



National Institute of Justice

S o l i c i t a t i o n

Jeremy Travis, Director

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A National Assessment of School Resource Officer Programs

APPLICATION DEADLINE:

February 14, 2000

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
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Department of Justice Response Center:
800-421-6770

Office of Justice Programs
World Wide Web Site:
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>

National Institute of Justice
World Wide Web Site:
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>

Community Oriented Policing Services
World Wide Web Site:
<http://www.usdoj.gov/cops>

A National Assessment of School Resource Officer Programs

I. Introduction

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) serves as the research and evaluation arm of the Department of Justice. Since 1995, NIJ, in partnership with the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), has instituted a broad research and evaluation agenda focused on transformations taking place in policing. With financial support under the authority of the Public Safety Partnership and Community Policing Act (Title I) of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (the Crime Act) [see 42 U. S. C. X 3796dd-4, 3793 (c) (11) (B)], NIJ has awarded grants as part of this partnership. These grants have totaled over \$40 million for research and evaluation efforts regarding the implementation, consequences, and implications of community-oriented and problem-solving policing. Complete lists of the studies funded in previous years are available from the U. S. Department of Justice Response Center at (800)-421-6770, at (202) 307-1480 and by FAX at (202) 616-9294.

The National Institute of Justice in cooperation with the COPS Office requests applications for a national assessment of School Resource Officer (SRO) programs. The COPS office has provided funds to NIJ to support one national evaluation. A grant of up to \$700,000 will be awarded for a period of two years. This research project will help fill the current void in research on the role of law enforcement in school crime prevention and help determine factors associated with effectiveness and ineffectiveness of SRO programs designed to promote safe schools.

II. Background

Instances of sensational criminal events in schools (e.g., Columbine, Jonesboro) have

focused national attention on safety and security for students. Research has shown that schools are comparatively safe places, and students in the 1990s are less likely to be victimized than in previous years. However, the perception and reality of crime and fear of crime are pernicious and have the potential to disrupt the learning environment. As a result, school districts across the country are faced with very difficult policy decisions: Should they press existing school personnel to add security services to their duties? Should off-duty retired police officers be contracted for additional professional services? Should they commit scarce resources to support a full-fledged department of security or even school police? Or should they encourage local police to become permanent participants in schools?

School Resource Officer is defined by Part Q of Title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 as amended in 1998, (2) section 1709, as follows: "a school resource officer 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." While this definition may describe some SRO programs, it is clear that not all programs are based on the community-policing philosophy. Programmatically, SRO programs may range from prevention based, collaborative community policing models, to reactive, enforcement based traditional policing models, and everything in between.

The COPS Office's COPS in Schools SRO program is an application of the principles and philosophy of community policing to the school environment.

Since the spring of 1999, the COPS in Schools Program has provided funds for more than 1500

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School Resource Officers in over 700 jurisdictions nationwide. (For additional information on COPS funded School Resource Officers, see COPS website at <http://www.usdoj.gov/cops>).

The COPS in Schools Program recognizes three primary roles for a School Resource Officer. These roles are:

- a) Problem solver and liaison to community resources;
- b) Educator;
- c) Safety expert and law enforcer.¹

SRO programs should be designed to balance these roles and provide all stakeholders a common understanding of the roles and responsibilities for their specific SRO program.

There are numerous versions of SRO programs. Frequently, they are designed to:

- a) Address crime and disorder problems, gangs, and drug activities affecting or occurring in or around an elementary or secondary school;
- b) Develop or expand crime prevention efforts for students;
- c) Educate likely school-age victims in crime prevention and safety;
- d) Develop or expand community justice initiatives for students;
- e) Train students in conflict resolution, restorative justice, and crime awareness;
- f) Assist in the identification of physical changes in the environment that may reduce crime in or around the school;

- g) Assist in developing school policy that addresses crime and recommend procedural changes;²
- h) Facilitate collaborative problem solving with students, parents, teachers, faculty, and staff to address school safety issues;
- i) Teach law-related education components to students;
- j) Make arrests and issue citations on campus;
- k) Serve as hall monitor, truancy enforcer, crossing guard, and operator of metal detectors and other security devices.

The multitude of activities that may be found within the boundaries of a SRO program can lead to confusion about what these programs are expected to accomplish and how to assess and measure the effectiveness of various approaches. The COPS Office and NIJ wish to catalogue, categorize, and assess the various models of school resource officer programs being implemented and gain a better understanding of the impact various approaches have on selected indicators of school safety.

III. Areas of Research Required

NIJ will award one grant for an analysis and assessment of the effectiveness of the various forms and models of SRO programs.

The assessment shall have two primary components:

1. A description of the characteristics (who, what, when, where, and how) and implementation (e.g. programmatic, procedural, logistical) of various models of SRO programs;

¹Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Solicitation for Technical Assistance Support. November 8, 1999. (Page 3)

² Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative. Program Announcement. Application Instructions and Forms. June 1, 1999. (Page 47).

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2. An outcome evaluation designed to measure the impact of various SRO programs on selected indicators of school safety.

A systematic assessment of the impact and effectiveness of various SRO programs will benefit decisionmakers grappling with the varied models of SRO programs.

The assessment should take into consideration specific characteristics of the schools, neighborhoods, and communities in which the SRO programs are being implemented, including ongoing school safety and delinquency prevention efforts.

The assessment should:

- a) Inventory the range of activities of school resource officers;
- b) Illustrate the level of community policing woven into the current SRO programs;
- c) Provide information on the impact and effectiveness of these varied approaches.

A research proposal designed to assess SRO programs should propose a methodology which addresses the following questions:

- a) What types of SRO models are instituted and what goals do these programs articulate?
- b) Who was involved in developing the model for the individual jurisdiction and determining its goals?
- c) What programmatic characteristics make an SRO program effective or ineffective?
- d) Did the impact on school safety vary by type of model implemented?
- e) To what extent are community-oriented policing approaches evident in a variety of SRO models?
- f) What measures of effectiveness are schools/police teams using to test their own effectiveness?

Possible indicators of effectiveness may include:

- a) Crime incidents in school;
- b) Incidence of youth crime in the surrounding community;
- c) Fear of crime in schools and in the surrounding community among teachers and students;
- d) Perceived quality of the relationship between police and school personnel, police and students;
- e) Level of school truancy;
- f) Appearance of building/grounds (graffiti, littering, etc.);
- g) Numbers of suspensions/disciplinary actions.

IV. How to Apply

Responses to this solicitation should be in the form of a full proposal not to exceed 25 pages (double spaced). The proposal should describe the general approach to this research, details of the research design, sampling frame, data collection techniques and analysis. Additionally, the proposal should include anticipated products, detailed budget and budget narrative, a time and task plan, as well as identification of staff and staffing plan. A single award will be made by April 3, 2000. (The Department of Justice Response Center 1-800-421-6770 can provide a list of school resource officers funded by the COPS office.)

All applicants must complete the required application forms and submit related required documents. (See below for how to obtain application forms and guides for completing proposals.) Applicants must include the following information/forms to qualify for consideration:

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- Standard Form (SF) 424—application for Federal assistance
- Assurances
- Certifications Regarding Lobbying, Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (one form)
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- Budget Detail Worksheet
- Budget Narrative
- Negotiated indirect rate agreement (if appropriate)
- Names and affiliations of all key persons from applicants and subcontractor(s), advisors, consultants, and advisory board members. Include name of principal investigator, title, organizational affiliation (if any), department (if institution of higher education), address, phone, and fax
- Proposal abstract
- Table of contents
- Program narrative or technical proposal
- Privacy certificate
- References
- Letters of cooperation from organizations collaborating in the research project
- Résumés
- Appendixes, if any (e.g., list of previous NIJ awards, their status, and products [in NIJ or other publications])

Proposal abstract. The proposal abstract, when read separately from the rest of the application, is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work. Applicants must concisely describe the research goals and objectives, research design, and methods for achieving the goals and objectives. Summaries of past accomplishments are to be avoided, and proprietary/confidential information is not to be included. Length is not to exceed 400 words. Use the following two headers:

Project Goals and Objectives:

Proposed Research Design and Methodology:

Due date. Completed proposals **must be received** at the National Institute of Justice by the close of business on February 14, 2000. Extensions of this deadline will not be permitted.

Award period. One grant will be awarded for up to 24 months.

Number of awards. NIJ anticipates supporting 1 grant under this solicitation.

Award amount. Award up to \$700,000 will be made available for this NIJ solicitation.

Applying. Two packets need to be obtained: (1) application forms (including a sample budget worksheet) and (2) guidelines for submitting proposals (including requirements for proposal writers and requirements for grant recipients). To receive them, applicants can:

- Access the Justice Information Center on the web:

<http://www.ncjrs.org/fedgrant.htm#NIJ>

or the NIJ web site:

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>

These web sites offer the NIJ application forms and guidelines as electronic files that may be downloaded to a personal computer.

- Request hard copies of the forms and guidelines by mail from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at 800-851-3420 or from the Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770 (in the Washington, D.C., area, at 202-307-1480).
- Request copies by fax. Call 800-851-3420 and select option 1, then option 1 again for NIJ. Code is 1023.

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Guidance and information. Applicants who wish to receive additional guidance and information may contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770. Center staff can provide assistance or refer applicants to an appropriate NIJ professional. Applicants may, for example, wish to discuss their prospective research topics with the NIJ professional staff.

Send completed forms to:

A National Assessment of School Resource
Officer Programs
National Institute of Justice
810 Seventh Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20531
[overnight courier ZIP code 20001]

SL 000394

To find out more information about the National Institute of Justice, please contact:

National Criminal Justice Reference Service

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Rockville, MD 20849-6000

800-851-3420

e-mail: askncjrs@ncjrs.org

To obtain an electronic version of this document, access the NIJ web site (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>).

If you have any questions, call or e-mail NCJRS.