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**New research examines effect of removing School Resource Officers on school climate  
in CPS high schools**

*Students' and teachers' sense of safety largely unchanged*

CHICAGO—A study released today examines what happened when Chicago Public Schools (CPS) began the process of removing School Resource Officers (SROs) from its high schools, starting in the 2020–21 school year.

“We found teachers’ and students’ reports of their sense of safety did not change significantly after the removal of SROs, based on their responses on *5Essentials* Surveys,” said Amy Arneson, lead author of the report and a Senior Research Analyst at the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research. “We also found that schools serving predominantly Black students were more likely to retain at least one SRO, and students who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, students who were not English Learners, and students in special education were more likely than their peers to be in schools that retained one or both SROs.”

The findings are part of a larger, ongoing study by researchers from the UChicago Consortium, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Lurie Children’s Hospital’s Center for Childhood Resilience. The study uses enrollment data, school discipline data, and school climate survey data from 2014–15 to 2022–23 to examine the effects of the Chicago Board of Education’s 2020 request to phase out SROs in high schools, and the district’s subsequent partnership with community-based organizations to develop the *Whole School Safety* (WSS) Framework, which defines school safety holistically around three pillars of 1) physical safety, 2) emotional safety, and 3) relational trust. Under the Board’s plan, Local School Councils (LSCs) in district-run high schools were given the power to decide whether or not to retain SROs on their campuses.

“The shift away from SROs and toward the Whole School Safety framework represents a significant change in how the district approaches school safety,” says Arneson. “We hope this research can help CPS leaders, community partners, students, families, and community members understand this shift. The findings released today illustrate what happened before and immediately following the decision by high school LSCs to retain or remove SROs. Future reports will examine other aspects, such as what the implementation of the Whole School Safety policy looked like in schools.”

Researchers used CPS administrative data on district-run high schools for students enrolled 2014–15 through 2022–23 and found:

- **SRO removal was significantly related to having fewer high-level discipline infractions.**
  - While high-level discipline infractions rose districtwide from 2018–19 through 2022–23, schools that had fully removed SROs did not have similar increases in high-level discipline infractions; their rates remained relatively flat.

- Notes on these outcome trends:
  - District-wide, recorded discipline infractions, suspensions, and police notifications declined, then rose after COVID-19:
    - From 2014–15 through 2018–19, each of these outcomes—recorded discipline infractions, suspensions, and police notifications—declined in CPS each year.
    - Between 2021–22 and 2022–23, there was an increase in each of these outcomes district-wide.
- **Where SROs were, and were not, removed differed by schools’ student body composition:**
  - In examining the characteristics of schools that retained, partially removed, or fully removed SROs, researchers found that schools that retained both SROs in 2022–23:
    - Were more likely to serve predominantly Black students.
    - Tended to be smaller and have higher levels of suspensions than schools that removed both SROs.
  - Students who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, students who were not English Learners, and students in special education were more likely than their peers to be in schools that retained one or both SROs.

In addition, researchers looked at teacher and student responses on the *5Essentials* survey and found that SRO removal was *not* related to changes over time in:

- Student survey reports of perception of physical safety or student-teacher trust, nor
- Teacher survey reports of perception of physical safety.

Research details:

**Removing Police Officers from Chicago Schools: Trends and Outcomes** by Amy Arneson, Rebecca Hinze-Pifer, Kaitlyn Franklin, David W. Johnson explored these research questions:

1. What were the characteristics of schools that retained, partially removed, or fully removed SROs?
  - a. What were the characteristics of students in schools that made different decisions about SROs?
2. When CPS high schools removed one or both SROs, how did school climate (student and teacher perceptions of physical safety, student perceptions of relationships with teachers) and discipline outcomes (infractions, high-level infractions, suspensions, and police notifications) change?

### **About the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research**

With the goal of supporting stronger and more equitable educational outcomes for students, the [UChicago Consortium](#) conducts research of high technical quality that informs and assesses policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). We seek to expand communication among researchers, policymakers, practitioners, families, and communities as we support the search for solutions to the challenges of school improvement. The UChicago Consortium encourages the use of research in policy action and practice but does not advocate for particular policies or programs.

Rather, we help to build capacity for school improvement by identifying what matters most for student success, creating critical indicators to chart progress, and conducting theory-driven evaluation to identify how programs and policies are working.

### **About the College of Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**

Founded in 1905, the [College of Education](#) is one of the nation's first land-grant schools of education, revered for its groundbreaking research, preparation of educator-leaders, and worldwide impact. U.S. News & World Report consistently ranks the College and its programs among the world's best. Home of the late Dr. Samuel Kirk, the "father of special education," and now more than 70 tenure-track faculty and over 2,000 undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and online students — Great Minds Think Illinois.

The University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign is a public land-grant research university in Illinois in the twin cities of Champaign and Urbana. It is the flagship institution of the University of Illinois system and was founded in 1867. The university serves the people of Illinois through a shared commitment to excellence in teaching, research, public engagement, economic development and health care. Faculty, staff and students share their knowledge, expertise and resources with residents in every corner of the state through public service and outreach programs.

### **About The Center for Childhood Resilience**

[The Center for Childhood Resilience](#) (CCR) is the public health arm of Lurie Children's Hospital Pritzker Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health. CCR's diverse multidisciplinary team of psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, educators, researchers and support staff increases access to the mental health supports young people need by educating and building support capacity for the adults and caregivers in children's lives. Since 2004, CCR has worked in the communities where kids live, learn and play to support their social, emotional and mental well-being through expanding evidence-informed programs and practices, civic advocacy, and other innovative, sustainable strategies that promote equity and reduce disparities.

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