



Foreword

SRO Performance Evaluation: A Guide to Getting Results captures the “lessons learned” from a 2-year pilot project by Circle Solutions Inc., funded by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office). Having spent several years building school-based partnerships and training School Resource Officers (SROs) for the COPS Office, we set out to create and test a process of performance evaluation for SROs that supports and furthers community policing in schools. Three principles guided our work. (1) SROs perform a distinctly different function for law enforcement agencies than do patrol officers/deputies or any other unit within the department. As such, the benchmarks used to assess and promote their success in the job must differ as well. (2) Holding SROs accountable for *results/outcomes* (e.g., reducing school-based crime and disorder problems) rather than *activities performed* (e.g., number of classroom presentations) leads to more effective policing and a reduction in school crime and disorder problems. (3) Involving customers in setting goals for the SROs allows the SROs to better understand the nature of and satisfy the expectations of their customers.

The process described in this guide was pilot tested with five law enforcement agencies and six schools across the country. They were:

- Boise (Idaho) Police Department at Capital High School
- Naperville (Illinois) Police Department at Neuqua Valley High School
- Port St. Lucie (Florida) Police Department at St. Lucie West Middle School
- Rochester (New York) Police Department at John Marshall High School and East High School
- St. Lucie County (Florida) Sheriffs’ Department at Forest Grove Middle School and St. Lucie West Middle School (St. Lucie County Sheriffs’ Department and the Port St. Lucie Police Department jointly serve St. Lucie West Middle School.)

These sites were selected to pilot this process because of their commitment to community policing, their commitment to the SRO program, and their diversity. These agencies and communities differ greatly in size, demographics, types of crime and disorder problems they face, labor union contracts, and SRO deployment strategy. Obtaining this diversity was important to be able to demonstrate that the performance evaluation process *can* be implemented by any law enforcement agency and school, regardless of size, the types of school-based crime and disorder problems, or how SROs are deployed. Even law enforcement agencies with strong labor unions supported this effort as a way to enhance SRO effectiveness.

The authors are grateful to these law enforcement agencies and schools for implementing this pilot project with us. Their contribution was truly extraordinary, and without them, this project would not have been possible. Contact information of key project staff is provided in Tool 15 of this guide.



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Introduction

SRO Performance Evaluation: A Guide to Getting Results is a step-by-step guide to help law enforcement and school personnel use SRO performance evaluation differently than they have in the past in an effort to better address school crime and disorder problems. This guide provides:

- A framework for understanding why outcome-based performance evaluation is important to law enforcement agencies, in general, and to SROs, in particular
- A rationale for asking SRO customers to provide input into the outcome-oriented goals for SROs
- A step-by-step strategy for implementing an outcome-oriented performance evaluation process for SROs
- Tools to help implement the outcome-oriented performance evaluation process

Is This Process for You?

- Does your department pride itself on being a community-oriented policing agency that partners with others and problem solves?
- Does the school and law enforcement agency want to more effectively identify and address the most critical school safety issues?
- Do you want to maximize the effectiveness of the SROs as role models, educators, school safety specialists, liaisons to community resources, law enforcers, and problem solvers?
- Are you willing to dedicate time and resources to collecting data and learning more about the school-based crime and disorder problems?
- Are you willing to revise your current SRO evaluation to reflect the unique environment in which SROs work?
- Are you more interested in whether your SROs are making the school safer than how busy they are, and therefore, are you willing to evaluate the SROs on what they accomplish?
- Would you like to give clear direction to your SROs about what they should be doing to reduce school-based crime and disorder problems?
- Would you like to work with SROs to revise their activities, if their activities are not producing results?
- Are you more interested in measuring the quality of your SROs' work than the quantity of your SROs' work?
- Do you want school personnel, parents, and students to better understand the SRO's roles in schools?
- Would you like to better understand the skills and knowledge required of SROs in order to recruit the right SROs and provide effective training for SROs?



What Is an Outcome-Oriented Performance Evaluation Process?

Outcome-oriented performance evaluation is a way for law enforcement personnel (command staff, labor union representatives, SROs, and SRO supervisors) and schools (school administrators, teachers, school staff, parents, and students) to better address school-based crime and disorder problems by:

- 1.** Identifying the most critical and/or frequent crime and disorder problems that need to be addressed by the SRO
- 2.** Assessing the SRO's performance based on *results/outcomes* (e.g., reducing school crime and disorder problems) rather than *activities performed* (e.g., how many classroom presentations the SRO conducted)
- 3.** Providing an opportunity to revise SRO activities if they are not producing the expected results/outcomes

What Will This Process Do?

The outcome-oriented performance evaluation process can:

- Help new SRO programs by providing clear guidance to SROs, school administrators, and SRO supervisors about the direction that programs should take
- Enhance existing SRO programs by focusing SRO activities on the most pressing school-based crime and disorder problems in a particular school and surrounding neighborhood
- Improve school staffs', parents', teachers', students', and other law enforcement officers' (customers of the SRO) understanding of what the SRO does on a daily basis and what he or she can and cannot affect with respect to school crime and disorder problems
- Enhance both the SRO's and customers' understanding of the actual nature of school crime and disorder problems in a particular school and surrounding neighborhood
- Provide a means of prioritizing the SRO's responsibilities and directing the SRO's proactive activities
- Improve, support, or replace much of the existing SRO performance evaluation system
- Provide a focus for SRO supervisors upon which to coach and mentor the SRO in order to improve performance
- Enhance community policing in schools by engaging the customers of the SRO in identifying their expectations and empowering the SRO to implement a variety of collaborative problem-solving activities to solve school crime and disorder problems



What Will This Process Not Do?

The outcome-oriented performance evaluation process is *not* designed to:

1. Produce prefabricated, standardized performance evaluation instruments that can be used for all SROs in all schools
2. Produce a set of goals, activities, and measures that all schools in a district can adopt and use as is
3. Provide a school district-wide plan for SROs

Which SROs Will Most Likely Demonstrate Success with This Process?

The type of SRO that will be most successful under this outcome-based performance evaluation process is one who:

- Embraces collaboration and is willing to initiate and maintain partnerships
- Is committed to having his or her customers, including students, provide input on the school safety goals
- Understands the problem-solving process and implements it
- Recognizes that school crime data can help him or her to better understand school crime and improve prevention and intervention approaches
- Applies critical thinking to the job
- Is self-motivated and proactive
- Is creative and resourceful
- Takes pride in getting results, rather than merely doing the job well
- Has long-term vision, willing to work toward goals that may take a year to be met
- Is an effective communicator

Assessing Readiness

The outcome-oriented performance evaluation process will not be embraced by all schools or by all law enforcement agencies. The potential benefits from the process are extensive, but the time and effort commitments required of SROs, SRO supervisors, and school personnel are not inconsequential. In fact, law enforcement agencies may be prudent to pilot this process in one school, prior to implementing it in all schools. Addressing the following needs will determine whether you are ready to implement the outcome-oriented performance evaluation process.

Is the Law Enforcement Agency Ready?

From the law enforcement agency you will need:

- Executive-level commitment to improving SRO performance evaluation under community policing, with full support and commitment to the process
- A project champion who understands the process and is willing and able to commit time to the project



- An SRO supervisor who has the skills and motivation for the process
- An SRO who is willing to receive customer input into his or her goals and activities, spotlight his or her successes, and improve upon shortcomings
- A labor union that understands and supports integrating results/outcome goals into SRO performance evaluation, rather than merely monitoring activities
- Willingness to collect, analyze, and share crime data with the school and school-based customers

Is the SRO Supervisor Ready?

The SRO supervisor should be prepared to:

- Participate in the customer meetings
- Accept customer input into the SRO's annual performance goals
- Ensure that the process progresses and is productive and constructive
- Mentor and guide the SRO to implement problem solving or other approaches that will produce an impact on specific crime and disorder problems
- Monitor and critique the SRO's activities
- Review school and police data
- Meet monthly or every 2 months with the SRO to assess progress
- Manage multiple projects simultaneously
- Intervene and help resolve conflicts between the SRO and school staff or other customers
- Incorporate the findings into the SRO's performance evaluation

Is the School Ready?

From the school you will need:

- School administrator's commitment to and interest in the process
- School administrator who understands the agreed-upon SRO role
- School administrator who is comfortable acknowledging the existence of school crime and disorder problems with parents, staff, students, and law enforcement and a willingness to address these problems
- School administration willingness to share school crime and disorder data with law enforcement, parents, school staff, and students
- School administration willingness to allow students and staff to participate in the process
- School records and data that are accurate and available for timely analysis

What Resources and Skills Are Needed?

The following resources and skills are important for members of the project team to have or obtain when carrying out this process:

- Organizational and planning skills
- A facilitator who can impartially lead discussion
- Basic research skills including sampling, survey design, and data collection and analysis
- Meeting location suitable for 8–15 people
- Resources such as flip-chart paper and refreshments for meetings



What Else Is Needed?

- **Willingness to partner.** All parties must share a willingness to partner with one another and share information. If there is a history of conflict between the law enforcement agency or SRO and the school, these issues must be addressed before starting the project. Furthermore, all parties must agree to establish procedures to handle confidential information.
- **Patience and motivation.** This process is a multi-year process and involves many stages. Results will appear over time, not overnight! In addition, due to the project time frame, continued motivation and commitment to the project will need to be maintained.