



Legislation Text

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Report regarding the status of the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of South San Francisco and the South San Francisco Unified School District. (*Scott Campbell, Chief of Police*)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council receive a report on the status of the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of South San Francisco and the South San Francisco Unified School District and provide feedback and direction.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

As described in the SSFPD-SSFUSD Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) pertaining to the School Liaison Officer (SLO) Program, an annual review will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, and whether the parameters of the MOU are being followed. Pursuant to the MOU, the first annual report was to be completed in March 2023. Factors included in the annual report include:

1. Success of established program goals and objectives.
2. An appraisal of areas with opportunities for improvement.
3. Aggregated data regarding why the police were called to campus, who called them, demographic data on the students and other people with whom the police interacted, and outcomes (including arrests, citations, and other relevant data).
4. A summary of the student arrests and citations by gender, race/ethnicity, and any other relevant data.

I. Achievement of the Goals and Objectives of the SLO Program

A. Protect the constitutional and civil rights of students.

All SSFPD officers are entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the constitutional and civil rights of all individuals, but particularly the students in our school district.

B. Maintain a safe and secure environment on school campuses which will be conducive to learning.

All SSFPD officers are expected to maintain safe and secure school campuses. Officers receive ongoing training regarding Active Killer and Critical Incident Responses, Crisis Intervention and De-escalation, Behavioral Intervention, and Procedural Justice. SLOs receive additional training specific to Cyber Incidents, Student Threat Assessment and Suicide Prevention, Vulnerability Assessments of School Facilities, and addressing the needs of students with Disabilities, and Mental Health Issues.

C. Establish a positive working partnership.

SLOs actively seek out opportunities to meet with school site and District administrators, as well as

certificated and classified employees to maintain positive working partnerships that help facilitate the effective handling of school incidents that involve the police department. Based on the positive partnerships that have been developed and maintained, numerous school site and District administrators consistently reach out to the SLOs for advice and to share information relevant to the safety and wellbeing of the students and staff.

The SLOs adopted a new uniform that is noticeably different than the uniform worn by patrol officers. The new uniform consists of a black polo shirt and khaki pants. The utility belt worn the SLOs is made of black nylon that is designed to be less noticeable. The new uniform gives the SLOs a more relaxed, and significantly less imposing appearance, while still affording officers the protection and access to safety equipment they may need. The new uniforms appear to have been well-received by students and school staff/administrators.

- D. SSFPD desires to promote positive attitudes regarding the role of the police in society through non-punitive, alliance-building interactions with students and staff, and will seek the District's partnership and input of District administrators in creating such opportunities.

The SLOs and other SSFPD officers have been called upon to assist with, and participate in, a variety of school activities over the past year. These events include Red Ribbon Week, Every Kid Deserves a Bike, Folklorico Dance Show, Halloween Trunk or Treat, and the Ruby Bridges Walk-to-School Day. The fact that officers have been invited to these events demonstrates the strength of the positive partnerships that exist between the District and the police department, particularly the SLOs. The presence of officers at these events appears to have been well-received by the students and their families. In fact, one elementary school conducted a survey of parents regarding traffic in front of the school, and several responses requested additional police presence to help ensure the safety of the students and to facilitate the smooth flow of traffic before and after school hours.

- E. Conduct criminal investigations.

The police department has always, and will continue to, conduct criminal investigations involving students and/or staff whenever necessary and appropriate. The goal of such investigations is to ensure the rights and well-being of all involved parties are protected using the least restrictive and imposing methods possible.

- F. Refer student cases to restorative justice alternatives/programs and court diversion to the greatest extent possible prior to relying on the court or penal system.

Whenever possible and appropriate (given the nature of the incident), incidents involving students are handled administratively by the school site or District. The SLOs serve as a resource and allow administrators to determine the most effective and least restrictive resolution.

- G. Ensure that all SSFPD officers understand the needs, strengths, and challenges of various student groups based on race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, religion, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, age, cultural group, immigration status, or affiliation with any other similar identifiable group.

All officers, but particularly SLOs, complete ongoing training regarding Bias-Free Policing, Anti-Discrimination, Behavioral Intervention, Crisis Intervention, Suicide Prevention, and Handling Incidents Involving Individuals with Disabilities and Mental Illness. The police department does not, nor has it ever, allowed officers to inquire about an individual's immigration status for any reason.

II. Aggregated Data for Police Calls on Campus

A. Calls for Service (August to December 2022)

368

Approximately 12% of the calls were initiated by officers. Those were either follow-up investigations, officer-initiated foot patrols, or officer-initiated Adopt-a-School visits.

The majority of calls were initiated by either District employees, student parents, alarm companies, passersby, or other non-school-related individuals.

The highest number of calls for service were 911 hang-ups and burglary alarms. The third highest number were calls, texts, and email requests from school administrators seeking advice or guidance from the SLOs.

Of the 368 calls for service, the majority came from South San Francisco High School (22.8%), El Camino High School (14.9%), and Alta Loma Middle School (12.2%).

B. Arrests

No school-related arrests of students or District staff were made during this reporting period.

C. Citations

No school-related citations were issued to students or District staff during this reporting period.

III. Opportunities for Improvement

After the first year of evaluation, no areas in need of improvement have been identified or brought to the attention of the police department. An internal review of the SLO program shows that the parameters of the MOU are being strictly adhered to, and that the SLO program continues to be an effective way to address school-related incidents and maintain positive relationships with our school community.

The MOU allows for the District to conduct an internal survey of school administration, staff, and student representatives who have had interactions with law enforcement officers on campus. The police department is unaware of a survey having been conducted but is open and receptive to any feedback such a survey yields.

IV. Recommendations

After consultation with SSFUSD Administration Staff, it was mutually agreed that the annual MOU report should be made in September rather than March of each year to capture information more accurately for an entire school year. This would make the next annual report due in September 2024.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no known fiscal impact to the City's General Fund.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This MOU meets strategic planning objective 3.0 Public Safety: providing skilled police, emergency service medical service and emergency management.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this report, the police department recommends continuing the School Liaison Officer Program for another year. The goals and objectives of the MOU have been met, and the program appears to be well-received by students, District staff, and parents.

The high number of calls for service shows a need for having officers dedicated to our school community. Arrests were minimal, and the majority of criminal investigations conducted were handled administratively by the District instead of being referred to the criminal justice system. The SLOs have built and maintained a positive partnership with the District as evidenced by their invited participation in a number of school functions and events. In addition, the SLOs have specific and unique training that helps them to better serve our students while keeping the school environment safe, inclusive, and conducive to learning.

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