City Auditor's Office

Cape Coral Police Department Community Services Bureau – School Resource Officer Program Audit

Report Issued: October 6, 2023

Audit Report No. 23-05

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TO: Mayor Gunter and Council Members

FROM: Andrea R. Russell, City Auditor ARR

DATE: October 6, 2023

SUBJECT: Cape Coral Police Department (CCPD): Community Services Bureau – School Resource Office Program Audit

The City Auditor's Office has completed the audit of the CCPD: Community Services Bureau (CSB) – School Resource Officer (SRO) Program. The audit was conducted in conformance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards by the authority granted through City Ordinances 28-02 and 79-10.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the CCPD command staff, CSB, the SROs and administrative staff for the courtesy, cooperation and proactive attitude extended to the team members during the audit. If you have any questions or comments regarding this audit, please contact Andrea Russell at 242-3380 or Jessica Pautz at 242-3382.

C: Michael Ilczyszyn, City Manager
Connie Barron, Assistant City Manager
Aleksandr Boksner, City Attorney
Kimberly Bruns, City Clerk
Anthony Sizemore, Chief of Police
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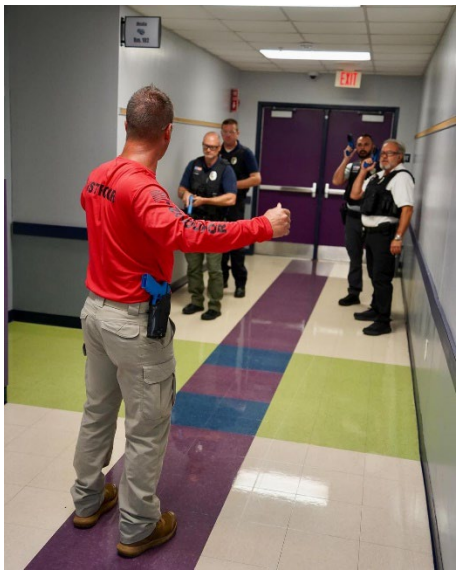
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City Auditor's Office conducted a performance audit of the CCPD: Community Services Bureau SRO Program. This audit is included in the City Auditor's FY23 approved Audit Plan.

Based on the test work performed and the audit recommendations noted below, we concluded overall that policies and procedures are in place; however, controls over completion of SRO training requirements and incident report closure need improvement. For further details on these findings and recommendations, see the Findings and Recommendations section. While we noted controls need improvement in these areas, we noted no material control deficiencies.

BACKGROUND



Florida State Statute (FSS) 1006.12- Safe-School Officers details requirements for SROs in public schools. In 2018, CCPD created an SRO program which is part of the Community Services Bureau (CSB). SRO positions initially utilized officers from various specialty units, such as SWAT, to provide safety and security at schools located in Cape Coral. CCPD currently has 30 SROs assigned to 26 schools within the city. The SRO program provides officers to 19 public schools, three private schools, and four charter schools. A signed agreement between CCPD and the schools defines roles, responsibilities, and payment requirements. For each School Year (SY) 21-22 and 22-23, CCPD had five agreements totaling $1,417,267.

SROs focus on safety of students and staff as well as mentoring students. SROs bridge the gap between police and students and help to foster an open relationship that facilitates reporting of suspicious activity in and around local schools.

SROs are sworn officers who start their careers with CCPD on patrol. They follow both CCPD General Orders (GO) as well as school policies for their assigned location. SROs work in conjunction with school administration and counselors as well as the Lee County Sheriff's Office (LCSO).

SROs completed 1,016 incident reports during SY21-22 and 904 incident reports during SY22-23. From January to June 2022[1], SROs completed 1,029 counseling and mentoring

[1] Statistics were not tracked prior to January 2022.

sessions, which included 136 presentations. For SY22-23, SROs completed 1,106 counseling and mentoring sessions, including 226 presentations.

AUDIT OBJECTIVE

To determine if the SRO program effectively establishes and maintains safe and secure learning environments in schools within the City.

STATEMENT OF AUDITING STANDARDS

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDING 2023-01: Noncompliance with General Order and Florida State Statute
Rank: High

Condition:
GO C-45 - School Resource Officer Program, requires additional training to be completed once an officer is reassigned from patrol to an SRO position. The SRO training requirements include:

- SRO course
- Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) course
- Patrol rifle course (provides advanced firearms training)
- Instructor Techniques course
- Annually demonstrate firearms proficiency by scoring at least 90% on both the Florida Department of Law Enforcement handgun qualification course and the Police Department rifle course.

In addition, FSS 1006.12(6)(a) - Safe-school officers at each public school: Crisis Intervention Training, requires SROs to complete a mental health CIT course using curriculum developed by a national organization with expertise in mental health crisis intervention.

Currently, it is the SRO supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the SRO completes the training as soon as possible; however, the GO does not have a defined timeline and there is insufficient monitoring to ensure the training is completed in a timely manner after reassignment. Our sample included training requirements for all SROs for School Years 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2023.

Test Results
Four of 42 (10%) SROs were missing more than one of the required four courses. In addition, if an SRO scores under 90% on firearm proficiency, the CSB requires the officer to attempt the qualification course quarterly until scoring 90% or better; however, this additional requirement is not in the GO. We noted three SRO's that did not achieve a score of 90% for our audit scope. A definitive timeline and more robust monitoring would help ensure SROs comply with GO C-45 and FSS 1006.12(6)(a). For further test results see the table below.

Results	Did not complete basic SRO Course	Did not complete CIT Course	Did not complete patrol rifle Course	Did not complete an Instructor Techniques Course	Did not score 90% or higher during SY21 annual completion of firearms proficiency	Did not score 90% or higher during SY22 annual completion of firearms proficiency
Number Tested	42	42	42	42	42	40[2]
Number of Exceptions	4	2	3	22	2	2
Exception Percentage	10%	5%	7%	52%	5%	5%

Criteria:
- FSS 1006.12(6)(a)
- GO C-45

Cause:
- Noncompliance with FSS 1006.12(6)(a) and GO C-45
- No time frame for SRO training completion
- Insufficient monitoring of training completion

Effect:
- Lack of advanced training which could hinder officer capabilities
- Required SRO training not completed in a timely manner resulting in SROs potentially unprepared for addressing school specific situations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

2023-01a: Update GO C-45 to clarify language and define a time frame for required SRO training prior to reassignment.

[2] Two officers retired in August during SY22. Neither officer completed all training requirements.

2023-01b: Develop and document administrative policies and procedures to ensure compliance with FSS 1006.12(6)(a) and GO C-45 SRO training requirements including a process for monitoring SRO compliance.

Management Response and Corrective Action Plan:

2023-01a Select one of these boxes: ☒ **Agree** ☐ **Partially agree*** ☐ **Disagree***
***For partially agree or disagree a reason must be provided as part of your response:**

2023-01a *Comply with recommendations as written*
2023-01a **Management Action Plan Coordinator:** Chief of Police
2023-01a **Anticipated Completion Date:** 01/31/24

2023-01b Select one of these boxes: ☒ **Agree** ☐ **Partially agree*** ☐ **Disagree***
***For partially agree or disagree a reason must be provided as part of your response:**

2023-01b *Comply with recommendations as written*
2023-01b **Management Action Plan Coordinator:** Chief of Police
2023-01b **Anticipated Completion Date:** 01/31/24

FINDING 2023-02: School Resource Officer Staffing Levels
Rank: Medium

Condition:
FSS 1006.12(1) - Safe-school officers, states school districts may establish a SRO program through a cooperative agreement with law enforcement agencies. CCPD GO C-45 - School Resource Officer Program, also provides guidance on requirements and renewals with agreements between CCPD and partnering schools. During the scope of our audit there were 30 assigned SROs and three Sergeants per SY for 26 schools.

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) recommends that every school have at least one trained SRO. Previously NASRO thought to place one SRO per 1,000 students; however, the recommendation now is to consider all factors including campus size, number of buildings, school climate[3], school location, and number of non-sworn safety team members on campus.

GO C-45 requires SROs to complete incident reports regarding situations that occur on school property. SROs complete incident reports to document threats, fights, or behaviors that could lead to dangerous situations. For SY 21-22 a total of 1,016 incident reports were completed. The majority of those reports, 803 (79%), were for incidents that occurred at high and middle schools. In SY 22-23 there was a total of 904 incident reports completed. Of those reports, 734 (81%) were for incidents at high and middle schools.

[3] A school climate can include several things such as engagement, safety, environment, or student behavior.

School agreements detail the number of SROs assigned to each school. Four of the five high schools in Cape Coral already have two SROs assigned. When considering the number of incident reports, campus size, and student populations at middle schools that are matriculating to high schools, additional SROs would be beneficial. SROs serve a very important role to keep students and staff safe at each school. In addition to location safety, SROs provide extensive mentoring to at-risk students. Often, counseling extends outside of school hours and grounds. SROs are an important step to facilitate open and respectful relationships between youth and police. In addition to these considerations, additional, adequately trained SROs could be available to substitute for an SRO who is unavailable to work their shift. Currently, if an SRO is unable to work their shift, a patrol officer is required to cover the SRO duties at that particular school.

Criteria:

- FSS 1006.12
- GO C-45
- SRO school agreements
- NASRO recommended SRO staffing levels

Cause:

- Large number of incident reports
- Increase in student population
- Insufficient staffing at certain schools

Effect:

- Potential insufficient counseling and mentoring of student population due to SRO shortage and time constraints

RECOMMENDATION:

2023-02: Develop and document a plan to hire additional SROs to supplement for absences, or to assign to locations with a more critical need.

Management Response and Corrective Action Plan:

2023-02 Select one of these boxes: ☒ **Agree** ☐ **Partially agree*** ☐ **Disagree***

***For partially agree or disagree a reason must be provided as part of your response:**

2023-02 *The Police Department will complete a staffing analysis and develop a plan to add additional SROs.*

2023-02 **Management Action Plan Coordinator:** Chief of Police

2023-02 **Anticipated Completion Date:** 10/01/2024

FINDING 2023-03: SRO Incident Report Closure
Rank: Medium

Condition:
Part of daily responsibility outlined in GO C-45 - School Resource Officer Program, requires SROs to complete all incident reports by the end of the day. SROs and Sergeants within the CSB reference GO C-42 - Investigative Services Bureau, which governs case management and provides the roles and responsibilities for completing an incident report. A specific procedure under "Investigations" states: "Officers are encouraged to follow-up on original investigation for case closure, arrests, and recovery of property." Once an incident report is completed by the SRO, a Sergeant reviews the report and may request changes or supplemental follow-up prior to closing the report. Follow-up on the original report is determined on a case-by-case basis. Follow-up determinations are based on several factors such as further questioning or investigation and may include driving to the student's residence to speak with them off campus. Incident reports can be closed if no follow-up is needed or if an arrest was made.

We reviewed a total of 40 incident reports for SY21-22 and SY22-23. Of the 40, 14 required follow up. We determined 100% of the reports were appropriately followed up on. Of the 40 incident reports reviewed, 38[4] of them could be closed; however, nine of the 38 (24%) incident reports were not closed. Leaving incident reports open can result in an artificially inflated case load for the Investigative Bureau (IB), who are responsible for investigating open reports further. IB may then have to devote time to researching cases that could have easily been closed by the SRO.

Criteria:
- GO C-42
- GO C-45

Cause:
- Non-compliance with GO C-42
- Limited monitoring of closure of incident reports by the CSB

Effect:
- Incident reports and cases are not closed in a timely manner
- Potential increased case load on IB Officers

RECOMMENDATIONS:

2023-03a: Develop and document a process for closure of open incident reports.

2023-03b: Update GO C-42 to include a time standard for review of open reports.

[4] Two of the 40 reports reviewed were "Notice to Appear" due to nicotine or vapes and didn't require closure and therefore were not tested with the other reports.

Management Response and Corrective Action Plan:

2023-03a Select one of these boxes: ☒ **Agree** ☐ **Partially agree*** ☐ **Disagree***
***For partially agree or disagree a reason must be provided as part of your response:**

2023-03a *A review of SOP's and General Orders and development of a process to come into compliance with recommendations.*
2023-03a **Management Action Plan Coordinator:** Chief of Police
2023-03a **Anticipated Completion Date:** 01/31/24

2023-03b Select one of these boxes: ☒ **Agree** ☐ **Partially agree*** ☐ **Disagree***
***For partially agree or disagree a reason must be provided as part of your response:**

2023-03b *Review and update General Order C-42*
2023-03b **Management Action Plan Coordinator:** Chief of Police
2023-03b **Anticipated Completion Date:** 01/31/24

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Based on the work performed during the planning and the assessment of risk, the audit covers SRO processes for the period of SY21-22 and SY22-23. Testing was performed using applicable FSS and CCPD GO's and policies and procedures that were in place during the scope.

We used copies of records as evidence and verified information through physical examination. Sample size and selection were based on the CAO Sample Methodology. We tested compliance with FSS and GOs by reviewing the following: all agreements with schools; incident reports; staffing levels; SRO training requirements; and communication of transfer students. To perform the different reviews, we examined all agreements within scope of the audit and all active SROs to determine if training requirements were completed. We used judgmental sampling to select incident reports to verify that the Sergeant reviewed the reports and any required follow-up was completed. Lastly, we judgmentally selected two high schools to review communication between school administration and SROs when students transfer with a previously documented history.

To achieve the audit objective, we evaluated and relied on information from the incident report software system and training files. Our evaluation determined that the data was reliable for the purpose of the stated audit objective.

Unless specifically stated otherwise, based on our selection methods, and testing of transactions and records, we believe that it is reasonable to project our results to the population and ultimately draw our conclusions for testing, findings, and recommendations on those

results. Additionally, for proper context we have presented information concerning the value and/or size of the items selected for testing compared to the overall population and the value and/or size of the exceptions found in comparison to the items selected for testing.

APPENDIX A

Finding Classification
Findings are grouped into one of three classifications: High, Medium or Low. Those findings that are categorized as low are not included in the report but rather are communicated separately to management. Classifications prioritize the findings for management to address and also indicate the level of testing required to determine if a finding's Corrective Action Plan is fully implemented in accordance with recommendations and Management's Response.

High: A finding that is ranked as "High" will have a significant impact on the organization. It is one that *prevents* the achievement of a substantial part of significant goals or objectives, or noncompliance with federal, state or local laws, regulations, statutes or ordinances. Any exposure to loss or financial impact for a High finding is considered *material*. Examples include direct violation of City or Department policy, blatant deviation from established policy and procedure, such as actions taken to circumvent controls in place, material non-compliance with federal, state or local laws, regulations, statutes or ordinances, or an area where significant cost savings could be realized by the Department or the City through more efficient operations.

High findings require immediate management attention and should take management's priority when considering implementation for corrective action.

Medium: A "Medium" finding is one that *hinders* the accomplishment of a significant goal or objective or non-compliance with federal, state or local laws, regulations, statutes or ordinances, but can't be considered as preventing the accomplishment of the goal or objective or compliance with federal, state or local laws, regulations, statutes or ordinances. Exposure to loss or potential or actual financial impact is *significant but not material* to the Department or City. Examples include lack of monitoring of certain reports, insufficient policies and procedures, procedure in place or lack of procedure that can result in *potential* noncompliance with laws and or regulations.

Medium findings require management attention within a time frame that is agreed upon by the Department and the City Auditor. Priority for implementation of management's corrective action should be considered in light of other High or Low findings.

Low: A "Low" finding is one that warrants communication to management but is one that isn't considered as hindering the accomplishment of a significant goal or objective and isn't causing noncompliance with federal, state or local laws, regulations, statutes or ordinances. Financial impact or risk of loss is minimal to none; however, low findings can *hinder the effectiveness or quality of department operations and thus are communicated to management separately. Low ranked findings are not included in the final audit report.*

The City Auditor's Office will not follow up on the status of Low findings communicated to Management.