NASP Joins Colleague Organizations in Clarifying Use of SROs in Schools

Bethesda, MD—The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has long been a leader in school safety and positive school climate. We frequently collaborate with allied organizations to improve understanding of and advocacy for evidence-based policies and practices. In 2013, NASP collaborated with key colleague organizations to produce the Framework for Safe and Successful Schools. Embedded in that document is brief guidance on the role of school resource officers (SROs). Given the events of the past several months, including the call for the elimination of all law enforcement in schools, we worked with a few of our colleague organizations involved in the Framework to further clarify the appropriate role and training of SROs and how properly implemented SRO programs differ from deploying untrained or undertrained law enforcement in schools.

The joint statement offers the current shared thinking of NASP, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the American School Counselor Association, the National Association of School Resource Officers, and the National PTA on this specific issue. Collectively, we acknowledge the challenges and potential harm inherent in the misuse or inadequate training of law enforcement in schools, particularly for students and communities of color, those with disabilities, and all who experience inequity, racism, or social injustice. The well-being and safety of these individuals and communities must be prioritized in every school, and especially in those that include an SRO program.

Specifically, the document, which is consistent with current NASP policies, is intended to provide guidance for protecting the safety and healthy development of all students, particularly in those locations where law enforcement in schools is legally mandated. Of paramount importance, when SROs are employed, there must be a detailed memorandum of understanding between the school and the local law enforcement agency that clearly defines the training and role of the SRO and prohibits their involvement in school discipline. There must be ongoing effective training for both SROs and school staff that addresses and mitigates the effects of implicit bias in schools, facilitates appropriate SRO activities, and protects students’ rights. Schools must also examine the role of school administrators, other educators, and the overall school system (policies, practices, and expectations) in how SROs are integrated and engaged. Additionally, SRO programs should be
subject to rigorous research so that the best available evidence is used to plan, implement, evaluate, and determine the value of these programs.

NASP is committed to continuing to work with our leaders, members, and colleague organizations to prioritize school safety policies and practices that ensure the well-being of all students and staff, again, with particular attention to protecting the well-being and civil rights of those who experience inequity, racism, and injustice.

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