

School Resource Officer Program Frequently Asked Questions

All information contained herein is subject to change, based on appropriations

School Resource Officer Program Overview:

- Provides grant funding to local law enforcement entities to place a full-time school resource officer (SRO) at each of Tennessee's 1,863 public schools
- To access grant funding, a local law enforcement entity must have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to provide full-time SROs to public schools in the local district. The MOU is required at a minimum to contain all of the best practices in the state's sample template, which will be provided to law enforcement entities.
- A law enforcement entity that currently provides an SRO to a public school is eligible for this SRO grant program
- Funding shall not be awarded for more than one SRO per public school
- The grant program will be administered and monitored by the Department of Safety

What is an SRO?

- A school resource officer is an armed law enforcement officer, as defined in T.C.A. § 49-6-4202, who must be in compliance with all rules and regulations of the POST commission
- SROs are employed by local law enforcement entities, like sheriff's departments and police departments
- SROs are assigned to a public school
- SROs receive 40 additional hours of training on school policing and working on school campuses

Can public schools use other officers besides SROs to provide security?

- Yes. Public schools may use school security officers (SSOs), as defined in T.C.A. § 49-6-4206, but SSOs may not be funded through the School Resource Officer Program grants
- A local education authority is authorized to create the position of SSO, and the SSO is an employee of the local education authority
- Under T.C.A. § 49-6-809, local boards of education are authorized to adopt a policy authorizing off-duty law enforcement officers to serve as armed SSOs during regular school hours when children are present on school premises and during school-sponsored events. In that scenario, the LEA must have an MOU with the law enforcement agency that employs the law enforcement officers.
- School security officers do not have the 40 hours of additional training on school policing that SROs have.

Can retired law enforcement officers become school security officers?

- Yes, and certain certified law enforcement officers who recently ceased serving as full-time law enforcement officers may attend a three-week course to be recertified without attending basic training, pursuant to Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1110-02-03(7)(a).

Is the SRO Program for non-public schools, too?

- No. However, the Governor's budget amendment provides for a \$7 million non-recurring fund for school security for non-public schools. Allowable uses are intended to include one-time expenses for school hardening and one-year funding for security. Future funding for similar supports is not guaranteed, and using this grant fund for recurring expenditures is not recommended.

