



WHERE DOES FUNDING FOR SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS COME FROM? THREE FEDERAL PROGRAMS EXPLAINED



This newsletter looks at federal funding for School Resource Officers (SROs) and school surveillance equipment. Specifically, it explains three of the many grant programs administered by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) that provide funding for state and local law enforcement agencies to hire law enforcement officers and to purchase surveillance equipment: the former COPS in Schools (CIS) program, the current Cops Hiring Program (CHP), and the current School Violence Prevention Program (SVPP).

Origins of DOJ Funding for SROs

In 1994, with the passage of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, Congress allocated \$8.8 billion dollars to expand law enforcement across the nation. The Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office was created within the DOJ to distribute and monitor these funds. To date, the COPS Office has provided approximately **\$14 billion** to 13,000 state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies, an amount that has subsidized more than 134,000 officer positions. A list of agencies receiving awards is [publicly available](#). The COPS Office provides several different types of grants, some of which are used specifically to hire SROs and to purchase school surveillance equipment.

COPS in Schools (CIS) Program

Historically, the largest federal effort to fund SROs was called the COPS in Schools program and was active from 1999 to 2005. For the first several years of the program, nearly \$200

million dollars were allocated annually. With several exceptions, each round of grantmaking typically funded over 200 agencies, suppling hundreds of SRO positions. In total the CIS Program awarded \$823 million across 20 rounds of grantmaking, funding 7,242 SRO positions in hundreds of communities across the nation. The CIS program ended in 2006.

COPS Hiring Program (CHP)

In its place arose the COPS Hiring Program. Whereas CIS was specific to SROs, the CHP program is not, meaning that agencies can hire officers that are either school- or non-school specific. Between 2013 and 2016, CHP funded 725 SRO positions across 314 agencies; however, it is difficult to determine the exact number of SROs that have been funded through CHP. Although agencies can use the money to hire SROs, they have not been consistently required to distinguish between types of law enforcement positions.

Between 2012-2020, the CHP program awarded approximately \$1 billion dollars to 1,800 agencies and funded approximately 8,000 law enforcement officers. California, for example, received \$90.6 million dollars in federal funding across a five-year period for 553 officers, Florida received \$111.6 million for 888 positions, and New Jersey received \$68 million dollars for 477 positions. During that same period, Minnesota received \$14 million for 98 officer positions, of which the Minneapolis Police Department received 20 officers (10 in 2013 and 10 in 2017). During 2020, the amount of CHP funding increased nearly four-fold, providing 2,000 more officer positions than in previous years. For 2021, the CHP program is set to provide \$140 million to 200 agencies. Comparatively, the DOJ provides just \$10 million in annual grants to integrate mental and behavioral health services into law enforcement teams.

School Violence Prevention Program

Some grants provide funding for school surveillance equipment. On such grant is the School Violence Prevention Program (SVPP), which school districts can use to purchase door locking mechanisms, school alarm and motion detectors, identification technology, and security cameras and systems. The grant does *not* provide funding for law enforcement officers, law enforcement vehicles, or weapons (e.g., guns, ammunition, or explosives), or police body cameras. The use of surveillance systems are a concern in light of research findings that schools serving primarily students of color are more likely to use these systems and that their use may not be justified by legitimate safety concerns. Surveillance systems may also detract from school culture and lead to more suspensions and low achievement. In 2020, 160 SVPP grants were awarded. The maximum award of \$500,000 was given to 27 school districts (concentrated in California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Nevada). The SVPP total program amount has increased steadily since it began in 2018. For FY 2018, the total program amount was \$24.5 million; FY 2019, \$32.5 million; FY 2020, \$48.9 million. For the FY 2021 solicitation, the DOJ has made \$53 million available.

Conclusion

Evidence of systemic racism in the disproportionate and unnecessary ticketing and arrests of

Black students and students of color have led to widespread calls to remove police officers and surveillance systems from schools. Because federal funds have played—and continue to play—an influential role in putting police officers inside and near schools, civil rights and organizing groups have [urged](#) President Biden to end DOJ funding for police in schools and have called upon voters to contact their members of Congress to support federal legislation prohibiting the use of federal funds for SROs.

NEPC Resources on School Finance and Funding

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