

The Safe to Learn Act of 2018 requires each public school in Maryland to have either School Resource Officers (SRO) or adequate law enforcement coverage. Allegany County Public Schools (ACPS) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in 2013 with the Allegany County Sheriff's Office, Cumberland Police Department, and Frostburg Police Department to provide School Resource Officers and works closely with these agencies and the Maryland State Police to provide adequate law enforcement coverage to all schools through routine police patrols.

The new law requires that the roles and authority of the SRO be posted on each school system's website. The information below outlines the role and authority of SROs in Allegany County schools. Some frequently asked questions provide additional clarity for the ACPS community.

The SRO
Is a specially trained and officer, who is a certified sworn law enforcement officer in the state of Maryland, trained to the standards set forth in the Safe to Learn Act of 2018 and by the Maryland Police Standards and Training Commission.
Is responsible for all law enforcement functions that may arise at the school, including investigating school threats and crimes that occur on school property that would not typically be resolved through normal school discipline.
Shall follow all pertinent policies of their respective law enforcement agency.
Shall not be used in any way to impose, or in lieu of, school discipline and will not conduct investigations of violations of the student code of conduct unless there is a criminal violation.
Notifies the school administrator or appropriate ACPS staff member of any student who is in crisis, requires assistance, in need of counseling or any other resource that falls outside of their authority and expertise.
Collaborates with school administrators, the Coordinator of School Safety, and Emergency Management to provide security for the schools and responds to threats at schools.
Is familiar with the school Critical Incident Plan and helps coordinate emergency responses during a critical incident.
Has a working knowledge of ACPS Student Services and other applicable ACPS policies.
Makes recommendations to improve school security and responds to critical incidents.
Acts as a role model and establishes positive relationships with students, parents and school staff.

The table above displays the roles and authority of SROs.

ACPS School Resource Officer Program Frequently Asked Questions

Does the law require a SRO in every school?

No, the law does not require an SRO in every school, but it does require that schools have either SRO or adequate law enforcement coverage. The most common practice of providing adequate law enforcement coverage in Maryland is through the use of SROs or routine police patrols.

What types of specialized training do SROs receive?

The Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) has developed a specialized curriculum for School Resource Officers, which has been accepted by the Maryland Police Training Standards Commission. This training includes various topics to include but not limited to response to active assailants, de-escalation, disability awareness, maintaining a positive school climate, constructive interactions with students, implicit bias, and disability and diversity awareness with specific attention to racial and ethnic disparities.

Are SROs armed?

Yes, SROs are certified sworn law enforcement officers, who are employed by their respective law enforcement agency. The SRO's primary responsibility is to provide security to the schools in which they are assigned. This security includes the act of intervening in an active assailant event.

Who is responsible for supervising the SROs in the schools?

Each SRO's respective law enforcement agency is responsible for their direct supervision. These agencies ensure that each SRO is adhering to their policies and procedures and working collaboratively with school administration. The supervisors are also responsible for handling any complaints related to SROs and staffing schools in an SRO's absence.

Are SROs allowed to discipline a student?

No, school administrators are responsible for all student discipline. SROs are not involved in or used in lieu of school discipline procedures.

Are there times when an offense can lead to both a criminal investigation and school discipline? If so how will this be handled?

School administrators have the discretion within the confines of the COMAR, ACPS policy, and administrative regulations to handle some minor offenses without involving law enforcement. SROs would be involved in offenses that school administrators would previously have contacted 911 for a police response. When an SRO conducts an investigation for a crime that has occurred in a school, the administrative investigation will be conducted secondarily and may not interfere with the criminal investigation. The decision to charge a student will be the responsibility of the SRO and will be completely separate of any school discipline imposed by the school administrator.

Will SROs teach classes?

SROs may act as guest speakers in classes on law enforcement related topics that are associated with specific curriculums. Many of our SROs are DARE-certified and teach DARE classes throughout the county.

Will there be a police presence at elementary and middle schools?

SROs cover high, middle, and elementary schools in the county. All schools continue to receive routine patrols by law enforcement officers.