



School Resource Officer (SRO) Program:

The Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018 requires each public school to have either a School Resource Officer (SRO) assigned to the school, or to provide adequate law enforcement coverage for the school. Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in 2013 with the Garrett County Sheriff's Office to provide SRO's to the schools. In September 2019, the Memorandum of Understanding was updated and additional SRO's were added to the program. The Garrett County Public School System also works closely with the Maryland State Police, Maryland Natural Resources Police, and the Oakland City Police Department to provide adequate law enforcement coverage to all schools through routine police patrols and other law enforcement activities.

The Maryland Safe to Learn act also requires that the roles and authority of the SRO's be posted on the public school system's website. The information below outlines the role and authority of SRO's in Garrett County schools. Some frequently asked questions provide additional clarity to the GCPS community.

The SRO:

- ❖ Is a specially trained police officer, who is a certified sworn law enforcement officer in the State of Maryland, trained to the standards set forth in the Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018 and by the Maryland Police Standards and Training Commission.
- ❖ Is responsible for all law enforcement functions that may arise at a school, including school threats and crimes that occur on school property that would not typically be resolved through normal school discipline.
- ❖ Shall follow all pertinent policies of their respective law enforcement agency.
- ❖ Shall not be used in any way to impose, or in lieu of, school discipline and will not conduct investigations of violations of the student code of conduct unless there is a criminal violation.
- ❖ Notifies the school administrator or appropriate GCPS staff member of any student who is in crisis, requires assistance, in need of counseling or any other resource that falls outside of their authority and expertise.
- ❖ Collaborates with schools administrators, the Coordinator of School Safety, and Emergency Management to provide security for the schools and responds to threats at schools.
- ❖ Is familiar with the school Emergency Preparedness Plan and helps coordinate emergency responses during a critical incident.
- ❖ Has a working knowledge of GCPS Pupil Services and other applicable GCPS policies and procedures.
- ❖ Makes recommendations to improve school security and responds to critical incidents.
- ❖ Acts as a role model and establishes positive relationships with students, parents and school staff.

GCPS School Resource Officer – Frequently Asked Questions:

- Does the law require an SRO in every school?

No, the law does not require an SRO in every school, but it does require that schools have either an SRO or adequate law enforcement coverage. The most common practice of providing adequate law enforcement coverage in Maryland is through the use of SRO's or routine police patrols.

- What types of specialized training do SRO's receive?

The Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) has developed a specialized curriculum for School Resource Officers, which has been accepted by the Maryland Police Training Standards Commission. This training includes various topics to include but not limited to response to active assailants, de-escalation techniques, disability awareness, maintaining a positive school climate, constructive interactions with students, providing education in regard to lawful civilian behavior, alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use prevention, implicit bias, and disability and diversity awareness with specific attention to racial and ethnic disparities.

- Are the SRO's armed?

Yes, SRO's are certified sworn law enforcement officers, who are employed by their respective law enforcement agency (e.g. The Garrett County Sheriff's Office). The SRO's primary responsibility is to provide security to the schools in which they are assigned. This security includes the act of intervening in an active assailant event.

- Who is responsible for supervising the SRO's in the schools?

Each SRO respective law enforcement agency is responsible for their direct supervision. These agencies ensure that each SRO is adhering to their policies and procedures and working collaboratively with the school administration. The supervisor is also responsible for handling any complaints related to the SRO.

- Are SRO's allowed to discipline a student?

No, school administrators are responsible for all student discipline. SRO's are not involved in or used in lieu of school discipline procedures. When a crime occurs, the SRO will intervene and take the appropriate steps consistent with police officer duties and GCPS policies.

- Are there times when an offense can lead to both a criminal investigation and school discipline? If so, how will this be handled?

School administrators have the discretion within the confines of COMAR, GCPS policy, and administrative guidelines and regulations to handle some minor offenses without involving law enforcement. SRO's would be involved in offenses that school administrators would previously

have contacted 911 for a police response. When an SRO conducts an investigation for a crime that has occurred in a school (or on school property), the school administrative investigation will be conducted secondarily and may not interfere with the criminal investigation. The decision to charge a student will be the responsibility of the SRO and will be completely separate of any school discipline imposed by the school administrator.

- Will the SRO provide appropriate training for students?

SRO's may act as guest speakers in classes on law enforcement related topics that are associated with specific curriculums. Our SRO's are certified ALICE instructors (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate). They also teach the "Winners Program" to all 6th graders and covers various topics, like: Illegal drug and alcohol use, tobacco use, bullying, and various other law enforcement topics.

- Will there be a police presence at the elementary and middle schools?

SRO's cover the high, middle, and elementary schools in the county. All schools will continue to receive routine patrols by law enforcement officers.