



# Fact Sheet

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## Secure Our Schools

*"We believe we can do a better job in educating our children in an environment that is as safe as possible."*

Superintendent Buster Evans  
Bleckley County (Georgia) School District

### Background

America's children spend more time in school than almost any other place outside the home. That places a huge responsibility on American schools and those charged with keeping them safe. In a time when a variety of weapons traffic illegally among America's youth, maintaining school safety becomes an increasingly difficult task. Classrooms no longer depend solely on teachers, but on teams of administrators, health care workers, security staff, and law enforcement professionals. Keeping America's children safe has become one of this nation's most successful collaborations, and it is a shining example of effective community policing.

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) has long demonstrated a commitment to school safety. The COPS Office has invested approximately \$912 million in America's schools through programs like Secure Our Schools (SOS), COPS in Schools, School-Based Partnerships, and the Safe Schools Initiative. In FY09, nearly \$16 million in SOS grant funding was awarded to 128 agencies to help schools in jurisdictions with high-risk areas respond to growing safety concerns.

### Grant Program Funding Provisions

A COPS Secure Our Schools grant provides funding to state, local, or tribal governments to assist with the development of school safety resources. This funding allows recipients the opportunity to establish and enhance a variety of school safety equipment and/or programs to encourage the continuation and enhancement of school safety efforts within their communities. The COPS Office is optimistic that this grant program will help place agencies at the forefront of innovative school safety developments. Funding under this program pays for such things as:

- Placement and use of metal detectors, locks, lighting, and other deterrent measures
- Security assessments
- Security training of personnel and students
- Coordination with local law enforcement
- Any other measure that may provide a significant improvement in security.

In FY09, all local, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies that have primary law enforcement authority within a partner primary or secondary school were eligible to apply for SOS. The grant is two years (24 months) in duration, and provides a maximum federal share of \$500,000. Agencies are required to contribute a local cash match of 50 percent towards the total cost of the approved grant project during the grant award period. The grantee agency must maintain records which clearly demonstrate the source of local matching funds, the amount of the match, and when the match is contributed. Funds previously budgeted for a law enforcement purpose may not be reallocated to provide local matching funds for the SOS program. Requests to waive the local match are not permitted under this program.

The COPS Office offers a variety of publications and products to advance community policing and support its grant programs. COPS Office publications and products offer insights into the experiences of others in the field in addressing specific problems, including the following:

- *School Safety Toolkit*, which includes documents and guides to help address issues often associated with school safety and youth violence
- *School Safety CD-ROM*
- *Traffic Congestion Around Schools POP Guide*
- *Addressing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide to Police Problem-Solvers*
- *COPS Collaboration Toolkit*
- *Implementing Responses to Problems*

COPS Office publications are posted at COPS Online at [www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov).

The COPS Office works with grantees to ensure that these funds address the most pressing security needs of young people while they are in school. SOS addresses a variety of existing and emerging problems relating to school security through responses that range from traditional to innovative and rely on both new technology and the experience of school administrators and law enforcement professionals. Law enforcement officers are encouraged to consult with school violence researchers, child psychologists, principals, and other school personnel to develop community policing programs to prevent school violence. These programs should be tailored specifically to improve each school's safety efforts.

### **Contact the COPS Office**

For more information about COPS Office school safety programs and resources, call the COPS Office Response Center at 800.421.6770, or visit COPS Online at [www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov).