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**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN
THE BUENA VISTA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
AND
THE BUENA VISTA SHERIFF'S OFFICE
July 2023 - June 2024**

I. PURPOSE

It is the policy of the Buena Vista Sheriff's Office to endorse and support through staffing the creation of positive interaction between law enforcement and the school community.

This endeavor is a partnership between education and law enforcement which supports a collaborative, problem-solving approach to violence in schools.

This policy represents mutually agreed upon goals and objectives of the Buena Vista Sheriff's Office and the Buena Vista City Public Schools for the School Resource Officer Program.

This Memorandum of Understanding will remain in force until such time either party withdraws from the agreement by delivering a written notification of such rescission to the other party.

II. SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

Mission:

The primary mission of the School Resource Officer is to create a partnership between the City of Buena Vista Sheriff's Office and the Buena Vista Public Schools. This program is intended to maintain a safe learning environment for our youth, identify and prevent, through counseling and referral, delinquent behavior, and to promote positive relationships between students and law enforcement.

Objectives:

1. Provide assessment of schools and provide identification of high risk or criminal activity on the school properties.
2. Provide timely, pertinent crime-related information to school personnel.
3. Coordinate student activities which promote a safe school environment.
4. Act as a liaison between school and law enforcement personnel.
5. Be a resource for violence reduction and avoidance for students.
6. Serve as a juvenile mediator for law enforcement/school related problems.
7. Teach a class action program; This program provides students with some working knowledge of the law and the criminal justice system.

III. UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM

What is a School Resource Officer Program?

A School Resource Officer (SRO) Program places officers in schools in an effort to create and maintain a safe learning environment for our youth. In its most successful format, it is; at its foundation community-based. It reflects a comprehensive community focus which integrates the officers and the SROs stationed in the schools with the existing network of resources in the community. The SROs are more than police officers in schools. The schools are their communities, and the officers in an SRO program fulfill three roles as they act as resource for their communities the schools:

- ▶ First and foremost they are law enforcement officers whose primary purpose is to “keep the peace” in their communities so that students can learn;
- ▶ Secondly, they are counselors who provide guidance to students and act as a link to support services both inside and outside the school environment;
- ▶ Thirdly, they are teachers who provide the schools with additional resource by sharing their expertise in the classroom.

Beyond these identified roles and, perhaps most important, SROs are positive role models for many youth who are not exposed to such role models in today’s society.

What a School Resource Officer Program Provides:

The bottom line associated with an SRO program is threefold:

- ▶ it is a mechanism through which safe learning environments can be created and maintained;
- ▶ it provides the community with an efficient, effective program;
- ▶ and it saves money because the approach associated with it is one of prevention.

Who Benefits and How?

Everyone! Specifically:

- ▶ students benefit because their schools are safer, they have another resource available to them, and they are exposed to positive role models;
- ▶ parents benefit because their children are in safe learning environments, and they have an additional resource;
- ▶ teachers and school administrators benefit because they are working in safe environments, and they have another resource available to them;
- ▶ law-enforcement officials benefit because they are better able to serve and protect their communities in an efficient, effective, and community-based way;
- ▶ the court system benefits because much of the time and money savings associated with SROs are incurred by the court system;
- ▶ taxpayers benefit because their tax dollars are being used in an efficient, effective way which has cost savings associated with it;
- ▶ the community benefits because the community foundation of the program brings the community together and allows it to address its own needs in a comprehensive, successful way.

IV. SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER JOB DESCRIPTION

Abide by school board policies and shall consult with and coordinate activities through the school principal but shall remain fully responsive to the chain of command of the law enforcement agency in all matters relating to employment and supervision.

Refrain from functioning as a school disciplinarian. If the principal believes an incident is a law violation, he/she shall contact the school resource deputy who shall then determine whether law enforcement action is appropriate.

Present information such as understanding the laws, the police officers, and the police mission.

Encourage individual and small group discussions about law enforcement related matters with students, faculty, and parents.

Attend meetings of parent and faculty groups to solicit their support and understanding of the school resource officer program and to promote awareness of law enforcement functions.

Make themselves available for conferences with students, parents, and faculty members to assist them with problems of a law enforcement or crime prevention nature.

Confer with the principal to develop plans and strategies to prevent and/or minimize dangerous situations on or near the campus involving students at school-related activities.

Perform duties as determined by the principal other than those regularly assigned to school personnel such as lunchroom or hall duty. (Nothing herein, is intended to preclude the SROs from being available in areas where interactions with students are expected.)

Abide by school board policy concerning interviews should it become necessary to conduct formal police interviews with students or staff on property or at school functions under jurisdiction of the public schools.

Take law enforcement action if necessary and notify the principal of the school as soon as possible; whenever practical, advise the principal before requesting additional enforcement assistance on campus, and undertake all additional law enforcement responsibilities at the principal's direction.

Give assistance to police officers in matters regarding the duties of resource officers whenever necessary.

Promote citizen awareness of law enforcement efforts, assure the peaceful operation of school-related programs, build support with students, and whenever possible, participate in or attend school functions.

Reaffirm their roles as law enforcement officers by wearing their uniforms, unless doing so would be inappropriate for scheduled school activities. (The uniform will also be worn at

events where it will enhance the image of the officers and their ability to perform their duties.) Any other clothing other than the standard uniform must be approved by the Sheriff.

File reports as required by the VA Code/Department Policy.

V. SCHOOL PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The principal of the school should ensure that a weekly meeting with the school officer is adhered to. The meeting may be delegated to other administrative staff.

The principal shall maintain the means to ensure that effective communications exist between the SRO and the school staff.

All criminal activity that comes to the attention of the principal or school staff which, in the judgment of school personnel, requires the intervention of law enforcement personnel shall be reported to the SRO when on duty. If an emergency situation exists, and the SRO is not available, the principal shall notify the Sheriff's Office. Information that is not of an emergency nature may be held for the SRO or reported to the Sheriff's Department.

The school shall provide a work area for the SRO that is equipped with a telephone and computer. It is recommended that the areas have a locked storage area for securing contraband recovered in the schools by the school staff. The SRO shall be responsible for arranging for the destruction of any illegal substances that will not be used for prosecution.

The school system shall provide in-service training, when available, to the SROs in areas that will increase the effectiveness of the officers and their ability to accomplish their respective duties and responsibilities.

VI. GUIDELINES ON COMMUNICATIONS

Good communications between the officer and the administration of the school is essential for providing a safe learning environment.

1. The School Resource Officer is assigned to a school is considered a member of the school's staff and should attend meetings when possible, contributing their knowledge and expertise toward the solution of matters affecting the operation of the school.
2. The School Resource officer should keep the principal and administrators abreast of police-related matters and receive input and any advice in dealing with such matters.
3. Every officer should earn the trust and confidence of faculty, administration and other employees of the community schools, parks, recreation areas and other gathering places for youth.
4. Classroom management rests with the teacher.

5. Officers are present to “provide a safe learning environment.”

VII. SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER ARREST AND INTERVIEW PROCEDURES

Police Investigation and Questioning:

The SRO has been given the authority to stop, question, interview, and take police action without the prior authorization of the principal. However, the SRO should first discuss the initiation of police action or charges with the principal or designee unless immediate action is required to prevent personal harm, fight, or destruction of evidence. The investigation and questioning of students during school hours or at school events should be limited to situations where the investigation is related to school. Investigations and questioning of students for offenses not related to the operation of or occurring at the school should ordinarily be limited to those in which delay might result in danger to any person, flight from jurisdiction by a person suspected of a crime, or destruction of evidence.

The principal shall be notified as soon as practical of any enforcement events. An SRO should coordinate his activities with school staff so that action between the agencies is cooperative and in the best interests of the school and public safety.

Arrest Procedures:

School Resource Officers are expected to be familiar with school rules and their application within the school system. Routinely, rule infractions will not be handled as violations of law, but rather referred to the principal for action. Any questions related to the enforcement of rules versus laws within schools should be discussed with the principal. This specifically applies to underage smoking and general standards of conduct.

The following procedures will be adhered to where arrests of students or staff become necessary:

1. The warrant arrest of a student or employee of the school should be coordinated through the principal, whenever practical.
2. Persons who have been deemed as non-students or those whose presence on school grounds has been restricted or forbidden shall be arrested for trespassing. This action will be supported by principals and employees of the school through court appearances when necessary.
3. Arrest of students or staff during school hours shall be reported fully to the principal as soon as practical.

4. Assault and Battery will be handled by the school officials and/or the SRO. The parents of the student involved should be advised by the school administrator that if they wish to pursue charges, they need to contact either the SRO or the Sheriff's Office.
5. Underage Possession of Alcohol-4.1.305 will be handled by school policy and court referral.
6. Possession of Tobacco by Minors-18.2-371.2. The school administration will handle offenses of possession of tobacco products by an underage person according to school policy and refer to the School Resource Officer.
7. Drugs. Any person who possesses any illegal drugs on school property shall be charged by the SRO. The SRO may wish to have the substance analyzed by the lab before placing charges. The SRO shall report any drug offenses to the principal. The school shall be allowed to follow all school policies regarding due process and student discipline.

Search and Seizure:

School officials may conduct searches of students' property and person under their jurisdiction when reasonable suspicion exists that the search will reveal evidence that the student has violated or in violation of either the law or the rules of the school. The standards for the search are reasonable suspicion.

THE SRO shall not become involved in administrative (school related) searches unless specifically requested by the school to provide security, protection, or for the handling of contraband.

These searches must be at the direction and control of the school official.

At no time shall the SRO request that an administrative search be conducted for law enforcement purposes or have the administrator act as his agent.

Any search by an officer shall be based upon probable cause, consent, or incident to arrest and, when required, a search warrant should be obtained. Stop and frisk will remain an option when there is reasonable suspicion that a criminal offense has been committed or may be committed, and that the suspect may be armed.

Administrative Hearing:

The SRO shall attend suspension and/or expulsion hearings upon request of the school principal. The officer shall be prepared to provide testimony on any actions that were taken by the officer and any personally observed conduct witnessed by the officers. The SRO shall

make available any physical evidence that is available. It will be the responsibility of the SRO to transport and safeguard any weapon this is needed at the expulsion hearing.

The officer shall not provide any official police department or juvenile record to the school. Release of such information is prohibited by the Code of Virginia unless such documents are subpoenaed by the schools through the appropriate court.

This MOU shall be effective July 1, 2023 and be reviewed annually.

Sheriff: _____ Date: _____

Superintendent of Schools: _____ Date: _____