Compiled by SchoolJusticePSD

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**School Justice PSD believes that law enforcement (SROs) should be removed from schools because:**

1) Students are in need of vital services for students, such as providing counselors and mental health workers.

2) Security can be provided by non-law enforcement entities at less expense with better outcomes.

3) Police presence in schools is harmful to our students and disproportionately impacts minoritized and disabled populations.

School Resource Officer (SRO) Pay and Activities During COVID School Closure: Overview and Key Points

10/19/2020

* **Students in Poudre School District (PSD) have not been in classes since March.**
* **PSD has continued to pay SROs this entire time.**
* **Fort Collins Police Services told SchoolJusticePSD that Poudre School District requested that 7 of the 14 SROs continue to be in the schools during COVID closure.**
  + **PSD told SchoolJusticePSD that Fort Collins Police Services suggested that 7 of the 14 SROs continue to be in schools during COVID closure.**
* **The tasks performed by SROs during school are either superfluous or need to be carried out by trained professionals.**
* **PSD is paying Fort Collins Police for work that should be paid out of the police budget, not the school budget. In June, PSD cut classified positions, including janitors (greatly needed during pandemic) and continued to pay police.**
* **PSD should protect the jobs of PSD employees, not the jobs of police.**

Overview: During the pandemic schools are closed and yet, PSD continues to pay for SROs.  The cost is approximately half of what they are paid when schools are open. The financial cost of SROs to the Poudre School District is troublesome, especially at a time where COVID related budget cuts are significant. The City of Fort Collins pays half, and PSD matches what the city pays. According to Tim Doran, of Fort Collins Police Services, this is the current projected expense for the city of Fort Collins, SROs, originally and during COVID. This does not include Larimer County or Timnath. As this cost is matched (not split) by the district, this is what PSD pays for SROs when schools are closed.[[1]](#footnote-0)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Original** | **Covid** |
|  | **Sgt** | 1 | 1 |
|  | **Corporal** | 2 | 1 |
|  | **Officer** | 11 | 5 |
| **2020** | **Jul-Sep** | $138,181 | $70,196 |
| **2020** | **Oct-Dec** | $253,332 | $128,693 |
| **2021** | **Jan-Mar** | $245,655 | $124,794 |
| **2021** | **Apr-Jun** | $207,272 | $105,295 |
|  | **Total** | **$844,440** | **$428,978[[2]](#footnote-1)** |

What is PSD paying police to do during school closures?

According to Fort Collins Police Chief Jeff Swoboda, during COVID school closures, SROs roles are:

* They are working in offices from closed schools or at the police department.
* They will be working in the community conducting investigations and/or follow-ups.
* They field “S[afe 2 Tell](https://safe2tell.org)” calls.
* They could be notified when students are arrested.[[3]](#footnote-2)

In addition to these formal “duties,”according to Fort Collins Police Service Instagram, SROs hand out laptops to students who are studying from home.[[4]](#footnote-3)

Key Points:

* Why is PSD paying police to work when schools are closed?
* COVID school closures have revealed the massive expense of SROs, and the ability we have as a community to demand that these tasks are performed by other professionals.
* Safe2Tell calls must be fielded by trained dispatchers and handled by the designated Safe2Tell team, not by SROs with nowhere to go can and should be fielded by non-enforcement professionals, such as counselors and social workers.
* Uniformed police officers do not need to hand out laptops.
* SROs should never be notified when students are arrested out of school. This leads to profiling and likely violates confidentiality.
* There is absolutely no reason why 7 SROs should be working during a time when schools are not open.
* The money spent on SROs when schools are closed could be better spent on meeting the needs of students during a global pandemic, like providing laptops, tutoring, meals for students, student health and mental health
* PSD needs to find ways to save money, not waste money paying for police while students are not in school

**PAYING COPS DURING COVID CLOSURES**

* The community was previously told that when schools are closed that PSD does not pay for SROs. We have learned that is not true.
* According to Chief Swoboda PSD is paying 7 out of 14 SROs when our schools are closed during Covid.
* The salary for 7 SROs we don’t need could buy laptops for students, protective gear for teachers, pay to clean and sanitize schools, pay social workers and tutors to students and families, etc.

**SROs must be eliminated and those funds must be redirected for these reasons:**

• While approximately 25% of the students in Poudre School District are students of color, nearly 50% of the students referred to law enforcement or disciplined in PSD are minoritized students. • While approximately 8% of children in PSD have an IEP (special education plan) they compose approximately 25% of children disciplined and 18% of law enforcement referrals.

• PSD spends nearly $1 million a year on police in schools.

• PSD does not have enough money for counselors and does not maintain the recommended student to counselor ratio.

• Law enforcement in schools does not increase school safety or prevent school shootings.

• An increase in mental health services for students does increase school safety.

• Money spent on SROs should be used instead for increasing the number of counselors, mental health services, and other necessary resources for students.

• SROs in schools lead to racial profiling of students.

• SROs in schools increase fear and mistrust among students of color.

• SROs result in violations of procedural and civil rights of students.

• SROs lead to the criminalization of students.

• SROs lead to more suspensions, expulsions, and legal actions against minoritized students.

• A law enforcement referral can cause students to lose their DACA, resulting in possible deportation of undocumented students.

• When police are in schools, administrators use law enforcement for discipline.

• Administrators in police free schools use more effective disciplinary practices, such as restorative justice.

**There are many alternatives to deploying SROs in schools that do not cause harm to students of color and instead result in healthier school communities.**

**COPS ON CAC**

* The Board of Education said that they wanted “robust” community input on the issue of SROs in schools, and wanted people to be able to safely share their experiences
* CAC was created in response to that request.
* PSD wants to put police on the committee.
* Students, parents and others can’t be honest about their experiences, feelings, and fears if police are on the committee.
* The experiences and feelings are not relevant to this discussion.
* PSD staff is setting up the CAC as a mediation between police and students, this does not meet the mandate of the Board.
* The CAC needs to have no members of law enforcement, or there needs to be a different method of meeting the mandate of the Board.

**PLAINCLOTHES SROs**

* PSD is suggesting that tensions would be eased if SRO’s don’t wear uniforms.
* The absence of uniforms will confuse students and they won’t know they are talking to someone who could arrest them or give them a ticket.
* Students could disclose to law enforcement information that should not be disclosed to law enforcement.
* Students need to be educated about their constitutional rights including the right to remain silent and the right to have a parent present during questioning. Not knowing who is law enforcement will prevent students from exercising those rights.
* One current problem of SROs is that they frequently violate the due process and constitutional rights of students, for example by not giving students Miranda rights. This will worsen with plain clothes SROs.

**Training of SRO’s**

* SRO’s are required to take these classes: <https://www.fcgov.com/police/transparency>

This is nothing compared to what mental health professionals get to go through. As changes keep coming to us, our students, youth and schools will need more resources to be successful.

**COVID-19 and 2020-2021 School Year (Beginning to look at and present alternatives)**

* Currently, Larimer County is sitting in the red (high risk) of getting COVID-19
* We are experiences a spike in cases
* Only ⅕ of Colorado’s population has been tested so far, which means we are not done yet [[5]](#footnote-4)
* As more and more students and families suffer mentally and financially, now is the time to focus on allocating resources to those in need
* DPS (Denver Public Schools) is phasing out 17 SRO’s this school year
* PSD is attempting to hold on to 7 SRO’s
* PSD does not need to hold onto the past, they need to be in the present and help our students and families in need.
* Students want to feel safe coming back to school. With *friends and teachers*, not with police.
* PSD needs to be able to offer free COVID testing for its teachers and counselors to better prepare them to be successful and to stay healthy

1. These are the costs for the Fort Collins SROs only.  If Timnath and Larimer Sheriff SROs are paid also the costs to PSD could be higher. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Source, Tim Doran, Fort Collins Police Services [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Source, Jeff Swodoba, Fort Collins Police Chief [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Source, Fort Collins Police Services twitter [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. <https://www.larimer.org/health/communicable-disease/coronavirus-covid-19/larimer-county-positive-covid-19-numbers> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)