



# The Case to Defund the Sonoma Valley SRO Program

And Refund Students with More  
Counseling and Trauma Based  
Interventions

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# Topics

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- II. Law Enforcement Anecdotes vs Data  
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# I. SVHS Anonymous Student Survey RESULTS

## December 2020

- 57.5% have interacted with an SRO
- 52.8% did not feel safe when interacting with an SRO
- 74.4% reported witnessing the SRO engaging in ways that made them feel uncomfortable
- 48.7% take care of siblings at home during distance learning
- 90% are uncomfortable with an SRO coming to their home if they do not attend a distance learning class
- 72.5% would feel more comfortable if a counselor dealt with that issue
- 64.1% reported circumstances that impede them from attending distance learning effectively.

# SVHS Anonymous Student Survey Example Statements

## December 2020

- My friends would be subject to random searches and harassment regularly, which affected their ability to respect authority and enjoy going to school. If you constantly tell a kid that they're predisposed to trouble, it manifests and their motivation for school diminishes. We could have benefitted from counseling more than anything but there was 4 counselors at the time. They were also not attentive about mental health/personal problems we may have been dealing with.
- Some of them get way to close to students, I get there are friendly relationships but it seems unprofessional to me
- Following Hispanic students
- I personally haven't seen any negative behavior but I'm certain the cops aren't saints
- Intimidation tactics, especially towards students of color.
- A brother and sister got into a fight at home and the brother came to school to talk about it and the sister ended up in handcuffs at school because she was 18
- I'm always wary of officers. I can't really trust their actions
- Brutality/ over excessive force
- Invest in STUDENT education and well-being. We need more social workers and other mental health professionals that will ACTUALLY make a positive impact for struggling students.
- I have disabilities and sometimes with anxiety its hard to answer questions under pressure. The police make me feel like I'm under pressure right away. Its scary honestly
- Multiple students cited mental health, physical issues, lack of internet access, lack of quiet space as barriers to distance learning. Additionally fear of reaching out for help and being treated differently.

# SVHS Anonymous Student Survey Example Statements

## December 2020

- The group of peers I hung out with were predominantly Mexican. Officer Regan targeted our group frequently for being suspicious of drug or gang activity, even without reason. I did well academically but because of who I hung out with, I was associated with “trouble”. One of my escapes from family and personal issues has always been art. I remember begging my mom to buy me a pack of good markers. Shortly after I was searched and they got thrown away because it was assumed I would be vandalizing.
- I never really hear anything, nothing is promoted to the younger and more diverse generation of students, and I just do not trust because I don’t even know who they are and what they do.
- It makes me feel like there’s something wrong happening, they don’t really seem to help with much.
- During a moment of crisis an SRO told me to stop crying or he wouldn’t help me.
- He acts different with the white kids than the BIPOC kids. He seems more friendly with the white kids and more uptight with the others. That’s from when I have met him though.
- They were never of any help and they followed us around for no reason.
- They made me and my peers feel intimidated. We never received any sincere help.
- He did not do anything for our school, I think schools should have resource officers but this particular one from what I saw didn’t do much.
- It feels unnecessary / uncomfortable to have armed officers on campuses.
- He didn’t necessarily make me feel unsafe, but he literally did nothing to actually help students.
- I just don’t know them so it’s not like they can make me feel safe in any way.
- Spoke to me like I did something wrong but I had just gotten there and didn’t do anything but show up.

## II. Law Enforcement Anecdotes vs Data

- Law enforcement provides positive stories of “troubled” youth that were assisted by SROs. These stories, while they cite a positive intervention by law enforcement, do not address the systematic and disproportionate targeting of BIPOC students through implicit bias or outright discrimination, racial and gang profiling and feeding the school to prison pipeline.
- This creates a hostile learning environment for BIPOC students, is in and of itself a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and leaves the school district open to Title VI violations and lawsuits.
- Data shows that School Resource Officers overwhelmingly contribute to the school to prison pipeline. For example:

In 2013, over a two year period, black students accounted for 73% of the Oakland School Police Department’s arrests while representing only 30.5% of the student population.

From 2014-2017, black students made up 25% of total arrests, citations and diversions in Los Angeles Public Schools despite representing less than 9% of the student population.

- Both Sonoma County and SVUSD have longstanding issues with disproportionate suspensions and expulsions of BIPOC students. To suggest that the SRO program is without bias is not logical. In the 2018-2019 year, Black and Native students were suspended at twice the rate of white students (0.08% and 0.09% vs. 0.04%) despite making up only 2.53% of the student population combined. Latinx/Hispanic students were suspended at a rate slightly higher than white students (0.05%) Source: [www.ed-data.org](http://www.ed-data.org)
- A 2018 Washington Post analysis of nearly 200 incidents of gun violence on campus found only two times where a school resource officer successfully intervened in a shooting.

# Local US Civil Rights Data

- In Sonoma Valley, these issues of structural racism and implicit bias can be seen in civil rights data collected in 2017 by the US Department of Education. Source: [www.ocrdata.ed.gov](http://www.ocrdata.ed.gov)

Race/Ethnicity	Student Enrollment	In school suspensions	Out of school suspensions	Expulsions	Referrals to Law Enforcement
Black/African American	0.5%	0%	0%	16.7%	3.6%
Hispanic/Latinx	61.3%	68.4%	65.7%	83.3%	60.7%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.4%	1.3%	0%	0%	0%
Asian	2.1%	0%	1.9%	0%	3.6%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Mixed race/two or more	1.6%	0%	0%	0%	0%
White	34.0%	30.3%	32.4%	0%	32.1%

# SRO Programs Criminalize our Youth

## SROs Lack Appropriate Training

- [The Southern Poverty Law Center](#) has shown that students in schools where SROs are stationed are five times as likely to be arrested than students in schools without SROs.
- The ACLU has argued that “law enforcement in schools should be strictly limited to enforcement of criminal laws and not school discipline policies.”
- A study by the Washington University Law Review reveals that the odds of a student who has committed a low-level offense being referred to law enforcement are between 1.38 and 1.83 times greater in schools where there is an SRO presence.
- An article in the Atlantic revealed that many officers lack the education to differentiate between disciplinary and criminal matters, lack the sensitivity training to control their own racial biases, and lack the background knowledge to distinguish students with disabilities from those with criminal intent.
- Students with disabilities represent roughly 12% of the total student population but account for a quarter of those arrested in schools, and 75% of those that have been physically restrained on school grounds.
- According to a 2012 study by Strategies for Youth, the majority of police academies do not provide recruits with any education in adolescent psychology and behavior. Additionally, in 37 states, police academies devoted less than 1% of total training hours to juvenile justice issues. Five states do not require any training on juvenile justice issues at all.
- Many officers lack the education to differentiate between disciplinary and criminal matters, lack the sensitivity training to control their own racial biases, and lack the background knowledge to distinguish students with disabilities from those with criminal intent.

# Program changes are essential

- The ACLU and others have identified the necessary components for effective SROs and have stated there should be federally mandated training for police officers including the following components:
- positive behavior management;
- mental health issues, disabilities, adolescent development and psychology, and recognizing symptoms of trauma, abuse, and exposure to violence and the behaviors such exposure tends to produce;
- effects of court involvement and interaction with the juvenile/criminal justice systems;
- information about alternatives to arrests and court referrals, including restorative justice and referrals to community-based resources (e.g., mental health, drug treatment, mentoring, afterschool programs);
- cultural competency;
- de-escalation strategies for students without using physical force and using safe restraint techniques; and
- constitutional standards for searches and interrogations of students.

**Why are we paying \$124,000 per year for an SRO with none of these qualifications when we could have two more counselors at SVUSD for approximately the same cost as ONE SRO?**

**The Santa Rosa City School Board has voted to SUSPEND the SRO program until major changes are made. Sonoma Valley can and should follow suit.**

# III. SRO Contract Issues and Inaccuracies

- The recently submitted 6-month SRO contract to the City of Sonoma calls for visits to students homes who show absences in distance learning classes. This change was submitted and due to be accepted without proper public review or comment. The total cost to the City is \$41,347 (or 33% of the total cost of \$124,041) for the six months remaining in the fiscal year. Full funding for the School Resource Officer position (\$82,694) was included in the FY 20/21 budget.
- BIPOC students are disproportionately struggling with technology access, the responsibility of child care of siblings, socio economic instability and increased mental health impacts such as depression and anxiety. This is a red flag for increased criminalization of youth in the midst of a pandemic which sees unprecedented record of failing grades county wide.

## Specific statements in this contract are troubling and/or inaccurate:

1. "The SRO is a clearinghouse of information for juvenile issues in the Sonoma Valley." -- **Parents did not agree to this.**
2. "Many families do not think to consult with counseling or support services available through the schools for problems they are experiencing in the home." -- **This is inaccurate. SVUSD now has the SAFE grant and directs student outreach.**
3. "On many occasions when assisting a family with problems, the SRO asks for permission to reach out to the child's school counselor and school administration about the issue so they can receive ongoing support services. This allows the SRO to go directly to the school counselor, explain the situation, and ask that they check in with the student. This is by far much more effective than simply suggesting to a parent that they contact a counselor, because experience dictates that many parents would not follow through for various reasons." **Is there data for this? Are these referrals tracked?**
4. 2019 SRO Calendar Year Statistics – **These totals omitted racial data. Why was this omitted and where is the data? This data has been requested multiple times.**

# SRO Contract Issues and Inaccuracies

5. “Home Visits -- The SRO frequently conducts home visits... As a note, while some of this outreach could be conducted by school counselors, the workload of a school counselor would not permit this type of high touch communication.” -- **All of this is covered in the SAFE grant as well. Why would we pay for this twice?**
6. “Sonoma Valley Youth & Family Services (“YFS”) is a juvenile diversion program jointly funded by the City of Sonoma and the Sonoma County Sheriff’s Office...school performance is reviewed as well as attendance and other factors that may bear on the juvenile’s ability to be successful. The juvenile then signs a six-month contract with objective goals to be completed. If the juvenile successfully completes the contract the citation is not filed...A juvenile’s contract goals reflect YFS’s principal belief that many of the juveniles referred have experienced some format of childhood trauma...YFS provides a safe and supportive environment.” -- **School attendance and records are reviewed but there is no school partnership listed in the YFS program description in this report. What if the student has disabilities/IEP and the behavior is a manifestation of those disabilities? They may not have the ability to really understand and follow the “contract”. The child has no rights at that point under the IDEA. With regard to the trauma piece, to our knowledge SRO does not have trauma informed training and learning. The SRO does not have disability training. YFS doesn’t feel “safe and supportive” to BIPOC students.**
7. “The SRO is not the only the pipeline for YFS, but it is the most significant one by far.” -- **Why are students “pipelining” to a law enforcement based program? This directly undermines the SAFE grant.**
8. “Without the SRO, Y&FS program may cease to function effectively. The SRO is a key link between the youth population and the city...there might be an increase in juveniles entering the adult justice system and lower graduation rates. -- **Is law enforcement the best way for the city to connect with Sonoma Valley youth? “Might be an increase”—where is the data on that? This is assumptive. Data shows that SRO programs contribute to youth entering the juvenile and adult justice systems.**
9. “There are plans to have the SRO participate in continued training around restorative practices through the recently awarded SVUSD SAFE grant for student wellness.” -- **This came up after the original contract excluded the SAFE grant and undermined it. The “plans” are very loose and not really an actual plan. This is an exaggeration.**

# SRO Contract Issues and Inaccuracies

10. "There is great value in having a SRO to support with situations of students safety and/or when mental health is concerned. The SRO is able to assess and transport for situations when there is concern for self harm. The SRO is able to transport the student if necessary and the existing relationship in situations like this facilitates the whole process that is one of high sensitivity." -- **Sheriffs regularly state they do not have mental health training. Law enforcement is npt the effective intervention for mental health crisis. This is why we have a SAFE grant and why Santa Rosa plans to implement CAHOOTS.**
11. "The presence of an SRO on school campuses, allows students to build an understanding and relationship with a law enforcement official during regular days. With the recent Black Lives Matter youth protests, youth from the Sonoma Valley reached out directly to the Police Department for support and assistance in planning their protest. The ability for this to occur was based on relationships being built with youth and parents in the community over time. Many of SVUSD students have a positive relationship with the SRO and are observed interacting with the SRO on a regular basis." -- **WHOLLY INACCURATE. The BLM rally had absolutely nothing to do with positive relationships between the youth organizers and the police or the SRO. This occurred because there was inaccurate information about the event's organizers on social media and on Next Door. The youth reached out to dispel rumors, to communicate the purpose of the event and prevent it being shut down or falsely represented.**
12. "Staff acknowledges that there have been concerns regarding the role and negative impact of law enforcement staff in other communities. That is not the experience in Sonoma." -- **This is inaccurate. See student survey administered December 2020.**

**Additionally, SVUSD was supposed to have a stakeholders meeting to include community input in the contract submitted to the district. That never happened. Staff recommendations do not reflect stakeholder input and experience which was excluded.**

## IV. Summary

- The Data on SRO programs nationwide and locally does not align with the position of their efficiency and necessity as put forward by law enforcement
- Data shows that BIPOC youth are disproportionately criminalized by SRO programs. SROs lack the training held by school counselors, mental health crisis professionals, safety coaches and restorative justice trainers.
- SCSO, SRPD and other LEAs stand to gain financially from SRO programs and have an agenda to promote and preserve them
- Although there were some positive experiences noted in the survey, the voices of Sonoma Valley youth and in particular, students of color, are OVERHWLEMINGLY clear in the anonymous survey that the SRO does not help them but instead creates a culture of fear and targeted racial profiling on their campuses.
- Moreover, 90% of students surveyed do NOT feel comfortable with an SRO coming to their home during distance learning.
- We strongly advise the City of Sonoma and SVUSD to place the SRO program ON HOLD and utilize the SAFE grant and additional mental health and counseling services instead.

# V. Resources and Alternatives to SROs

- [National Campaign for Police Free Schools](#)
- [People's Plan for Police Free Schools - BOP Oakland](#)
- [Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports](#)
- [Cops and No Counselors - How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff Is Harming Students](#)
- [American Federation of Teachers expands anti-racism efforts, calls for separating police and schools](#)
- [The Students Were the Danger: In Racially Diverse Schools, Police Were More Likely to View Students as Threats](#)
- [We Came to Learn](#)
- [Model School Policies to Avoid Criminalization of Students](#)
- [Student safety coaches an alternative to school resource officers](#)