

U.S. Departments of Education and Justice Issue Dear Colleague Letters and Resource Materials for LEAs Addressing the Use of School Resource Officers

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On Sept. 8, the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Justice (DOJ) each issued "[Dear Colleague](#)" letters and accompanying "resource documents" addressing school-based law enforcement and the role of [School Resource Officers](#) (SRO).

The letter states that "school districts that choose to use SROs should incorporate them responsibly into school learning environments and ensure that they have no role in administering school discipline." The ED letter urges school districts to take steps to eliminate "overreliance" on SROs and to ensure that school personnel are appropriately trained to address behavioral issues through a variety of "corrective, non-punitive interventions, including restorative justice programs and mental health supports." The DOJ letter notes "properly implemented" SROs can have a positive impact on student educational experiences, and officers can serve as mentors and educators, teaching students about "public safety and the criminal justice system, as well as how to keep themselves and their families safe." Both ED and DOJ letters and the resource materials focus on limiting the involvement of SROs in "routine school disciplinary matters."

The resource materials include a checklist in the form of a School-Based Enforcement through Collaboration, Understanding, and Respect (SECURE) local implementation rubric intended to assist in the development and/or revision of policies governing relationships between school districts, law enforcement agencies and the juvenile justice system. The rubric is structured around five identified actions steps that include:

1. Creating sustainable partnerships and formal memoranda of understanding (MOUs) among school districts, local law enforcement agencies, juvenile justice and civil rights and community stakeholders;
2. Ensuring that MOUs meet constitutional and statutory civil rights requirements;
3. Recruiting and hiring effective SROs and school personnel;
4. Ongoing training for SROs and school personnel and
5. Continuous evaluation of SROs and school personnel.

You can go to [SECURE](#) to access the full text of the recommended local implementation rubric.

If you have any additional questions regarding this guidance or the role of SROs in your school, or if we can provide any assistance as you review your existing policies and procedures, please do not hesitate to contact us.