

BOARD BRIEF

Date: July 16, 2021

BOARD INFORMATION: X

MEETING PREPARATION: _____

FROM: John Contreras, Director of Safety and Security Services
Dr. Alicia Hart, PMP, Executive Director of Facilities and Operations

THROUGH: Stephen M. Wilkins, Ed.D., Chief of Staff
Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Meagan Alderton, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: School Resource Officer (SRO) Update and Next Steps

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 1: Systemic Alignment
Goal 5: Family and Community Engagement

SY 2020-2021 FOCUS AREA:

Focus Area 3: Strategic Plan Implementation

FY 2021 BUDGET PRIORITY:

Improving Customer Relationship Services and Management
Communications and Customer Service for Internal Stakeholders

SUMMARY:

On Monday, May 3, 2021, the Alexandria City Council voted to reallocate \$789,909 in funding from this program to mental health resources. The reallocation of these funds translates to the removal of the SRO program at Alexandria City High School (King Street and Minnie Howard Campuses), Francis C. Hammond Middle School and George Washington Middle School. Please note that this decision only affords ACPS approximately 3 months to establish a contingency plan with regards to safety and security mitigations for our students and staff in the midst of our summer learning and reopening for fall during a global pandemic.

Upon learning of the reallocation, ACPS stakeholders (to include the Executive Director of Facilities and Operations, Safety and Security Services leadership, Secondary Principal leadership, and Student Services and Equity leadership) met to determine implications of

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removal of the SRO program, potential security solutions and next steps. A summary of these items is captured below:

Implications of SRO Removal

There are noted implications of the removal of school resource officers to include:

- Increased vulnerability at school sites (lack of information sharing and pertinent intelligence, gang recruitment and activity awareness)
- Decreased deterrence of situations such as active threats to students, staff, and visitors, etc.
- Potential increase of calls for service from APD to respond to such incidents given no SRO coverage. Increased calls for service may result in a law enforcement officer responding who may not be trained in school climate issues and the effects of trauma on some students
- Decreased police response time to calls for service in and around impacted campuses
- Increase to operating budget to fund additional School Security Officers (SSO's) to help offset loss

Potential Security Solutions

1. **Option A:** Supplement the loss of five SRO's with five additional School Security Officers (SSO)
 - a. SSO's are employed and supervised by ACPS
 - b. Annual cost per contracted SSO is approximately **\$37,000**
 - i. Would recommend an initial one-for-one replacement effort during transition year by hiring five additional contracted SSO's. Estimated cost is **\$185,000**
 - ii. Would determine if additional SSO's would be required after assessing program performance during transition year
 - c. It is important to note that there are significant differences in the SRO vs SSO work program
 - i. SSO's are not armed
 - ii. SSO's are not law enforcement officers and their primary role and responsibility is to observe and report
2. **Option B:** Increase Safety & Security Services discretionary budget used for detailed police officers.
 - a. Detailed officers are primarily used for traffic control and work the perimeter of a school location (unless assigned to a special event).
 - b. Hourly rate for a detailed police officer is \$50 per hour. The schedule for this officer is primarily 8 AM - 4 PM, Monday- Friday
 - i. Estimated cost would be **~\$72,000/officer**
 - ii. Estimated cost for two detailed officers would be **~\$144,000**
 - c. This option would provide at least two officers dedicated to patrol the four impacted sites, as well as provide an additional layer of safety via daily random check-ins at all ACPS campuses. Additionally, these officers would be available to respond as-needed to our Elementary locations while on duty

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3. **Option C:** Combination of both Option A and Option B (ACPS Staff - Recommended Approach)
 - a. This option would allow for additional SSO's to provide supplemental safety coverage and for detailed officer support in frequently patrolling the exterior of facilities

Next Steps

1. Meet with APD leadership on revision of MOU
 - a. Meeting occurred on Jun 10, 2021
2. Creation of a revised MOU with APD. The revised MOU would include information on calls for service procedures and the continued use of Law Enforcement Occurrence Reporting Form. The goal is to complete a revised MOU draft by July 15, 2021.
3. Update to the Student Code of Conduct to include a new administrative process for responding to events that need police support. The goal is complete update by August 2021
 - a. This activity would be led by the Department of Student Services and Equity; the Office of Safety and Security Services will support as needed

Data Analysis

Given the short timeframe provided to ACPS to understand the impact of the removal of the SRO program, we are unable to provide a quantitative analysis to support the recommendations noted at this time. However, we have provided a qualitative analysis to summarize the potential implications of SRO removal.

BACKGROUND:

ACPS had a standing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Alexandria Police Department (APD) regarding the provision of School Resource Officers (SRO) at select locations and the management of the SRO program. On Monday, May 3, 2021, the Alexandria City Council voted to reallocate \$789,909 in funding from this program to mental health resources.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the board brief regarding our contingency plan recommendation to supplement the loss of the School Resource Officer (SRO) program due to the most recent vote of the City Council to defund our School Resource Officer program.

IMPACT:

Supplementing the SRO program with additional SSO's will provide some safety and security coverage and help deter potential safety issues in the absence of the SRO program.

CONTACT:

John Contreras, john.contreras@acps.k12.va.us
Dr. Alicia Hart, alicia.hart@acps.k12.va.us