



Factors to consider when implementing a school resource officer

In the education sector, current events have put school safety in the spotlight. As community members, we all want schools to be a safe learning environment for students and educators. With this new focus, administrators have the difficult task of identifying sustainable measures which will make a true impact on safety.

One common security measure being discussed and implemented is the placement of a school resource officer (SRO) in schools. By placing a SRO in a school, districts are able to leverage the skills of a trained officer to enhance school safety. Certain school districts in Wisconsin have already made the decision to directly employ or contract with a local law enforcement agency to place a SRO in their schools.

If your district is considering adding a SRO to a school, there are a number of factors that need to be considered. The larger factors include:

- **Budgetary:** No matter the size or location of a school district, making the budget work is a common concern. When thinking about a SRO, a district needs to consider all of the costs associated with implementation. That can range from salary and training to equipment.

Recently, the [State of Wisconsin passed legislation](#) which includes an appropriation of \$100 million in funding for expenditures related to improving school safety. The funds will be available via grants administered by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and will focus on expenditures for training, equipment and facilities.

- **Responsibilities:** A school district introducing a SRO to its facilities should define the duties of the officer based upon its district and community culture. There are plenty of resources to help a district with the process of defining those duties. These resources include information from the [Federal Department of Justice](#) and the [National Association of School Resource Officers](#).
- **Risk management:** There are multiple ways for a district to employ a SRO. If a district makes the determination to implement an officer in their facilities, they would be well-advised to work closely with both their legal counsel and insurance experts to minimize risks associated with implementation.

It's common for districts to contract with local law enforcement agencies through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for SRO services. In such a scenario, legal counsel should review all documents and your insurance agent should review all contracts to determine how best to insure the district's risk of loss from the activities of the SRO. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction provides a [sample MOU along with other resources](#) for a resource officer.

Takeaway: With the current public focus on school safety, schools are under increased pressure to take steps to enhance the safety precautions utilized within their district. No matter where your district is on the implementation curve, we encourage you to leverage external resources and partnerships to make an impact on the safety of your learning environment.

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