

Attachment B
School Resource Officers and School Discipline

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to establish a collaborative agreement on school security and school discipline to guide and define the relationship between Norman Public Schools (the “District”) and the City of Norman (“Norman”) (collectively referred to as “the Parties”) in the use of School Resource Officers (“SRO” or “SROs”). The Parties acknowledge that law enforcement plays an essential role in maintaining safety in the community and in the District. However, the use of arrests and referrals to the criminal justice system for minor or typical school behaviors can adversely affect students and erode confidence in and respect for both the school administration and law enforcement. The parties have developed this guidance to ensure a consistent approach to law enforcement and school discipline that emphasizes cooperation in the handling of school-based student misbehavior. Emphasis is placed on handling incidents uniformly while ensuring that each case is addressed on an individualized basis. The manner in which each incident is handled is dependent upon many factors unique to each child. This includes, but is not limited to, behavioral history, present circumstances, disciplinary record, academic record, general demeanor and disposition toward others, disability, special education status, and other factors. Accordingly, the parties concur that students involved in the same incident or similar incidents may receive different and varying responses depending on the factors and needs of each student.

To address these issues and ensure that all students have access to a safe and productive learning environment, the Parties agree that cooperation is essential. Among other benefits, committed cooperation can enhance appropriate responses and use of resources, when responding to school-based misbehavior. For purposes of this MOU, student misbehavior is considered to be breaches of the Code of Student Conduct, disruptions, and other minor infractions or omissions by a student that occurs on school grounds, school transportation or during a school sponsored or related event.

Responding to Student Misbehavior

In the event a student misbehaves, the school principal and their designees will be the primary source of intervention and disciplinary consequences. SROs are responsible for criminal law issues—not school discipline issues. The Code of Student Conduct provides detailed information on consequences and interventions and shall guide the response to particular types of misbehavior. In addition, school officials should make reasonable efforts, where applicable, to connect students to school or community-based support services, such as counseling, mentoring, or extra-curricular activities.

Many types of minor student misbehavior may technically meet the statutory requirements for non-violent misdemeanors (e.g. theft, vandalism, disorderly conduct, loitering, incidents relating to alcohol, threats, harassment, etc.), but may be handled outside of the criminal justice system. Absent a real and immediate threat to students, teachers, or public safety, incidents involving public order offenses such as those above and including disturbance/disruption of school or public assembly; trespass; loitering; profanity; and fighting that does not involve physical injury or a weapon, may be considered school discipline issues to be handled by school officials, rather than criminal law issues warranting formal law enforcement intervention (e.g., issuance of a criminal citation, ticket, or summons, filing of a delinquency petition, referral to a probation officer, or actual arrest) as may be appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Behavior that rises to the level of a felony offense is not included within this category.

All individuals involved in school discipline decisions shall consider the surrounding circumstances including the age, history, disability or special education status, and other factors that may have influenced the behavior of the student, the degree of harm caused and the student's genuine willingness to repair the harm and accept responsibility for the student's action.

SROs will avoid arresting students at school, where possible, unless the child poses a real and immediate threat to student, teacher, or public safety, or a judicial warrant specifically directs the arrest of the student in a school. School principals shall be consulted prior to an arrest of a student where practicable, and the student's parent or guardian shall be notified of a child's arrest as soon as practicable.

Further Incidents

Repeated incidents of non-violent misdemeanors shall result in graduated levels of school-based interventions and consequences by the administrators on campus, according to the Code of Student Conduct, and referral to law enforcement for certain incidents.

Student Rights

Absent a real and immediate threat to student, teacher, or public safety, an SRO may conduct or participate in a search of a student's person, possessions, or locker only where there is probable cause to believe that the search will reveal evidence that the student has committed or is committing a criminal offense.

- The SRO shall inform school administrators prior to conducting a probable cause search where practicable.
- The SRO shall not ask school officials to search a student's person, possessions, or locker in an effort to circumvent these protections.

A school official may conduct a search of a student's person, possessions, or locker only where there is reasonable suspicion to believe that the search will reveal evidence that the student has violated or is violating either the law or the rules of the school, and the search is justified in scope given such suspicion.

- Absent a real and immediate threat to students, teachers, or public safety, a school official shall not ask an SRO to participate in such a search.

Absent a real and immediate threat to students, teachers, or public safety, an SRO may question or participate in the questioning of a student about conduct that could expose the child to court-involvement or arrest only after informing the child of Miranda rights and only in the presence of the child's parent or guardian.

Accountability

The school district and Norman Police Department shall maintain annual publicly available data, in compliance with the Oklahoma Open Records Act, without disclosing personally identifiable information, documenting the following:

- Number of incidents resulting in a juvenile arrest for conduct on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event, broken down by school; offense; arrestee's age, grade level, race, sex, and disability status; and disposition/result;

- Number of incidents resulting in other forms of law enforcement intervention — including searches and seizures by SROs; questioning by SROs; issuance of a criminal citation, ticket or summons; filing of a delinquency petition and referral to a probation officer—for juvenile conduct on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event, broken down by school; offense or reason; type of law enforcement intervention; juvenile’s age, grade level, race, sex, and disability status; and disposition/result;
- Number of suspensions or other disciplinary consequences imposed on students, broken down by school; offense/infraction; student’s age, grade level, race, sex, and disability status; and disciplinary consequence imposed;
- Policies, and protocols governing the SRO program;
- Number of SROs deployed to each school;
- Training materials for SROs; and
- Number and types of complaints lodged against SROs.

It is the policy of the Norman Police Department to investigate all complaints against it, or of alleged SRO misconduct, to equitably determine whether the allegations are valid or invalid, and take appropriate action. Any student, parent, teacher, and principal or other school administrator may submit a complaint, orally or in writing, of abuses or misconduct by SROs to the Norman Police Department.

- Parents shall be permitted to submit a complaint in their native language.
- The complaint system must be confidential and protect the identity of the complainant from the SRO to the extent consistent with the SRO’s due process rights.
- Complaints shall be investigated and resolved, and complainants shall be furnished with a written explanation of the investigation and resolution.

Every student, parent, and guardian in the school system shall be informed of the complaint procedure through the District’s customary means of communicating information to students and parents.

School Mission and SRO Role

As emphasized above, the involvement of SROs is to improve school safety and the educational climate at the school, not to enforce school discipline or punish students. Accordingly, building-level school administrators shall be consulted when a SRO is deployed to the school.

The SRO shall meet with building-level school administrators, teachers, parents, and student representatives at least annually to discuss issues of school safety. Similarly, the SRO shall be integrated into the school community through participation in faculty and student meetings and assemblies as appropriate and through participation in relevant school training.

The SRO Supervisor shall maintain activity reports and submit monthly summaries of these reports to district-level school administrators, and the relevant law enforcement agency. The monthly summaries shall include, for each SRO, the numbers and descriptions of all incidents or calls for service; names of school officials involved (referring teachers, principals, etc.); student searches; student questioning; tickets, citations, or summonses; filing of delinquency petitions; referrals to a probation officer; actual arrests; and other referrals to the juvenile justice system.

Absent a real and immediate threat to students, teachers, or school safety, and absent the situations described above where formal law enforcement intervention is deemed appropriate by the SRO, building-level school administrators shall have final authority in the building over matters of school discipline.

Discretion of Law Enforcement

Nothing in this MOU is intended to limit the discretion of law enforcement. Officers responding to an incident or consulting with school officials are encouraged to use their discretion in determining the best course of action, especially when using alternatives to arrest. While the option to use the criminal justice system is available for many incidents, the totality of the circumstances should be taken into consideration and any less punitive alternatives that ensure the safety of the school community should be considered.

Professional Development

Every SRO shall receive at least 40 hours of pre-service training and 8 hours of annual in-service training on some or all of the following topics:

- Child and adolescent development and psychology;
- Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), conflict resolution, peer mediation, or other restorative justice techniques;
- Children with disabilities or other special needs; and
- Cultural Competency.

Annual Review

These guidelines shall be reviewed at least annually to ensure that they remain timely, effective, and fully correlated to an educational environment that is secure while tolerant of students' learning and testing of school and community expectations and boundaries.