



# NEW - School Safety Guardians

## Information and Frequently Asked Questions

On October 12, 2021, the School Board of Hernando County approved a resolution to establish a guardian program under the Coach Aaron Feis Program. Developed in collaboration with the Hernando County Sheriff's Office (HCSO), the School Safety Guardian is a new position for the school district. These trained and certified guardians will provide additional support to our School Resource Officers. This year, the district will employ five (5) guardians, one at each high school. In the future, it is the intent to expand the guardian program to those middle and k-8 schools with larger enrollment.

### Q: What is the role of School Safety Guardian?

School Safety Guardians will be highly visible on campus and will be responsible for providing security and surveillance to school campuses, parking lots and grounds. Their duties include responding to emergency situations, assisting school administration and law enforcement with threat assessments, monitoring entry points, conducting perimeter checks, and other security-related tasks.

### Q: What is the difference between a school resource officer and a School Safety Guardian?



#### School Resource Officer

- Armed and uniformed
- Graduate of a law enforcement training program or academy
- Sworn law enforcement officer
- Have arrest power
- Employees of the Hernando County Sheriff's Office



#### School Safety Guardian

- Armed and uniformed
- Certified through the HCSO's guardian program
- Not considered law enforcement
- Can detain, but no arrest authority
- Employees of the school district

### Q: What are the training and qualifications of the School Safety Guardian?

To qualify for the Guardian Program, candidates must pass:

- all background checks,
- all drug testing, and a
- psychological screening

Candidates must also complete over 144 hours of specialized training of which 132 hours are in comprehensive firearm safety and proficiency training and 12 hours of diversity training.

**The Hernando County Sheriff's Office will provide training & certification to be a guardian with the school district.**

### Q: Will the School Safety Guardians replace the School Resource Officers?

No. School Safety Guardians are in addition to the School Resource Officers who currently serve our schools. While Florida law only requires one School Safety Guardian **or** School Resource Officer per school, the school district has the authority to provide additional staff.

### Q: How are these safety initiatives funded?

The SROs currently in our schools are employees of the Sheriff's Office. The SROs are contracted by the school district to work in our schools. Currently, the SRO unit includes 23 SROs, 2 relief SROs and 2 sergeants.

The Hernando County School District pays for 100% of the cost of the salaries and benefits of the SROs and has one deputy assigned to every school. There is also a lieutenant position employed and paid for by the Sheriff's Office that oversees the operation of the SRO unit.

The School Board currently pays \$2,213,676.00 per year for the contracted SRO services. The State of Florida, Department of Education provides \$1,470,676.00 in Safe Schools funding toward the cost of the contract.

Guardian salaries will come from the **Mental Health & School Safety** category of the recent voter-approved **millage referendum**. A grant from the Florida Department of Education will cover the cost of equipment and training. The combination of millage funding and the state grant will cover the full cost of the guardian program.

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Students  
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