



# OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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## **ARMED SCHOOL SECURITY**

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This report provides a sample of four states, including Connecticut, that permit armed security personnel in schools. We chose three of these states – Arizona, California, and Virginia – because their laws are frequently cited in school security literature. Besides describing the states' laws, the report also provides information on how the states fund the security personnel.

### **SUMMARY**

Several states expressly allow school districts to employ security personnel, armed or unarmed, as they see fit. These include Arizona, California, and Virginia. Connecticut law also allows school districts to employ security personnel, but in a more indirect way. It requires boards to keep schools safe. It also tacitly acknowledges that they may do so by retaining security personnel, specifying training requirements for such personnel in municipal law.

Funding sources for school security personnel vary among the surveyed states and include federal grants, state appropriations, local aid, and repurposed criminal penalty fees. Many states rely upon a combination of funding sources, while others rely on just one.

One source of funding available to all states is the federal Community Oriented Policing Services (C.O.P.S.) grant. C.O.P.S. has awarded millions of dollars to nationally fund over 6,500 school resource officers (SROs) through the C.O.P.S. in Schools (CIS) Program.

According to the official C.O.P.S. website (<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=35>), CIS provides a maximum federal contribution of up to \$125,000 per officer position for approved salary and benefit costs over a three-year grant period, with any remaining costs to be paid with local funds. Officers paid with CIS funding must be hired on or after the grant award start date. All jurisdictions that apply must also demonstrate that they have primary law enforcement authority over the schools identified in their application, and also demonstrate their inability to implement this project without federal assistance.

## **ARIZONA**

### ***Security Personnel Provisions***

In Arizona, a law enforcement agency may assign a peace officer or a full-authority Arizona certified reserve peace officer to participate in each school's "safe schools program." A school must consent, and the Arizona Department of Education (DOE) must work with the county school superintendent, county sheriff, and local chief of police for such assignments (Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 15-155). The peace officer is permitted to carry a weapon on school grounds (Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 15-341(A)(23.)).

### ***Funding Provision***

The Arizona DOE pays for the assigned police officers with appropriations and, in some cases, CIS grants (Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 15-155). The most recent grant recipient data through 2010 indicates that CIS grants totaling \$13.8 million have been awarded to add 114 SROs to improve safety for students, teachers, and administrators in primary and secondary schools throughout Arizona (<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/StateReports2010/az.pdf>).

## **CALIFORNIA**

### ***Security Personnel Provisions***

Under California law, district school boards may establish a security department, which must be supervised by a chief of security designated by the superintendent. A board may hire personnel or peace officers, who operate under the chief, to ensure the safety of school district personnel and pupils (Cal. Educ. Code § 38000(a)). A peace officer's primary duty is to enforce the law as an arm of city and county law enforcement agencies. Unlike police officers, a peace officer is not vested with general police powers (Cal. Penal Code § 830.32(b)).

A peace officer may carry a firearm while on duty if the board requires it. If so, the officer must satisfy additional training requirements (Cal. Educ. Code § 38001.5(b)).

### ***Funding Provision***

California law provides funds for the training of peace officers in school security departments, but not salaries. It does permit county treasurers to fund salaries by transferring monies collected from railroad crossing violations into the general fund of any school district for this purpose (Cal. Educ. Code §38002). School districts have also covered security costs with CIS funds. Through 2010, school districts received grants totaling \$61.5 million, which have been used to add 492 SROs to improve safety for students, teachers, and administrators in primary and secondary schools throughout California.

## **CONNECTICUT**

### ***Security Personnel Provisions***

Local and regional boards of education are not required to employ armed guards under Connecticut law. However, boards do have a statutory obligation to provide a “safe school setting” ([CGS § 10-220\(a\)](#)). Some boards meet that obligation by employing school security personnel, a practice that is implicitly sanctioned in municipal statutes, which requires public school security personnel to be trained by the Police Officer Standards and Training Council ([CGS § 7-294x](#)).

The practice is also sanctioned by the law setting conditions under which security personnel can carry arms on school property. Under that law, personnel may carry a firearm on school property under two circumstances. First, if security personnel or their employer enter into such an agreement with school officials, carrying is permitted. Second, if security personnel is a peace officer under state law and is engaged in the performance of official peace officer duties, carrying is also permitted ([CGS § 53a-217b\(b\)\(2\)-\(3\)](#)).

### ***Funding Provision***

According to the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA), school boards that choose to employ security personnel generally use local funds, in some cases supplementing those funds with federal funds. OFA estimates that the cost of staffing all Connecticut public schools with armed security guards ranges between \$60 and \$70 million. This estimate is based on

both a per-student and per-school calculation of costs. Connecticut has approximately 560,000 students in approximately 1,100 public school buildings. Some districts cover these costs with CIS grants. Through 2010, these grants, which total \$9 million, have been used to add 72 SROs in primary and secondary schools. Attachment 1 identifies the districts receiving CIS grants and the grant amounts.

## **VIRGINIA**

### ***Security Personnel Provisions***

Virginia permits public elementary and secondary schools to hire law-enforcement officers as SROs through local law enforcement agencies to provide law-enforcement and security services. (Va. Code § 9.1-101). The SROs may carry a weapon on school grounds while performing their duty (Va. Code § 22.1-277.07(F.)).

### ***Funding Provisions***

Funding for SROs comes from the state treasurer's non-lapsing "School Resource Officer Incentive Grants Fund," which is capitalized by appropriations, gifts, donations, grants, and bequests. Interest earned on the monies remains in the fund and is credited to it (Va. Code § 9.1-110(A.)).

Virginia's Criminal Justice Services Board disburses the funds as matching grants to local law-enforcement agencies and local school boards that have established a collaborative agreement to employ uniformed SROs in middle and high schools. The board establishes the criteria for making grants from the Fund, which includes procedures for determining the amount of a grant and the required local match. Any grant of general funds must be matched by a locality on the basis of the composite index of local ability to pay (Va. Code § 9.1-110(B.)) The board may annually disburse up to 5% of the Fund specifically for the training of SROs (Va. Code § 9.1-110(A.)). School districts have also received CIS grants. Through 2010, grants totaling \$13.6 million have been awarded to add 120 SROs to improve safety for students, teachers, and administrators in primary and secondary schools throughout Virginia.

