

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
AND HILDA L. SOLIS**

May 30, 2017

Developing Standards for the School Resource Deputy Program

The Los Angeles County (County) Sheriff’s Department (Department), through its School Resource Deputy Program, has provided dedicated and full-time law enforcement services to various school districts in the County for approximately 19 years. Currently, twenty school districts across the County participate in the program. While the majority of schools contracting out for school resource officers are high schools, a handful of middle schools and even some elementary schools (within the Lawndale Elementary School District) now participate in the program. Participation involves having a full time, uniformed and armed Sheriff’s deputy on the campus, or a Sheriff’s deputy available on call. Participating schools have reported that they are very much in favor of the program.

Law enforcement presence in schools has expanded nationally over the past 20 years, fueled in part by high profile school shootings and the rise of “zero tolerance” policies to address student misbehavior. In 2013, the National Center for Education Statistics estimated that about 30 percent of public schools reported having a school resource officer (SRO), the term often used for law enforcement on campuses. A 2011 report by the Justice Policy Institute found that nationally, on average, SROs spend approximately 50% of their time on law enforcement activities, 25% of their time advising and mentoring, 12% teaching (e.g., D.A.R.E. classes), and the remainder performing miscellaneous activities.

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The lack of rigorous research and data on school police has made it difficult to assess the effectiveness of this practice. While the impact of SROs on school safety has been mixed, available evidence does suggest that police presence on school campuses increases the likelihood that youth will be arrested and have additional contact with the justice system. As the Justice Policy Institute noted in their 2011 report, when controlling for school poverty, a 2009 study found that students attending schools with SROs were nearly three times more likely to be arrested than students in schools without law enforcement officers present. Additionally, various analyses performed by school districts have shown a disproportionate impact of arrests on youth of color and youth with disabilities. In January 2017, an analysis of federal data by the Education Week Research Center showed that in 43 states and the District of Columbia, African-American students were arrested at school at disproportionately higher levels (the cause of this disparity is unknown, but a potential reason is that African-American students are more likely than other racial groups to attend schools with police).

In an effort to better understand and ultimately improve issues around school safety and school police, beginning in 2013 the federal government funded a national study on SROs and other forms of school police. Additionally, the Justice Department has backed the development of a new training curriculum for school police, as well as supporting the creation of more clearly defined roles for law enforcement in schools. This data and recommended guidelines are forthcoming.

In the meantime, the County should take steps now to better understand, define and measure the effectiveness of its own School Resource Deputy Program to ensure it is positively impacting school safety and student success. The Department has offered some positive anecdotal evidence around the success of relationship-building and mentorship between officers and students; however, more rigorous information on the program is not available. For example, there are not clearly defined roles for school-assigned Sheriff's deputies around the types of incidents with which they should or should not be involved. Additionally, it does not seem that deputies assigned to this program receive specialized training (e.g., in adolescent brain development or trauma)

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to ensure they are equipped to work with youth on a school campus, a fundamentally different job than patrolling the streets or in a custody environment. Lastly, the program lacks quantitative data analysis. Therefore, it has been difficult to assess the impact of the program outside of anecdotes, including learning from and lifting up elements that may be working and addressing and guarding against any potential negative impact, including a disproportionate impact on certain groups of students. Creating standards for the School Resource Deputy Program will serve to improve school safety, school climate, and ultimately student success.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Approve the recommendations set forth by the Sheriff in the Board letter dated May 16, 2017, with the provisions that the requested approval and delegated authority shall be granted for a two-year period from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2019, with three one-year extension options, each to be exercised subject to Board approval.
2. Request the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, in collaboration with the participating schools districts and the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and with the assistance from any other necessary departments and community stakeholders, to report back to the Board of Supervisors, in writing, in 90 days on the creation of best practice standards for the School Resource Deputy Program, including:
 - a. Clearly defined roles for law enforcement deputies assigned to the School Resource Deputy Program that balance the need to respond appropriately and with flexibility to public safety issues with the need to protect against law enforcement involvement with school discipline issues;
 - b. The development of a training curriculum that addresses the unique needs of working with students on school campuses, including but not limited to training that addresses adolescent development, childhood

trauma, conflict resolution, and de-escalation, as well as best practices to involve the parents or guardians of minors;

- c. The development of clear goals for the School Resource Deputy Program, quantitative and qualitative metrics to measure the achievement of these goals, and a plan for regularly sharing and utilizing this data to identify trends and make any appropriate modifications to the program. This data should be disaggregated by school type, gender, age, race and ethnicity, and disability to protect against disproportionate impact; and
 - d. Alignment with other Countywide efforts connected to youth and law enforcement, including the work of the Subcommittee on Youth Diversion (“Advancing a Countywide Approach to Youth Diversion,” Ridley-Thomas and Hahn, January 24, 2017).
3. Direct the Los Angeles County Office of Education to, on an as-needed basis, provide technical assistance to school districts, particularly those participating in the School Resource Deputy Program, around achieving school safety and positive school climate, including the role of initiatives such as restorative justice programs, Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports, and supportive school staff including counselors and mental health clinicians.

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