

Madison Metropolitan School District
**RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES FOR CALLING THE
POLICE**

There is growing concern regarding the unnecessary use of police in American schools to address ordinary student disciplinary issues and to enforce school rules. The referral of students into the juvenile justice system is associated with negative outcomes that impact students' academic achievement and increased drop out rates. While the majority of student arrests and citations are for misdemeanor offenses such as disorderly conduct, trespassing or fighting, they often have a detrimental effect and contribute to further contact with the juvenile system that expose the students to possible institutionalization. New research indicates that the best indicator of adult criminality may be the youth's prior incarceration in a juvenile facility.

MMSD's goal is to minimize police involvement for minor student infractions that should be managed with the Behavior Education Plan. The District is committed to a non-criminal enforcement model that supports restorative justice concepts, early intervention and problem solving rather than reliance on law enforcement. However, it certainly doesn't mean that police will never be needed in our schools. The following are circumstances where involvement of the police may be necessary

In a Situation that Poses an Imminent Threat to the Safety of Staff or Students

An Imminent Threat is defined as a situation, threats or actions of a individual(s) which present an immediate threat of harm which could reasonably be expected to cause death or serious bodily injury to staff or students. An example is a person on a school campus with a firearm, or a person armed with a weapon such as a knife. In these situations schools should activate emergency procedures and call the 911 Center to request immediate police assistance.

To Report an Incident on Behalf of a Student

These situations may be the result of child abuse/neglect concerns or to report a crime where the student was victimized off school grounds. Many students and parents don't feel comfortable with or don't know how to report incidents to the police and may need our assistance to do so. These types of incidents may include threats to the student on the way to or from school, cyberbullying, enticements or other situations that impact our students' safety. With the exception of incidents of suspected child abuse or neglect (Bd. Policy 4400), administrators should contact parents first, before calling the police. However, if

the administrator has reason to believe that delaying the report would jeopardize the student's safety, and the parents can't be reached, the police should be notified as soon as possible.

When any Person Engages in Violent, Disorderly and Threatening Behavior in School and when it exceeds the School's Ability to Safely Manage the Behavior

Calling the police is appropriate when an individual (adult or student) is involved in disorderly, violent or threatening conduct to the extent that it significantly disrupts school **and** when the behavior is such that it exceeds the school's ability to safely manage it and when such behavior has the potential to escalate and jeopardize the safety of our staff or students. These situations include behavior that pose a danger of self-harm, as well as potential harm to others.

To Report Certain Crimes that Occur in School

There are other situations that require police involvement. These are related to certain incidents or crimes that occur in schools, which are of such serious nature that they are beyond the scope of schools to manage within the BEP, alone. Examples of these include the following:

Sexual assaults

Possession of firearms

Actual, attempted or threatened use of a weapon toward another person or to cause disruption.

Bomb threats

Possession of explosives

Attempted or actual use of fireworks, smoke bombs, pepper spray/gas, MACE, or tear gas

Setting or attempting to set a fire

Possession of drugs with intent to distribute

Physical attacks against students or staff that result in significant injuries

Armed robberies

Robberies with use of force

Possession of child pornography

Factors to Consider

Decisions about calling the police are best made after consultation with the legal department or with the safety coordinator. Situations involving imminent danger require immediate action, but others require a closer examination of facts and consideration of all the factors involved, such as:

Age and grade level of the student

Cognitive/developmental issues
The existence of a BIP
The extent of the harm or intended harm to students or staff
The student's ability to de-escalate and self-regulate
The school's ability to safely manage the incident
The victim requests a report to the police

Contact with the Police and Resolution

A request for police assistance doesn't necessarily need to result in an arrest. In fact, in many situations the best resolution will be reached when the police and the school administrator are able to discuss the reason for involving the police, review all the factors involved and jointly determine the best option to ensure the safety of the students.

All options should be explored. Can the incident be resolved by the simple presence of the police? Will a warning or counseling from the officer suffice? Is the officer able to withhold enforcement action pending a peaceful resolution of the incident? What other tools, short of arrest are available to the officer?

Law enforcement officers possess broad authority to arrest, but under most circumstances, they also have discretionary options that should be discussed. Principals will need to clearly articulate the desired outcomes and work with the officer to achieve them.

Any time the police interact with a student, the school administrator must implement Board Policy 4400, and ensure the needs of the school are clearly expressed.

The Madison Police Department, as well as MMSD, is committed to the reduction of existing disparities in academic achievement, as well as in arrest and incarceration rates, particularly of youth of color. To this end, it's extremely important that schools utilize existing educational systems and resources to manage student behavior and rely less on police intervention, unless the behavior poses an immediate threat to the school or falls under the categories outlined above.

Use Of Educational Resource Officers (ERO's)

Educational Resource Officers (ERO's) are assigned to each high school to provide an extra layer of safety to our schools. They work alongside their school's administrative team to address issues that may jeopardize staff or student safety. As defined in the contract between the District and the police department, the ERO's have a dual and balanced role, as educators and law enforcement officers.

Their role is to support the school to maintain a safe environment **but not to engage in the enforcement of minor school rules that should be addressed by the school utilizing appropriate interventions and the Behavior Education Plan.**

The relationship between schools and the police is most effective when there is a mutual understanding of the specific roles of the school and that of the ERO's. It is an MMSD expectation that administrators will work closely with ERO's and their command staff to discuss roles and situations in which the ERO may intervene directly or provide support to the school. All school administrators should be trained and included in these discussions to ensure a consistent interpretation of the critical role the ERO's have in our schools.

Disposal of confiscated items from Students

All illegal and dangerous items need to be turned over to the police so they can be safely disposed of. These items include, but are not limited to: illegal drugs, firearms, explosives, live ammunition, brass knuckles, switchblade knives, and MACE/pepper spray.