



Dignity In Schools Campaign

Why Counselors, Not Cops?

The presence of police in schools has escalated dramatically in the last several decades, and the figures on arrests and referrals to law enforcement show disproportionate targeting of Black and Latino students. This is just one aspect of the school-to-prison pipeline, where some students are denied an opportunity to succeed, and instead are pushed out of school and into the juvenile or criminal justice system.

While the complete emotional, social and financial impact of daily police presence in schools is not fully understood, it is clear that students and their families are criminalized, and that school-based arrests and referrals to law enforcement go up when police have a regular presence in schools.

The Dignity in Schools Campaign has developed an updated set of Model Policies to Fight Criminalization that build on recommendations from our Model Code on Education & Dignity, last released in 2013.

These resources provide recommendations for schools, districts, states and federal policy-makers to end the regular presence of law enforcement in schools and end the criminalization of students.

The Model Policies are based on best practices, research and experiences of students, parents, intervention workers, peace-builders and educators from around the country, and on

a human rights framework for schools. They are designed so that communities and policy-makers can identify specific areas of concern and implement the recommended language, including changing laws and policies, while taking into account the diverse needs and characteristics of individual communities.

States are investing in the criminal and juvenile justice system instead of schools and supports for students

In every state in the US, spending on corrections grew at a much higher rate than education spending over the past three decades.

On average, per student spending on education at the state and local level decreased by 28% while spending on corrections increased by 44%.

During the 2015–16 school year, Black students represented 15 percent of the total student enrollment, and 31% of students who were referred to law enforcement or arrested, and these racial disparities are on the rise.

DSC will continue updating recommendations from our Model Code on Education & Dignity over the next few months and release a new version in 2019.

Funneling money into more school police and other practices that criminalize students is not the answer to promoting safety in schools. Here is why.

It Causes Harm: More police lead to more students being arrested for school discipline

- When police are in schools they tend to get involved in school discipline, escalating incidents that might have been resolved by a trip to the principal's office.
- Having police in schools and punitive school cultures makes it less likely that students will trust adults in the building to come forward with concerns they may have about other students.
- For immigrant and undocumented students, bringing police into the school building can lead to deportation for themselves or their families.

It Won't Solve the Problem: Armed personnel pose a safety threat to students and other school staff, and there is no evidence they make schools safer

- Students are already facing violence from armed and unarmed law enforcement in their schools, including fatal and life-threatening injuries.
- Students of color, especially Black students, face the greatest risks. School-based arrest rates and corporal punishment are much higher for Black and Latino students, and studies have shown that subjects are more likely to shoot Black individuals in split-second situations, and we already see the tragic consequences. There has also been an increase in anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment in schools, and students are already feeling fearful.
- There is no evidence that armed personnel make schools safer during a school shooting. Armed police were present at Virginia Tech, Columbine and Parkland. The majority of mass shootings end when the shooter decides to end them, not by intervention by law enforcement, according to a FBI study.

We Need Real Safety: Preventing violence requires long-term and short-term solutions

- Social and emotional learning and Restorative Justice teach young people how to manage their emotions and respond to conflicts in healthy ways.
- Counselors, wrap-around services and strong relationships with caring adults give struggling students support, and keep students who may need interventions from falling through the cracks.

We need to invest in
counselors, social workers,
Restorative Justice
Coordinators, Community
Intervention Workers and
other supportive school
staff that actually create
safer schools.

- Having entrances and halls monitored by staff like Community Intervention Workers who know the student body well can preemptively address issues, intervene as conflicts arise, and quickly identify when something is wrong that requires an emergency response.
- School Resource Officers are police, not counselors or social workers. Students deserve trained mental health professionals. Telling students they can go to an SRO for counseling (when the SRO can report their conversations as part of a criminal investigation) is ineffective and can lead to negative consequences. ■