

Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Youth Services



History

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office School Resource Officer program traces its origins to 1997, the year it first partnered with the Okaloosa County School Board to place deputies in local middle and high schools. Since that time, the dedication to that concept, along with the ongoing professional development and training of its participants, has deepened and expanded dramatically.



Following the Sandy Hook tragedy, in January 2013 the OCSO Youth Services Division added 26 officers overnight to the unit and now has SROs in all 37 public schools within Okaloosa County. The unit services more than 30,000 students and an additional 2500 faculty and school personnel within the county. It is the policy of our unit that all middle and high school SROs also provide safety and planned security at ALL

sporting and school related activities. They are required to develop an operational, tactical plan for events with significant attendance. Additionally, SROs are involved in school crisis security assessments as part of the Okaloosa County School District Safety Board.



History

In 2014, the Florida Association of School Resource Officers honored the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Youth Services Division with the "Agency of the Year" award for Florida.

The SRO unit is continuing to develop a trained Auxiliary and Emergency Reserve Unit to assist with our Sheriff's mandate of ensuring every school has an SRO on campus every day. SROs also attend scheduled Town Hall and community meetings, to include interviews on our local Radio Show and community television broadcasts. These steps will spread the word of the SRO mission and gain feedback and perspective from the citizens who SROs serve, as they strive to better this program.

The Youth Services Division has impressive and wide-ranging capabilities and training methodologies. The SROs are not only the front line protection for our children in schools, they are also responsible for several other investigative services:



- **Sexual offender/predator verifications and investigations. This past December 343 checks were attempted in one day.**
- **Gang Identification Tracking and Intelligence Gathering/ Dissemination for the agency.**

Our agency is fortunate to have the backing of the citizens of Okaloosa County and the Okaloosa County School District. Our SROs work hard in partnership with local programs including Juvenile Justice Probation Officers, Boys & Girls Clubs, The Police Athletic Club and Big Sisters/Big Brothers to keep kids positively engaged and out of trouble. Funds from the COPS grant enable our officers to receive training in educational IEP's and Special Needs students as well as Strategic School Plans and other specialized areas so we can provide the best support possible to our school partners and the children we serve.



Community Service

In working to cultivate positive traits, the SROs themselves lead by example. Community Service is a primary tenet of our program and each individual SRO takes the concept to heart with numerous projects.

- **OCSO Youth Week**
- **OCSO Sheriff's Explorer Program**
- **Angel Tree "Shining Star" Program**
- **Star Charities**
 - Round the Bay Run
- **Florida Sheriff's Association Teen Driver Challenge**
- **Florida Sheriff's Association Caruth Camp**
- **Bike/ Walk to School Day**
- **Juvenile Justice Council**
- **Northwest Florida Men's Encounter (Church ministry program)**
- **"Take a Kid Fishing"**
- **Community Youth Sports**
 - Football, Baseball, Softball, Soccer, Basketball
- **Community Safety Day**
- **Board Member for National Alliance on Mental Health (Emerald Coast Chapter)**
- **Heart of the Bride - Mud Run for Orphans**
- **Trunk or Treat**
- **LEO Education Day**
- **Public Safety Day**
- **Special Olympics Florida**
- **Wounded Warrior Foundation**
- **Boy Scouts of America**
- **Salvation Army**
- **"The Greatest Save" PSA program**
- **Children In Crisis**
- **Ronald McDonald House**
- **American Cancer Society**
 - Relay For Life
- **American Heart Association**
 - Heart Walk
- **United Way**
 - Coats for Kids



Training

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Youth Services Division prides itself in the ability to utilize our own SROs in their area of expertise as well as other assets of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office to provide In-Service training at little or no cost to the agency. Due to these expanded tasks, the Youth Services Division was placed under the purview of the Criminal Investigations Division in 2014. When not in schools, and to push the tactical enhancement of the unit, the Okaloosa SRO program has implemented the following into the unit:

- **Unit Specific Trainers**
- **A designated K-9 team**
- **Fitness Trainer**
- **Tactical Training Officer**



Our SRO selection process is rigorous and designed that only the most diverse, dedicated and fit officers available to work in our schools are selected. 98% of our officers have college degrees and our unit represents 75% of the top performers in our Physical Abilities Testing process. SROs are required to maintain physical fitness standards, evaluated bi-annually in the completion of a Physical Abilities Test. SROs attend ongoing Use of Force training to include proficiency training with lethal and non-lethal weapons. This training is in addition to our bi-annual weapons qualifications course. Our SROs receive annual training and certification in the following:

- **Non-Violent Physical Crisis Intervention**
- **Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI)**
- **Active Shooter**
- **MILO System - (Multiple Interactive Learning Objectives)**



SROs also have established accounts with Police One Academy for self-initiated on-line continuing education and training on an abundance of law enforcement related subject matter. This allows SROs to enhance their education, job proficiency and subject matter expertise without leaving their campuses for training during the school day, thus providing 100% law enforcement coverage of all schools at all times.

Training

All of the SROs in the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Youth Services Division are actively working towards the designation of National SRO Practitioner. Currently 23 of our 38 officers hold FASRO designations as a SRO Practitioner with 6 others having turned in their applications. 27 of our SROs joined the unit less than three years ago when elementary schools were adopted into the program. We have made great strides in that short amount of time to develop and advance our abilities. In addition to the NARO and FASRO designations, many of our SROs have also demonstrated their commitment to being an SRO by obtaining the School Resource Officer Specialists Designation from the Florida Attorney General's Office via the Florida Crime Prevention Training Institute.



**Florida Crime Prevention
Training Institute**

"Training Excellence Since 1982"



TRIAD AT WORK

The goal of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Youth Services Division is to provide continued safe learning environments in our community schools, provide valuable resources to our school staff, foster a positive relationship with our community's youth and work together to develop strategies to resolve problems affecting our youth with a combined effort of a goal to protect every child so they can reach their fullest potential. In order to reach these goals the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Youth Services Division has incorporated the triad of being Educators, Informal Counselors and Law Enforcement Officers.

Our SROs exhibit a degree of law enforcement professionalism that is exceptional. As law enforcement officers we serve as a shield for our community's most valuable assets; our children. Our SROs are present in every Okaloosa County School K-12 and are responsible for all law enforcement action taken on school campus as well as assisting with the following:

- **Conduct daily counseling of students** — Working hand in hand with school counselors in a team effort to combat a variety of emotional issues
- **Conflict resolution**
- **Depression and other mental instability**



ABOVE AND BEYOND

Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Youth Services SROs regularly teach curriculum on the following subject matter:

Good Citizenship and Character Building Programs –

“Junior Deputy Leadership Posse”

Books 2 Badges Program

“Character Counts”

Deputy C.A.R.E.S.

“Are you Smarter Than Deputy ____?”

Sheriff's Explorers

Anti-Bullying

Cyber Safety

School Safety



Drug & Alcohol Abuse

Teen Driver Challenge

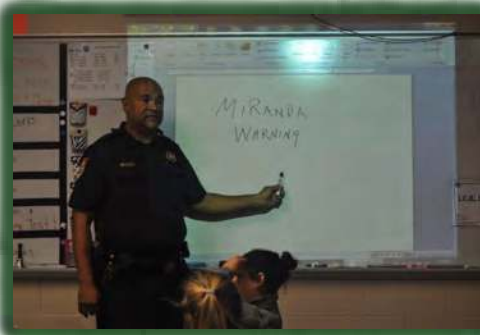
Just Say No to Drugs

Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation Groups

History & Civics –

Middle School SROs teach a class on the Bill of Rights with emphasis on the 4th, 5th and 8th amendments

Forensic Science



Community Preparedness

Because Okaloosa County is home to military units based out of three military installations, the Okaloosa SROs have implemented and conduct Random Anti-Terrorism Measures to ensure the safety of the children in our unique community. We understand the importance of maintaining a tactical advantage and work to educate our school administrators and staff about these needs in real world applications. Okaloosa County is home to Eglin Air Force Base, the United States Air Force Special Operations Command at Hurlburt Field, Duke Field, the Combined Forces EOD School, U.S. Army Ranger Training and the 7th Special Forces Group. Our SROs recognize the stresses associated with deployment of military parents and the hardships affecting our military dependent students. SROs regularly work with Military Family Life Counselors in the school to provide counseling to those students when necessary.



New Project Deputy's C.A.R.E.

Conversations About Real Experiences -

Middle School — a program designed especially to reach at risk male teens in middle school. The purpose of the program is for deputies to build rapport and a relationship with students needing a positive male role model.

High School - the program expands to include minority male and female teens with the purpose to invoke an open discussion about topics concerning the perceptions by minority youth about law enforcement officers and their responsibilities as a law enforcement officer. Current social videos are brought for discussion and reverse role playing is introduced at this level.



Motivational Speakers

King Safrotwe Kakradae IV of Ghana

Discussed the importance of helping each other and striving for goals to succeed in life.



Chris Hollyfield; WWE Wrestler, “Got Respect” Motivational Speaker about Bullying Prevention.



Commitment In Action



Commitment In Action

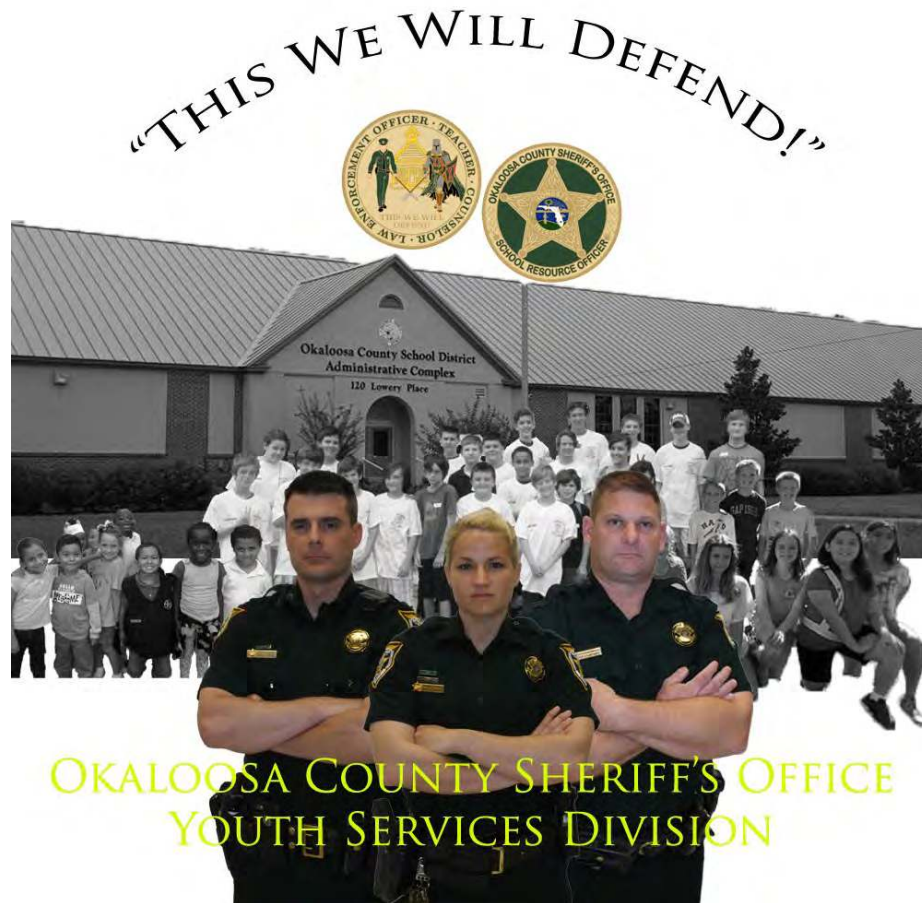


Commitment In Action



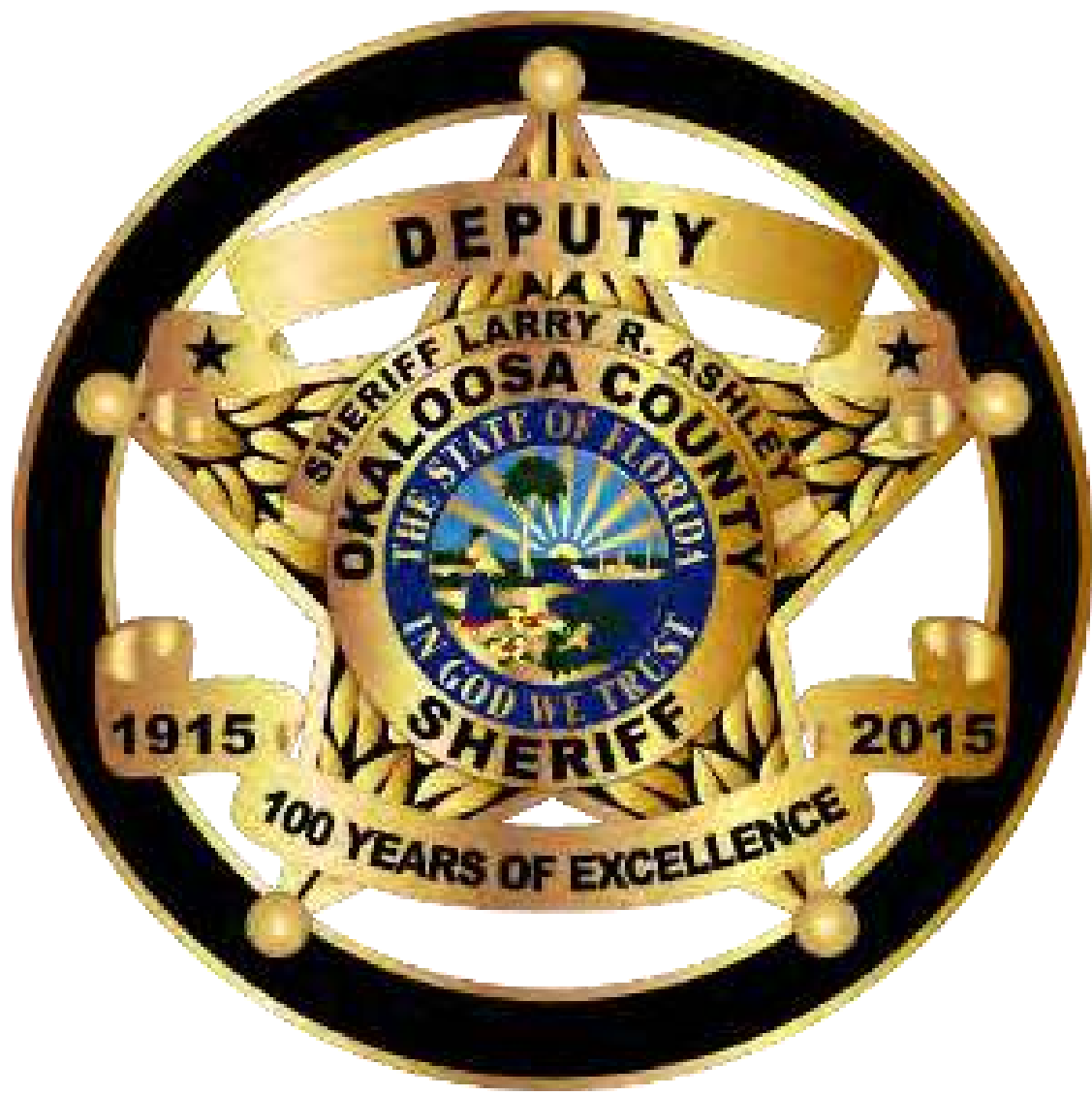
With the unshakable commitment of the Sheriff, agency, and community, the Okaloosa SRO Unit's goals are straightforward: No opportunity to educate, mentor, and build leadership skills will be overlooked, however the safety and security of Okaloosa students and staff will always be the primary mission. It is the directive of Sheriff Ashley that no school will go unprotected, no matter the cost. The Youth Services Division of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office is ready to stand as that shield of protection.

As the Okaloosa SRO Unit coin proudly states:



*“Our mission is to protect and serve and I can think of no more critical public safety goals than protecting our most precious resource and working to help them become good citizens,” said **Sheriff Larry Ashley**. “Our Unit excels on every front - from safety and security to mentoring and leadership development. Our emphasis on training, professional development, and organizational efficiency is second to none and I am incredibly proud of this statewide recognition of our program as a role model for all of Florida. I also want to credit the support we get from parents, teachers, and school district administrators.”*

Larry Ashley
Sheriff Larry Ashley



DEPUTY

SHERIFF LARRY R. ASHLEY

OKALOOSA COUNTY

THE STATE OF FLORIDA
IN GOD WE TRUST

SHERIFF

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100 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE