



# Fact Sheet

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## Secure Our Schools

*"We believe we can do a better job in educating our children in an environment that is as safe as possible."*

Superintendent Buster Evans  
Bleckley County (Georgia) School District

### Background

America's children spend more time in school than almost any other place outside the home. That places a huge responsibility on American schools and those charged with keeping them safe. In a time when a variety of weapons traffic illegally among America's youth, maintaining school safety becomes an increasingly difficult task. Classrooms no longer depend solely on teachers, but on teams of administrators, health care workers, security staff, and law enforcement professionals. Keeping America's children safe has become one of this nation's most successful collaborations, and it is a shining example of effective community policing.

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) has long demonstrated a commitment to school safety. The COPS Office has invested approximately \$912 million in America's schools through programs like Secure Our Schools (SOS), COPS in Schools, School-Based Partnerships, and the Safe Schools Initiative. In fiscal year (FY) 2010, SOS will distribute nearly \$16 million to help schools with a demonstrated need for both improved security and financial assistance to address growing safety concerns. Grantees are required to contribute a local cash match of 50 percent toward the total cost of the approved grant project.

### Grant Program Funding Provisions

A COPS SOS grant provides funding to state, local, or tribal governments to assist with the development of school safety resources. This funding allows recipients the opportunity to establish and enhance a variety of school safety equipment and/or programs to encourage the continuation and enhancement of school safety efforts within their communities. The COPS Office is optimistic that this grant program will help place agencies at the forefront of innovative school safety developments. Funding under this program pays for such things as:

- Placement and use of metal detectors, locks, lighting, and other deterrent measures
- Security assessments
- Security training of personnel and students
- Coordination with local law enforcement
- Any other measure that may provide a significant improvement in security.

All local, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies that have primary law enforcement authority within a partner primary or secondary school are eligible to apply for SOS. The grant is two years (24 months) in duration, and provides a maximum federal share of \$500,000. Agencies are required to contribute a local cash match of 50 percent towards the total cost of the approved grant project during the grant award period. Additionally, the SOS statute, 42 USC § 3797b(a)2, requires all applicants to include an assurance that the application was prepared after consultation with individuals not limited to law enforcement officers (such as school violence researchers, child psychologists, social workers, teachers, principals, and other school personnel) to ensure that the improvements to be funded under the grant are –

- (A) consistent with a comprehensive approach to preventing school violence; and
- (B) individualized to the needs of each school at which those improvements are to be made.

The COPS Office offers a variety of publications and products to advance community policing and support its grant programs. COPS Office publications and products offer insights into the experiences of others in the field in addressing specific problems, including the following:

- *School Safety Toolkit*, which includes documents and guides to help address issues often associated with school safety and youth violence
- *School Safety CD-ROM*
- *Traffic Congestion Around Schools POP Guide*
- *Because Things Happen Every Day: Responding to Teenage Victims of Crime*
- *Bullying in Schools*
- *Disorderly Youth in Public Places*
- *SRO Performance Evaluation: A Guide to Getting Results*
- *Teen Action Toolkit*
- *Vital Partners: Mayors and Police Chiefs Working Together for America's Children and Youth*

COPS Office publications are posted at [www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov).

The FY 2010 SOS program is placing a greater emphasis on school safety assessments. All applicants must have conducted a school safety assessment within the last three years for the schools targeted through the grant application or request funding through the grant application to conduct a school safety assessment for those identified schools. An exception to this requirement may be granted if the applicant is already planning an assessment for the targeted schools with other funding during the two-year SOS grant period. These assessments should be used as strategic evaluation tools to identify school safety problems. SOS applicants will be able to request budget items which are specifically linked to the resolution of school safety problems identified through these school safety assessments.

The COPS Office works with grantees to ensure the SOS program addresses the most pressing security needs of young people while they are in school. SOS funding addresses a variety of existing and emerging problems relating to school security through responses that range from traditional to innovative and rely on both new technology and the experience of school administrators and law enforcement professionals.

### **Contact the COPS Office**

For more information about COPS Office school safety programs and resources, call the COPS Office Response Center at 800.421.6770, or visit COPS Online at [www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov).