MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

School Resource Officer (SRO)
&
School Security Employee (SSE)
Training Academy

MCSS

schoolsafety.maryland.gov
410-281-2335

The Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) is the State's leading organization specializing in school safety. Our team's diverse experience in school safety, law enforcement, emergency management, and education allows us to develop unique approaches to school safety. The MCSS collaborates with experts in the field of school safety and education to develop tailored programs that provide ongoing training, support, and guidance, making the center the foremost provider of high-quality training for School Resource Officers (SROs) and School Security Employees (SSEs) in Maryland.

The MCSS SRO/SSE Training Academy aims to equip SROs and SSEs with the knowledge and skills they need to maintain safe and supportive learning environments in Maryland's public schools. Through education and training, the Academy helps schools and school systems foster inclusive educational environments that are free from fear, harm, trauma, and unnecessary hardship.

MCSS appreciates the support and expertise of our State partners in the development and delivery of Maryland's first-ever standardized training for SROs and SSEs. We are grateful to the Department of Disabilities, Department of State Police, Department of Health, Department of Education, Department of Emergency Management, the Office of the Attorney General, and our subject matter experts from across the State.

Background

The Safe to Learn Act of 2018 mandated the creation of a specialized training curriculum for SROs and SSEs.[1] After the enactment of the Safe to Learn Act, MCSS collaborated with subject matter experts from across the State to develop the instructional curriculum. Once the content was finalized, the training workgroup began developing the training objectives and delivery materials. In the spring of 2019, the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC) certified the SRO/SSE training program. MCSS then began the task of training SROs and SSEs assigned to public schools throughout Maryland.

The MPTSC requires recertification of all law enforcement training programs every three years. In 2021, MCSS expanded and deepened the training program during the recertification process. MCSS again updated the program with current school safety topics during the 2025 recertification.

To date, MCSS has trained over 1,800 SROs and SSEs in the State of Maryland.

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[1] *See* Ed. Art. §7–1508(b)(4-5), COMAR 14.40.04

The Safe to Learn Act (2018) required the standardized training to include topics on **de-escalation, maintaining a positive school climate, constructive interactions with students, implicit bias, and disability and diversity awareness, with specific attention to racial and ethnic disparities**. Ed. Art. §7–1508(b)(1)(ii). These classes are identified with an asterisk.

SRO/SSE Training Academy Topics

Adolescent Development and Behavior

Disability & Diversity Awareness*

Content Development Experts: Content Development Experts: Dr. Christa Kulp, Ph.D., NCSP, Anne Arundel County Public Schools

Description: This course assists SROs/SSEs with understanding, sensitivity, and effective communication strategies when engaging with diverse student populations, including those with disabilities. This module defines important terms like disability, diversity, inclusiveness, and cultural fluency while exploring how individuals with disabilities may experience discrimination in various fields, including education, health care, employment, economic, and justice.

Normative Adolescent Behaviors

Content Development Experts: Dr. Christa Kulp, Ph.D., NCSP, Anne Arundel County Public Schools

Description: Most adolescents establish a level of independence and self-sufficiency that is marked by individuating from their family members and beginning the important process of transferring dependencies from parental to peer relationships. In this module, the trainee develops a knowledge base of normative adolescent behavior, an understanding of the importance of strong partnerships, effective lines of communication, and the clearly delineated roles and responsibilities of school resource officers and school security employees. The trainees establish a framework for principled conversation and decision-making to mediate and create a positive and engaging school climate while learning about alternatives to arrest when managing adolescent behavior safely and effectively within the school setting.

Trauma-Informed Interventions

Content Development Experts: Courtnay Hatcher, EdS, NCSP, BCBA, Frederick County Public Schools; Tina Dove, M.Ed., Maryland State Education Association; Timmeka Perkins M.S, Advocate for Safer Communities and Thriving People; Jeneen Stewart Ed.S, Frederick County Public Schools; Kathleen Rockefeller J.D, School Climate Specialist at Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Marcie Gibbons, LCSW-C, Anne Arundel Mental Health Agency

Description: This interactive presentation reviews the definition of trauma-informed care and strategies to support students and school communities. Through a lens of typical adolescence and the ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences Study), strategies are evaluated and provided for trauma-informed approaches for students and members of the school community. The impact of trauma across the child's developmental periods are evaluated. The impact of trauma and trauma-informed strategies within the classroom and school community are analyzed and reviewed in effort to create an engaged school community of care, empathy and safety.

Understanding Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

Content Development Experts: Shelly McLaughlin, Program Director, Pathfinders for Autism; Neal Lichter, Program Director, Pathfinders for Autism; Jenn Lynn, Empowering Autism Caregivers, LLC

Description: MCSS expands upon mandated police officers' training to make it applicable to both SROs and SSEs who have the potential to spend a great deal of time each day with persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities. In this module, trainees identify the procedures that they should/may employ when encountering a student with an intellectual/developmental disability, the risk factors for wandering and elopement and strategies for searching for a missing student with an intellectual/developmental disability, and de-escalation strategies that an SRO/SSE should follow to ensure the safety and calmness of a student with an intellectual or developmental disability. Trainees must also demonstrate communication techniques required to effectively interact with a student with an intellectual/developmental disability, understand the impact sensory issues may have on a student, and describe how to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act when encountering a student with an intellectual/developmental disability.

Youth Development

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Youth development refers to the process of growth and maturation that young people undergo physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially as they transition from childhood to adulthood. It encompasses a range of experiences, opportunities, and influences that shape individuals during their adolescent years. This module details the seven (7) developmental domains, cultures, and sub-cultures relevant to youth in schools, distinguishing between risk factors, strengths along with worldviews youth might hold, identification of prosocial behaviors to replace antisocial behaviors, the difference between school discipline matters vs criminal matters, and use of conflict de-escalation techniques.

Building Positive Relationships

Constructive Interactions with Students*

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: The modern-day SRO/SSE has the opportunity to impact youth in many different ways. This course explains the role of the SRO as a coach, mentor, and educator and how these supportive roles can be used to build relationships with students while maintaining professional boundaries.

Implicit Bias*

Content Development Experts: George Stephens, Montgomery County Police Officer, Retired. Maryland DARE Regional Coordinator and DARE Mentor. Fair and Impartial Policing Certified Instructor.

Description: This block of instruction is designed to make us aware of our biases and those of others. Participants will learn that biases are not negative but a part of human existence. This course explores how unconscious attitudes and stereotypes can influence perceptions and actions, and how biases can affect our professional performance even with no negative intent. Through reflective activities, real-world examples, and guided discussions, SROs and SSEs will learn how to identify their biases, reduce their effects, and build stronger relationships with students from diverse backgrounds. Participants will also discuss strategies to mitigate the negative impact of biases within the school setting.

Maintaining a Positive School Climate*

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Schools that prioritize creating a positive and supportive environment tend to witness improved academic outcomes, stronger community relationships, and overall enhanced well-being for everyone involved. This course discusses the difference in promotion and prevention mindsets, as well as defines the creation and maintenance of a positive school climate.

Multicultural and Generational Differences

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

This class is designed to prepare SROs and SSEs to engage effectively with the increasingly diverse student populations they serve. Participants will explore the impact of cultural backgrounds, generational identities, and social norms on student behavior, communication styles, and perceptions of authority. The course emphasizes building cultural competence, improving communication, and fostering trust with students, families, and school staff from varied backgrounds.

Official Interactions with Juveniles

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Interactions between SROs, SSEs, and juveniles in a school setting involve various considerations to ensure safety, support, and appropriate handling of situations. This module covers the differences between school discipline and criminal behavior. Real-world scenarios will be discussed, emphasizing the importance of using discretion and showing SROs and SSEs the importance of fairness and discretion in all situations.

Restorative Approaches in Schools – What, Why, How

Content Development Experts: Nancy Schertzing, MS Director, Restorative Approaches in Education, The Center for Dispute Resolution, University of Maryland, Francis King Carey School of Law.

Description: Restorative Approaches are an approach to school climate and discipline that builds community, fosters relationships, and empowers students to make things right when they cause harm. In this interactive session, participants will understand the restorative foundation and gain practical working knowledge of restorative approaches, including: identifying at least three core values of restorative theory and three goals of using restorative approaches in schools; identifying several restorative approaches used in Maryland schools; listing two goals of restorative approaches that are also goals of community policing; and recognizing three strategies for minimizing the effects of trauma when working with students.

Education and Prevention Programs

Bullying in Schools

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Bullying refers to aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated, and involves a power imbalance between the person who bullies and the individual being bullied. This instruction block equips the participants with the knowledge and strategies to effectively identify, prevent, and respond to bullying in school environments. Participants will explore the different forms of bullying and learn how to distinguish bullying from other types of peer conflict and hate bias issues. It emphasizes early intervention, collaboration with school staff, and the roles of the SROs and SSEs in creating a safe and supportive environment for all students.

Current Trends

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Social media, Apps, and trends are constantly changing. This module details new and current trends in popular youth culture. This module is constantly being updated and made relevant regarding youth trends.

Dangers of Devices

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: With each new technology comes concerns about its potential impact on the well-being of our youth. In recent years, scholars and the public have voiced concerns about the rise of digital technology, focusing on smartphones and social media. This module provides an overview of digital devices, internet technology, and social media use related to adolescent well-being.

Drug Trends in Maryland Schools

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: The drug culture in schools is continually evolving, influenced by various factors such as societal changes, advancements in technology, popular culture, and the availability of new substances. Understanding the ever-changing nature of drug culture in schools requires awareness of current trends, emerging substances, and shifts in student behaviors regarding drug use. This module discusses current trends in controlled dangerous substance usage in schools, signs of addiction/overdose, educational efforts, and "wraparound" services available throughout the State.

Human Trafficking in Schools

Content Development Experts: Candace Parrott, Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Public Awareness Co-Chair, Araminta, Chief Engagement Officer, Fresh Waters Executive Director.

Description: This class is designed to equip SROs and SSEs with the knowledge and strategies to identify, prevent, and respond to human trafficking within school communities. Participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of the signs and dynamics of trafficking, including how traffickers target and recruit youth, and strategies for supporting and protecting at-risk students. The class includes real-world case studies from Maryland and practical resources to assist participants in enhancing safety in their daily roles.

Managing Gangs in Schools

Content Development Experts: Michael Rudinski, Safety and Security Manager, Howard County Public Schools

Description: Gang activity in schools can pose serious challenges to students' safety, well-being, and learning environment. Understanding and addressing gang-related issues within educational settings is crucial for maintaining a secure and supportive school environment. This module discusses gang activity by region within the State, signs within schools, and documentation of gang activity.

Safe Schools Maryland Training

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: A safe schools tip line is a confidential reporting system designed to allow students, parents, teachers, and community members to report concerns about safety, bullying, harassment, or any other potentially harmful or threatening behavior occurring within a school environment. It provides a platform for individuals to share information anonymously or confidentially, ensuring they feel secure in reporting sensitive or worrisome situations without fear of retaliation. This module educates the SRO/SSE on the Safe Schools Maryland anonymous reporting system.

Victimization of Youth in Schools

Content Development Experts: Kelly Truax, RN, Community Outreach Coordinator, Greater Baltimore Medical Center; Laura Clary, MSN, RN, Fne-A/P, Sane A, Greater Baltimore Medical Center

Description: Victimization of youth is a significant concern that encompasses various forms of abuse, exploitation, or mistreatment experienced by individuals under the age of 18. This victimization can occur in multiple settings, including homes, schools, communities, and online spaces. This course provides the SRO/SSE with essential details regarding how to recognize the victimization of youth, abuse/neglect investigations, and relevant Maryland statutes and Code of Maryland Regulations about child protection.

Legal Foundations

Maryland School Law

Content Development Experts: Attorney General's Office

Description: School law, also known as education law, encompasses the legal framework that governs educational institutions, their administration, policies, and the rights and responsibilities of students, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders within the educational system. Understanding the importance of school law is crucial for maintaining order, ensuring fairness, protecting rights, and promoting a conducive learning environment within schools. This module provides a review of the Maryland Education Article, Code of Maryland Regulations, and Constitutional law. HIPAA and FERPA are reviewed, as well as the exceptions for information sharing.

School Safety and Emergency Management

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a multi-disciplinary approach to crime prevention that uses urban and architectural design and the management of built and natural environments. CPTED strategies aim to reduce victimization, deter offender decisions that precede criminal acts, and build a sense of community among inhabitants so that they can gain territorial control of areas, reduce crime, and minimize fear of crime. This module trains SROs and SSEs to guide their assigned schools in creating better plans. Amongst other learning outcomes, trainees learn to recognize examples of strategies that can be employed to improve or maintain the ability of a facility or environment to prevent crime.

De-Escalation and Crisis Intervention for SROs and SSEs*

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: This course is designed to provide SROs and SSEs with tools and techniques to help them safely de-escalate conflicts and tense situations within school settings. Emphasizing communication, emotional intelligence, and student-centered approaches, the training focuses on reducing the need for physical intervention while maintaining safety and order and preventing a crisis from evolving into a tragedy.

Pathways to Violence

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: The focus of this course is to equip SROs and SSEs with the knowledge and tools to recognize and interrupt the progression toward violence in school environments. Participants will explore the concept of the "Pathway to Violence". The students will examine how personal, social, and psychological factors can lead individuals, especially youth, toward aggressive or violent behavior. The training emphasizes early identification, behavioral warning signs, and the importance of intervention strategies grounded in relationship-building and threat assessment. This class will lead into the School Threat Assessment team's training.

School Behavioral Threat Assessment Teams

Content Development Experts: Dr. Kellie Anderson, NCSP, Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Dr. Christa Kulp, Ph.D., NCSP, Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Local Education Agency (LEA) Behavioral Health Coordinators

Description: School Behavioral Threat Assessment Teams are crucial in ensuring the safety and well-being of students, staff, and the school community. These teams are designed to proactively assess, manage, and respond to potential threats or concerning behaviors exhibited by students. This module covers the definition of a School Behavioral Threat Assessment team, options available to an SRO to mitigate an identified threat to a school campus, reporting requirements, and information sharing with the MCSS.

School Emergency Planning

Content Development Experts: Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) staff

Description: A school emergency plan typically covers the development, implementation, and execution of protocols and procedures to ensure the safety and security of students, staff, and faculty during various emergencies. This module explains the four phases of an emergency: preparation, response, recovery, and resiliency, as well as preparation methods to mitigate an active assailant incident.

Tabletop Exercises (TTX) Schools

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Tabletop exercises are critical in enhancing school safety and emergency preparedness. This class is designed to provide SROs and SSEs with an overview of how these scenario-based discussions help schools and safety personnel identify gaps, improve coordination, and strengthen crisis response plans. In class, participants will engage in a real-world scenario to practice approaches to enhance school safety discussions.

Special Topics

Self-Care for SROs and SSEs

Content Development Experts: Mike McDermott, NYPD (Ret.), Vice-President, Director of Law Enforcement National Relations at Harbor of Grace Enhanced Recovery Center, National Law Enforcement & First Responder Wellness.

This course stresses the importance of self-care for SROs and SSEs who navigate high-stress environments and demanding responsibilities. The course is an overview of the wellness pillars and ways to incorporate small changes to improve the quality of one's daily life. Small changes can yield big payoffs for every attendee who employs these changes and develops a well-rounded wellness concept.