

## School Resource Officers

### 437.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy describes the West St. Paul Police Department school resource officer (SRO) program (Minn. Stat. § 626.8482).

#### 437.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include (Minn. Stat. § 626.8482, Subd. 1):

**Custodial arrest** - The actual, physical restraint of a person and their subsequent detention. Custodial arrest may occur with or without a warrant depending on the circumstances.

**De-escalation** - The methods and actions taken to decrease the severity of a conflict, whether physical or verbal in nature. See the Use of Force Policy for additional guidance.

**Developmentally appropriate practices** - Individualized, responsive care that is appropriate for the child's age, cultural context, disability status, and personality.

**Great bodily harm** - Bodily injury that creates a high probability of death, or that causes serious, permanent disfigurement, or that causes a permanent or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ or other serious bodily harm (Minn. Stat. § 609.02, Subd. 8). See the Use of Force Policy for additional guidance.

**Positive school climate** - A school environment that makes students feel safe, supported, and welcome.

**School** - An elementary school, middle school, or secondary school as defined in Minn. Stat. § 120A.05.

**School resource officer or SRO** - An officer assigned to work in a school during the regular instructional school day as one of their regular responsibilities through the terms of a contract between the Department and the designated school district or charter school.

See the Use of Force Policy for additional definitions, as applicable.

### 437.2 POLICY

The West St. Paul Police Department is committed to enhancing the safety of students and faculty on campuses located in the department's jurisdiction by forming a partnership with school administrators, faculty members, and students.

### 437.3 SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM

The Chief of Police should appoint SROs to serve in schools upon contract with local school districts or charter schools. The goals and objectives of the SRO program are to provide a safe learning environment, provide valuable resources to school staff members, foster a positive relationship with students, and develop strategies to resolve problems. Methods to achieve these goals and objectives include but are not limited to:

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- (a) Assisting with the development and implementation of a school safety plan.
- (b) Protecting the school against external threats by preventing unauthorized access to school property and securing the school against a natural disaster or other violence.
- (c) Creating respect for law and order in the public school system and minimizing criminal activity.
- (d) Identifying students at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system and guiding them toward more positive and socially acceptable ways to behave.
- (e) Reducing criminal activity on or near a school campus.
- (f) Enhancing communication and understanding between students, their families, district staff, and the Department.
- (g) Assisting with the coordination of security measures for school activities such as sports events, dances, and other large gatherings, if applicable.

### **437.4 SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER DUTIES**

The SRO duties and responsibilities include (Minn. Stat. § 626.8482, Subd. 2):

- (a) Fostering a positive school climate through relationship building and open communication.
- (b) Protecting students, staff, and visitors to the school grounds from criminal activity.
- (c) Serving as a liaison from law enforcement to school officials.
- (d) Providing advice on safety drills.
- (e) Identifying vulnerabilities in school facilities and safety protocols.
- (f) Educating and advising students and staff on law enforcement topics.
- (g) Enforcing criminal laws.
- (h) Using developmentally appropriate practices that take into consideration differences in culture, language, trauma, and an individual's disabilities.
- (i) Encouraging students to ask questions about school safety.
- (j) Using crisis intervention and de-escalation strategies whenever possible in response to crisis or safety situations.

### **437.5 USE OF FORCE**

SROs should exercise age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate practices when interacting with students.

SROs shall not use force or their authority solely to enforce school rules or policies or participate in the enforcement of discipline for violations of school rules (Minn. Stat. § 626.8482, Subd. 2).

SROs should employ de-escalation techniques and physical intervention strategies consistent with their training, using only that amount of force that reasonably appears necessary given the

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facts and circumstances perceived by the SRO at the time of the event to accomplish a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

SROs shall render reasonably prompt care consistent with their training to a person physically held or restrained, if needed.

The safety of the SRO and others present should not be compromised during de-escalation tactics.

See the Use of Force Policy for additional guidance.

### 437.5.1 USE OF FORCE CONSIDERATIONS

SROs should comply with the following use of force considerations consistent with the POST SRO model policy:

- (a) The immediacy and severity of the threat or potential injury to the SRO and bystanders
- (b) The conduct of the individual being confronted, as reasonably perceived by the SRO at the time
- (c) The personal characteristics of a subject and SRO (e.g., age, maturity, physical size, physical abilities)
- (d) The subject's ability to understand and/or comply with SRO commands (e.g., impaired by drugs or alcohol, experiencing reduced mental capacity, known to have an education plan or accommodations)
- (e) The presence or proximity of weapons or dangerous improvised devices
- (f) The degree to which the individual has been effectively restrained and their ability to resist despite being restrained
- (g) The availability of other reasonable and feasible options and their possible effectiveness (seriousness of the suspected offense)
- (h) The immediate need for intervention versus allowing time and distance for de-escalation
- (i) The training and experience of the SRO
- (j) Whether the subject appears to be resisting, attempting to evade arrest by flight, or is attacking the SRO
- (k) The risk and foreseeable consequences of the subject's escape
- (l) Whether the conduct of the subject being confronted no longer reasonably appears to pose an immediate threat to the SRO or others
- (m) Prior contacts with the subject and knowledge of their propensity for violence
- (n) Any other exigent circumstances

### 437.5.2 DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES

De-escalation strategies should include but are not limited to:

- (a) Being empathetic and nonjudgmental.
- (b) Respecting personal space.

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- (c) Using nonthreatening nonverbal communication.
- (d) Avoiding complex questions.
- (e) Giving students an appropriate amount of time to make decisions.

### **437.6 ARREST CONSIDERATIONS**

When a criminal incident also involves a violation of school rules, SROs should consider referral of the matter to school authorities in lieu of formal criminal referral, as appropriate for the incident.

Custodial arrests in school should be avoided if reasonably practical. If a custodial arrest is necessary because of exigency or public safety considerations, the arrest should be made in a non-communal area away from the view of other students if practicable.

When reasonably practicable, appropriate school staff should be notified prior to and/or present during the custodial arrest of a student. If it is not possible to give prior notice, the SRO should notify school staff as soon as practical after a custodial arrest has been made. The SRO shall coordinate with the County Attorney's Office to use alternatives to formal criminal charges (e.g., diversion, restorative justice programs). Formal charge alternatives may be used when appropriate for the incident, the students and families involved, and for victims as well as the larger school community.

### **437.7 STUDENT AND PARENT DATA**

Department records containing student and parent data shall be maintained pursuant to state law and the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.

### **437.8 TRAINING**

SROs shall complete required initial and ongoing POST-approved training within the timeframes provided in Minn. Stat. § 626.8482. An SRO shall complete training prior to assuming SRO duties unless the SRO qualifies for a statutory extension or exemption (e.g., officers with prior qualifying training, certain substitute SROs) (Minn. Stat. § 626.8482, Subd. 3).

An officer serving as a substitute SRO for fewer than 60 student contact days within a school year is not obligated to complete the required training or perform the following duties (Minn. Stat. § 626.8482, Subd. 3(d)):

1. Provide advice on safety drills
2. Identify vulnerabilities in school facilities and safety protocols.

The SRO's most recent training documents shall be maintained in the SRO's training file (Minn. Stat. § 626.8482, Subd. 3). See the Personnel Records Policy for additional guidance.

### **437.9 POLICY REVIEW**

SROs shall review this policy prior to assuming SRO duties (Minn. Stat. § 626.8482, Subd. 3(c)).

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### **437.10 SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER COORDINATOR**

The Chief of Police or the authorized designee should appoint an SRO coordinator to act as a central point of contact between the schools and the Department in addition to managing the program. The duties of the SRO coordinator may include:

- (a) Negotiating contracts between the Department and school districts or charter schools.
- (b) Developing school safety plans in coordination with school administration and other appropriate stakeholders.
- (c) Developing procedures to guide appropriate SRO interactions with students.
- (d) Auditing security measures, at least annually, throughout the school and making recommendations to enhance safety and reduce risk, if needed.
- (e) Assisting the Chief of Police or the authorized designee with the selection of SROs.
- (f) Supervising SROs (e.g., scheduling, discipline, performance evaluations).
- (g) Coordinating with other divisions or agencies as needed for drills, training, canine searches, or other activities.
- (h) Overseeing compliance with POST standards concerning SRO training.
- (i) Maintaining familiarity with local rules and state law related to SROs and juveniles.

### **437.11 SRO CONTRACT**

The contract between the school district or charter school and the Department shall:

- (a) Include the SRO's duties set forth in Minn. Stat. 626.8482, Subd. 2.
- (b) Address a mutually agreed upon policy regarding the use of plain clothes, modified uniforms, and other changes to SRO attire.
- (c) Articulate the role, if any, of the school district or charter school in the selection, vetting, and retention of the SRO.
- (d) Establish a public notification process that an SRO will be present in the schools.
- (e) Address data practices policies and procedures.
  - 1. The SRO contract shall identify the education records that may be shared with the Department generally and with the SRO specifically, and the purposes for which disclosure is allowed.

A school district or charter school may contract with the Department for the SRO to perform additional duties (Minn. Stat. § 626.8482, Subd. 2). The contract should cover paid services, where applicable. The contract should also address how the SRO will be informed of school district resources available to school staff to assist with de-escalation of conflicts in school (e.g., specialized crisis teams, mediation opportunities).

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### **437.12 PHYSICAL RESTRAINTS**

SROs should minimize the use of restraints on students whenever possible, including prone restraints as defined in Minn. Stat. § 121A.58 (i.e., placing a child in a face-down position). See the Handcuffing and Restraints Policy for additional guidance.