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An Investigation of Reciprocal Reporting Agreements Between School Districts and Local Law Enforcement Agencies

Mark E. Doan

Eastern Illinois University

This research is a product of the graduate program in Educational Administration at Eastern Illinois University. Find out more about the program.

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Author ___________________________ Date __________
An Investigation of Reciprocal Reporting Agreements

Between School Districts and Local Law Enforcement Agencies

(TITLE)

BY

MARK E. DOAN

THESIS

FIELD STUDY

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

Specialist Degree in Educational Administration

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1997

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING

THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the existing status of reciprocal reporting agreement guidelines between high schools and local law enforcement agencies in East Central Illinois. Principals of all high schools and local law enforcement officials in a 13 county area were surveyed, and responses were tabulated.

In the surveyed area, 54% of the districts did not have reciprocal reporting agreements with law enforcement offices. Local Parent-Teacher Advisory Committees had very little or no input (52%) in the development of these guidelines. While 70% of high school administrators have general guidelines to follow when law authorities are to be contacted, 90% responded that their own discretion was used in deciding when to call law officials.

Recommendations from this study include: (a) district administrators should compare and contrast present reporting agreements against a model agreement, (b) boards of education should be informed and educated about reciprocal reporting statutes, (c) all principals should be instructed in all facets of existing agreements, due to the frequent turnover of administrative positions, (d) school officials should promote a positive relationship with law authorities, (e) regional offices of education should encourage the development of reciprocal reporting policies between schools and law enforcement agencies, and (f) state legislators should be made aware of the perceived roadblocks which affect the sharing of information regarding criminal activity by students.
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CHAPTER 1
Overview of the Problem

In 1978, a study reported that 282,000 students were physically attacked in secondary schools each month (National Institute of Education, 1995). Violence in schools has gained in national prominence. Each day there is another story of violence and crime occurring on a school campus. One occurrence can strike fear into entire communities.

Chris was a student at a high school. He was on juvenile probation for assault and battery. Chris was also diagnosed as having a behavioral disorder and was transferred to a new high school because of his trouble in the past. Most school officials and teachers knew nothing of Chris's past because there was no reciprocal reporting agreement between Chris's school and local law enforcement agencies. After his enrollment, Chris was arrested and charged for sexually assaulting and beating to death a female student in the girls' restroom at the school (Holleman & Lhotka, 1995). This is not an isolated event. A USA Weekend survey indicated that 37% of those students surveyed did not feel safe in school, 43% avoided restrooms, and 45% avoided school grounds when possible (Ansley, 1993).
Because of the increasingly serious nature of many juvenile crimes, a number of juvenile courts and state legislators are beginning to recognize the need for juvenile record sharing (Turner, 1989).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the existing status of reciprocal reporting agreement guidelines between school districts and local law enforcement agencies in East Central Illinois. There is some agreement that a free exchange of information between law enforcement agencies and school districts would serve the best interests of both parties (Humphrey and Turner, 1994). According to existing statutes, the court system in Illinois is under little obligation to inform schools of those students who are on probation or the terms of their probation. On the other hand, school officials are not totally bound to report violations, suspensions, or expulsions of students on probation to local authorities (Humphrey and Turner, 1994). The School Code of Illinois, section 10-20.14, requires a district's Parent-Teacher Advisory Committee, in cooperation with law enforcement agencies, to develop guidelines for reciprocal reporting of criminal offenses.
committed by students (Illinois Association of School Boards, 1996).

In order to assist school district officials in formulating a reciprocal agreement with law enforcement officials, there was a need to investigate existing agreements used in East Central Illinois. Specific objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the level of participation by school districts, county Sheriff departments, States Attorney offices, and probation departments presently utilizing reciprocal reporting agreements.

2. To determine perceived roadblocks which inhibit the sharing of information between school districts and law enforcement agencies.

3. To determine if general guidelines were present for use when law enforcement authorities were to be contacted by school personnel when criminal activity occurred.

4. To determine information which would be useful to school and law enforcement officials which presently is not shared.

After compiling and analyzing questionnaires distributed to secondary school administrators, Sheriffs departments, and
probation departments, information was gathered to determine the extent to which reciprocal reporting agreements were being used and the perceived effectiveness of such agreements.

In discussions by this researcher with school administrators, the lack of sharing knowledge regarding students and criminal activity is perceived as a major obstacle in providing a safe and conducive environment for learning to take place. This study should encourage districts to establish and adopt School/Police Policies and Guidelines in order to formulate a workable document for reciprocal reporting. In addition, information sharing between school districts and law enforcement agencies would enable schools to take steps to insure students are protected from violence while on school grounds. The findings of this study also may be used by any school districts in other states subject to their respective state statutes. This study should provide information to district officials which will help them create an agreement unique to their own specifications but within the parameters of statutory law. School district officials should be able to compare and contrast their existing reciprocal reporting guidelines against perceived obstacles and,
therefore, improve or enhance their present police/school partnership.

The setting of this study consisted of the following 73 specific high schools in East Central Illinois:

- Arcola H.S.
- Armstrong-Potomac H.S.
- Atwood-Hammond H.S.
- Bethany H.S.
- Bloomington H.S.
- Catlin H.S.
- Champaign Centennial H.S.
- Charleston H.S.
- Cissna Park H.S.
- Clinton H.S.
- Danville H.S.
- Decatur MacArthur H.S.
- DeLand-Weldon H.S.
- Dwight H.S.
- Flanagan H.S.
- Gridley H.S.
- Heyworth H.S.
- Argenta-Oreana H.S.
- Arthur H.S.
- Bement H.S.
- Bismarck-Henning H.S.
- Blue Ridge H.S.
- Cerro Gordo H.S.
- Champaign Central H.S.
- Chenoa H.S.
- Clifton Central H.S.
- Crescent City H.S.
- Decatur Eisenhower H.S.
- Decatur St. Theresa H.S.
- Donovan H.S.
- Fisher H.S.
- G.C.M.S. H.S.
- Heritage H.S.
- Hoopeston Area H.S.
Iroquois West H.S. Jamaica H.S.
Kansas H.S. Leroy H.S.
Lexington H.S. Lovington H.S.
Mahomet-Seymour H.S. Maroa-Forsyth H.S.
Mattoon H.S. Meridian H.S.
Milford H.S. Mt. Zion H.S.
Niantic-Harristown H.S. Normal Comm. H.S.
Normal Comm. West H.S. Normal University H.S.
Oakland H.S. Oakwood H.S.
Olympia Fields H.S. Paris H.S.
Paxton-Buckley-Loda H.S. Pontiac H.S.
Prairie Central H.S. Rantoul H.S.
Ridgeview H.S. Rossville-Alvin H.S.
Sheldon H.S. Shiloh H.S.
St. Joseph-Ogden H.S. Stephen Decatur H.S.
Streator Woodland H.S. Sullivan H.S.
Tri-Valley H.S. Tuscola H.S.
Unity H.S. University H.S.
Urbana H.S. Villa Grove H.S.
Warrensburg-Latham H.S.

In addition to the list of high schools, Sheriff departments,
States Attorney offices, and probation departments were targeted from the following Illinois counties:

- Champaign
- Coles
- DeWitt
- Douglas
- Edgar
- Ford
- Iroquois
- Livingston
- Macon
- Macon
- McLean
- Moultrie
- Piatt
- Vermilion

The desired effects of this study were to encourage school districts, specifically high schools, to establish and adopt School-Police Policies and Guidelines. In addition, information sharing between school districts and law enforcement agencies should enable school personnel to take steps to insure all students are protected and therefore produce a safer, more orderly environment conducive to learning.

Limitation of the Study

Outside the scope of this study were schools with grades K-8. High school administrators were chosen to be surveyed because high school officials often deal with students who commit criminal offenses.

Definition of Terms

The following operational definitions should be useful in
understanding the context of this study:

**Reciprocal reporting.** The sharing of criminal, juvenile information between school district and law enforcement agencies by using guidelines established by both parties.

**School Administration/Officials.** The high school Principal or Assistant Principal involved in the disciplining of students in a school district.

**Parent-Teacher Advisory Committee.** The committee formed to help develop guidelines on pupil discipline.

**Juvenile crimes.** Crimes committed by a person under 17 years of age which include, but are not limited to, assault, battery, theft, intimidation, possession of drugs, and harassment.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature and Research

As long ago as 1917 the home seemed to be disappearing, and crime, despite effective police and probation systems, was increasing everywhere (Spring, 1986). One approach in dealing with juvenile delinquency was to use the school as a solution. In 1967, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice reported that failure of schools to adequately educate the child was a causal link to juvenile delinquency (Menacker, 1995).

As student misbehavior and the lack of parental discipline increased, the federal government became involved by adding its input. The 1978 landmark "Violent Schools-Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report," indicated that well over one-third of robberies and assaults on youths occurred in schools (Menacker, 1995). In a National League of Cities study released in 1994, 80% of respondents said violence was a serious problem in classrooms, hallways and playgrounds (National School Safety Center, 1995).

Because of the increasingly serious nature of many juvenile crimes, a number of juvenile courts and state legislatures
have begun to recognize the need for juvenile record sharing (Turner, 1989). Some school officials do not report crime and violence activity to law enforcement agencies when it occurs at school. School administrators sometimes make the decision to address problems through the use of school discipline as opposed to dealing with the criminal justice system. Maddox (1994) stated that selective reporting and exclusion of information obstructs effective decision-making and hinders delivery of efficient police services.

According to the 27th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Towards the Public Schools, lack of discipline was cited as the biggest problem facing schools (cited in National School Safety Center, 1995). The public's fears are also manifested in students and school executives. In the survey, "The Violence at Your Door," 97% of respondents thought school violence had increased in the last five years (cited in National School Safety Center, 1995).

With increased violence in schools, educators are challenged to protect pupils from mistreatment by other students and also protect teachers from violent students. Schools cannot fulfill this obligation unless they know which
of their students are habitual and violent youths known to law enforcement authorities (Nicholson, 1985).

The sharing of information concerning juvenile records is controversial. Courts have historically operated under the assumption that a juvenile's records are to be kept confidential in order to protect a youth's right to privacy (Stephens, 1990). Stephens also indicates that problems occur when those who are teaching, counseling, and disciplining do not have full knowledge of the minors for whom they must make daily decisions.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) was drafted to restrict information sharing (Clontz, 1988). FERPA prevents the disclosure of personally identifiable information, with certain limited exceptions. Information is categorized as either directory or non-directory. Directory information is not considered private. Examples of directory information are name, address, date of birth, attendance, awards received, and institution(s) attended (Rapp, 1989). Non-directory information is material included in a student's record other than directory information and it is considered private. Non-directory information may
not be shared without parental consent. FERPA laws strike a delicate balance between privacy of education record information and the needs of educators to be aware of the relationship between certain juveniles and law enforcement agencies (James, 1994).

In Illinois, the Juvenile Court Act of 1987 impacts what schools and law enforcement officials may or may not do in terms of sharing information (Humphrey and Turner, 1994). Court records are not open to everyone. One area which seems to need clarification is whether school officials are considered other properly interested persons. If so, may juvenile court records be disclosed without violating confidentiality standards?

Section 20-20.14 of the Illinois School Code (IASB, 1996) states that each district must have guidelines for reciprocal reporting in place. Some districts in Illinois have developed and utilized comprehensive reciprocal reporting agreements. There is a need for districts to move towards more comprehensive, yet usable, reciprocal reporting agreements.
CHAPTER 3
Design of the Study

General Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the existing status of reciprocal reporting agreement guidelines between school districts and law enforcement agencies in East Central Illinois. Specific objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the level of participation by school districts, county Sheriff departments, States Attorney offices, and probation departments presently utilizing reciprocal reporting agreements.

2. To determine perceived roadblocks which inhibit the sharing of information between school districts and law enforcement agencies.

3. To determine if general guidelines were present for use when law enforcement authorities were to be contacted by school personnel when criminal activity occurred.

4. To determine information which would be useful to school and law enforcement officials which presently is not shared.
Sample and Population

Participants in this study included the principals or assistant principals from all 73 high schools in a 13 county area in East Central Illinois. There was no limitation on the enrollment size of the high schools which were surveyed for this study. Other participants included representatives from all States Attorney offices, Sheriff departments, and probation departments in the same 13 county area in East Central Illinois.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

To obtain information to meet the specific objectives of this study, the researcher developed two questionnaires. The questionnaire sent to high school administrators (Appendix A) sought specific responses as to which districts actually had guidelines in place for reporting criminal offenses by students. School officials answered either yes or no to this question. The advisory committee's level of involvement in the development of these guidelines was also ascertained. School officials were asked to indicate the level of involvement by marking one of the following four responses, "Yes (in all aspects)", "Somewhat (in select areas)", "Very Little (advisory
committee merely accepted the guidelines)”, and "No". School officials were asked if there were general guidelines to follow in contacting law enforcement authorities when criminal activity occurred at school. The school officials answered either yes or no and additionally they were questioned if personal discretion was used to decide when to call law enforcement officials.

The researcher also developed a questionnaire (Appendix B) which was sent to all Sheriff departments, States Attorney offices and Probation departments in 13 counties in East Central Illinois. The questionnaire sought information concerning reciprocal reporting agreements between schools and those agencies.

Law enforcement and school officials were asked to indicate the most inhibiting factors or roadblocks to the sharing of information between both school and law officials. Respondents were also allowed a comment section as to what information, which presently is not shared, would be beneficial to their respective offices.

Data Analysis

The survey data were collected and results tallied by the
researcher. In Chapter 4, the information is presented using descriptive statistics to interpret the data.
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1. To determine the level of participation by school districts, county Sheriff departments, States Attorney offices, and probation departments presently utilizing reciprocal reporting agreements.

2. To determine perceived roadblocks which inhibit the sharing of information between school districts and law enforcement agencies.

3. To determine if general guidelines were present for use when law enforcement authorities were to be contacted by school personnel when criminal activity occurred.

4. To determine information which would be useful to school and law enforcement officials which presently is not shared.

The Secondary Principal Reciprocal Reporting Questionnaire (Appendix A) was sent to 73 high school principals. Fifty-
seven surveys were returned for a 78% participation rate. Thirty-nine States Attorney, Probation, and Sheriff Department Reciprocal Reporting Questionnaires (Appendix B) were mailed to law enforcement agencies in 13 different counties. A total of 25 were returned for a 64% participation rate. The questionnaires sought responses concerning whether districts had guidelines in place for reciprocal reporting, the extent of participation by the Parent-Teacher Advisory Committee, roadblocks which inhibit the sharing of information, and a listing of other types of information which would be useful to all parties involved.

Table 1 shows the percentage of districts which were in compliance with Illinois state statute 105 ILCS 5/10-20.14. By law, districts must have policy guideline procedures to maintain a reciprocal reporting system between school districts and local law enforcement agencies regarding criminal offenses committed by students. Fifty-four percent of principals indicated that guidelines were not in place at this time. However, 46% of the responding districts did have these guidelines established. Law enforcement officials are also required to maintain a reporting agreement with local
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Administration Questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your district have in place, guidelines for reciprocal reporting of criminal offenses committed by students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( n )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Law Enforcement Agency Questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your office/department participate in a formal reciprocal reporting agreement with local school districts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( n )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...school districts. Table 1 also indicates that law enforcement agencies are participating in agreements with schools at only a 32% rate. Over two-thirds of the law enforcement respondents indicated they did not participate in a formal reciprocal reporting agreement with local schools.

Of the school districts surveyed, over half were not in compliance with state law. Over two-thirds of the law enforcement respondents indicated that their offices did not
participate in formal reciprocal reporting agreements.

Table 2 presents information concerning whether school districts that already have guidelines in place met the intent of the law by having a Parent-Teacher Advisory Committee help in developing these policy procedures. Of the 26 districts with guidelines established, 8% of the advisory committees were involved in developing the guidelines in all aspects, 40% of the committees were somewhat involved (in select areas), 12% were very little involved (merely accepted the guidelines), and 40% of the committees were not involved in establishing reciprocal guidelines.

Table 2 also describes the participation of law enforcement agencies in the development of reporting procedures. One half (50%) of the law enforcement agencies were involved in the formulation of the guidelines for the reporting agreements while half had no input at all.

As indicated in Table 2, school administrators reported that almost one-half of the Parent-Teacher Advisory Committees had some input into the formulization of the reporting guidelines. However, 52% of the committees had very little to no involvement in the development of the
Table 2

School Administrator Questionnaire

Was a Parent-Teacher Advisory Committee involved in the development of these guidelines?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (In all aspects)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat (In select areas)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Little (Merely accepted the guidelines)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Law Enforcement Questionnaire

Did your office have input in the formulation of the guidelines for these agreements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 presents responses of school administrators concerning whether general guidelines existed to determine when law authorities would be contacted because of criminal activity at school. Nearly three-fourths (73%) of school officials had general guidelines available for them to use when
**School Administrator Questionnaire**

In your district, are there general guidelines for when appropriate law enforcement authorities may/will be contacted by school personnel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you use your own discretion in deciding when to call law enforcement authorities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

deciding whether or not to contact the police, while 27% did not. In addition, Table 3 indicates that school officials used their discretion 90% of the time when deciding whether or not law enforcement authorities would be contacted.

Table 4 describes some of the perceived roadblocks or inhibiting factors to the sharing of information between school districts and law enforcement agencies. The responses from those surveyed showed some similarities. Fifteen percent of school officials listed confidentiality laws as the
most inhibiting factor. Other perceived roadblocks listed by 8% of the respondents were time element problems, lack of enforcement of existing laws, and unclear or undefined reporting policies. School officials also mentioned policies dealing with disclosure of information (7%), lack of communication (5%), and infringing upon the individual rights of juveniles (5%) as factors which affect the sharing of information with law enforcement officials.

As shown in Table 4, 32% of law enforcement officials indicated that confidentiality laws were the number one roadblock in the sharing of information. Other responses from law enforcement agencies were in agreement with responses from school officials; 18% of those surveyed felt selective reporting by school principals deterred cooperation between the groups. This is similar to school officials stating that unclear or undefined reporting policies inhibit communication of criminal activity between school and law officials. Nine percent of the law enforcement respondents felt the lack of time and ineffective court follow through also had negative impacts on the sharing of information. A wide variety of other comments concerning inhibiting factors were received. From
Table 4

**School Administrator Questionnaire**

What do you believe are the most inhibiting factors or roadblocks in regards to the sharing of information between school districts and law enforcement agencies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality laws</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to enforce laws</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear or undefined reporting policies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies dealing with disclosure of information</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infringing on individual rights of juveniles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Law Enforcement Questionnaire**

What does your office believe are the most inhibiting factors or roadblocks in regards to the sharing of information between school districts and your office?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality laws</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective reporting by school officials</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective court follow through</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the law enforcement questionnaires the lack of staff,
personality clashes, school fear of liability, and the lack of knowledge of present laws regarding confidentiality were considered inhibiting factors. Some school officials mentioned legal ramifications, lack of and multi-jurisdictional areas as other roadblocks in the process of sharing information.

Gathering information regarding students who have a violent past is imperative if other students are to be protected and control of school buildings maintained. Both school and law enforcement officials were asked an open-ended question about what information they would like for the other to provide, but presently does not. As indicated in Table 5, 18% of the school officials stated that the present working relationship was fine and no new information was needed. Fifteen percent of school officials indicated a need to know about juvenile arrest information, while 12% wanted information about which students were on probation. Six percent of administrators indicated a need to know about drug use by students, when students had court appearances, arrest record information, and the nature of local offenses or illegal activity. Local law enforcement officials were questioned as to what information which is not being provided that they
Table 5

**School Administrators Questionnaire**

What information could law enforcement agencies provide, but presently do not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good working relationship, no new information needed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile arrest information, including athletes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information of students on probation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student drug use information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court appearance information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrest record information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of local criminal offenses or illegal activity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Law Enforcement Questionnaire**

What information could school officials provide, but presently do not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All information is provided when requested or needed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would like the information in a more timely manner</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School officials selectively release information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

would like to have. As indicated in Table 5, 36% of the officials stated that they were provided all the information requested or that they need. Only two other responses received more than one mention. Twelve percent of law enforcement officials indicated that they would like to receive
information in a more timely manner, while another 12% complained that information was selectively released by school officials.
CHAPTER 5

Summary, Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the existing status of reciprocal reporting agreement guidelines between school districts and local law enforcement agencies in East Central Illinois. The specific objectives were to determine the level of participation by school districts, county Sheriff departments, States Attorney offices, and probation departments presently utilizing reciprocal reporting agreements; to determine perceived roadblocks which inhibit the sharing of information between school districts and law enforcement agencies; to determine if general guidelines were present for use when law enforcement authorities were to be contacted by school personnel when criminal activity occurred; and to determine information which would be useful to school and law enforcement officials which presently is not shared.

Seventy-three high school principals and 39 States Attorney, Sheriff, and probation offices in a 13 county area in East Central Illinois were included in the study. Sixty-four percent of the law enforcement questionnaires were returned
while 78% of the school official questionnaires were returned.

Findings

The analysis of data provided a realistic overview of the present status of reciprocal reporting agreements in East Central Illinois. Over half (54%) of the districts surveyed did not have reciprocal reporting guidelines in place. Of the schools that did have agreements in place, the Parent-Teacher Advisory Committee was somewhat involved in developing the reporting guidelines 48% of the time. In the 13 county area which was surveyed, 50% of the law enforcement agencies reported having input into the development of the guidelines.

The results also indicated that 70% of the school officials questioned had some general guidelines to follow when police officials were to be contacted. Ninety percent of school officials, however, used their own discretion when deciding whether or not to call the police.

Both law enforcement and school officials provided some perceived roadblocks in the sharing of information. School officials listed confidentiality laws as the most inhibiting factor followed by disclosure of information policies, lack of communication, infringing on individual rights, unclear or
undefined reporting policies, and lack of enforcement of existing laws. Confidentiality problems were ranked as the most inhibiting factor by law enforcement officials. Other roadblocks cited by law enforcement personnel were selective reporting of offenses by school officials, lack of time, and ineffective court follow through.

Those school and law enforcement agencies which have agreements already in place were questioned as to what information they would like to have, but presently do not. A large number of the members of both groups indicated that they were happy with their relationship and no new information was needed. School officials did indicate the following information would be beneficial: (a) juvenile arrest information, (b) probation students, (c) drug usage by students, (d) student court appearances, and (e) the nature of local criminal offenses or illegal activity. A number of representatives of law enforcement agencies indicated that they would like information in a more timely manner and expressed a concern about school officials sometimes selectively releasing information.
Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, this writer concluded that over half of the school districts in the 13 county area surveyed were not in compliance with reciprocal reporting state statutes. Only half of the Parent-Teacher Advisory Committees in districts where guidelines have been formulated had input. Those districts that did not allow input from the advisory council also violated Illinois law.

It can also be concluded from the survey data that a majority of school officials have established guidelines to follow when law authorities are to be contacted. However, 90% of school officials reported using their own discretion when deciding whether or not to contact authorities.

Both school and law enforcement officials felt that the number one roadblock to sharing information were the present confidentiality laws. Although 54% of the school districts did not have a reciprocal reporting agreement in place, in 70% of all districts the school official had some guidelines to follow when law authorities were to be contacted. However, school officials usually used their own discretion when deciding whether or not to contact law enforcement authorities. The
sharing of information informally by school officials could cause liability problems. This study shows the need for school and law enforcement officials to establish formal reciprocal reporting agreements which will promote a positive relationship between the school and law officials.

Recommendations

The recommendations presented are designed to assist other educators and law enforcement personnel in establishing or modifying reciprocal reporting agreements.

1. It is recommended that administrators in all districts compare and contrast present reporting agreements or guidelines against a model agreement which should be provided by state officials.

2. It is recommended that all districts inform and educate board members about reciprocal reporting.

3. It is recommended that school administrators should be instructed in all facets of existing reciprocal reporting agreements due to frequent turnover in administrative positions.

4. It is recommended that school officials promote a positive relationship with local law enforcement agencies.
5. It is recommended that Regional Offices of Education encourage the development of reciprocal reporting agreements between schools and law enforcement agencies.

6. It is recommended that legislators be made aware of the roadblocks which affect the sharing of information regarding criminal activity by students.
References


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