



NORTH BAY POLICE SERVICE

2008 Annual Report School Liaison

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A. Mandate of the Unit

- Act as liaison between the North Bay Police Service and 17 area schools.
- Establish, develop and maintain partnerships with area school stakeholders.
- Provide information on community safety issues.
- Promote and foster a reduction of crime and victimization in relation to young persons.
- Assist in the development of students' understanding of good citizenship.
- Divert young persons away from crime and anti-social behaviour; and
- Work in partnership with other government and community-based organizations to support positive youth development

B. Executive Summary

The School Liaison Program was initiated in January of 2000 with the identified need to increase service delivery to area schools in order to foster and maintain safe, non-threatening environments for students, staff and community members. Police provide a visible and positive image for law enforcement. They serve as a confidential resource to counselling for students concerning problems they face. They bring expertise into schools that will help young people make more positive choices in their lives. They also work to protect the school environment in order to maintain an atmosphere where teachers feel safe to teach and students feel safe to learn.

At present, the unit consists of one Detective Constable who reports directly to the Detective-Investigative Support. The majority of investigations being conducted by the School Liaison Officer (SLO) can be resolved without imposing federal and/or provincial sanctions upon the offender. The needs of school staff and students can be satisfied with the attendance of the SLO, where simply talking to the youth whose behaviour and actions are under scrutiny, is effective in dealing with the issue. Unfortunately, these occurrences are not always tracked under the current records management system and are therefore not included in the statistics gathered by the SLO.

There are occasions when the laying of charges under the Criminal Code of Canada, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act or the imposition of Youth Criminal Justice Act provisions is necessary. The use of mediations, conferences, written and verbal warnings and the option of taking no further action are also at the disposal of the Investigating Officer.

In 2007, police and canine assisted searches of local schools for illicit drugs were suspended due to an Ontario Court ruling. As such, the SLO did not conduct any school/locker searches in 2008. This did not preclude school administrators from conducting searches of individuals/lockers, where reasonable grounds existed, resulting in several drug seizures by school staff.

C. Activities

During the 2008 calendar year, the SLO was primarily engaged in conducting investigations into criminal incidents ranging from assaults and threatening to mischief, theft, criminal harassment, weapons and drug related activity. Due to the provisions of the Police/School Protocol and the different response options that are afforded young persons under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the length of time needed to investigate and properly respond to each incident has dramatically increased.

The SLO's function in the school is not solely to respond to criminal activity and, as such, it is necessary to be in area schools for other reasons. Police presence in area schools provides an opportunity to present a positive image of police to our youth, to foster strong working relationships with stakeholders and maintain community partnerships. Volleyball games were played between police teams and individual schools to further promote a positive working relationship. The School Liaison Officer attended at school sporting events, special events and in a ceremonial function at graduation ceremonies for the presentation of "Good Citizenship" awards and bursaries.

Many of the local schools, during the calendar year, have requested the assistance of the SLO with the practice and evaluation of school lockdown policy and drills. This included schools involved with and outside of the liaison program. This is an extremely important and necessary practice in order to establish policies and procedures that are effective and respond to the diverse needs of the schools and police. The SLO member also attended a school staff meeting, after an actual high school lockdown, to address concerns and questions raised from the actual lockdown.

D. Performance Indicators

In 2008, there were five hundred and six (506) school related calls for service within the territorial boundaries of the North Bay Police Service. Two hundred and fifty-four (254) calls for service to schools fell within the mandate of the School Liaison Program. Of these calls, the member assigned as SLO personally responded to one hundred and ninety-nine (199). As previously mentioned, numerous interventions occurred within the school setting which were not recorded as they were minor in nature and often times were resolved by way of verbal caution and/or reprimand.

The office of the SLO processed fifty(50) Criminal charges, four (4) Provincial Offences Notices, seventeen (17) youth cautions or warnings and eighteen (21) referrals to the Youth Officer. The fifty (50) criminal charges are broken down as follows: Fail to Comply-13, assault-14, threats-5, mischief-4, theft under-4, Possession of Stolen Property-3, Weapons Dangerous-2, Criminal Harassment-2, Robbery-1, Possession of a Controlled Substance-1 and Fail to Appear-1.

Comparatively 2007 statistics reveal three hundred and ninety-nine(399) calls for service with fifty-one(51) criminal charges laid, one(1) provincial offences notice issued, sixty-two(62) youth cautions/warnings and twelve(12) youth referrals to the Youth Officer.

E. Anticipated Issues for the Future

Drugs

The use, possession and distribution of both illicit and prescription drugs in our schools continues to be the major concern. Drug users in the school setting continue to abuse traditional drugs such as marijuana however, there has been an emergence of a legally purchased herb commonly known as Salvia. This drug produces a legal LSD like "high". Salvia, also known as Diviner's Sage and Magic Mint, is a psychoactive drug and is readily available to our youth through retail outlets and through the internet. Even though Salvia is legal it does not mean it is healthy. The US DEA has officially listed Salvia as a "drug of concern". Experts on addiction say extensive use of the drug can cause depression and anxiety. This drug is being detected at both the high school and senior elementary school levels. This is of concern due to the young age of the youth consuming the drug.

Recent court decisions restricting the use of drug detecting dogs in schools have severely hindered the ability of school officials and police to respond to drug activity within the school environment. Combined efforts of school administrator's and police to gain the trust of students is required to gather drug information that can be acted upon to curtail the drug problem within schools. Many of the violent incidents taking place on and off school property are related to drug activity. One officer cannot supply a proper response and a coordinated joint effort by Street Crime, the Drug Unit, Intelligence and the SLO is needed to respond appropriately.

Mischief/Graffiti

In recent years there has been a marked increase in the reported incidents of mischief and graffiti within North Bay and surrounding area. Although, not specifically a school related problem, it certainly has it's origins within a specific age group of youth who are attending school. "Tagging" has become a socially acceptable practice and somewhat of a status symbol among our youth. A coordinated effort by the police and school board officials is required to help combat this ever present and growing problem. Education on the costs associated to the detrimental effects of this practice would go a long way in teaching our youth what good citizenship is all about.

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying has been brought to the fore front of many school related issues in recent years. This form of bullying is on the increase as the internet provides an anonymous venue for "bullies" to ply their trade so to speak. "Bullies" are free to insult, abuse, and say hurtful things to others without ever having to face the person being bullied. They rarely have to see the devastating effects and the toll that it takes on the innocent

victims. Parental vigilance and education are required to teach our youth the detrimental effects that all forms of bullying exact on victims.

School Safety, Crisis Management Plans and Police Response

As a result of a number of incidents including suspicious persons on school property, strangers being observed in washrooms, reports of subjects brandishing knives and guns on school property and bomb threats, there is an identified need to educate our members and school staff on appropriate response to these incidents.

Even though all area schools have established plans in place, many issues have been recognized when attempts are made to implement the plans. There is a need for the NBPS to facilitate communication between senior school officials and leaders, from all school boards, so they can come together to discuss the needs of students, staff, parents and police under their respective plans. There has been a definite escalation in the number and severity of incidents, nation-wide, within the school environment. We must make efforts to ensure that these needs are addressed prior to a serious occurrence taking place locally.

The further development of the School Police Emergency Action Response program (S.P.E.A.R.) will address many of the concerns presently being voiced by both School Boards and Police. S.P.E.A.R. is designed to provide police and other emergency services with critical and accurate school information to assist in responding to school emergencies. This innovative and comprehensive computer database, designed and first implemented by Peel Regional Police, takes a proactive approach to school security and emergency preparedness. The program is activated in the event of a violent or large-scale incident at any one of the local schools but is adaptable to other vital buildings and infrastructure assets in the municipalities of North Bay and Callander. The program coordinates frontline police unit response with that of specialized units such as the Emergency Response Team, Incident Commanders and Negotiators during such incidents, and provides school specific data and response plans that allow police to make critical decisions.

A project of this magnitude, involving so many different community partners, is a major undertaking and is labour intensive involving the gathering of huge volumes of information and documentation. The S.P.E.A.R. program is still in the planning/information gathering stages with an implementation date set for the future.

Staffing

One of the major aims of police, as identified in the Ontario Northeast Region Police and School Protocol, is to ensure consistency of approach when dealing with schools. There has been, and continues to be, a demonstrated need to increase the allocation of personnel in the School Liaison function to the levels that existed prior to 2004 when the unit was staffed with two officers.

Should this recommendation not be possible, a re-examination of the relationship between the School Liaison Officer (SLO), members of the Youth Office and DARE could result in the desired response to the needs of the school community.

F. Performance Objectives for the Next Year

Staffing

Many of the School Liaison calls for service are reactionary in nature. Patrol staff can and must augment the efforts of the SLO in order to fulfill the mandate of the protocol. The SLO should move toward a proactive presence in the schools rather than being in the schools strictly in a reactive capacity. A review of the methods in which calls for service are received, outside normal school hours, and subsequently dealt with should also be conducted. This would allow for the needs of victims to be addressed in a timely fashion with future referral of information to the SLO for any required follow up with school administration.

The reassignment of the French language DARE officer to the SLO office, when the annual curriculum is complete, would ensure the efficiency, quality and consistency of the service being provided to area schools. This would allow for an increased number of calls being answered directly by members assigned as SLO.

S.P.E.A.R.

The SLO should continue to assist with the research phase of the implementation of this project. This would ensure that the unique perspective, obtained by the SLO, as a result of day-to-day attendance in the schools, is included and considered.

Statistics

There is an identified need to re-evaluate the way school related calls for service that fall within the mandate of the liaison program are logged and recorded. At present, not all schools are part of the program, however all school related calls fall under one category when logged regardless of inclusion in the program. Calls such as alarms, trespass after hours, and MVC's recorded at the school address are shown as school related calls. As such this creates problems when attempting to search the data base and obtain relevant SLO related information concerning calls for service, charges laid, etc. The present method of recording calls requires a manual review of these calls to obtain relevant data. A possible solution could involve the use of "SLO" as a category for clearing calls. Any and all school related calls would be cleared to this category regardless of who attends. This would allow the SLO to search the data base and retrieve information only relevant to the liaison program including calls for service, warnings-written or verbal, youth referrals, charges and diversions by both the SLO officer as well as general patrol. This has been discussed with the communications supervisor and would require very little in the way of training or resources to implement.

A memo has been sent to the communications supervisor detailing the schools in the program and the calls for service of interest.

G. Other

N/A

H. Appendices

Appendix "A" – School Liaison Performance Indicators

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School Liaison Performance Indicators

	2006	2007	2008
Calls for Service	406	399	254
Criminal Code Charges	13	51	50
Provincial Offences Notices	5	1	4
Youth Referrals	N/A	12	21
Warnings	27	62	17