



**HERNANDO  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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## School Safety Guardian Program

### Information and Frequently Asked Questions

The Hernando County, Florida School Safety Guardian Program was established in October 2021 to enhance school safety by assigning trained armed personnel to school campuses. This initiative was introduced following the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program. As of July 1, 2023, the program was expanded and renamed the Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, and Coach Scott Beigel Guardian Program to honor the lives of these dedicated individuals.

In collaboration with the Hernando County Sheriff's Office (HCSO), the school district created the School Safety Guardian role, which currently consists of fifteen Guardians placed across high schools, K-8 schools, and middle schools. Moving forward, the district plans to recruit additional Guardians to strengthen the current team. These school guardians undergo comprehensive training and rigorous background checks to ensure they are fully equipped to protect students and staff in the event of a threat.

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

The role of the School Safety Guardian typically involves providing a visible presence of security on school campuses to deter potential threats and respond swiftly in case of emergencies. Specific responsibilities include:

1. Ensuring the safety and security of students, staff, and visitors.
2. Monitoring school premises for any suspicious activity or unauthorized individuals.
3. Responding to incidents such as fights, medical emergencies, or security breaches.
4. Collaborating with school administrators, law enforcement, and other stakeholders to develop and implement safety protocols.
5. Conducting regular patrols of school grounds, including hallways, classrooms, and outdoor areas.
6. Participating in ongoing training sessions to maintain proficiency in handling emergencies and firearms (if armed).
7. Building positive relationships with students and fostering a sense of trust and security within the school community.
8. Serving as a resource for students and staff on safety-related matters and providing guidance on emergency procedures.

## What is the difference between an SRO and a Guardian:

<p><b>SRO's</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Armed and Uniformed</li><li>• Graduate of a law enforcement training program or academy</li><li>• Have arrest powers.</li><li>• Employees of the Hernando County Sheriff's Office</li></ul>	<p><b>Guardian</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Armed and Uniformed</li><li>• Certified through the Hernando County Sheriff's Office Guardian Program</li><li>• Not a sworn officer</li><li>• No arrest authority but can detain.</li><li>• Employees of the School District</li></ul>
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## What are the training and qualifications of a School Safety Guardian:

Guardians must pass all-background checks, All drug testing, and psychological screening.

**The Hernando County Sheriff's Office will provide training and certification to be a Guardian with the School District.**

Beginning in July 1, 2024, a person who is certified and in good standing under the Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission, who meets the qualification established in F.S.S 943.13; any person employed or appointed full time, part time or auxiliary law enforcement officer or correctional officer and who is otherwise qualified for the position of a school safety guardian may be certified as a school safety guardian by the sheriff's without completing the training requirements detailed below.

Applicants are required to undergo and complete 144 hours of specialized training, comprising 132 hours dedicated to comprehensive firearm safety and proficiency training, along with an additional 12 hours of training to improve the school guardian's knowledge and skills necessary to respond to and de-escalate incidents on school campuses.

## Will the School Safety Guardians replace the School Resource Officer?

No! School Safety Guardians supplement the presence of School Resource Officers currently stationed in our schools. While Florida law mandates only one School Safety Guardian or School Resource Officer per school, the school district retains the discretion to allocate additional staff as needed.

### **How are these safety initiatives funded?**

The SRO's currently in our schools are employees of the Hernando County Sheriff's Office. The SRO are contracted by the school district to work in our schools. Currently, the SRO unit includes 23 SRO's, 2 relief SRO's, 1 Lieutenant and 2 Sergeants.

The Hernando County School District pays 100% of the cost of the salaries and benefits of the SRO's and has one deputy assigned to every school.

The school board currently allocates \$2,743,658.00 annually for contracted SRO services.

Guardian services are currently sourced from the Mental Health & School Safety category of voter-approved millage referendum funds. The Florida Department of Education subsidizes equipment and training expenses through a grant. The Guardian program's costs are covered by a combination of millage funding and state grants.

### **How can I apply for a Guardian position with the Hernando County School District?**

Thank you for your interest in the Guardian program in Hernando County Schools. Please visit <https://www.hernandoschools.org/departments/hr/jobs> Guardian positions are posted under non-instructional category as needed. Please read over the requirements for the Guardians position prior to applying to ensure you are eligible to apply.

