
SSID

Fact Sheet

Law Enforcement School Programs

The school shooting incidents during the decade of the 1990's prompted an increase of law enforcement presence in our schools. The School Violence Resource Center (SVRC) at the Criminal Justice Institute (CJI) University of Arkansas System undertook a project to determine what programs law enforcement agencies currently provide in their local schools to assist with violence prevention and/or intervention. The following information summarizes the law enforcement programs survey project and its findings.

Methodology

An on-line survey was utilized to gather responses from law enforcement. Potential respondents were contacted through an email message containing a link directing them to the on-line form. Law enforcement email addresses were obtained through a current project at CJI. In addition, the chiefs of police association in each state was contacted and asked to forward the email with the survey link to its members.

Response and demographics

Total responses to the on-line survey were 153 after the elimination of incomplete responses and submission errors. The total number of individual agencies was 107 representing 18 different states. The population range served by these agencies was from 400 to 430,000. Fifty-five percent served less than 50,000 and 45% served greater than 50,000. The majority of agencies (62%) had 50 or less full-time certified officers.

Programs

Agency responses indicate that law enforcement provides a variety of programs and services to their local schools and students. Of the agencies reporting programs primarily delivered during or in school, 77% listed one program with the remaining 23% listing more than one.

The program most often cited was the School Resource Officer (SRO) program. The second most frequently cited was the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program. Many agencies citing an SRO program included in their descriptions that these officers provide instruction, such as the DARE curriculum. For some agencies the SRO was in the school to prevent or intervene in any violent and/or criminal behavior. Examples of programs listed other than SRO and DARE include but are not limited to: C.H.O.I.C.E.S., Gang Resistance Education And Training (GREAT), police liaison officers, bullying, and Radkids.

Target population

Law enforcement agencies were asked to identify which age groups their program or programs targeted: elementary school age, middle school age, or high school age. Thirty-two percent of the agencies targeted all 3 age groups. The largest percentage (73%) targeted middle school age students. The next group was elementary with 63.5% and high school with 58%. The majority of agencies (80%) considered their programs to provide both violence prevention and intervention. Twenty-one agencies noted their program as prevention only.

Duration of program and personnel

Respondents were asked to indicate how long their program had been offered. The majority of programs had been offered for 5 years or less. Four agencies reported programs that had been offered for over 20 years. Only 5 reported programs that were offered less than one year. Agency respondents also indicated that their programs were most often requested from or through the school.

Most programs offered by law enforcement occur during or throughout the school year. Some are offered only once per year and a few agencies noted their programs are provided year round. The same officer or officers were used to provide the programs by most agencies. Several agencies reported rotating officers after a specific time such as 2 to 5 years or, assigning them to a particular school.

Funding

Respondents were provided a list of potential funding sources and asked to indicate all options that applied to their particular situation. The options available were: their agency, community groups, local businesses, school, fund-raisers, state grant, or federal grant. The majority of agencies had two funding sources. Of those reporting two sources, the law enforcement agency and the school funded most programs. Only one agency indicated it received assistance from all sources listed on the survey. Sources of funding noted other than those listed above included: traffic fine surcharge, local charities, community backed anti-drug tax, and donations in lieu of fines (through the court).

Partnerships and resources

When asked about partnerships in developing and implementing their programs, the most common response by agencies was the school (faculty, administrators, and/or district). Respondents were asked to list any resources they used to deliver the programs. If the agency officer was presenting a specific program, such as DARE, the national curriculum was used. Several SRO programs used lesson plans for law education classes available through the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). Others used books, pamphlets, videos, and other materials depending upon the subject matter. Many officers worked together with school officials to determine resources to be used. Some agencies

indicated their officers developed their own materials depending upon the subject matter and audience addressed.

Acknowledgement:

The concept for this project was based upon the work by Colleen Ryan, M.A. and Frederick Matthews, PhD (1995) entitled A National Directory of Exemplary School-Based Police Programs to Combat Youth Violence. This directory was produced under a joint partnership between the Solicitor General Canada, the Canadian Association for Safe Schools, and Central Toronto Youth Services. The document is available on-line at http://www.sgc.gc.ca/policing/publications_e.asp in Adobe Acrobat format