

February 2024

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

School Resource Officer (SRO) and School Security Employee (SSE)

Training Academy



schoolsafety.maryland.gov
410-281-2335

The Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) is a leading organization in the state of Maryland that specializes in school safety. Our team includes individuals with diverse experience in school safety, including law enforcement, emergency management, and education. We have a unique approach to ensuring that schools are safe places for students and staff. By collaborating with experts in the field of school safety and education, the center has developed tailored programs that provide ongoing training, support, and guidance. This approach positions the center as the prime vehicle for delivering high-quality training to School Resource Officers (SROs) in the state of Maryland.

The MCSS School Resource Officers/School Security Employees (SRO/SSE) Training Academy aims to equip individuals serving in these roles within Maryland public schools with the necessary knowledge and skills to maintain a safe and supportive learning environment. The SRO/SSE Training Academy strives to equip SROs and SSEs with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively and efficiently perform their duties through education and training. In doing so, it helps schools and school systems cultivate inclusive educational environments that are safe, secure, and free from fear, harm, trauma, and unnecessary hardship.

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

Background

The Safe to Learn Act of 2018 mandated the development of a specialized curriculum to train SROs and SSEs.¹ Following the enactment of the Safe to Learn Act, MCSS engaged subject matter experts from various parts of the State to design the instruction curriculum. Once the content was finalized, the training workgroup began the development of the training objectives and delivery materials. During the spring of 2019, the SRO/SSE training program was certified by the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC). Following this, MCSS initiated the challenging task of training SROs and SSEs assigned to public schools throughout Maryland.

MPCTC requires all law enforcement training programs to be recertified every three years. Therefore, in 2021 MCSS used the recertification process as an opportunity to expand the training program with new and much-needed modules and give deeper training on some existing modules.

To date, MCSS has trained over 1,600 SROs and SSEs in the State of Maryland.

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

SRO/SSE Training Academy Topics

Mandated²

De-Escalation

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Implementing de-escalation techniques in a school environment is crucial to equip SROs/SSEs with the skills necessary to effectively manage and resolve conflicts or potentially volatile situations while prioritizing the safety and well-being of students and staff. The course focuses on training SROs with de-escalation strategies customized for school settings. Additionally, it delves into differentiating between school discipline matters versus criminal matters and using conflict de-escalation techniques.

Disability & Diversity Awareness

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; Presented by: Courtnay Hatcher, EdS, NCSP, BCBA, Frederick County Public Schools

Description: This course emphasizes 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.

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, defines creation and maintenance of a positive environment.

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.

² The Safe to Learn Act (2018) required the standardized training to include topics on de-escalation; disability awareness; maintaining a positive school climate; constructive interactions with students; and implicit bias and disability and diversity awareness with specific attention to racial and ethnic disparities. Ed. Art. §7-1508(b)(1)(ii).

Implicit Bias

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Implicit bias refers to the attitudes, stereotypes, or beliefs that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases are often unintentional and automatic, influencing our perceptions and behaviors toward certain individuals or groups without our awareness. This module explores implicit bias and explains how understanding it can create a better relationship and atmosphere between students and their SRO and SSE.

Working in a School

Getting into the Classroom

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: SRO/SSEs play a unique role in schools, not just in ensuring safety and security but also in fostering positive relationships with students and providing educational support. This course covers the creation of effective programs and/or use of available programs related to the importance of law related education of students for safe decision-making choices. The aim is to enhance their ability to connect with students and contribute positively to the learning environment.

Principles of Effective Learning

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Understanding how learning styles delve into the diverse ways individuals acquire, process, and retain information is extremely important in the school environment. This module explores the significance of recognizing various learning styles to create inclusive and effective educational environments. It also identifies the eight principles of learning and the styles of learning and how they relate to law-related education for SROs and SSEs.

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.

Working Collaboratively with the School Administration

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Partnerships and working together are key ingredients in helping students be successful. This course covers the importance of a positive working relationship with school staff, understanding of chains of command from each entity, the importance of frequent meetings within the education environment, and documentation requirements of each entity.

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.

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.

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

Description: Trauma-informed interventions in school systems focus on understanding the impact of trauma on students and developing strategies to create supportive environments that address their needs. This module explores the recognition of behaviors of concern, the use of Behavioral Threat Assessment Teams to access issues, the understanding of the impact of traumatic experiences on youth and how not to re-victimize an individual, and the four essentials of Trauma Informed Care.

Informal Counselor

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Informal counselors play a significant role in the overall well-being and support system within a school setting. In this module, SRO/SSEs will discuss identifying characteristics, strategies, roles, and responsibilities of being an informal counselor and how to advance the concept of conflict resolution.

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 important details regarding how to recognize the victimization of youth, abuse/neglect investigations, and relevant Maryland statutes and Code of Maryland Regulations about child protection.

Official Interactions with Juveniles

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Interactions between SRO/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. It also explores the requirements for an LEO to conduct an interview, when an interview becomes an interrogation and use of Miranda, understanding of “Non-negotiables” for the arrest of anyone 14 years of age and older, and avoiding “embarrassment” of a student being taken into custody.

Restorative Approaches in Schools – What, Why, How

Content Development Experts: Courtney 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

Description: Restorative practices promote inclusiveness, relationship-building, and problem-solving. This expanded module ensures trainees gain more than simply an overview and instead gain a practical working knowledge of restorative approaches. Trainees identify at least three core values of restorative theory and three goals of using restorative approaches in schools. Trainees also identify several restorative approaches that are being used in Maryland schools and list two goals of restorative approaches that are also goals of community policing, one of which is in reference to youth programming. The trainee also recognizes three strategies for minimizing the effects of generational harm when working with students.

Investigation of Bullying

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. It can

take various forms, including physical, verbal, social, and cyberbullying. Bullying often occurs repeatedly over time, causing harm, distress, and an imbalance of power. This course identifies the characteristics of bullying, harassment, intimidation, social media misuse, the effects of victimization, and possible suicidal/homicidal implications on bullied individuals. It analyzes strategies and investigative techniques used in prevention and provides an overview of the Maryland State Department of Education's online reporting forms and how to utilize them.

Legal Requirements

SRO Definition and History

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: The School Resource Officer position is important within the school and community. This course defines the term "School Resource Officer," the roles the SRO assumes within a school (Mentor/Educator/Law Enforcement Officer (LEO)/Emergency Manager), as well as the history of SROs within the State of Maryland.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: An MOU is an important and sometimes overlooked document that is vital in assigning an SRO in a school system. This course provides an understanding of the importance of an MOU between the Law Enforcement Agency and the School System. It includes the key elements of an MOU, including the sharing of juvenile information in the State of Maryland.

Hate Bias and Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement Officers

Content Development Experts: Attorney General's Office

Description: Hate bias and hate crimes are serious social issues that involve prejudice, discrimination, and violence targeted against individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other factors. Understanding these concepts is crucial for addressing and combating these harmful behaviors effectively. This course identifies the definition of hate speech and why it is protected, the differences between hate bias and hate crimes, and summarizes state and federal laws related to hate crimes.

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. HIPPA and FERPA are reviewed, as well as the exceptions to each for information sharing.

Prevention

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.

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 that they feel secure in reporting sensitive or worrisome situations without fear of retaliation. This module educates the SRO/SSE all about the Safe Schools Maryland anonymous reporting system.

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 entire 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.

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.

Drug Education and Current Trends

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, educative efforts, and “wraparound” services available throughout the State.

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.

Managing Gangs in Schools

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

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 are 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.

Preparedness and Response

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 emergency situations. 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.

Crisis Intervention

Content Development Experts: MCSS Staff

Description: Crisis intervention is a short-term management technique designed to reduce potential permanent damage to an individual affected by a crisis. Utilizing such methods can help restore one’s mental state and prevent any psychological trauma immediately following a crisis. SROs and SSEs must be able to assess the mental health of those with whom they interact and respond appropriately. In this module, the trainee learns how to identify common youth mental health issues such as depression, anxiety disorders, trauma, psychosis, and substance abuse and how to respond to panic attacks, suicidal thoughts or behaviors, non-suicidal self-injury, acute psychosis, overdose, or withdrawal. Trainees learn how to use pre-booked responses to divert individuals with mental illness and how to identify their local mental health resources, policies, and procedures.