilar school districts. One school system serves a small, urban, largely minority, economically distressed, crime-burdened neighborhood. The other serves a large, rural, affluent, predominantly Caucasian, sparsely populated community.

Program Planning and Costs
The sheriff's office views the program as an opportunity to enhance community outreach, violence reduction efforts, and substance abuse prevention services at county schools. Administrators at both participating school districts see the program as a means of improving school safety, with officials from one emphasizing crime prevention and relationship building, and staff at the other stressing counseling and teaching, particularly around issues of alcohol and drugs. The COPS in Schools grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services covers the full cost of the five SROs' salaries and fringe benefits.

The SROs
The SRO openings attracted a great deal of interest within the sheriff's office. One school superintendent helped the department with officer screening and selection, interviewing between 10-20 candidates for the initial five positions. All of the officers selected had significant law enforcement experience and had rotated through several divisions within the sheriff's office. In addition to attending training sessions required by the COPS Office, some of the officers attended the National Association of School Resource Officers' (NASRO) 40-hour basic course before starting work. All SROs have received ongoing in-service training from the sheriff's office, and two have attended annual school safety programs at the request of their school district superintendents.

Program Activities
SROs spend roughly one-quarter of their time on law enforcement, one-quarter teaching, and one-half counseling and mentoring.
- *Law enforcement*: Officers at one school district have helped staff to identify potential signs of gang activity. They have interpreted gang graffiti and reduced control of courtyard corners by groups of students. SROs at the other school district coordinate their enforcement-related actions with a private security unit and the schools' administrative staff.
- *Teaching:* The SROs provide drug prevention classes and presentations to students at all grade levels. The officers use considerable creativity in reaching students with this message, in one instance writing and filming a skit. In the program's urban site, officers focus their classes on gang and drug deterrence. In

the more rural district, SROs integrate teaching more routinely into their work. Teachers request that they speak to classes on law-related topics and address drug and alcohol use in small teacher-led group discussions.

- *Mentoring:* Informal conversations provide the greatest amount of SRO-student interaction, but officers also use after-school activities as opportunities to mentor students. They attend athletic events, dances, and class trips. In one school district, the SROs coordinate a "community services" program that gives kids an opportunity to perform SRO-monitored "service" in lieu of more severe disciplinary measures.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation
The sheriff's office uses written reports from SROs and comments from school staff to monitor the program. Schools also provide yearly written assessments of the officers. These resoundingly endorse the initiative. Students also express approval: three quarters that of those who took a written survey said they would feel comfortable reporting a crime to their SRO, and half said their opinion of police had improved since the program began.

Although difficult to attribute reduced crime or increased safety at schools to any one factor, quantitative data from this site show promising trends. In the urban district, police records show a steady fall in the number of calls to send beat officers on campus since the SROs started, while at the rural schools discipline reports suggest achievements in terms of conflict resolution and early detection of criminal behavior.

Large New Site Two

Large New Site Two, with a total population of about 400,000, is a county of roughly 600 square miles in a Mid-Western state. Residents are predominantly white, urban-dwelling homeowners with a per capita income slightly lower than the state average. The sheriff's office employs approximately 100 sworn officers. The office's School Resource Officer program received COPS in Schools' funding for five full-time officers beginning in 1999. These SROs work in five separate school districts that vary in size and in level of urbanization and socioeconomic development.

Program Planning and Costs
Based on needs identified by school administrators at the program's start, SROs planned to work in the areas of dispute resolution, truancy reduction, identification of at-risk students, mentoring, and role modeling. Each school system's SRO and school administrators have collaborated to tailor the program according to their other needs. The COPS in Schools grant covers the full cost of the five SROs' salaries and fringe benefits, with the exception of a small county contribution in year three. Four of the five districts assumed the costs of retaining their SROs when the COPS Office grant expired.

The SROs

The agreements between the sheriff and school districts called for "joint selection" of SROs by the sheriff's office and school districts. Fourteen candidates applied for the initial five openings and were screened through written questionnaires and personal interviews. While the five deputies selected had between 11 and 16 years' experience with the sheriff's office, they found the transition to SRO a difficult and stressful process because they were not trained before taking up their new assignments.

Program Activities

Because each of the school districts has distinct characteristics and needs, the SROs vary in the degree to which they perform activities suggested by the program's triad model. On the whole, however, the county's SROs focus approximately half of their time on counseling and mentoring, a quarter of their time on teaching, and a quarter of their time on law enforcement or other activities.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

The sheriff's office uses written reports from SROs and comments from school staff to monitor the program. School officials have used different means for evaluating the program's effectiveness in the five school districts. All districts provide written assessments of the SROs, some annually and some quarterly, to the sheriff's office.

Truancy declined and less severe disciplinary measures were imposed in the site after the SRO program began, although numerous other factors may have contributed to these improvements.

Large New Site Three

Large New Site Three, bordering two major east coast cities, has a racially and ethnically diverse population of 45,000. The town employs roughly 100 sworn officers to police its 10 to 12 square-mile jurisdiction. Its public schools serve an annual enrollment of 7,000 in grades K-12. Three School Resource Officers began working in the school system during the 1999-2000 academic year–one assigned to each of the town's two middle schools and high school.

Program Planning and Costs

Planners of the Large New Site Three SRO program viewed it as a vehicle for improving communication and trust between local and youth and for formalizing the long-standing, positive working relationship between town police and schools. Over its three-year duration, a COPS in Schools grant funded approximately 80 percent of the three officers' salaries and benefits, with the town assuming an increasing share from year to year.

The SROs

The police department recruited and screened 11 candidates for the three SRO positions. Police interviewed applicants on their own, although the school district provided a list of criteria for officers to meet. All three officers selected, as well as their immediate supervisors in the police department, attended a 40-hour basic training course offered by NASRO. One of the three officers also completed NASRO advanced "practitioner" courses. The police department includes SROs in all mandatory in-service classes, ensuring that they maintain their law enforcement skills. Supervisors believe that, because the SROs interact with so many students each day, their report writing, interviewing, and other "people-oriented" skills have improved since they have been posted to the schools.

Program Activities

School and police officers favor the triad model of program implementation that incorporates law enforcement, teaching, and counseling activities. The SROs report they concentrate on counseling, with informal conversations with students, guidance appointments, and parental conferences accounting for about two-thirds of the SROs' time. About 20 percent of their time is dedicated to classes or assemblies, and about 15 percent to enforcement-related duties. They also play a vital role in planning and maintaining school safety.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

SROs discuss their work daily with police supervisors and provide monthly summaries of their activities to the department. Principals routinely share comments and concerns with these supervisors although they have no formal process for evaluating the SROs' performance. Educators at this site resist assessing the program based on changes in disciplinary data. Police records do show, however, an apparent decline in arrests and criminal misbehavior at the three schools hosting SROs. Students say they appreciate the officers' approachability and assistance with personal, as well as law-related, concerns. Principals and teachers strongly advocate for the program's continuation.

Large New Site Four

Large New Site Four is a city of more than 250,000 in the southwestern United States. Its population is diverse with a significant number of Hispanic residents. The police department employs more than 600 sworn officers to cover the city's more than 150 square miles. The school system has more than 70,000 students in more than 100 schools. Thirty-eight school resource officers assigned to the city's 30 middle and high schools began working in the school system in 1999 with funding from the COPS in Schools program.

Program Planning and Costs

Those involved with the development of the SRO program viewed it as the next phase of a long-standing commitment to having police work in schools. Local police have worked in schools in Large New Site Four for more than 25 years. These efforts have included D.A.R.E. officers, G.R.E.A.T. officers, and now SROs. The city has a significant gang and violence problem in several schools as well as many neighborhoods. As a result, stationing police in the schools has been viewed as a public safety priority. The budget, fully funded by a COPS in Schools grant, had an initial cost of $1,218,269.

The SROs

The police department assigns SROs to schools without consulting school administrators. Most of the SROs have had considerable police experience. They have worked in a wide range of areas within the department including SWAT, white-collar investigation, drug enforcement, juvenile investigation, and patrol. However, except for one SRO and one school administrator who attended a COPS-sponsored training, there has been no other formal training for SROs. Because of a very high turnover rate, the department has had trouble filling the vacancies; as a result, the department has had to use "reverse seniority," assigning the newest officers to the SRO unit. The program budget, initially $1,218,269, is paid for by a COPS in Schools grant.

Program Activities

The SRO program has is no clear model or structure. As a result, officers perform varying sets of activities. However, the most common forms of interaction with students involve coaching athletic teams, community service, summer camps, and informal contacts during the school day.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Because SROs are stationed in multiple schools, school administrators do day-to-day monitoring. A police officer who supervises the SROS deals with problems as they arise.

Small Established Sites

Case Studies

All five small established sites are in North Carolina. Two began in 1993, two in 1994, and one in 1995.

Small Established Site One:	This program involves a police department with fewer than 40 sworn officers in a county of over 40,000 people. As part of a written agreement, one SRO is stationed at the one high school, which has over

	1,500 students. The SRO spends about 50 percent of his time on law enforcement activities, including traffic control, supervising lunch periods, and responding to calls from the elementary schools; 30 percent on law-related education, including teaching Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.); and 20 percent devoted to 20–30 counseling sessions a week.
Small Established Site Two:	The local police department that sponsors this program has fewer than 50 sworn officers serving a town with slightly more than 20,000 residents. The one high school and two middle schools where the three SROs are stationed have between 700–2,000 students. A community panel interviews all applicants for SRO positions, although the chief makes the final choice. SROs receive a five percent supplement to their salaries. The amount of crime in the schools influences the ratio of time the SROs spend on law enforcement, education, and counseling. For example, one middle school SRO spends only 20 percent time on law enforcement, while the other two SROs spend about 60 percent, including investigating crimes, filing petitions, going to court, and patrolling the campuses. All three SROs are involved in mentoring, including coaching sports teams.
Small Established Site Three:	In this county of 60,000, two SROs from the sheriff's department (50 sworn deputies) are assigned to two high schools, and a third SRO covers three middle schools. Student enrollment at the schools ranges from 600 to over 900. The program began in response to an increasing number of bomb threats and drug trafficking at the schools. As the program developed, the SROs' initial primary focus on law enforcement shifted to a more even balance with education and counseling, but the proportion of time each SRO spends on these three areas varies considerably by school.
Small Established Site Four:	The sheriff's department that operates this program has about 30 sworn officers serving a community of 27,000 people. The four SROs are assigned to two middle schools and two high schools with student populations ranging from 500–700. When the initial grant that funded the SROs ended, community support for maintaining the program prevented the county commissioners from eliminating it. Initially, SROs spent most of their time on law enforcement, including supervising a deferred prosecution community service and counseling program for students the officers have arrested. Over time, the SROs have spent more time counseling, as well as teaching about date rape, civil law, and other topics at teachers' requests, and D.A.R.E. at the four elementary schools.
Small Established Site Five:	The program in this rural county of 35,000 people began in response to the statewide emphasis on school crime prevention and to violent incidents in nearby school districts. Four SROs from the sheriff's department of 30 sworn officers serve two high schools and two middle schools with student bodies ranging from 700–1,000 each. The officers

spend about 30 percent of their time on law enforcement, a large portion of it investigating crimes through reviewing surveillance videos; 30 percent on law-related education, including teaching D.A.R.E.; and 40 percent on counseling and mentoring, including participating in PTAs, school plays, and pep rallies.

Similarities and Differences Among Five Small Established Programs

In some respects, most or all of the five programs are very similar; in other respects, they differ considerably.

Program Planning and Costs

Program planning and implementation vary among the five sites largely due to different initial community reactions to the programs. Two communities strongly opposed having an armed officer in the schools, forcing one SRO initially to drive his own car and not wear a uniform as well as go unarmed. In two other sites, there was confusion about what the SROs' role should be. However, four of the five sites experienced relatively smooth beginnings, not because of prior planning but because of direct discussions between police chiefs and sheriffs with school superintendents who knew each other and "sealed" their agreements with a handshake.

The State provides funding to all school systems for high school SROs. However, in two of the five programs the funding does not cover the full cost of the officers' salaries and equipment, which the local law enforcement agencies or county or municipal government has to pay for. In one site, a COPS in Schools grant from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office) has funded one of the program's middle school officers for three years, with the school system agreeing to pay the cost in full for the fourth year; school systems fund the middle school SROs in two other sites; and the county pays for the middle school SROs in the two remaining sites.

Program Activities

All five programs require SROs to be trained at the North Carolina Justice Academy, where officers are introduced to a tripartite SRO model that expects them to perform as law enforcement officers, law-related educators, and law-related counselors. However, SROs spend very different proportions of time on each of these roles across—and even within—the five sites. After law enforcement, the SROs devote the most time to counseling. SROs also mentor students by coaching athletic teams, advising extracurricular clubs, and hosting summer camps for at-risk youth. In their education roles, some SROs rarely taught in the classroom while others taught as many as 2–3 days a week for 6–10 weeks just at their assigned schools' feeder schools

Monitoring and Evaluation

The principal means of monitoring the SROs is through informal contact between law enforcement agency officials and school administrators. However, SROs in one site submit a report to their sheriff's department supervisor each month, and principals are asked to fill out a performance review for each SRO in their schools. While each

jurisdiction has annual crime incident figures for its schools, the data could not shed light on whether the SRO programs were reducing student misconduct largely because the very few crimes committed by students at most of the schools studied made comparisons between the number of offenses before and after the SROs programs began unreliable. However, several administrators, teachers, and students reported that they felt safer as a result of the SRO program, observing that the officers provided a "comfort level" that they liked. With the exception of the SROs in two sites' middle schools, SRO supervisors from the participating law enforcement agencies along with school district administrators in all five sites felt that their programs would endure, in some cases because the funding sources were stable, there was significant public support for the programs, or both.

Small New Sites

Case Studies

All five of the small new sites selected for this evaluation were in Kentucky. The programs were recent recipients of COPS in Schools grants from the office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office). Three of the programs began in the fall of 1999, and two programs began in February 2000. With the exception of interviews with school district and police department supervisors, all of the observations and interviews for the case studies were conducted at the high schools and middle schools to which the SROs are primarily assigned.

Small New Site One: This program is located in a rural county of about 500 square miles with a population of approximately 25,000. The school district is countywide with a total enrollment of about 4,000 students enrolled in 12 schools, including one high school with about 1,000 students and a middle school with over 500 students. Two SROs are assigned primarily to the high school but respond to calls and occasionally patrol all of the district's schools. The program's host agency is a small-town police department with about 10 sworn officers. The SRO program was designed to deter drug activities, crime, and disorder in the schools. The SROs engage in a variety of safety and enforcement activities ranging from traffic control to criminal investigations, as well as teaching, counseling, field trips, and athletic events, but estimates of the time distribution across activities could not be provided.

Small New Site Two: The county in which this program is located, with about 300 square miles, includes areas categorized as rural and suburban. There are about 4,000 students enrolled in six schools within the county. The program's lone SRO is assigned to the district's only high school, which enrolls approximately 1,000 students. The SRO serves a small sheriff's

department of fewer than 20 sworn deputies. The SRO program was intended to address fighting, smoking, drugs, and general disorder among students. The SRO spends most of her time on enforcement duties and patrol. The heavy focus on law enforcement appears to be a result of poor discipline within the school. What little time she spends on teaching and counseling is done on an informal basis.

Small New Site Three: This site is located in a county of about 25,000 residents distributed across about 500 square miles in a rural part of the state. The county school district enrolls approximately 4,000 students in seven schools, including one high school housing the SRO program. The SRO's host agency is a county sheriff's department with about 10 sworn deputies. The SRO program was designed to address problems of disorderly conduct, smoking, truancy, and occasional instances of students bringing weapons to school. An overarching program goal was the presumed deterrent effect an SRO would produce and ability to provide quick response capabilities for serious crimes or other disasters. The original orientation of SRO activities emphasized law enforcement, but the SRO's role has shifted significantly so that he currently spends roughly half his time in enforcement and patrol, with 2-3 hours per week teaching classes and about 12-14 hours per week mentoring students.

Small New Site Four: This site is situated in a rural county of under 300 square miles with approximately 20,000 residents. About 3,000 students are enrolled in the nine schools in the county, including one high school with about 1,000 students. The program's SRO, one of about 20 deputies in the county sheriff's department, is assigned to the high school. The main impetus for the program was the chief deputy's concern about the number of violent incidents in schools across the country. The program began with a focus on enforcement but has evolved incrementally toward a much heavier emphasis on crime prevention, student counseling, and teaching classes. The SRO is also actively involved in disciplinary cases with the assistant principal.

Small New Site Five: This site abuts a small city within a county of 500 square miles, with areas classified as urban, suburban, and rural. Over 10,000 students are enrolled in the district's 25 schools, which include three high schools and three middle schools. The one high school and one middle school participating in the SRO program have approximately 1,300 and 700 students, respectively. The schools are served by one SRO from the local city police department with fewer than 100 sworn officers, and one SRO from the county sheriff's department, with fewer than 10 sworn deputies. The program's initial intent was to help youth develop positive relationships with, and impressions of, the police. Although the schools are perceived to have little serious crime and fewer problems than do most middle and high schools, there were still concerns about drug and alcohol abuse, smoking, truancy, and general discipline that the program was intended to

address. The SROs spend about 15 hours per week on law enforcement duties and about 5 hours per week in meetings with school-related organizations and community groups. The rest of the officers' time is spent teaching, counseling, and mentoring.

Similarities and Differences Among Five Small New Programs

The program locations were widely distributed throughout the state: two in the west, two in the north, and one in the east. The school and community populations were not racially diverse—the student bodies of four of the five school districts and counties were all at least 85 percent white.

Throughout this capsule description and later in this chapter, many of the observations made about the five small new sites are presented collectively, except where substantial differences merit special attention. On many important dimensions, there are significant similarities in program design and implementation, and widespread agreement about how the programs were regarded by their constituencies.

Program Planning and Costs
Planning and implementation of the SRO programs proceeded in a variety of ways. The sponsors initiating the program varied across sites. In one case, the county sheriff (the host law enforcement agency for the SRO) applied for grant funding and pushed for the school district leadership and high school administration to accept it. In other sites, the programs were advanced initially by district superintendents or principals.

All five programs began without a detailed plan for exactly how the SROs were to be used. There was a general idea that the officers would spend part of their time on patrol and that they would respond to crime and serious disorder, as well as disciplinary incidents. Beyond that, there was a wide range of often-conflicting expectations. Initially, SROs learned their responsibilities by trial and error on the job and over time developed standards for appropriate and inappropriate activities. The most serious implementation problems related to disagreements about where to draw the line between criminal violations and other serious incidents meriting SRO attention, and disciplinary activities more properly handled by teachers and staff. Other common areas of disagreement were whether the SRO would be available beyond normal school hours, direct traffic, or routinely teach or give presentations.

All of the programs were funded by COPS Office grants covering the SROs' salaries. Grant funding was supplemented to various extents by the school districts, the police departments, or both in the form of training, equipment, and office space. Many of the program costs beyond salaries were not precisely recorded as SRO program expenditures.

Program Activities
The SROs in four of the five sites operated in a relatively traditional law enforcement mode: patrolling and responding to calls for service. In the fifth site, the SRO spent the majority of his time teaching, giving presentations, holding meetings, and actively

fostering relationships with various constituencies. Partly because each SRO began the program with little initial direction, this range of emphasis evolved primarily as a result of the interests and abilities of individual officers.

Most SROs make few arrests a year because of the relatively low crime rate in the schools. Instead, most enforcement activity addresses misdemeanors, and officers usually issue citations rather than make arrests. Most officer calls for service involve disruptions and suspicious behavior. The SROs in all five programs are very available to students for informal chats and serious conversations about problems. In addition to the obvious mentoring benefit, the significant time the SROs invest in informal conversations with students serves to aid law enforcement by establishing trust and rapport that increases the likelihood that students will report problems, as well as tapping into an excellent source of intelligence about past incidents and potential trouble brewing among students. Most of the SROs periodically teach or give presentations, although the frequency of these activities varied widely among sites and SROs.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation
Police and school district administrators monitor the program on an as-needed basis by reviewing expulsion records of cases in which SROs were involved. Records of SRO activity vary widely across the five small new programs. While all officers keep required records of misdemeanor citations and the relatively rare arrests, documentation of other SRO activities varied from none to the completely and meticulously detailed.

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In all five sites, interest in sustaining the SRO programs after COPS Office funding ends is strong among school administrators, law enforcement administrators, and parents. Regardless of who initiated the program and who resisted initially, the pockets of resistance soon dissolved, and in all five sites the SRO programs subsequently experienced widespread and strong support. Parental support is very strong for the SRO programs, even in sites in which parents strongly resisted the program initially.

Survey of Students in Three Large New SRO Programs

As noted above, Northeastern University conducted a survey of students in its four large new sites to learn more about perceptions about fear of crime and trust in the law enforcement agency. However, for reasons explained above, the report of the survey results provides information on only three of the programs. Appendix F provides the survey instrument.

Data Analysis

As part of a the National Assessment, Northeastern University developed, designed, and implemented a 38-item survey instrument to collect information regarding student perceptions of the SRO program in three sites. Within these three sites, 907 students in four distinct school districts were surveyed. The survey was administered to 6th and 8th grade students and/or 10th and 12th grade students in schools in three different sites. Fifty-eight percent of the students from Large New Site 1 were 6th or 8th grade students and 42 percent were either in 10th or 12th grade. Eighty percent of the students surveyed in Large New Site 3 were 6th or 8th graders, and 20 percent of the students were 10th or 12th graders. All the students in Large New Site 4 were either 10th or 12th grade students.

To meet the requirements of the Abt Associates Human Subjects Review Board, Northeastern University used an active consent method of recruiting student respondents. Since all of the potential respondents were minors, the university sent parental consent forms home prior to the administration of the survey. While only students with parental permission were allowed to participate in the survey, students with this consent still retained the right to decline to participate. The potential sampling problems that this method of recruitment can result in are explained Northeastern University's full report.

The process of administering the survey varied slightly in each location. In some schools the survey was distributed in English class. In other schools it was easier for the administrators and teachers to have the research team give the survey in a study period. However, a research team member was present during the administration of the survey at

each site. At the start of each survey session, instructions on how to properly complete the survey and a brief synopsis of the purpose of the project were explained to the group of students. Detailed instructions were also printed on the first page of the survey. As part of the instructions, students were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their answers would be kept confidential. Students were also instructed to place the completed survey in the envelope that was given to them with the survey and to pass it in to the proctor or a member of the research team.

Summary of Findings

Relying on past research on SRO and "SRO-type" programs, there were several questions the survey sought to answer. These research questions can be broken down into two basic concerns: (1) what factors in an SRO program affect students' comfort level for reporting crimes and (2) what factors in an SRO program affect students' perception of safety.

Three SRO programs in four schools districts were surveyed. The survey addressed variables that may affect students' comfort level reporting crimes to the SRO and variables that may affect their perceptions of safety. The analysis was based on data obtained through surveys of 907 students across four school districts. Using these data, the analysis addressed seven research questions:

1. Does frequency of interactions between students and SROs affect students' perception of safety?
2. Do positive opinions of the SRO affect students' perception of safety?
3. Is there a relationship between environmental factors such as neighborhood crime or past victimization and students' perception of safety?
4. Does frequency of interaction between student and SRO increase students' comfort level reporting crimes to the SRO?
5. Does having a positive opinion of the SRO increase students' comfort level reporting crimes?
6. Do environmental factors or other variables negate the effects of interactions, positive opinions, or comfort reporting?
7. Does being comfortable reporting crimes to the SRO affect students' perception of safety?

The goal of the survey was to identify factors that affect both students' comfort reporting crimes to SROs and their perceptions of safety in schools. Univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analysis showed that several factors were associated with the dependent variables.

In terms of students' comfort level reporting crimes to the SRO, the analysis found the following:

- There is a statistically significant relationship between frequency of conversations between student and SRO and comfort reporting crimes. However, further examination proved that having frequent conversations with the student may be less influential than initially thought. Perhaps this is true because SROs are able to affect the students' comfort level with their reputations; that is, students who have met with or spoken to the SRO may be "spreading the word" about whether other students should approach them.

- There is statistically significant relationship between having a positive opinion about the SRO and feeling comfortable reporting a crime. Students who hold a positive opinion about the SRO are more apt to feel comfortable reporting crimes. This finding was supported with the regression model, which showed that students' opinion of the SRO remains significant when holding other variables constant. The regression model illustrates that, compared with other students, students who have a positive opinion of the SRO are a little more than 2-½ times more likely to feel comfortable reporting a crime to the SRO.

- The regression model also indicated that students' perception of safety also has a significant relationship with feeling comfortable reporting crimes; students who reported that they felt safe at school were more than 2-½ times more likely than other students to feel comfortable reporting crime.

In terms of students' perception of safety, the analysis showed the following:

- A larger percentage of students who have a positive opinion of the SRO also report feeling safe at school. Ninety-two percent of students who have a positive opinion report feeling safe compared with 76 percent of students who do not have a positive opinion of the SRO.

- Neighborhood crime and feeling safe at school have an inverse relationship; that is, the lower level of perceived crime in a student's neighborhood, the safer that student feels at school.

- Students who have experienced some type of victimization feel less safe than students who have not.

- Very importantly, even when victimization and environmental factors are introduced into a regression model, having a positive opinion of the SRO and being comfortable reporting a crime remain statistically significant.

Of course, it is important that students report crime occurring on campus. The study findings suggest that students are more likely to report crime if they respect and feel comfortable with the SRO. Overall, the study showed that perhaps the most important and easily modifiable variable in both models is creating a positive opinion of the SRO among the student body. The results suggest that it is important to determine the best method for SROs to create a positive image.

Comparison of Program Activities and Lessons Learned among 19 School Resource Officer (SRO) Programs

This report compares the 19 programs in terms of seven key dimensions, with a focus on lessons learned: choosing a program model; defining specific SRO roles and responsibilities; recruiting SROs; training and supervising SROs; collaborating with school administrators and teachers; working with students and parents; and evaluating SRO programs.

Data Analysis

Information used in the preparation of the report came from the same sources as the information included in the case studies report:

- the results of the site visit interviews, focus groups, and observations;
- telephone interviews conducted after the site visits to obtain information not available during the site visits (e.g., because a respondent was sick or the data were not yet available); and
- program materials the sites sent us, such as data sets, memorandums of agreement, SRO monthly progress reports, minutes of school board meetings, and public information materials.

Summary of Findings

This cross-site report discusses commonalities and differences among the 19 sites with a particular focus on lessons learned—information based on the experience of the sites that could benefit other jurisdictions in setting up or improving an SRO program.

The report focuses on seven issues:

1.   Choosing a Program Model
2.   Defining Specific SRO Roles and Responsibilities
3.   Recruiting SROs
4.   Training and Supervising SROs
5.   Collaborating with School Administrators and Teachers
6.   Working with Students and Parents
7.   Evaluating SRO Programs

Choosing a Program Model. In the basic School Resource Officer model, SROs enforce the law, teach, and mentor. Most of the 19 programs included in the National Assessment reflect this model, but *the level of emphasis that SROs devote to each of these three roles varies considerably across and within programs*. As a result, it is more accurate to think in terms of where individual programs and SROs fall along a *continuum* between, at one extreme, engaging in mostly law enforcement activities and, at the other extreme, engaging in mostly teaching and mentoring.

There are several considerations that new—and existing—SRO programs should think about in deciding how their SROs can best allocate their time according to the three basic SRO roles, including *the level of crime and disorder* in a school and *the wishes of the school administration*. However, *the personality and experience of the individual SRO* may ultimately prove the most decisive factor in determining where on the continuum each SRO's balance of activities falls.

Defining Specific SRO Roles and Responsibilities. When SRO programs fail to define the SROs' roles and responsibilities in detail before—or even after—the officers take up their posts in the schools, problems are often rampant—and may last for months and even years. Successful programs have generally followed several steps in developing a list of SRO roles and responsibilities, including:

- identify roles and responsibilities *in writing*;
- *avoid relying on a personal relationship, easy access, and a handshake* between police and school administrators for establishing SRO roles;
- *involve the schools* in developing the SRO roles and responsibilities;
- *distribute* the roles and responsibilities, and periodically *review them*; and
- provide *a mechanism for resolving disagreements* between school administrators and SROs about the officers' responsibilities.

In developing the written description of SRO roles and responsibilities:

- narrow the considerable leeway of *what it means for SROs to engage in "law enforcement"*;
- make clear whether and how SROs will be responsible for *enforcing discipline*; and
- be specific about the SROs' *teaching, and counseling and mentoring, responsibilities*.

Recruiting SROs. Carefully screening applicants and conscientiously supervising them are necessary to recruiting and retaining officers who are—and remain—well qualified by temperament and skills to be SROs. It is especially important to develop written criteria for who can qualify as an SRO, including:

- likes and cares about kids;
- has the temperament to work with school administrators;
- has the capacity to work independently;
- is not a rookie; and
- knows the community in which he or she will be working.

Other keys to successful screening and recruitment include:

- assigning officers with the right personality—someone, as one principal put it, with "*an outgoing, caring, but no-nonsense personality*";
- when there is a lack of qualified applicants, *using incentives*, such as take-home cruisers and a percent salary increment to help attract qualified candidates; and
- *involving school district and school-level administrators* in the screening process to increase acceptance of the SROs among school personnel.

Training and Supervising SROs. Few of the 19 programs train SROs before they go on the job. Nevertheless, *any delay in training can be a serious problem* because SROs then have to learn their jobs by "sinking or swimming." One program has provided for pre-service training by arranging for a long-standing SRO to become certified as an SRO trainer. Several other programs arrange for new SROs to "shadow" an experienced SRO before going on the job. A number of programs provide in-service training, including sending SROs for advanced SRO training with reputable training organizations. Most SROs and school administrators agree that it would be valuable to train principals and assistant principals along with SROs as a team.

Most programs fail to provide consistent or close supervision of the SROs' work. However, adequate supervision of SROs is important to make sure the officers are working to their full potential and are not experiencing unreported or unacknowledged problems. Typically, programs require SROs to complete monthly activity logs and meet once a year with the supervisor. In some programs, supervisors periodically visit SROs and school administrators at the schools and observe the officers teach.

Collaborating with School Administrators and Teachers. Perhaps the single most troublesome area for most programs has been establishing productive relationships between the SROs and principals and assistant principals, in large part because of a fundamental difference in the law enforcement culture and the school culture in terms of goals, strategies, and methods. Administrators expressed three principal concerns about having an SRO in their schools:

- *Who's In Charge?*
- *Who Makes the Decision to Arrest?*
- *Why Isn't "My" SRO Available All the Time?*

Nevertheless, over time, most administrators developed good working relations with their SROs and came to value the program highly. While sometimes this change in attitude involved just getting used to the program, ***many programs found they could expedite the process of improving working relationships*** by:

- collaborating with school administrators in planning, operating, and supervising the program;
- explaining program benefits to administrators;
- orienting school-level administrators to the program;
- training SROs before they go on the job; and
- addressing administrator concerns about the SROs' availability.

Gaining the support of teachers is essential if SROs want to get invited to teach their classes—and ***teaching is an essential SRO responsibility for improving kids' perceptions about "cops" and taking advantage of a unique opportunity for motivating students to seek out the SROs*** outside of class when the youth are having problems. Many SROs are constantly invited by teachers to address their classes because the officers have taken the time to:

- orient teachers to the program before it begins;
- explain how SROs improve student learning; and
- go beyond the normal SRO responsibilities to help teachers.

Working with Students and Their Parents. Program coordinators, SROs, and school administrators all recognize the difficulty SROs experience trying to maintain authority as enforcers of the law while at the same time preserving a helping relationship with students as teachers and mentors. ***Walking this fine line plays itself out in two particular areas: counseling and familiarity with students.***

Especially when there is a poor or no relationship between the school guidance counselor and a student, the SRO often fills the gap. However, in addition to the serious risk of giving poor advice, SROs are exposed to the criticism—and even civil liability—of practicing psychological counseling without a license when they help students with personal problems unrelated to the law. Nevertheless, the vast majority of school administrators said they trusted the SROs' judgment to know when to refer a student for professional help with a personal problem and involve the parents.

Most familiarity between SROs and students is harmless, such as students using informal names to refer to the officers (e.g., "Officer Nancy" or "JD"). However, a few SROs have skirted or exceeded the boundaries of appropriate behavior with students. Programs can help SROs balance being supportive while remaining an authority figure by:

- establishing specific guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behavior;
- arranging to provide formal training for SROs on the topic; and
- instructing SROs to act defensively—for example, never close their office doors when talking with a student of the opposite sex**.**

Some parents become concerned that an SRO's presence in the schools suggests their children's schools must be unsafe. Programs that used PTAs, other community meetings, newsletters, letters, and newspaper articles to inform parents about the program reported few or no objections from parents. In turn, ***parents who support the program often encourage their children to seek out the SRO for help and, in three different sites, have helped pressure city officials to reverse their plans to drop their SRO programs***.

Evaluating the Program. Very few of the 19 programs included in the study conducted useful and valid assessments of their programs. However, ***program evaluation is essential*** to learn whether and how the program needs improvement and to convince funding sources of the importance of continuing the program.

The first step in any evaluation is to review the program's goals and then ***decide what questions to ask about each goal***. For example, if a program's goals include reducing truancy and improving kids' image of the police, the evaluation can ask:

- By how much have truancy rates changed since the program began?
- How have students' opinions of the police changed since the program began?

The second step is to ***identify the information to collect*** that will answer the questions, and the third step is to ***determine how to collect the information***.

The law enforcement agency and school system should collaborate on the assessment by interviewing or obtaining written assessments from principals and assistant principals. One school district conducts annual focus groups of randomly selected students designed to assess their opinions and use of the program.

Program supervisors need to circulate the evaluation findings to the chief or sheriff, the city manager or mayor, and the school board to bolster the case for continued funding. The program also needs to give the evaluation results to each SRO and school for purposes identifying problem areas that need addressing.