

# Systematic Review: Perceptions of School Resource Officers



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School Resources Officers (SROs) have become more consistently present in schools around the country. But how do students, teachers, principals, and parents perceive the role and effectiveness of SROs? To help answer this question, researchers from Michigan State University conducted a systematic review of literature on SRO perceptions. [In this video](#), they discuss results of the systematic review and how SRO perceptions may affect long-term student outcomes and policy decisions.

## Learning Outcomes

- » Summarize different perspectives on School Resource Officer roles.
- » Explain how varying perspectives may influence policy and practice decisions in your school and community.
- » Compare the conclusions from the systematic review with the School Resource Officer program at your school.

## Key Takeaways

- ✓ Among SROs surveyed, the majority perceived that law enforcement and ensuring student safety were their primary responsibilities. They also emphasized their role in solving crimes, collaborating with other staff members, and forming positive relationships with students to promote a more favorable perception of law enforcement.
- ✓ Among students studied, the general perceptions were that SROs increased feelings of safety at school, although the perception of safety associated with SRO presence varied tremendously by gender, race, age, and frequency of interaction.
- ✓ Studies evaluating teachers' perceptions of SROs focused on what they felt made a good SRO. The key factors of a positive perspective were an SRO's consistent presence, availability, and frequency of interactions. There was also a perception among teachers that SROs could be doing more as educators through increased classroom involvement.
- ✓ Among principals and school administrators, the perception of SROs was generally positive. Most felt that the SRO's primary role was in reducing criminal activity and ensuring safety. Principals also felt that an important characteristic of SROs was willingness to foster positive relationships with students and staff across campus, as well as remaining visible, available, and present.
- ✓ There have been very few studies on the parental perspective on SROs, so more research is needed.
- ✓ Overall, the perception among the majority of individuals was that SROs are a positive influence on campuses and increase the feelings of safety, while there were some mixed results on the actual effectiveness of the role especially as it relates to marginalized populations.

## Additional Resources

[Almanza, M., Mason, M., & Melde, C. \(2022\). Perceptions of school resource officers: Protectors or prosecutors? Criminal Justice Review.](#) - The systematic review that is discussed in this video.

[School Resource Officer Video Series](#) - A series of videos that help SROs consider the way students think, how to connect with them, how to break down barriers to communication, and how to become a successful presence in their school.

[Canady, M. \(2021\). School Resource Officer Program Recommendations. National Association of School Resource Officers.](#) - A guide from NASRO on adopting their program recommendations for SROs.

## Questions for Discussion

- » How are SROs different from other law enforcement officers? How can their role on campus be communicated in a way that promotes a sense of safety for all?
- » Are your SROs in alignment with the rest of the staff when it comes to priorities, discipline approach, and responsibilities? If not, how can you get there?
- » If your school is considering implementing an SRO program, what are your goals for the program? How would you like SROs to interact with students, faculty, staff, and the school community?

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This project was supported by Cooperative Agreement No 2019 YS BX K 001 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.