



LARAMIE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
1910 PIONEER AVENUE
CHEYENNE, WYOMING 82001

Brian Kozak
SHERIFF

LARAMIE COUNTY JUVENILE SERVICES CENTER
13794 PRAIRIE CENTER CIRCLE
CHEYENNE, WYOMING 82009

Wyoming's First County - Established 1867

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sheriff makes school safety an agency-wide goal

The Sheriff's Office has adjusted the method in which we provide service to Laramie County School District #1 schools within Laramie County. We have done this so we can provide a higher level of service until an unresolved agreement between the County and School District can be decided.

Prior to August of 2022 the School District had a memo of understanding with the County, which specified the duties and limits of liability of the school resource officer (SRO), who patrolled the seven elementary schools within a 2,600 square mile area of Laramie County. In August, prior to this administration taking office, the agreement expired. Despite the District and the previous administration's inability to agree on the scope of duties, the Sheriff's Office continued to provide SRO services.

Sheriff Kozak, after learning the SRO was involved in school tasks without clearly defined boundaries, adjusted service until the School District and County can agree on the scope of duties for the SRO. Instead of having one deputy assigned to the seven elementary schools, which the Sheriff feels is inadequate to provide a good level of service to our kids, the Sheriff's Office will require all patrol deputies to patrol the schools.

Sheriff Kozak said, “School principals may rely on the SRO to enforce academic rules and view confidential educational records, which placed the Sheriff’s Office and deputy in a compromising and litigious situation. The agreement outlines that the deputy is not to become involved in matters the principal should deal with, but focus on school security, student relationships, and law enforcement.”

Sheriff Kozak was responsible for the SRO contract when he was the Chief of Police; the agency received national recognition for the SRO program. However, the difference was that the Police Department had a valid memo of understanding with the School District, and it assigned one SRO to each secondary school. It is an unrealistic expectation, and we believe the public would agree, to rely on one SRO to provide security for all the schools in such a large geographic area.

Until the boundaries are defined for the SRO, we will have all deputies take part in school safety. They will continue to walk the campuses and interact with students. We will require all deputies to engage in traffic enforcement near the schools. All deputies have been given access to unlock doors at each of the schools. Kozak said, “I believe the level of service will improve since school safety will be an agency goal and not just the duty of one deputy.” The Sheriff will continue to work with the School District to assess law enforcement service and possibly reinstitute the SRO if an agreement can be reached.