

SCHOOL POLICE OFFICER PROGRAM



**WILKES-BARRE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

The Wilkes-Barre Area School District recognizes the need for intervention and prevention in an effort to reduce crime among juveniles in school-based settings. To meet this need the District has placed ten full-time school police officers (SPO) into the Wilkes-Barre Area School District and developed its own Police Department. The department is recognized by the Pennsylvania State Police and has been granted its own ORI number. Serving the school community to enhance the safety and security of all schools within the District.

The issue of creating safe schools is a concern shared by the community. Children find it difficult to learn and teachers cannot teach if violence is present in their schools. Our children and our teachers have a right to expect their school to be safe and to be a place where individuals are not threatened, intimidated or victimized.

This program is an effort not only to address school-based crime, but an endeavor to provide juvenile intervention and prevention through education, mentoring, and counseling as a means to reduce juvenile crime throughout the community. The program is designed to integrate a school police officer into the school setting, not as a police officer assigned to the school district, but rather as a school police officer who is part of the school community and whose presence is as inoffensive and as commonplace as a teacher, school nurse or custodian.

The exclusive focus of the officer's duty in the school community is a vital aspect of this program. Unlike the police officer who responds to school problems as a result of an emergency call, the school police officer regards the school and its surrounding neighborhood as his/her community.

The officer knows the school and the layout of the grounds, the school rules and regulations, the school's population, and the neighborhood. The students and the school police officer will see each on a daily basis affording them the opportunity to interact in many different situations ranging from a classroom setting to perhaps shooting hoops in the gym.

This basic interaction is important because it allows youths to view the school police officer as a person who helps to lay the critical foundation needed to support trust, free exchange of information and ideas, and improved relationships.

Working within the school allows the school police officer the opportunity to work hand in hand with school personnel and with school-based probation officers to identify students in need of intervention or guidance.

The Wilkes-Barre Area School District has benefited from working partnerships with the Wilkes-Barre City Police Department, Plains Township Police Department, and the Pennsylvania State Police established through Memorandum of Understanding. These valuable partnerships have expedited investigations both within and beyond the District, saving time, effort, and resources.

The District has developed its own Police Department which was granted an ORI Number by the Pennsylvania State Police serving to enhance the safety and security of all schools within the District.

The Wilkes-Barre Area School District's Police Department has a dedicated staff of highly trained and experienced law enforcement officers.

Chief of Police Operations, Carl Gembitski, SP Sergeant Brett Smith, SPO Barry Jacob SPO James Sheridan, SPO Ed Mishanski, SPO Carol Davenport, SPO Jeff Lutz, SPO SPO Kaitlyn Camillocci, SPO Dave Sobocinski and SPO Michelle Moore are proud and committed to serving the department and the school community.

Special thanks to the School Board of the Wilkes-Barre Area School District and Wilkes-Barre Area School District Superintendent Dr. Brian Costello for their continued support to help protect the safety of our students, faculty and staff.

BENEFITS OF HAVING SCHOOL POLICE OFFICERS

- * Increase the safety of students, faculty, administrators and visitors within the school.
- * Teacher who instructs students on crime prevention and related law issues.
- * Counselor/mentor who serves students and their families and serves as a liaison to community resources.
- * Role model.
- * On - campus resources for school faculty and the community.
- * Create an orderly and secure atmosphere for a student which is conducive to learning.
- * Reduce juvenile crime in school.
- * Promote a greater understanding between students and law enforcement.