

## **School Security Chiefs List Serve Discussion: Armed vs. Unarmed School Security Officers**

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) sponsors and coordinates a number of list serves to promote communication, collaboration, and the sharing of ideas, information, and resources for school emergency management. As a part of this communication, OSDFS manages a list serve for chief law enforcement officials from the nation's largest school districts the chiefs to discuss and respond to key emergency management issues. These chiefs of school security help provide OSDFS with a better understanding of the problems regarding school crime and safety currently existing in our nation's schools and work with OSDFS to discuss possible solutions and explore strategies.

In February 2010, a query was posted to OSDFS's School Security Chiefs list serve by a Colorado School Security Chief regarding emerging trends towards armed or unarmed security departments. This query received a total of fifteen (15) responses from thirteen (13) states. Chiefs' reported school security practices varied, with some districts employing only unarmed security personnel, some districts employing a combination of armed and unarmed personnel, and other districts only employing armed personnel. Districts also reported various methods for employing school security staff, such as employing security staff directly through a school police department, or through working in some capacity with their state or local police department to directly provide officers to serve their schools. Other variations in reported school security practices include but may not be limited to security officers or school law enforcement jurisdiction (school, city, or state), scope of duties (arrests, detentions, peace-keeping), licensure (local, city, or state), and level of authority.

Because the information shared via this list serve has broad applicability to the wider school emergency management field, OSDFS has redacted the responses received and is posting this summary here for reference purposes. A chart displaying individual responses has been included to showcase the variability of methods and practices for employing and arming school security personnel.

### **Of the fifteen (15) responses received:**

**One (1) Chief reported they do not use armed security personnel.** This school district reported that they employ a small staff of unarmed School Resource Officers (SROs) and receive additional support, as needed, from their City Police Department.

**Six (6) Chiefs reported specifically on their use of armed school security personnel.** Only three of these six Chiefs explicitly stated they use only armed security, while the other three made no mention of unarmed security. Overall, these officers, while either deployed directly through local or school district police departments, are certified and trained by the State.

Two of these responses came from Chiefs in the state of Texas, which permits schools to operate their own school police departments. One of these Chiefs stated, “all armed personnel in Texas schools must be police officers.”

**Eight (8) Chiefs reported they use a combination of both armed and unarmed school security personnel.** Responding Chiefs who reported using a combination of both armed and unarmed security personnel had unique procedures for deploying security staff to schools and to which schools or in which types of situations armed or unarmed staff are utilized.

Also, in addition to using both armed and unarmed security, these Chiefs reported using a combination of sworn and unsworn officers from both the district as well as local police departments. These differences affect officers’ scope of duties and jurisdiction within schools, the city, and the state.

Some responding Chiefs included descriptions of how their district assigns school security personnel. For example, one Chief in Indiana reported that out of 105 Security Associates:

- Three (3) are assigned to follow sex offenders;
- Fifteen (15) Rapid Response Associates are assigned to respond to emergencies and conduct safety audits;
- Four (4) are Lead Supervisors;
- Ten (10) are uniformed Police Officers;
- Fifty-seven (57) are sworn School Resource Officers funded from 5 different departments; and,
- Sixteen (16) are sworn Officers and Detectives funded by the School Police Department.

This Chief also reported that one armed SRO is deployed to most schools; two are deployed to some. Uniformed Police Officers rotate through the Elementary Schools as well as answer calls at other facilities; unarmed security associates are also deployed to Middle and High Schools. This Chief reported they utilize the services of off-duty Police Officers, as well.

Another description provided by a Chief in Pennsylvania reported that they employ 450 sworn “School Police Officers” and 250 non-sworn “Substitute Security Officers” who are unarmed. The local Police Department deploys armed “Municipal Police Officers” to high schools and to some middle schools.

One Chief reported their State recently passed legislation permitting schools to operate their own School District Police Department. This Chief reported their officers are armed, but use “less lethal weapons” than City Police Officials. School Police Officers are licensed through their State Law Enforcement Academy and that officers’ authority includes “powers as they relate to school issues during on-duty time only.” Unarmed security officers are hired to patrol construction sites.

Another Chief reported that their armed security staff is all State-certified Police Officers with “normal” police authority. Unarmed school security officers work in coordination with one armed Police Officer in every high school.

### Trends in School Security Personnel: Armed vs. Unarmed

Organization	State	Yes, No or Both?	Description of Security Personnel	Armed?	Unarmed?
Respondent #1	CO	Both		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armed in-school and on-patrol officers and lead security officers.</li> <li>Armed non-sworn security staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both armed and unarmed non-sworn security staff.</li> </ul>
Respondent #2	NC	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>105 Security Associates: 3 assigned to follow sex offenders, 15 Rapid Response Associates for emergencies and to conduct security audits, 4 Lead Supervisors, 10 uniformed Police Officers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>57 of the 105 are sworn School Resource Officers funded from 5 different departments,</li> <li>16 of the 105 are sworn Officers and Detectives funded by the school Police Department.</li> <li>1 armed SRO in most schools, 2 in some.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unarmed Security Associates in Middle and High Schools.</li> </ul>
Respondent #3	DC	Both		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armed Uniformed Special Police Officers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigators licensed as Special Police Officers who have a choice of whether or not to be armed.</li> </ul>
Respondent #4	IN	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School District Police Department as of 2008, per new 2007 IN legislation.</li> <li>School security was a part of [the Department of] Public Safety's efforts prior to 2008.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armed, but with less lethal weapons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unarmed contract security employed for construction sites.</li> </ul>
Respondent #5	NY	Both		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uniformed Task Force Officers, part of the NYPD School Safety Division, are deployed to schools with high crime compstats.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unarmed peace officers are a unit of the New York Police Department.</li> </ul>
Respondent #6	NJ	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly unarmed, unsworn officers in Elementary schools.</li> <li>One sworn armed police officer with several unarmed security officers in High Schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One armed, sworn police officer with several unarmed security officers in High Schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly unarmed, unsworn officers in Elementary schools.</li> <li>One sworn armed police officer with several unarmed security officers in High Schools.</li> </ul>
Respondent #7	FL	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district works with 7 law enforcement agencies that provide the equivalent of 90 sworn officers.</li> <li>OCPS employs 70 unarmed district security.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No armed District security employees.</li> </ul>
Respondent #8	PA	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>450 sworn "School Police Officers"</li> <li>250 non-sworn "Substitute Security Officers," both unarmed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armed "Municipal Police Officers" at high schools and in some middle schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neither School Police Officers nor Substitute Security Officers are armed.</li> </ul>
Respondent #9	VA	No			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small staff of unarmed SROs employed by the district.</li> </ul>
Respondent #10	NM	Yes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armed Patrol division</li> <li>Armed plain-clothes detectives</li> </ul>	
Respondent #11	MD	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police Force of 142 personnel in the District</li> </ul>		
Respondent #12	TX	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 100 school district police departments in Texas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armed personnel in Texas schools must be police officers.</li> </ul>	
Respondent #13	TN	Yes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officers are armed.</li> </ul>	
Respondent #14	TX	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>89 armed Texas peace officers employed by the School Police Department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All armed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No unarmed security officers/guards</li> </ul>
Respondent #15	TX	Yes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All armed "police officers".</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No unarmed security staff.</li> </ul>

Organization	State	Yes, No or Both?	Licensure	Authority	Jurisdiction
Respondent #1	CO	Both			
Respondent #2	NC	Both			
Respondent #3	DC	Both		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metropolitan Police granted uniform waivers to investigators to carry concealed weapons.</li> </ul>	
Respondent #4	IN	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indiana Law Enforcement Academy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Powers as they relate to school issues during on-duty time, only.</li> </ul>	
Respondent #5	NY	Both			
Respondent #6	NJ	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sworn officers are State certified.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sworn officers have normal police powers.</li> </ul>	
Respondent #7	FL	Both			
Respondent #8	PA	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sworn school Police Officers are NOT certified under the PA Municipal Police Officers Act</li> <li>Municipal Police Officers are deployed by the Philadelphia Police Department</li> </ul>		
Respondent #9	VA	No			
Respondent #10	NM	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employed by the school district</li> </ul>		
Respondent #11	MD	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trained and certified by the State of Maryland--MPTC Maryland Police and Training Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full law enforcement authority within the city limits (MOU with City PD) and within the state of Maryland if a crime should occur in their presence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full law enforcement authority within the city limits (MOU with City PD) and within the state of Maryland if a crime should occur in their presence</li> </ul>
Respondent #12	TX	Yes			
Respondent #13	TN	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armed officers carry an armed guard license issued through the State</li> <li>Armed officers complete Regional Law Enforcement training through the Memphis Police Department.</li> </ul>		
Respondent #14	TX	Yes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prime jurisdiction in the 355 sq. miles of the district.</li> </ul>
Respondent #15	TX	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Licensed through the Sate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same powers and authority as any other police department.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Entire District (88 sq. miles)</li> </ul>

Organization	State	Yes, No or Both?	Scope of Duties	Notes
Respondent #1	CO	Both		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans are underway to arm all security staff.</li> </ul>
Respondent #2	NC	Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uniformed Police Officers rotate through the Elementary Schools and answer calls at other facilities.</li> <li>Detectives, Deputy Chief, and Chief of Police do criminal and personnel investigations.</li> <li>Security Associates work overtime at sporting events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Off-Duty officers are also used.</li> </ul>
Respondent #3	DC	Both		
Respondent #4	IN	Both		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School districts can have their own Police Departments per 2007 Indiana legislation; IPS has opted to do so.</li> </ul>
Respondent #5	NY	Both		
Respondent #6	NJ	Both		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The trend is to have a combination of sworn and unsworn for cost savings and effectiveness.</li> </ul>
Respondent #7	FL	Both		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The budget formula is 2 officers per high school, 1 officer per middle school, and 1 officer who rotates 1 day a week at each of 5 elementary schools.</li> </ul>
Respondent #8	PA	Both		
Respondent #9	VA	No		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The district receives support from Alexandria City Police.</li> </ul>
Respondent #10	NM	Yes		
Respondent #11	MD	Yes		
Respondent #12	TX	Yes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School districts can have their own police departments.</li> </ul>
Respondent #13	TN	Yes		
Respondent #14	TX	Yes		
Respondent #15	TX	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Safety and any breach of the peace occurring in the presence of school police officers.</li> </ul>	