



COPS INNOVATIONS

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

*Promising Strategies
from the Field*

A National Overview





Hollywood SROs Develop New Youth Programs



Florida's Hollywood Police Department combined a COPS in Schools (CIS) grant with local and federal funding to double the number of School Resource Officers (SROs) deployed in its schools. All SROs complete a 40-hour Basic SRO course, and most also undergo advanced SRO training.

The city of Hollywood, Florida has 140,000 residents including about 30,000 school-aged children. Before CIS funding, the Hollywood Police Department (HPD) assigned one SRO to each of the city's three high schools. The other four visited the city's four middle schools, 14 elementary schools, and 11 private schools. The HPD's objective was to have either a full-time or part-time SRO assigned to each of the city's schools and to build stronger law enforcement relationships with students and the community.



Combining Local and Federal Funding Sources

COPS awarded the HPD a CIS grant in 1999 that enabled the department to fund five SROs for three years. The Law Enforcement Forfeiture Trust Fund contributed enough money to support two more SROs, and the Broward County School Board provided an annual \$12,000 for each SRO. The HPD now included 14 SROs, which the department assigned as follows: one SRO works full-time in each of the three high schools and four middle schools, six SROs cover two elementary schools each, and one SRO works in one public elementary school and teaches the D.A.R.E. program in 11 private schools. The HPD also invested an additional \$2.4 million in community youth programs during the 1999-2000 school year.

Results

The department began creatively expanding its youth-oriented initiatives as soon as the SROs were in place with a mix of established and innovative new programs, including the following:

- 0 Youth Mentoring Program:** The Broward County School Board recruits, screens, and matches mentors with children. Memorial Regional Hospital and The Starting Place provide mentors and work with the HPD to maintain a referral system for at-risk youth. About 30 other service organizations also provide free assistance to these children. HPD employees (sworn and civilian) who mentor are compensated for an hour of this time during the workweek.
- 0 HPD Reading:** Similar to the mentoring program, HPD employees are compensated for one hour per week to work with elementary students.
- 0 Student Crime Watch:** This national program has been introduced to all Hollywood schools. Student volunteers typically receive communication radios and patrol vests. Other student participation programs include Gun Stoppers/Crime Stoppers, Bomb Threat Hotline, Safety Patrol, and Conflict Mediation.
- 0 Do What's Right Program:** Students who unselfishly perform a "Good Samaritan" act are selected by the school to receive rewards and recognition for their actions. The police department solicits donations from area businesses.



- 0 **Truancy Reduction:** SROs and the State's Attorney's Office work collaboratively with information collected by the Sheriff's Office and the HPD to target parents who permit their children to be truant from elementary schools. State's Attorneys come to the HPD to counsel negligent parents face-to-face.
- 0 **Life-Skill Instruction:** Elementary school SROs instruct students on a variety of skills such as table manners, "stranger danger," and conflict resolution.
- 0 **Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.):** Elementary school SROs teach this 17-week program to fifth grade students. Harley Davidson leases a customized motorcycle to the HPD for one dollar per month to bring positive attention to the D.A.R.E. program.
- 0 **Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.):** SROs teach this program to all middle school seventh graders. The Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms provides free training to officers.
- 0 **Gun Safety:** Elementary school SROs make presentations to parents and children. Parents receive information about responsible gun ownership and students learn what to do if they come across a gun.
- 0 **Traffic Control:** The new COPS-funded SROs initiated a traffic enforcement program at the elementary schools. Teachers and crossing guards are trained to observe and report violations to the SROs, and the HPD sends warning letters to violators. SROs are radar-certified officers and run radar at schools during arrival and dismissal. This is especially important at high schools.

COPS In Schools (CIS)

CIS grants enable law enforcement agencies hire law enforcement professionals to work in and around primary and secondary schools. CIS has helped to hire and train nearly 6,000 School Resource Officers (SROs) since 1999. COPS has allocated a total of \$672 million to help hire SROs and an additional \$21 million to train SROs and the school administrators with whom they work.



Hollywood SROs also conduct annual evaluations of school campuses using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design guidelines. COPS-funded training prepares all SROs to conduct such evaluations and then make recommendations for improving safety and security to school principals based on the findings of those evaluations.

Efforts to inform the community about the new initiatives and the SROs have been extensive and have included presentations to PTAs, school employees, community organizations, local businesses, the school board, and numerous special-interest groups. The message has also been delivered on bumper stickers, posters, billboards, brochures, television and radio spots, ads on busses and benches, promotional videos, baseball cards featuring SROs, three racecars sponsored by the Youth Services Section, websites with links to various resources, a police mini go-cart, puppet shows, and appearances by McGruff the Crime Dog and Daren the D.A.R.E. mascot.

While the successes of this multidimensional program are not currently supported by any statistical data, SROs and HPD management provided many examples. Officers report that contacts with Hollywood youth are more positive than contacts with youth from other jurisdictions. The department reports that having resource officers in the schools has had an impact on reported crime. SROs can often handle situations that might otherwise require a call for service.

Generally, the police report that Hollywood schools and surrounding communities are more at ease since the SRO staffing increase. An increase in positive feedback and a decrease in complaints from the community indicate that Hollywood's improved school security and the big media push to educate local citizens has paid off.