



## CITY OF SACO, MAINE

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### MEMORANDUM

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The following information is provided for City Council Members regarding School Resource Officers:

#### **What is a School Resource Officer?**

A school resource officer, by federal definition, ***“means a career law enforcement officer, with sworn authority, deployed in community-oriented policing, and assigned by the employing police department or agency to work in collaboration with school and community-based organizations.”*** (Title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 as amended in 1998, (2) section 1709).

#### **History of School Resource Officers:**

In 1963, the Tucson Arizona Police Chief adopted the term of School Resource Officer and realized something had to be done for the school community and the relationship between youth and law enforcement. Officers were assigned to junior high schools on a full-time basis. They assumed the role of an informal counselor and became a resource for parents, students, and staff. The program grew from Tucson to other large metropolitan areas during the 60's and 70's and even led to the major school districts seeking and receiving special legislation to create their own police departments under full direction of the school district.

#### **What a School Resource Officer is NOT:**

An SRO is not a replacement for existing school security practices. School security is much more involved than just a uniform and badge. Security involves everyone in the school including the administrators, teachers, custodial staff, nurse, counseling staff and support personnel. Thus, the SRO should not be utilized exclusively as a security guard to check identification, parking permits, or monitor the hallways and cafeterias. This would place too much responsibility on one person and waste the valuable resources of a highly trained professional. The SRO is also not a school disciplinarian.

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## **Societal Changes:**

The Role and importance of the SRO changed dramatically on April 20, 1999 at the Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, when Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold murdered 12 students and one teacher and injured 21 others. Since that time there have been 22 shootings at elementary and secondary schools in which two or more people were **killed**. Five of these incidents have occurred since 2013 claiming the lives of 27 victims. School shootings were so bad during the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations that they both formed committees to look at the issue. *(note: since 2013 there have been more than 300 school shootings in America – which is almost one a week.)*  
<https://everytownresearch.org/school-shootings/>

The Saco School Department and the Saco Police Department have had an established a School Resource Officer (SRO) program for approximately 20 years.

The primary roles of the SROs are to:

- Provide support and assistance to the school administration and staff to maintain a safe and constructive learning environment;
- Enforce local, state and federal laws;
- Serve as a resource to administrators and teachers in planning and providing age appropriate educational programs that foster respect for the law, an understanding of law enforcement, and safe and healthy behaviors;
- Serve as a resource to administrators and staff concerning law enforcement and child welfare issues;
- Assist individual students and their families in addressing issues related to law enforcement and helping students to have a meaningful school experience; and,
- Serve as a liaison between the schools and the Saco Police Department in addressing issues of concern to both departments.
- Work with school administrators to identify children that would benefit from the Jump Start Program.

School administrators and staff have the primary responsibility for maintaining proper order in the schools and for disciplining students for violations of School Board policies and school rules. However, the Superintendent and administrators may seek the assistance of an SRO and/or the Saco Police Department when they believe there is a threat to the welfare and safety of the schools, students and/or staff. The Superintendent and administrators shall also inform an SRO and/or the Saco Police Department when they have reason to suspect that a student or staff member may have violated a state or federal criminal law.

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## RELATIONS WITH SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES

The School Board recognizes that a cooperative relationship with law enforcement authorities is desirable for the protection of students and staff and in maintaining a safe school environment. To that end, the Saco School Department and the Saco Police Department have established a School Resource Officer (SRO) program. The School Board hereby officially designates the police officers assigned by the Saco Police Department to serve as SROs as the law enforcement unit of the Saco School Department.

The purpose of the SROs is to enforce local, state and federal laws and to assist in maintaining the physical security and safety of the School Department. In keeping with the Saco School Department's mission, the primary roles of the SROs are to:

- Provide support and assistance to the school administration and staff to maintain a safe and constructive learning environment;
- Enforce local, state and federal laws;
- Serve as a resource to administrators and teachers in planning and providing age appropriate educational programs that foster respect for the law, an understanding of law enforcement, and safe and healthy behaviors;
- Serve as a resource to administrators and staff concerning law enforcement and child welfare issues;
- Assist individual students and their families in addressing issues related to law enforcement and helping students to have a meaningful school experience; and
- Serve as a liaison between the schools and the Saco Police Department in addressing issues of concern to both departments.

School administrators and staff have the primary responsibility for maintaining proper order in the schools and for disciplining students for violations of School Board policies and school rules. However, the Superintendent and administrators may seek the assistance of an SRO and/or the Saco Police Department when they believe there is a threat to the welfare and safety of the schools, students and/or staff. The Superintendent and administrators shall also inform an SRO and/or the Saco Police Department when they have reason to suspect that a student or staff member may have violated a state or federal criminal law.

The School Board discourages SROs and other law enforcement authorities from using the schools as a venue to arrest and/or question students for activities not related to or affecting the schools. The Superintendent and administrators retain the authority to deny the SRO access to students for non-school-related investigations.

Under this policy, SROs are considered to be school officials with legitimate educational interests in reviewing educational records, with administrative approval, in order to perform their professional responsibilities.

The School Board authorizes the Superintendent to develop administrative procedures, in consultation with the Saco Police Department, to guide interactions between the schools, the SROs and the Saco Police Department. Such procedures should safeguard the rights of students and parents and be

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consistent with School Board policies, as well as the SRO program agreement between the Saco School Department, and the Saco Police Department, and are subject to approval by the School Board.

Legal Reference: 20 USC 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99

Cross Reference: KLGA-R - School Resource Officer/Law Enforcement

Administrative Procedure

JRA – Student Education Records and Information

Adopted: 11/15/17

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