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School Resource Officers and Special Education Roles, Presence and Training

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School Resource Officers and Special Education Roles, Presence, and Training

by

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

For the last 8 years, I have worked as a Special Education Behavior Paraprofessional and more recently, as a special education substitute teacher. The school houses two different federal setting IV programs; Program 1 and Program 2. The placement of our students in either of these programs are a team decision and the students receive special education services for the entirety of their school day in a setting separate from the general education building. The school population includes students from kindergarten through the age of 21 years.

In Program 1 the students typically have primary disability categories of Emotional/Behavior Disorder (EBD) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The students typically demonstrate significant needs in the areas of social skills, behavior management, and emotional regulation. The ultimate goal is for our students to develop the skills that will allow them to transition back to a mainstream school setting. Each student has a specific plan to help them with self-regulation.

Program 2 includes students who typically have their primary disability as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Developmental Cognitive Delay (DCD). Students who are placed in this program tend to demonstrate significant needs in the areas of communication, behavior management, and self-regulation. The goal for these students is to help them build the skills to maximize their independence and, if appropriate, transition back to a mainstream school setting.

Both programs are similar in the services provided to the students; however, the student's family and financial dynamics are all very different. Many students come from single parent homes, low income and some have minimally parental involvement. Regardless of the parental

involvement the teachers and director of the program are diligent about informing parents of their children's' behavior and academic success.

Program 1 follows the Boy's Town Decision Making Model (BDMM) for behavior management. When the BDMM is used with students who are dysregulated but are able to use social skills to calm and regulate themselves, they are more likely to work through their difficult behaviors. In both programs, students are able to take breaks when they are feeling dysregulated. There are times students are not able to self-regulate and their behaviors may escalate quickly; students have been known to be physically aggressive toward staff.

Staff are trained in the use of restrictive procedures in case of emergencies. If the maladaptive behaviors remain too intense and staff are not able to maintain the safety of themselves and the students, the school resource officer (SRO) helps de-escalate the behaviors.

School Resource Officers

School Resource Officers have been present in schools for decades. When disorder arises in our schools, the SRO assist in resolving the situation. Educators question whether having an SRO in schools is positive or negative experience for the students, particularly students in special education.

Historical and Social Background

According to Espelage et al. (2020), NASRO estimates 20% of all public and private K-12 schools have an SRO present. The first SRO program was implemented in 1953 (May & Minor, 2012). When SROs are present in schools the funding comes from city, county, or district dollars (Jaydani, 2019). The duties of SROs are school based. Rather than typical law

enforcement duties, SROs enforce school rules (Jaydani, 2019). The Columbine shooting increased the presence of SROs in public schools (Ryan, 2018).

The roles of SROs reflect the school environment. According to Jaydani (2019), SROs have three main roles. The first function is law enforcement officer. The second and third roles reflect the more educational elements of their duties; law-related counselors, and law-related teacher (Jaydani, 2019). Despite these duties, SROs receive little training adolescent development (Jaydani, 2019).

My interest in the roles of SROs and in their understanding of special education originated from a conversation. I was speaking with an SRO, and she reported: "If I had to go to assist with the program on the other side, I wouldn't know what to do." She was specifically referring to the students in Program 2 who are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders who are non-verbal or who have difficulty communicating what they need. Her comment showed deficits in understanding the disorder and its behavioral sequelae and in behavioral interventions for students who are identified on the autism spectrum. Because of such deficits, this review examines the training and functions of SROs. Three questions guide the review. First, what is the role of SROs in Special Education settings? Second, how does the presence and action of SROs affect special education students? Third, how are SROs trained?

Rationale and Significance of the Review

A number of theoretical and applied outcomes may emerge from the findings of this paper. First, better specialized training for SROs when engaging with students with disabilities may be developed. Second, school personnel may understand the efficacy of SROs when student behaviors escalate. Third, ways for improving the actions of SROs during severe behavioral

episodes may be identified. Finally, positive behavioral interventions for SROs may be identified.

I work closely with SROs in our building, and they have brought up concerns about when to intervene, specifically with students who are diagnosed with ASD who are non-verbal. Additional training for all officers would be very beneficial. Specialized training in mental illness and with behavioral disorders may benefit the officers when they perform duties in the broader community.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review examines the training and functions of School Resource Officers (SROs). Again, three questions guide the review. First, what are the roles of SROs in Special Education settings? Second, how does the presence and actions of SROs affect special education students? Third, how are SROs trained?

Students in Special Education

In 2015-2016, youth receiving special education services accounted for 12% of the total population (Counts et al., 2018). Individuals with cognitive and affective disabilities are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system; this number could decrease if SROs have proper training in special education, in mental illness, and in developmental disabilities.

In lieu of referrals to juvenile correctional centers, students who have disabilities could be directed to outpatient or inpatient treatment, to anger management, or to family therapy to help prevent maladaptive behavioral episodes. Such avenues may give youth a better outlook on life and give them the foundations and skills they are lacking to become functioning members of society. Research has shown that 28% of juvenile delinquents with a disability qualify for special education services. Amongst these youth almost 50%, would qualify for special education under emotional disturbance (Counts et al., 2018).

Students that receive special education services are more likely to display a range of high intense behaviors that are typically not seen in a general education classroom, and therefore, an SRO is more likely to be called in to help de-escalate these situations (May & Minor, 2012).

Students with disabilities have an individual education plan (IEP) team. This team consists of teachers, principal, speech or occupational therapy, and parents. Directions for the foundation and functions of the IEPs comes from federal mandates. The Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 ensures students with disabilities are provided with a free appropriate public education (FAPE). This act has had multiple revisions, and some of these changes specifically address practices designed to reduce maladaptive behavior IDEA (2004) (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.) recommends a child's IEP team should also "consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS)." (p. 77). PBIS is defined by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs as "a multi-tiered school-wide approach to establish the social culture that is helpful for schools to achieve social and academic gains while minimizing problem behaviors for all children" (Meade, 2019).

One common misconception is that students with disabilities cannot be disciplined. However, the lack of discipline could also be considered a denial of "appropriate" education (Meade, 2019). Under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, n.d.), students cannot be removed from any setting without a parent's consent and are guaranteed FAPE within the least restrictive environment (LRE). Under IDEA, students with significant aggressive behaviors can still be suspended but, restrictions on how often and for how long a student may be suspended are extant. If students are an imminent danger to themselves or to others as a function of aggressive behavior, restraints are permitted as a last resort. Procedures should be discussed as a team and put in place for intervening in aggressive behaviors.

The U.S. Office of Civil Rights and the Civil Rights Data Collection (DOE), defines physical restraint as "personal restriction that immobilizes or reduces the ability of a student to

move his or her torso, arms, legs or head freely," seclusion as "the involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area from which the student is physically prevented from leaving" (Meade, 2019, p. 77).

**Criminal Justice Professionals: Positions
    and Roles in Public Schools**

School resource officers perform a wide array of duties and tasks. These tasks include patrolling school grounds during school and at school events, investigating criminal complaint, and assisting with maladaptive behavior. These roles fulfill law enforcement, law teaching, and law counseling with mentoring functions (Counts et al., 2018). SROs are present to enforce school rules and to keep school grounds safe. SROs may be responsible for handling incidents off school grounds that involve students, such as bullying behavior or preventing actions portrayed as a threat (Meade, 2019).

Law Enforcement Officer

School resource officers are typically uniformed and armed. While their main duties during the school day are school focused, they may get pulled from their school duties to assist with significant situations in the community. Studies show that on average an SRO spends roughly half of their time in the role of law-enforcement, approximately one quarter of their time as a law-related counselor, and a lesser portion of their time as a law-related educator (Ryan, 2018). Their primary function is as a law enforcement officer who keeps a school and school grounds safe from intruders and violence and who monitor and evaluate high traffic problem areas such as the locker rooms, the cafeteria, and the parking lot (Clark, 2011).

School resource officers may need to engage in law enforcing with the students in special education, particularly students who are displaying aggressive behaviors. They only intervene as

a last resort when staff are unable to maintain safety of the situation. All students receiving special education services have an individualized education plan (IEP) and some students will have a behavior intervention plan (BIP) in place. The BIP allows for guidance on how to proceed with behavior interventions, and these procedures involve exhausting all resources before an SRO intervenes. At times, SROs restrain students with handcuffs to allow for better control of the situation. When I have seen our students in handcuffs, they sit down, continue to yell, and use profanity, but they are not able to harm themselves or others.

Law-Related Teacher

The second and third roles reflect more educational elements of their duties. In the role of law-related teaching, they may facilitate preventative educational classes such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.), Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Second Step, and Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) (Rosiak, 2014). An SRO may be a guest speaker and lecture on topics such as drugs, gangs, bullying, laws and constitutional rights and even criminal investigations. SROs may also conduct in-services to school personnel on emergency preparedness, crisis management, crime prevention (Rosiak, 2014). Not only do SROs teach inside the school walls, but an SRO may host a parent's night to engage and inform family members. An SRO may talk and interact with parents, grandparents or community members in general at community events, school dances, and sporting events. If an SRO is actively engaged in the community, the more respected and accepted they will be (Clark, 2011).

Law-Related Counselor

The third role SROs function as is law-related counselors. This may include students confiding in them about home life, gang involvement, or drug use. When students confide in

SROs, this gives the SRO more opportunity to identify at-risk students and provides an

opportunity for a positive relationship to evolve between students and SRO during this time.

Good rapport between the two parties is a key component to a successful SRO program (Rosiak,

2014). Counseling duties may force SROs to determine whether they should act as law

enforcement agent or as a social agent providing students with resources to help themselves.

Despite these duties, SROs receive little training on schools and adolescent development

(Jaydani, 2019).

Presence in Schools

No national database on SROs in schools exists, and therefore, an accurate census of

SROs in not extant. NASRO has estimated that there are between 14,000 and 20,000 SRO placed

in schools nationwide (Espelage et al., 2020). Ideally, SROs should be assigned to specific

schools for a 3-year term. Extended placement within a school makes an SRO more comfortable,

confident, and effective in their position. Having a three-year term gives SROs the opportunity to

build relationships with students and faculty and to become a respected part of the school

atmosphere (Clark, 2011).

Placement of SROs in schools is not without controversy. Past research through opinion

surveys and other designs has shown there has been no solid evidence on the effectiveness of

SRO placement in schools. The original purpose for SRO placement in schools was to create a

safer environment that was free from drugs, weapons, and violence (Ryan, 2018).

Past experiences with law enforcement may garner negative attitudes from students

towards SROs, but positive outcomes are also extant. Overall, students felt safe with SROs

present (Espelage et al., 2020). Youth that are on probation are less likely to continue criminal

activity because SROs are present and positive mentoring interactions are available (May & Minor, 2012). Daily contact with students normalizes interactions between police officers and students; such contacts improve communication and trust (James et al., 2011). Student and SRO interactions may range from reducing a student's aggressive behaviors to engaging in a conversation.

According to Theriot and Orme (2016), several studies have been done on students' feelings of safety in schools and minimal studies on interactions between SROs and students. Students have mixed feelings of safety and the presence of SROs in schools, yet students do view SROs more positively than officers outside of school. Parents and administration view SROs as positive mentors. Interactions generally have no effect on student's perceptions unless the interactions are negative. Students who have higher levels of victimization or disorder tend to feel less safe and interactions are higher (Theriot & Orme, 2016).

In the wake of the death of George Floyd, Minnesota's two largest districts no longer have officers in their schools. Many opposing the presence of SRO in schools are stating they are more harmful than helpful and create a hostile school environment, especially to those students of color. There were incidences where SRO may have abused their authority, however, it is unknown if there was a clear understanding of the SRO's role. Surveys done in Minneapolis (2017) and St. Paul (2019) showed an overwhelming majority of staff and students wanting to keep the SRO programs in schools. In the same 2019 statewide survey it was shown that 94% of students thought having SROs in school was a good idea. St. Paul schools were seeing more positive interactions and arrests also dropped from 56 to five within 1 school year. This was partially due to efforts for improving SRO-student interactions (Startribune, 2020).

Challenges Arising Among SROs, Teachers,
   and School Administrators

While teachers and school administrators generally perceive the presence of SROs in a

building as an asset, several factors may negatively affect this perception and attenuate the

positive effects on SRO programs. These factors include communication, cooperation, and

mutual goals. SROs perceive teacher and administrators who fail to report criminal activity as

uncooperative (Clark, 2011). An SRO should not criminalize behavior that school administration

should properly handle. One study has shown that 75% of principals used SROs to maintain

discipline. The National Association of School Resource Officers ([NASRO] 2015) stated,

"SROs should be prohibited from becoming involved in formal school discipline situations that

fall under the responsibility of school administration."

Working with Students with Disabilities:
   Information for School Resource
   Officers

To work effectively with students who have disabilities, SROs need to understand some

basic concepts related to specific disabilities and to special education in general. This includes

definitions of disabling conditions, patterns of symptoms within specific categories of special

education, and elements of special education practice. In this section, data and behavioral

descriptions that should be included in the training of SROs is reviewed.

Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD)

The Department of Education (DOE), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

(IDEA) Sec. 300.8 (c) (4) defines emotional disturbance (ED / EBD) as a condition exhibiting

one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree

that adversely affects a child's educational performance: (a) an inability to learn that cannot be

explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, (b) an inability to build or maintain

satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, (c) inappropriate types of

behavior or feelings under normal circumstances, (d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness

or depression, (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or

school problems, (ii) Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to

children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional

disturbance under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act,

n.d.).

Between 1.3 and 4.0 million students from preschool to high school are currently

diagnosed with EBD, and the rate continues to increase. EBD generally continues into adulthood,

but early interventions may reduce the severity and the frequency of maladaptive behaviors

(Spinelli, 2012). Manifold causes of EBD are extant. A persons' environment can greatly affect

their behavior. Stress, diet, traumatic experiences, brain disorders and perinatal injury have been

identified causes.

Challenging behaviors that are associated with EBD flow evenly through disciplinary,

instructional and interpersonal areas, often causing chaos at home, school and classroom

environments (Gresham, 2015). These behaviors can include noncompliance, verbal and physical

aggression, self-injury, elopement and a wide range of disruptive behaviors (French, 2019).

Student with EBD are at higher risk of being removed from school grounds when compared to

students with other types of disabilities. SROs can be effective role models for this specific

group of youth by making them feel valued and building positive relationships that may deter

them from a path of delinquent behavior (May & Minor, 2012).

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

ASD is a developmental disability that significantly affects communication and social interaction. The disorder is generally evident before age three. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, n.d.).

The causes of autism remain under investigation. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2021) autism is a "developmental disorder" meaning symptoms arise within the first 2 years and developmental milestones are not met. There are risk factors that scientists can correlate with autism but no scientific evidence to support. Although characterized by communication and interaction difficulties, other behaviors may include self-injury, impulsivity, sensory processing problems, social impairments, stereotypy, and anxiety (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021).

Intellectual Disability

Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning that exists concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and that manifested during the developmental period defines intellectual disability. The term "intellectual disability" was formerly termed "mental retardation" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, n.d.). Intellectual disabilities (ID) can be caused by genetic or environmental factors. ID can be associated with mental health issues, neurodevelopmental disorders, neurological problems, and medical conditions (Lee et al., 2021). Individuals who have intellectual disabilities may lack competence in social, conceptual, and practical skills.

Mental Health

Mental health and mental illnesses can both cause and be influenced by positive or negative social determinants of health. These determinants include income, housing, stress, early childhood experiences, social exclusion, occupation, education level, social support, and lack of access to resources (Manderscheid, et al., 2010). According to the Special Report on Child Mental Health reported that between 12% and 22% of all youth under the age of 18 have a diagnosable mental disorder and are in need of services for mental, emotional or behavioral problems (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). In this section, de-escalation strategies and behavior interventions for maladaptive behaviors for SROs to be aware of is reviewed.

De-escalation Strategies

Transient environment or family stressors are only two reasons why a student may become dysregulated and display maladaptive behaviors (French, 2019). De-escalation strategies are very beneficial to students. Students are able to understand their triggers, then identify de-escalation strategies that might work in that particular situation. They may have strategies that work at home that cannot be used or do not work at school and vice versa De-escalation strategies reduce the severity of a behavioral episode and allow students to return to a calmer behavioral level.

An array of de-escalation strategies is extant. Representative strategies include empathic statements, removing stressful stimuli, suggesting a self-regulatory strategy (e.g., coloring, music or a walk) (French, 2019). Students may also be extrinsically rewarded for maintaining adaptive behavior (French, 2019). A classroom environment should always involve clear expectation,

simplified instruction and potent reinforcers for positive behaviors (French, 2019). Behavioral

plans may include recommendations for specific de-escalation strategies.

De-escalation strategies may fail during some behavioral episodes, and in these instances,

other approaches must be extant. To provide SROs with an understanding of higher tier

strategies, existing programs need to be described. At my school, a Corrective Teaching method

is used based from the Boys Town Decision Making Model. This method augments a student's

self-directed de-escalation strategies. The model includes describing the maladaptive behavior,

providing a negative consequence for the behavior, discussing alternatives to the behavior

including social skills, rehearsing a more adaptive behavior, and then rewarding the desired

behavior when it is displayed (Boys Town For Parents Questions and Answers, 2021).

SRO Trainings and the Culture of Schools

Many SROs are trained in the culture of police departments, which this culture is not

always compatible with the goals and culture of the schools (Fisher, 2016). The requirements for

SRO trainings and education programs vary, but SROs are trained law enforcement officers.

They have been trained in the legal and tactical aspects of the law, but they may not have

received specific training in laws related to schools, in how schools operate nor in the purposes

of behavioral programs within schools (Meade, 2019). With no standards or requirements for

SROs some states have established their own training/certification requirements. The lack of

training for SROs can be very problematic for both them and students in special education

(Ryan, 2018).

The National Association of School Resource Officers' (NASRO) offers a 40-hour

course aimed for educators, administrators and SROs (May & Minor, 2012). NASRO's 40-hour

training includes 14 different areas; school-based law enforcement, understanding students with special needs, counseling, social media, drugs, substantive and transient threat response and crime prevention (Counts et al., 2018). All of these areas are very important and while this training touches base on students with special needs, training specifically designed to meet the specific needs of students in special education is not included.

Addressing Mental Health Issues Within
   the Scope of SRO Practice

With mental health and illness on the rise, police departments are seeing more and more mental health related calls (Canada & Watson, 2012). Because of this increase, police departments are developing Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT). CIT trains officers to approach and interact respectfully with people with mental illness. CIT trained officers are more likely to refer away from criminal justice and more towards mental health treatment (Canada & Watson, 2012). CIT was introduced in 1988 and now there are over 400 programs across the nation. This program is also 40-hours of knowledge base training that covers developmental disabilities, medications and side effects, verbal de-escalation techniques, substance abuse and associated disorders, borderline personality disorders, suicide intervention, mental health and resources, along with patient perspective of law enforcement. An additional 12-hours of verbal de-escalation and diffusion training are offered to those who receive CIT. CIT trained officers are more likely to display empathy and patience, officers are more likely to identify individuals that are in need of psychiatric care (James et al., 2011). Elements of this training are directly applicable to addressing the behavioral and emotional needs of special education students.

SROs and other law enforcement officers can also benefit from Trauma-Informed Care (TIC). Trauma is typically caused by excessively adverse events in someone's life, especially

during childhood. Accident, attack, or sexual abuse are examples of such trauma. Trauma

informed care (TIC) is designed to create environments that are responsive to students'

backgrounds, and the types of trauma they may have experienced. TIC may be used even if the

specific source of trauma is unknown. Having a TIC approach makes for very positive outcomes

(Espelage et al., 2020).

Incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) and restorative justice within the training

protocol would be beneficial. Without these types of trainings SRO could do more harm than

good if they do not possess the proper knowledge when dealing with crisis involving (May &

Minor, 2012).

Broader Themes

The training of SROs must transcend a narrow focus on the juvenile justice code and the

procedural elements of policing. Behavior management, child development, communication, the

needs of students who have disabilities, and the cultural competence must be included. Training

in these areas would greatly benefit SROs when they have to interact with student with

disabilities, especially students with emotional and behavior disorders (Ryan, 2018). If SROs

have specific trainings in special education and then are able to have access to student's behavior

support plans (BSP), the SRO will then be able to intervene behaviorally in a manner that is

consistent with the practices of teachers and paraeducators. Such alignment of practice is critical.

Consistency is very important for student in special education. When SROs are properly trained

students also may not only view SROS as law enforcement but rather as a part of the school

multidisciplinary team (May & Minor, 2012).

Chapter 3: Action Research

This review examines the training of SROs, the duties of SROs, and the effects and consequences of SROs on students in special education. When there are students with high behavioral needs and situations are no longer become safe for school staff to continue intervene, SROs are used as the last resort. The research questions are the following:

1. What are the roles of SROs in Special Education settings?

2. How does the presence and actions of SROs affect special education students?

3. How are SROs trained?

Methodology

This study was designed so that the three research questions could be evaluated separately. Questionaries were sent out to SROs through a Facebook forum, local law enforcement agency with 32 responses from around the state of Minnesota, separate questionnaire sent to administration, special education teachers and general education teachers in my home district.

1. What are the roles of SROs in Special Education settings? This will be looked at from administration and SROs themselves.

2. How does the presence and actions of SROs affect special education students?

3. How are SROs trained?   Training that are available and training that would be beneficial.

Results: Question 1

Question 1: What are the roles of SROs in Special Education settings? Results from the reading and questionnaires sent out regarding the duties of SROs, found to be very similar.

Building relationships, teaching D.A.R.E., monitoring hallways, directing bus and parent traffic at the end of the school day (J. Kofler, personal communication, March 29, 2021). One difference in the results from the questionnaire (J. Kofler, personal communication, March 29, 2021), was that slightly over 50% of SROs reported they spent most of their time as a law-related counselor which is doubled compared to finding by (Ryan, 2018).

When it comes to special education, SRO will approach with more caution and awareness of the situation and students involved. Situations when SROs become involved with a student is when they are engaging in self-injurious behavior or are physically aggressive toward staff, serious suicidal threats or a weapon is involved, property damage, and lastly when a student's behavior plan has been followed with all options exhausted and the desired outcome has not been reached (J. Kofler, personal communication, March 29, 2021). Typical SRO interactions in a general education high school setting are to assist with criminal acts (fighting, possession of tobacco, drug or alcohol and even internet crimes) (J. Kofler, personal communication, March 29, 2021). SROs are also called in to help with a child protection case, reports of abuse, and lockdown drills (J. Kofler, personal communication, March 29, 2021).

Discussion: Question 1

Question 1: What are the roles of SROs in Special Education settings?

Based on the information gathered, SROs roles are similar all around, but their approach may look and sound very different when intervening in a situation that involves students in special education. Students in special education may need more time to process the situation or task demands given. SROs may need to change the verbiage or how they describe things to students in special education so they have a better understanding. During maladaptive behaviors

SRO are there to maintain the safety of students and staff, monitoring situations. SROs need to be requested by school personnel to intervene and are used as a last resort involving maladaptive behaviors.

Results: Question 2

Question 2: How does the presence and actions of SROs affect special education students? The overall presence of the SROs in school buildings is very welcoming. Administration has noted they like that the SRO are able to build positive law enforcement relationships with students (J. Kofler, personal communication, March 29, 2021). SRO not only are present at schools during the day, but they also attend other school functions, dances, sporting events, and they may even be a coach of a sports team. Many SROs reported their presence in the building was to help build positive rapport with at-risk students (J. Kofler, personal communication, March 29, 2021).

Discussion: Question 2

Question 2: How does the presence and actions of SROs affect special education students? The main purpose of the presence of SROs is to maintain the safety and security of all persons on school grounds. Many times, school is the only place where students feel safe and cared for. This is a valuable time to build relationship in with students. These relationships that are created in safe environment may make students deter them from making the wrong choices in the future. Students with EBD have the inability to form positive relationship across settings and they have a difficult time with authority figures such as teachers, officers, and parents. Our SROs often attend PE classes and have lunch with students which allows for the opportunity to build positive relationships and respect for authority in a safe and controlled environment. Due to the

positive rapport an SRO and student may have, students may think twice before engaging in disruptive or defiant behavior outside of school.

When SROs have had to intervene in maladaptive behaviors, they do take the opportunity the rebuild that relationship with students as soon as possible. Even when some of our students have had a negative interaction with our SRO, they still request to talk to them, show them something cool they have recently received.

Results: Question 3

Question 3: How are SROs trained? Results showed that there were no specific training requirements to become an SRO. While some states have requirements, Minnesota is one state that does not require any specific training, only requirement to be and SRO is to be a sworn law enforcement officer (Counts et al., 2018). Many respondents to the SRO questionnaire, completed a 2-year or 4-year degree in law enforcement. Once a law enforcement officer is hired as an SRO, they completed basic trainings. Trainings offered for SROs included NASRO training, D.A.R.E. training, some took training through Minnesota Juvenile Officer's Association (MNJOA) (J. Kofler, personal communication, March 29, 2021). One officer even sought out their own training through the MN School Safety Center a division of Homeland Security (J. Kofler, personal communication, March 29, 2021).

Over 85% of SRO surveyed stated there are specific protocols for special education students and/or specific to the buildings they support. According to the Administration Questionnaire, one of the five principals stated there are student specific protocols in place that SRO can follow (J. Kofler, personal communication, March 29, 2021).

Discussion: Question 3

Question 3: How are SROs trained? Of the 32 SRO that completed the survey 90%, stated knowing students triggers and calming strategies, their diagnosis and best approach for that individual, would benefit them the most when interacting with students in special education. One SRO even stated knowing what the goal of this interaction is, would be helpful (J. Kofler, personal communication, March 29, 2021). Having a general guide of information regarding specific students would be beneficial for SROs to have along with access to a student's BSP, see Appendix A.

This type of document would allow for SROs to obtain the pertinent background information on students they may need to know if ever intervening with during maladaptive behaviors. Allowing SROs to be placed in a school for a 3-year term as recommended by (Clark, 2011), this would give SROs more time to get to know the students they work with, and their unique qualities. There should be college courses that align with special education that a law enforcement officer could take as electives or as a course of study. Appendix B outlines St. Cloud State University's Criminal Justice BA and Minor degrees with potential classes from the Special Education programs (St. Cloud State University, n.d.). Law enforcement officers can take a few different law enforcement paths with their careers, an education emphasis should be one of them.

Conclusion

Still a strong need for rigorous causal research demonstrating effects of SRO programs in schools (Clark, 2011). If there were more requirements for child development and disabilities entering law enforcement, this would not only help officers put in schools, but officers on street patrol as well. Given the diverse population having education in child development and psychology will not only be beneficial before officers were put into schools, but it would be good knowledge for street patrol officers to have as well. Some officers do not have the temperament for developing relationships with teenagers or understand traumas people may have experienced. This training/schooling may give officers a different perspective when interacting with the diverse population and the experiences of all involved could be more positive. Officers would know how to interact effectively with students of all ages with or without a diagnosis.

Limitations

The participating SROs were a very small number compared to the number of SROs in the schools. This is also limited to only Minnesota SROs. How the questionnaire/survey was delivered. This questionnaire was all volunteers it was not designated to a specific study. Questionnaires were also sent out to teacher in both special education and general education, which resulted in zero responses. Having had feedback from a teacher's perspective would have been helpful.

Future Recommendations

Have administration give students a better understanding of why SROs are present in their schools. This may help the negative perceptions of officers turn more positive. Allowing for different dress code for SRO–in the St. Paul, Minnesota Schools SROs were dressed in light blue polo verses full uniform (Startribune, 2020). Currently, in Minnesota the only requirement to

become an SRO is to be a sworn law enforcement officer, while other states require specific

trainings (Counts et al., 2018). With that said, to keep programs running effectively, all SRO

programs throughout the United States should have the same requirements for becoming an SRO

and there should be with a better system in place for evaluating SROs. Having well trained,

effective SROs in schools could potentially help eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline and

redirect more to therapy and treatment centers.

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Appendix A: Student Specific Guide at XYZ Middle School

Student A

Grade: 11
Diagnosis: EBD
Triggers: Undesired class work, other disruptive behavior, positive reinforcement/praise
Behaviors: profanity, yelling, name calling
De-escalation Strategies: 5 mins walks in the hallway, take 10; reality and coupling statements
Likes: Nightmare Before Christmas
Dislikes:
BSP: Yes

Student B

Grade: 5
Diagnosis: Developmentally Cognitive Delayed
Triggers: coughing, undesired class work, new adults, attention seeking
Behaviors: SIB, physical aggression towards staff, yelling, swearing,
De-escalation Strategies: Take 10, deep breathing
Likes: Unicorns, giving hugs
Dislikes: New people, adult attention on others.
BSP: Yes

Student C

Grade: 8
Diagnosis: Mild – Moderate Down Syndrome
Triggers: Undesired task demands
Behaviors: non-compliance, physical aggression
De-escalation Strategies: redirect every 2 mins
Likes: Country music, beaded necklaces (beads)
Dislikes:
BSP: Yes

Student D

Grade: 12
Diagnosis: Autism–non verbal
Triggers: Loud noises, undesired task demands
Behaviors: Physical Aggression towards staff.
De-escalation Strategies: (name) hands down; (name) sit down.
Likes: Straws

Dislikes: loud noises
BSP: Yes

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Appendix B: Criminal Justice Program Outline

St. Cloud State University – Criminal Justice Degree

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Program Student Learning Outcomes

- Administration of Justice: Contemporary criminal justice system, major systems of social control and their policies and practices; ethics, victimology, juvenile justice; comparative criminal justice.
- Corrections: History, theory, practice and legal environment, development of correctional philosophy, ethics, incarceration, diversions, community-based corrections, treatment of offenders.
- Theories of Crime and Justice: The nature and causes of crime, typologies, offenders, and victims; policy implications of theories; ethics; legal and criminal justice system responses to crime and victimization.
- Law Adjudication: Criminal law, criminal procedures, ethics, prosecution, defense, and court procedures and decision-making.
- Law Enforcement: History, theory, practice and legal environment, police organization, discretion, ethics and subculture.
- Research and Analytic Methods: Quantitative and qualitative methods for conducting and analyzing criminal justice research in a manner appropriate for undergraduate students. Application of data analysis and statistics for measuring crime and assessing criminal justice system responses to crime.

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BA in Criminal Justice (45-49 Credits)

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Admission Requirements

- GPA: 2.65
- To be eligible to apply for the BA in CJS or a BA in CJS with a concentration, students must have completed 12 credits at SCSU, including CJS 111, with an earned GPA of 2.65 or higher.

Notes

- To be eligible to graduate with a BA in CJS or a BA in CJS with a concentration, students must have a GPA of 2.5 or higher in CJS courses.
- Licensure: The Minnesota Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Board criteria states that students who wish to pursue a career in law enforcement in the State of Minnesota must meet licensing requirements for both education and training.
- To be eligible to attend the law enforcement skills training, students must complete CJS 111, CJS 421, CJS 422, and CJS 431 with a minimum GPA of 2.65. Students must also complete a Minnesota Emergency Services Regulatory Board (EMSRB) approved First Responder level or higher certification.
- PSY 201 has the prerequisites: PSY 115 and MATH 112 or equivalent; STAT 219 has prerequisites: MATH 193 or STAT 193 or satisfactory math placement score

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Program Requirements
30-43 Credits: Core (all concentrations)

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- CJS 111 Crime and Justice in America (Diversity)
- CJS 411 Organization and administration in Criminal Justice,
- CJS 415 Corrections: Theory and Practice
- CJS 430 Criminal Law
- CJS 431 Criminal and Juvenile Procedures
- CJS 433 Ethical Studies in Criminal Justice
- CJS 486 Theories of Crime and Justice
- CJS 487 Criminal Justice Research Methods
- CJS 488 Senior Thesis and

- PSY 200 and PSY 201, or SOC 304, or STAT 219.

Corrections and Reentry Concentration: (9 credits)
- CJS 441 Correctional Alternatives
- CJS 444 Internship
- CJS 470 Evidence Based Practices

Victim Services Concentration: (9 credits)
- CJS 444 Internship
- CJS 480 Victimology: Theories and Principles
- CJS 482 Domestic Violence and Criminal justice

21st Century Policing: (9 credits)
- CJS 420 Critical Issues in Law Enforcement
- CJS 444 Internship
- CJS 465 Community Policing a Diverse Society

o Educational Emphasis: (12 credits)
- SPED 520 Characteristics of Students with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities
- SPED 521 Characteristics of Students with Learning and Behavior Disorders
- SPED 505 Behavior Theories and Practices in Special Education,
- SPED 511 Special Education Procedural Safeguards,

*Students electing the non-concentration, elective option are required to complete 15 credits from the list of CJS approved elective courses.

Electives 6-15 credits (CJS approved elective courses):
- CJS 305 Intro to Private Security
- CJS 325 Comparative Criminal Justice
- CJS 401 Introduction to Gang Issues,
- CJS 420 Critical Issues in Law Enforcement
- CJS 421 Peace Officers Standards and Training: Administration
- CJS 422 Peace Officers Standards and Training: Statutes
- CJS 425 Sex Crimes and Sex Offenders
- CJS 441 Correctional Alternatives
- CJS 444 Internship (max. of 16 credits),

Max. of 16 Credits
- CJS 445 Crisis Intervention
- CJS 446 Child Abuse and the Criminal Justice System
- CJS 450 Juvenile Justice System
- CJS 455 Private Security and the Criminal Justice Community
- CJS 457 White Collar Crime
- CJS 461 Juvenile Legal Process
- CJS 465 Community Policing a Diverse Society
- CJS 470 Evidence Based Practices
- CJS 473 Criminal Justice and the Media
- CJS 480 Victimology: Theories and Principles
- CJS 482 Victim Services
- CJS 485 Domestic Violence and Criminal Justice
- CJS 489 Seminar in Criminal Justice,
- CJS 490
- CJS 496 Crime Analysis, Mapping and Profiling

CJS 199-499 (1-16 credits);
- CHEM 207 Forensic Science
- CHEM 307 Advanced Forensic Science
- CMST 412 Theories of Persuasion
- ECON 381 Economics of Crime and Justice
- ENGL 216 African American Literature (Diversity/RIS)
- GEOG 490; HLTH 405 Drugs in Society
- HIST 350 African American History
- PHIL 212 Moral Problems and Theories
- PHIL 482 Philosophy of Law and Punishment
- POL 413 Judicial Process
- POL 491 Constitutional Law
- POL 492 The Courts and Civil Rights

- ○ SOC 366 Juvenile Delinquency
- ○ SOC 367 Criminology
- ○ SOC 368 Social Deviance

- ○ SSCI 460
- ○ STAT 219 Statistical Methods I for Social Sciences

Educational Emphasis Electives

- ○ PSY 543 psychology of adult development and aging
- ○ PSY 573 Aggression, anger and violence
- ○ PSY 590 Psychological disorders
- ○ SPED 552 Advanced Methods & Interventions for Students with Mild-Moderate Disabilities,
- ○ MFT 628 Child Development and Treatment
- ○ CFS 433 Methods: Young children with disabilities
- ○ CSD 171 American Sign Language
- ○ CSD 271 American Sign Language II
- ○ PSY 327 Motivation & Emotion

*Courses required in the core or selected concentration cannot count as electives.
*Students fulfill the University's Upper Division Writing Requirement by successfully completing CJS 488.

Minor in Criminal Justice (21 Credits)

Admission Requirements – See above
Program Requirements

9 Credits:
- ○ CJS 111 Crime and Justice in America (Diversity)
- ○ CJS 411 Organization and administration in Criminal Justice
- ○ CJS 415 Corrections: Theory and Practice

Electives: 12 credit hours of elective courses must be chosen from those courses offered within the

program major.