CSCU

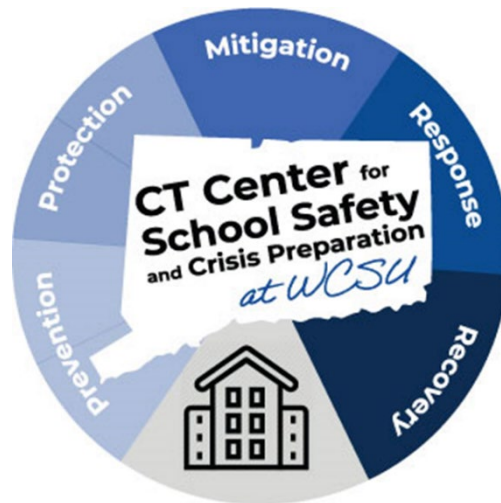**THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS IN CONNECTICUT:**

A Report Completed for the General Assembly Judiciary Committee

December 1, 2022

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Introduction

This report fulfills Section 3 of Public Act 22-114, which was passed by the Connecticut General Assembly and signed by the Governor of Connecticut in May of 2022. As per Section 3 of PA 22-114, a public institution of higher education will study the role and impact that school resource officers (SROs) have on students with disabilities in CT, and report back to the Connecticut General Assembly Judiciary Committee by December 1, 2022. The Connecticut Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation, located at Western Connecticut State University (WCSU), was selected in June of 2022 by the Board of Regents for Higher Education, and charged with answering the following questions:

(1) Determine how many school resource officers are employed in this state and the number of such officers in each school district;
(2) Detail the funding mechanisms each district uses to employ school resource officers;
(3) Develop metrics for assessing the efficacy of school resource officers, particularly in the context of interactions with students with disabilities;
(4) Determine the chain of command structure when students with disabilities experience crises in school, including who responds and when;
(5) Determine what the process is for entering into memoranda of understanding between school districts, boards of education and school resource officers, and public accessibility to such process.
(6) Explore other issues that the public institution of higher education conducting the study deems relevant to such study.

The foundation for conducting this study came from recommendations of the Police Transparency & Accountability Task Force which released its final report in January 2022. One potential benefit of this research is that it can help improve police interactions with the disability community. The WCSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted approval to conduct this research in September of 2022 under protocol number 2223-04. The results from this research are presented in five (5) sections. These sections include an introduction, methods, results, discussion/conclusions, and suggestions for future research.

Methods

This study used a mixed methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. All participation was voluntary. An online survey was distributed to Superintendents/District Administrators, Law enforcement officials/SROs, and School Special Education Directors to determine the number of SROs in each district, the funding mechanism, the presence of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)s, the public accessibility to the MOU process, and the chain of command structure when students with disabilities experience crises in school, including who responds and when. Initial surveys went to approximately 200 Superintendents, 185 Directors of Special Education, 200 SROs and other law enforcement officials. There were follow up emails and phone calls after the initial survey distribution to provide reminders and help verify data. The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) released survey results on school resource officers in November of 2022. The survey results from CAPSS were used to help triangulate the data.

Concurrently with the online survey, several groups and organizations throughout the state were offered an opportunity to participate in a focus group with the responsibility of developing metrics for assessing the efficacy of school resource officers, particularly in the context of interactions with students with disabilities. Representatives from the following organizations expressed an interest and were offered an opportunity to participate in the focus group: Bethel Public Schools, Center for Children's Advocacy, Connecticut Black and Brown Student Union, Connecticut Justice Alliance, Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center Inc., Connecticut State Department of Education, Connecticut State Police, FAVOR, Inc., Greenwich Police Department, National Association of School Resource Officers, New Haven University, Regional School District 15, Regional School District 6, Simsbury Police, TOW Institute, Waterbury School District, and Watertown Police Dept. Participation in the focus group was voluntary and there were ten (10) representatives who contributed to the data through surveys and focus group discussions.

Results

The results section is divided into five sections matching the requested information from PA 22-114. The first section combines questions one and two addressing the number of SROs and the funding source. The next section addresses question three and the metrics for assessing the efficacy of school resource officers. The third section focuses on the chain of command structure when students with disabilities experience crises in school, including who responds and when. The fourth section examines the process for entering into MOUs between school districts, boards of education and school resource officers, and public accessibility to such process. Finally, the fifth section explores other issues that the public institution of higher education conducting the study deems relevant to such study. Readers should note that final numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Results Questions 1 and 2: Number of SROs and Funding

Question (1) Determine how many school resource officers are employed in this state and the number of such officers in each school district;
Question (2) Detail the funding mechanisms each district uses to employ school resource officers;

According to the data examined by the Center, there are 236 SROs working in ninety-one (91) school districts (see Table 1 - Number of SROs and the Funding Source). The data is divided into six columns with the district in the left column, the number of SROs in the second column, and the four funding sources in columns three, four, five, and six. The four identified funding sources were law enforcement agency, school district, town/municipality, and a split between the school district/law enforcement agency respectively.

Table 1: Number of SROs and the Funding Source

School District Name	SRO count	FUNDING AGENCY			
		Police	School District	Town/ Municipality	Sc.Distr. & Police
Ansonia School District	1		1		
Avon School District	1	1			
Berlin School District	1	1			
Bethel School District	3			1	
Bridgeport School District	3	1			
Bristol School District	4	1			
Brookfield School District	3	1			
Cheshire School District	2	1			
Clinton School District	1	1			

District					
Colchester School District	1			1	
Connecticut Technical Education and Career System	19		1		
Cromwell School District	2				1
Danbury School District	5			1	
East Haddam School District	1			1	
East Hampton School District	1			1	
East Hartford School District	4	1			
East Haven School District	2			1	
East Lyme School District	1	1			
East Windsor School District	1	1			
Easton School District	3		1		
Ellington School District	2		1		
Enfield School District	4	1			
Fairfield School District	6	1			
Farmington School District	3	1			
Glastonbury School District	3	1			
Greenwich School District	2	1			
Groton School District	2		1		
Guilford School District	1				1
Hamden School District	2	1			
Hebron School District	1			1	
Killingly School District	1		1		
Lebanon School District	1			1	
Litchfield School District	5		1		
Madison School District	2		1		
Manchester School District	5		1		
Meriden School District	5	1			
Middletown School District	4	1			
Milford School District	5				1
Monroe School District	2	1			
Montville School District	2			1	
Naugatuck School District	2				1
New Britain School District	2	1			
New Canaan School District	2	1			
New Haven School District	5	1			
Newington School District	1			1	
Newtown School District	3			1	
North Haven School District	7			1	
Norwalk School District	5	1			
Norwich Free Academy District	1			1	
Norwich School District	3		1		
Old Saybrook School District	3	1			
Orange School District	2	1			
Oxford School District	2			1	
Plainville School District	2		1		
Plymouth School District	1			1	
Putnam School District	1			1	

Regional School District 05	1		1		
Regional School District 06	5		1		
Regional School District 07	1		1		
Regional School District 09	1			1	
Regional School District 10	1		1		
Regional School District 12	1		1		
Regional School District 13	1		1		
Regional School District 14	4		1		
Regional School District 15	1			1	
Ridgefield School District	3	1			
Rocky Hill School District	2	1			
Seymour School District	2			1	
Shelton School District	3			1	
Side By Side Charter School District	1			1	
Simsbury School District	2	1			
Somers School District	2	1			
South Windsor School District	2	1			
Southington School District	1	1			
Stafford School District	1		1		
Stamford School District	5	1			
Stratford School District	5			1	
Suffield School District	1	1			
Vernon School District	1	1			
Wallingford School District	1	1			
Waterbury School District	11		1		
Waterford School District	2				1
Watertown School District	3		1		
West Hartford School District	2			1	
Weston School District	2			1	
Westport School District	1	1			
Wethersfield School District	2			1	
Wilton School District	2	1			
Windsor School District	1	1			
Wolcott School District	2		1		
Woodbridge School District	1		1		
TOTAL	**236**	38	23	25	5

The funding for ninety-five (95) or 40% of the SROs comes from the law enforcement agency, seventy-seven (77) or 33% of the SROs comes from the school district, fifty-two (52) or 22% of the SROs comes from the town/municipality, and twelve (12) or 5% of the SROs comes from a split between the school district and the law enforcement agency (see Table 2 - Number of SROs and the Funding Source).
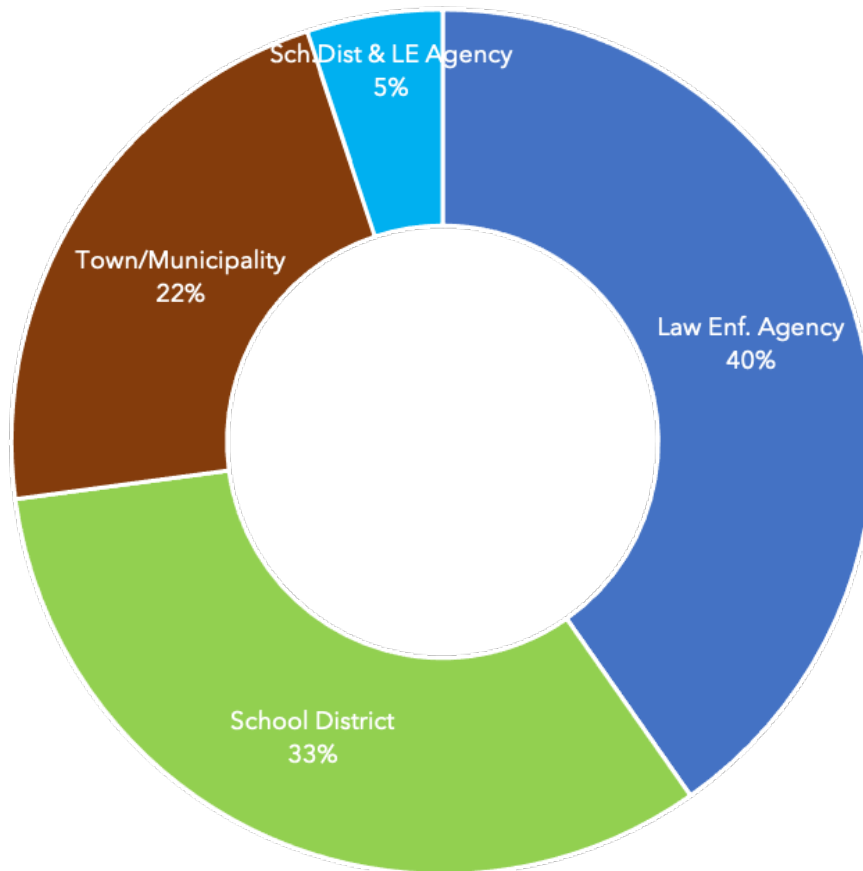
Table 2: Number of SROs and Funding Source Summary

Funding Source	Number of SROs
Law Enforcement Agency	95
School District	77
Town/Municipality	52
School District/Law Enforcement Agency	12
Grand Total	**236**

Figure 1: Number of SROs and the Funding Source

Number of SRO(s) and the Funding Source (N = 236)

The data can also be viewed by the funding source used in each district (see Table 3 - Funding Source by District). Thirty-eight (38) or 42% of the districts had the SROs funded by the law enforcement agency, twenty-three (23) or 25% of the districts had the SROs funded by the school district, twenty-five (25) or 27% of the districts had the SRO funded by the town/municipality, and five (5) or 6% of the districts had the SROs funded by a split between the school district and the law enforcement agency.

Table 3: Funding Source by District

Funding Source	Count of District
Law Enforcement Agency	38
School District	23
Town/Municipality	25
School District/Law Enforcement Agency	5
Grand Total	**91**

Figure 2: Funding Agency Distribution for School Districts

Funding Agency Distribution = 91 school districts
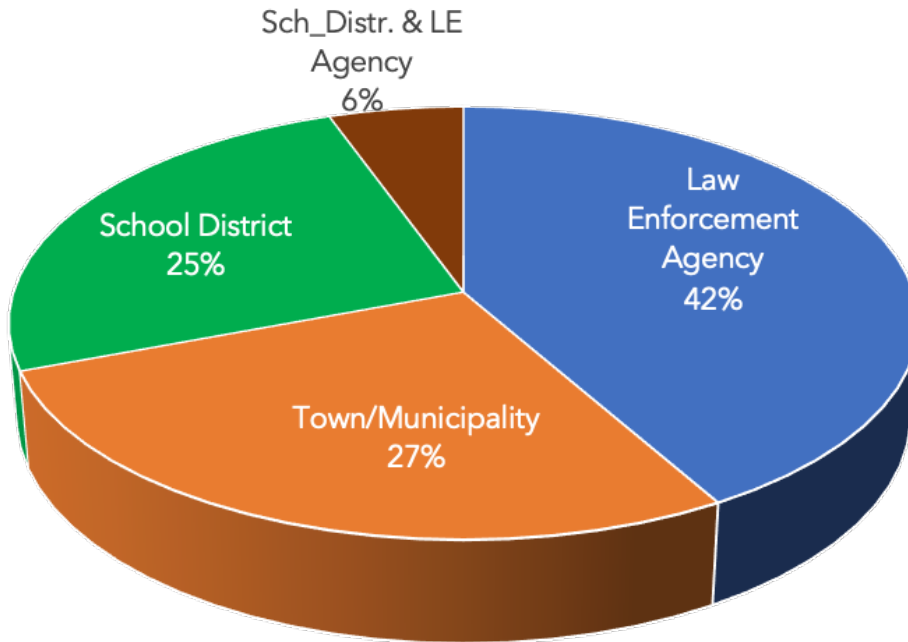
Results Question 3: Metrics for Assessment

Question 3 -Develop metrics for assessing the efficacy of school resource officers, particularly in the context of interactions with students with disabilities.

Data converged, both in the survey and in the focus groups, which pointed to potential metrics for measurement. Researchers used role descriptions from the National Association of School Resource Officers, as well as other literature, to triangulate the findings of the survey and the focus groups. The phrase "school community" includes administration, staff, parents, students, and students with disabilities. Results yielded 25 metrics rated by participants in the focus groups (see Table 4: Metrics to Measure SRO Efficacy). Focus group participants were asked to rate each metric, followed by a discussion of the merits of each. Any metric that was heavily weighted positively, 60% or more Agree or Strongly Agree, is described as High Recommended. Any metric that clustered 60% of responses as Disagree or Strongly Disagree is described as Low Recommended. All other responses that did not cluster at the top or the bottom of the scales

are described as Medium Recommended. It is interesting to note that the metrics were overwhelmingly recommended as High, indicating the survey and literature review yielded appropriate descriptors of the desired metrics.

Table 4: Metrics to Measure SRO Efficacy

School Community = Administration/Staff/Parents/Students/Students with Disabilities		Recommendation Level		
No	Metric to Measure SRO Efficacy	High	Medium	Low
1	A signed MOU between the school district and the law enforcement agency	✓		
2	The public should have input on the MOU			✓
3	Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the SRO	✓		
4	Clearly defined SRO selection criteria	✓		
5	Input from the school district on the SRO selection criteria	✓		
6	Knowledge of their roles and responsibilities	✓		
7	Knowledge of their role as a school-based law enforcement officer	✓		
8	Knowledge of their role as a mentor/informal counselor	✓		
9	Knowledge of their role as a safety educator	✓		
10	Knowledge of the school's emergency response plans	✓		
11	Completion of NASRO Basic SRO training (or equivalent)	✓		
12	Completion of Crisis Intervention Training	✓		
13	Completion of Adolescent Mental Health Training	✓		
14	Completion of Social Emotional Learning Training	✓		
15	Completion of Restorative Practices Training		✓	
16	Completion of students with Disabilities Training	✓		

17	Accessibility to the school community	✓		
18	Relatability to the school community	✓		
19	Approachability to the school community	✓		
20	Trustability to the school community	✓		
21	Connectedness with the school community	✓		
22	The perception of impact on school safety	✓		
23	Number, type, and disposition of SRO's interactions with school community members		✓	
24	SRO's relationships with school community members	✓		
25	SRO's relationship with minority school community members	✓		

Results Question 4: Chain of Command

Question 4- Determine the chain of command structure when students with disabilities experience crises in school, including who responds and when.

The survey collected data to explore the chain of command when a student with disabilities experienced a crisis. Participants were asked about the presence of a policy, the presence of a written policy, and whether the policy addressed different response levels depending on the severity of the crisis. Respondents were also given five scenarios which became progressively more severe, and they were asked to identify who responds and who is in charge.

School Policy for Students with Disabilities in Crises

A majority, 79% of the respondents, identified that their school has a policy for circumstances when a student with disabilities experiences a crisis (see Figure 3: Presence of a School Policy). However, 16% of the participants identified that their school does not have a policy, and 5% did not know. It is significant to note that not all the policies are written (see Figure 4: Presence of a Written Policy). 62% identified that their school has a written policy, 24% identified that their school does not have a written policy, and 14% did not know if their school had a written policy for circumstances when a student with disabilities experiences a crisis.
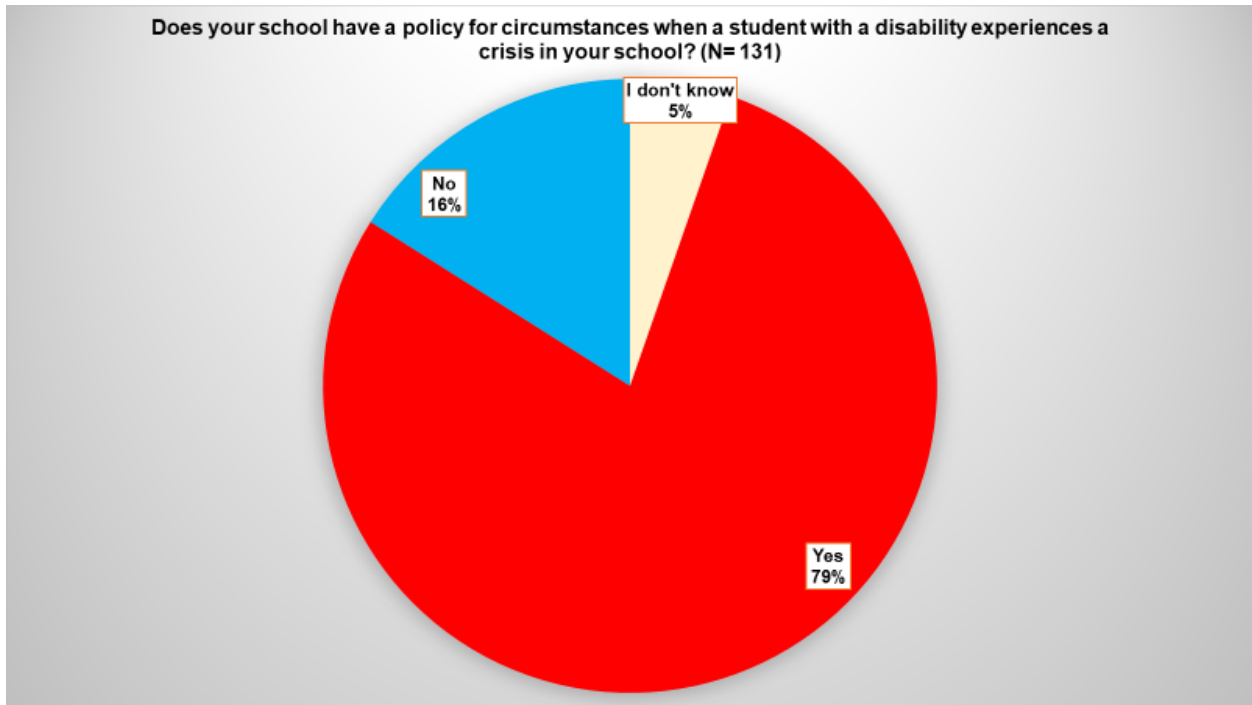
Figure 3: Presence of a School Policy

Figure 4: Presence of a Written Policy
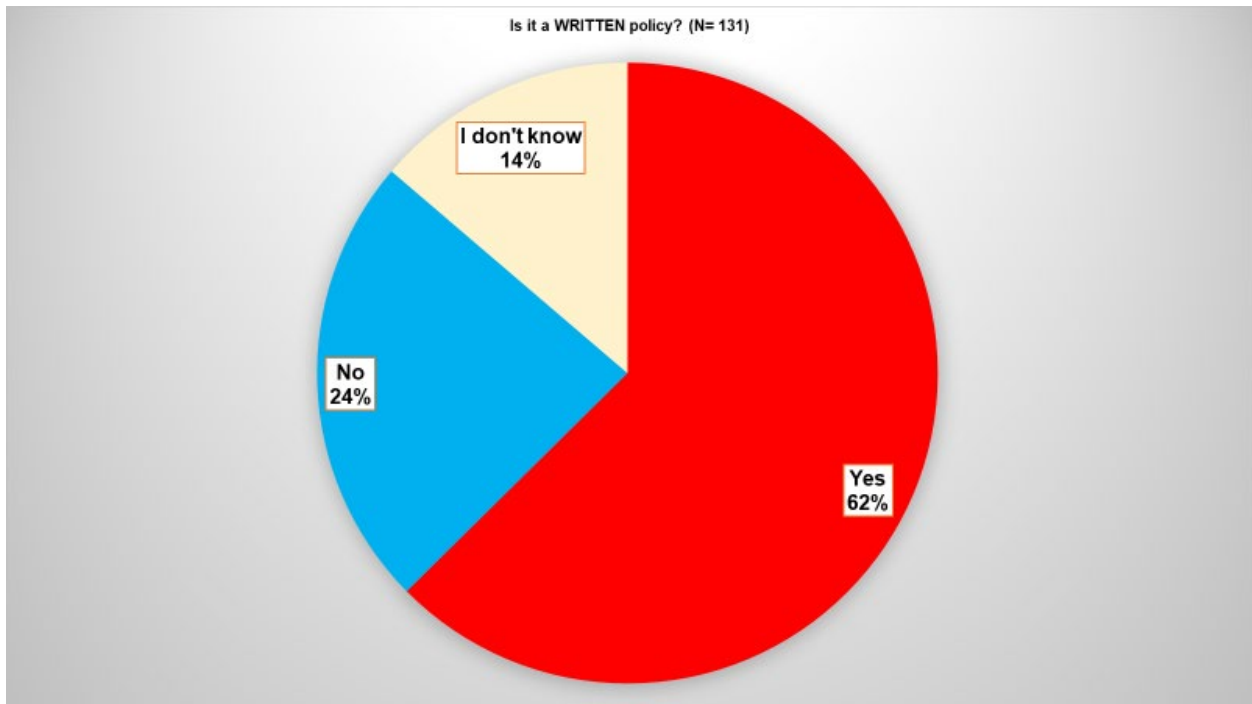
Along with the presence of a policy, it was helpful to understand if the policy addressed the response levels depending on the severity of the circumstances. 64% of the survey participants identified that their school's policy addresses different response levels depending on the severity of the crisis. However, 19% of respondents identified that their policy does not address the different severity levels and 17% did not know (see Figure 5: Response Levels within the Policy).

Figure 5: Response Levels within the Policy

Does the policy address different response levels depending on the severity of the crisis? (N= 129)
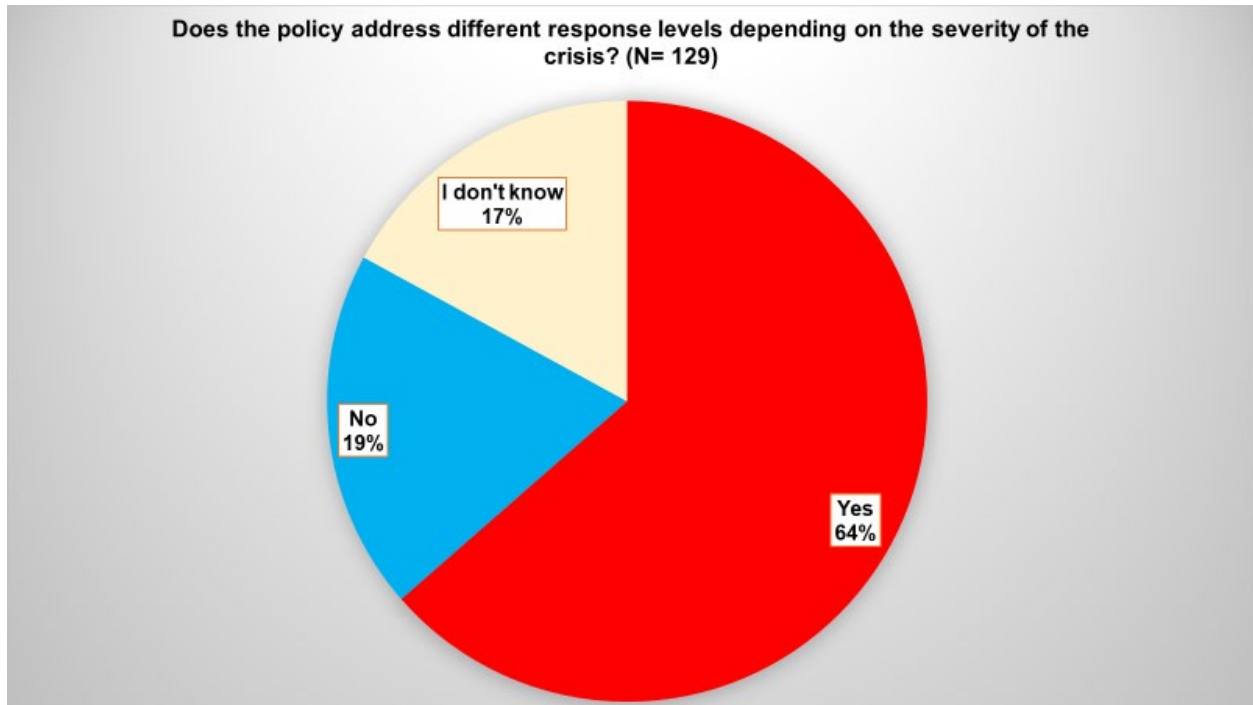
Chain of Command Scenarios

The Connecticut School Resource Officer Survey included five scenarios describing progressively more serious incidents. Respondents were asked to answer two questions regarding each scenario: 1) Who responds? and 2) Who is in charge of the crisis? The results are grouped together by each scenario.

Scenario 1: *Student with disabilities who is crying uncontrollably in class. Who responds?* (Select all that apply).
Respondents answered as follows: Special Education Teacher (n=109), School Social Worker (n=99), School Psychologist (n=95), School Counselor (n=89), Teacher (n=86), School Administrator (n=82), School Nurse (n=36), Other (n=18), Unarmed Security Guard (n=15), School Resource Officer (n= 5), Armed Security Guard (n=4), Emergency Medical Responder (n=2) (see Figure 6: Scenario 1 Who Responds).

*Figure 6: Scenario 1 Who Responds*
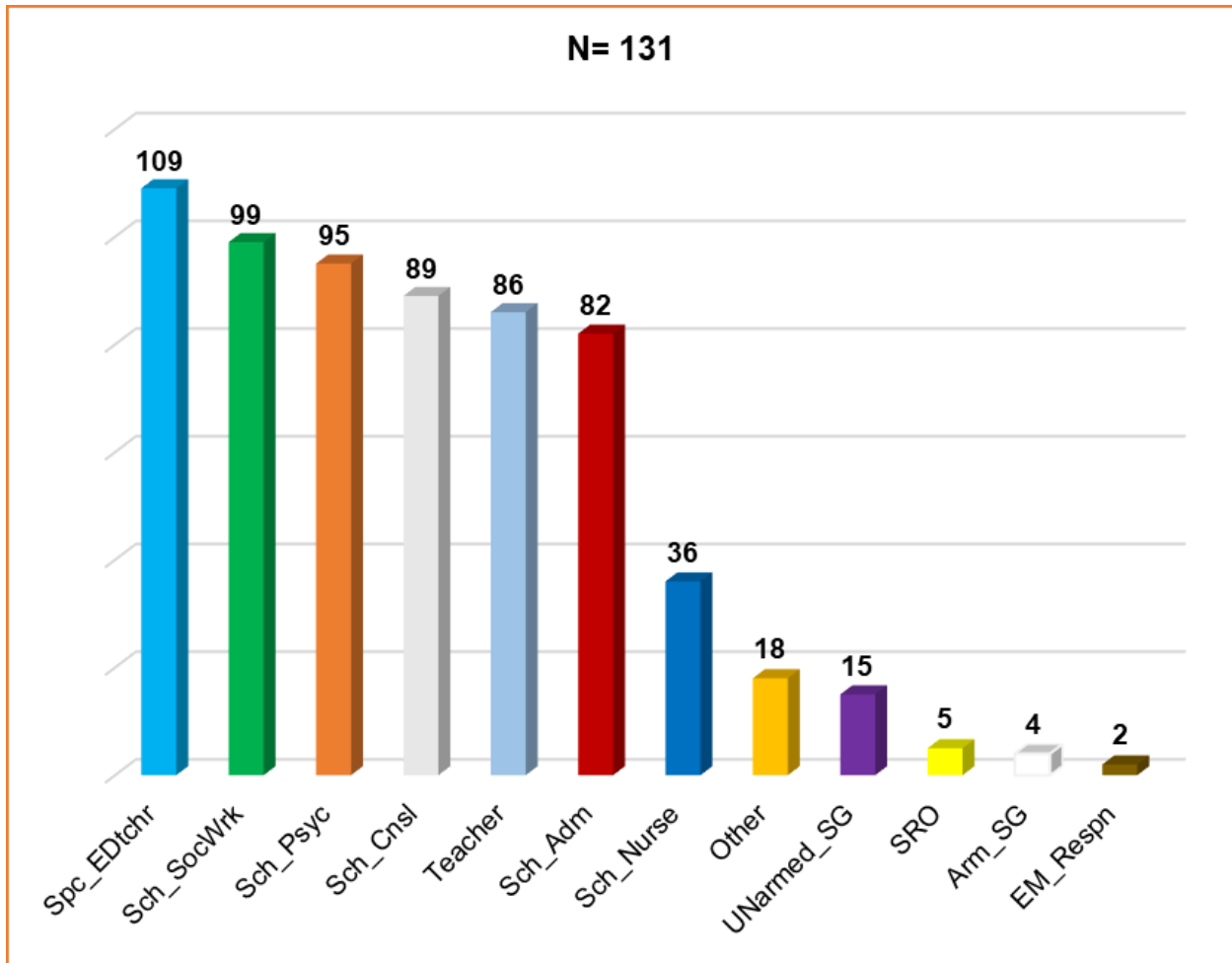
Scenario 1: *Student with disabilities who is crying uncontrollably in class. Who is in charge of the crisis?* (Select only one).

Respondents answered as follows: School Administrator (n=59), Special Education Teacher (n=30), School Psychologist (n=13), School Social Worker (n=9), Teacher (n=8), Other (n=7), School Counselor (n=5), School Nurse (n=0), Unarmed Security Guard (n=0), School Resource Officer (n= 0), Armed Security Guard (n=0), Emergency Medical Responder (n=0) (see Figure 7: Scenario 1 Who is in Charge).
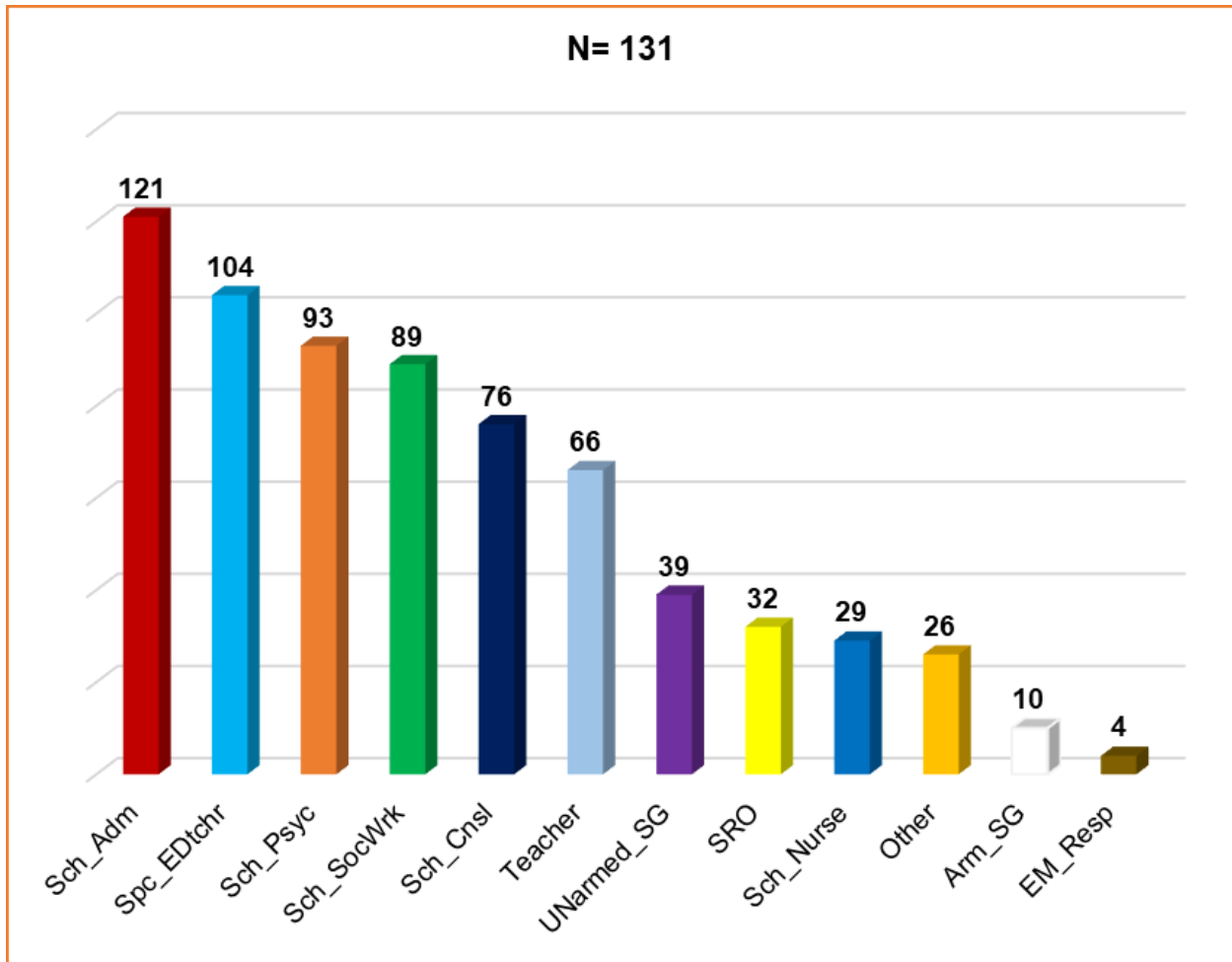
Figure 7: Scenario 1 Who is in Charge
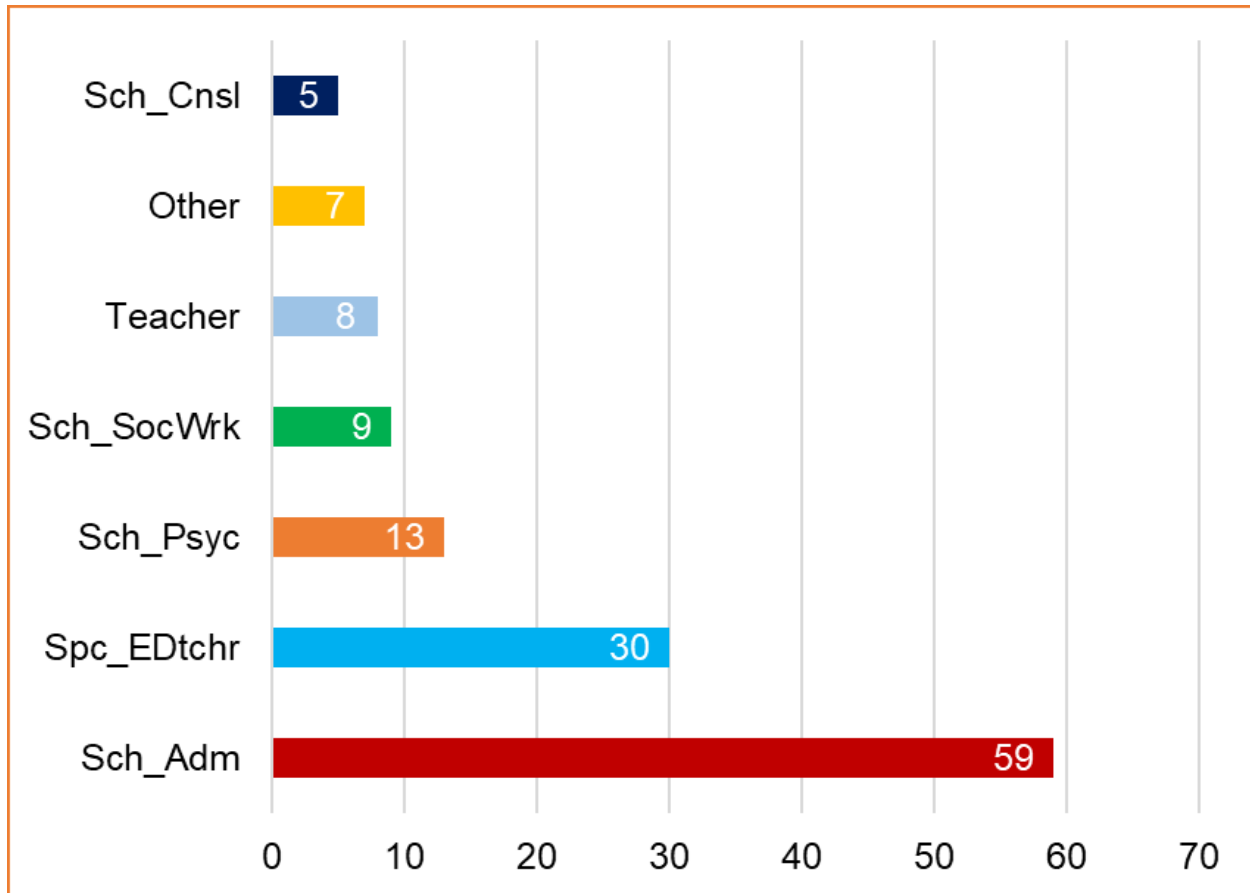
Scenario 2: Student with disabilities who is dysregulated to the point of throwing books, chairs. *Who responds?* (Select all that apply).

Respondents answered as follows: School Administrator (n=121), Special Education Teacher (n=104), School Psychologist (n=93), School Social Worker (n=89), School Counselor (n=76), Teacher (n=66), Unarmed Security Guard (n=39), School Resource Officer (n= 32), School Nurse (n=29), Other (n=26), Armed Security Guard (n=10), Emergency Medical Responder (n=4) (see Figure 8: Scenario 2 Who Responds).

Figure 8: Scenario 2 Who Responds

Scenario 2: Student with disabilities who is dysregulated to the point of throwing books, chairs. *Who is in charge of the crisis?* (Select only one).

Respondents answered as follows: School Administrator (n=88), Special Education Teacher (n=14), Other (n=9), School Psychologist (n=8), School Social Worker (n=5), School Resource Officer (n=4), Teacher (n=3), School Counselor (n=0), Unarmed Security Guard (n=0), School Nurse (n=0), Armed Security Guard (n=0), Emergency Medical Responder (n=0) (see Figure 9: Scenario 2 Who is in Charge).
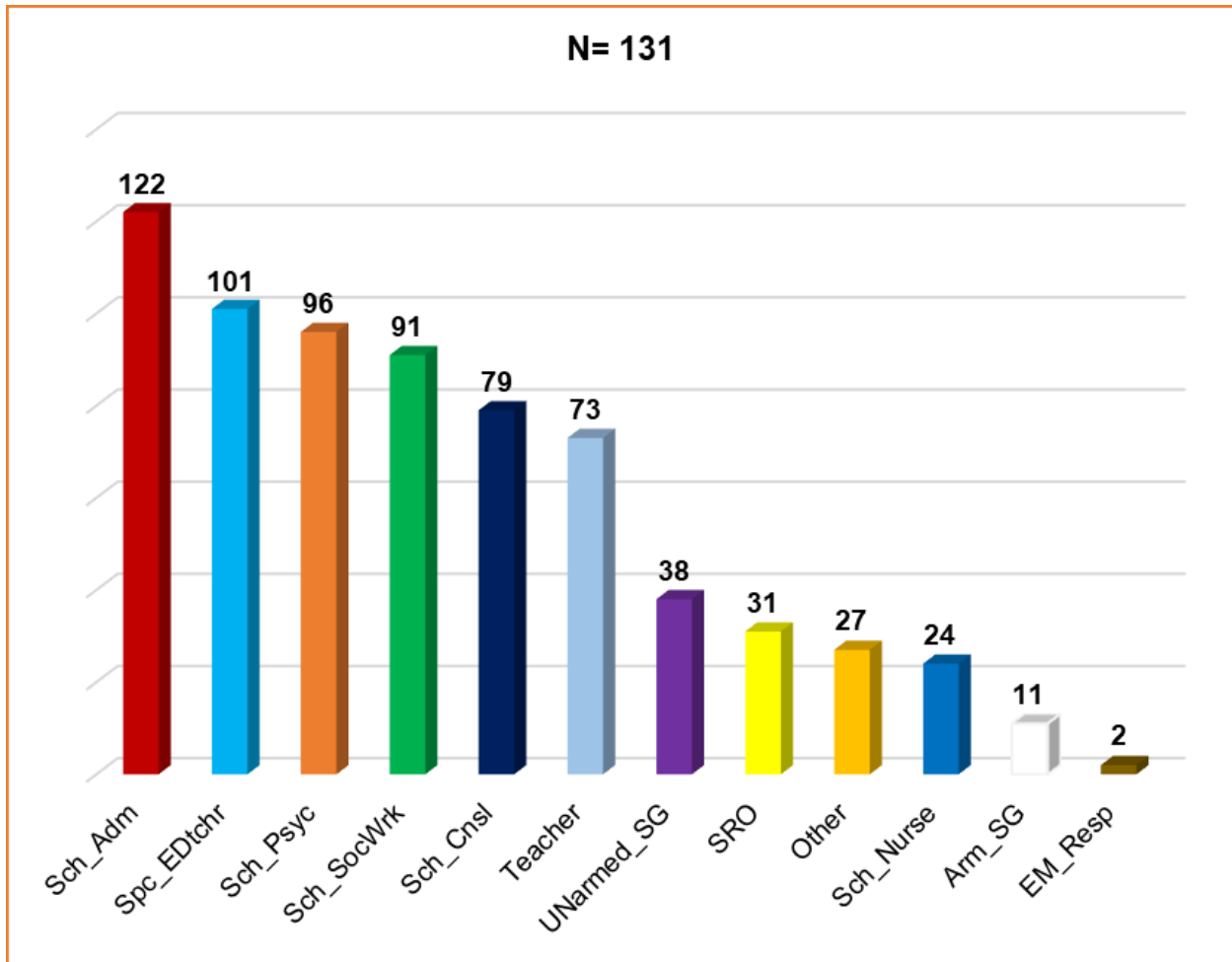
Figure 9: Scenario 2 Who is in Charge
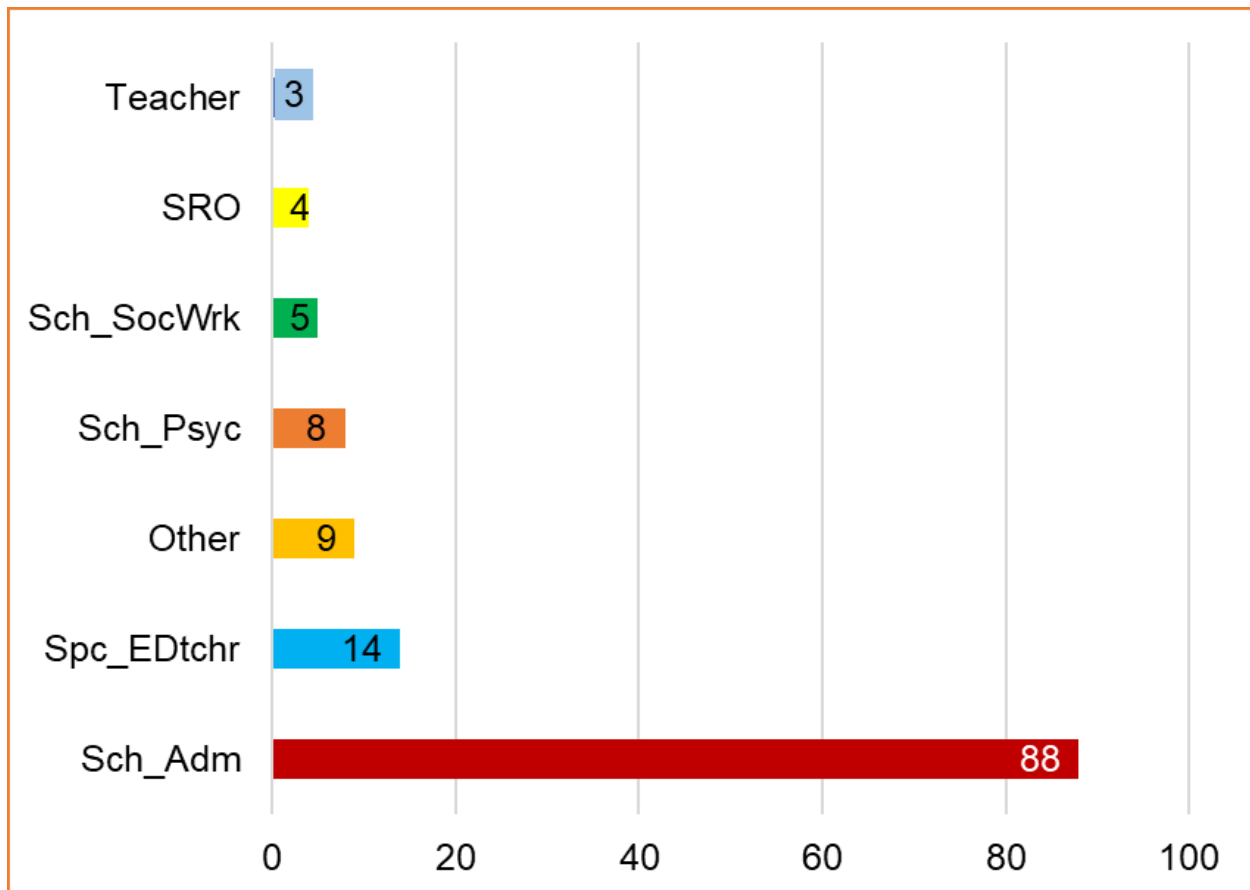
Scenario 3: Student evacuation from a classroom because of a behavioral outburst from a student with disabilities. Who responds? (Select all that apply).

Respondents answered as follows: School Administrator (n=122), Special Education Teacher (n=101), School Psychologist (n=96), School Social Worker (n=91), School Counselor (n=79), Teacher (n=73), Unarmed Security Guard (n=38), School Resource Officer (n= 31), Other (n=27), School Nurse (n=24), Armed Security Guard (n=11), Emergency Medical Responder (n=2) (see Figure 10: Scenario 3 Who Responds).

Figure 10: Scenario 3 Who Responds

Scenario 3: Student evacuation from a classroom because of a behavioral outburst from a student with disabilities. Who is in charge of the crisis? (Select only one).

Respondents answered as follows: School Administrator (n=104), Other (n=9), Special Education Teacher (n=6), Teacher (n=4), School Social Worker (n=4), School Psychologist (n=2), School Resource Officer (n= 1), Unarmed Security Guard (n=1), Emergency Medical Responder (n=0), School Counselor (n=0), School Nurse (n=0), Armed Security Guard (n=0) (see Figure 11: Scenario 3 Who is in Charge).

Figure 11: Scenario 3 Who is in Charge
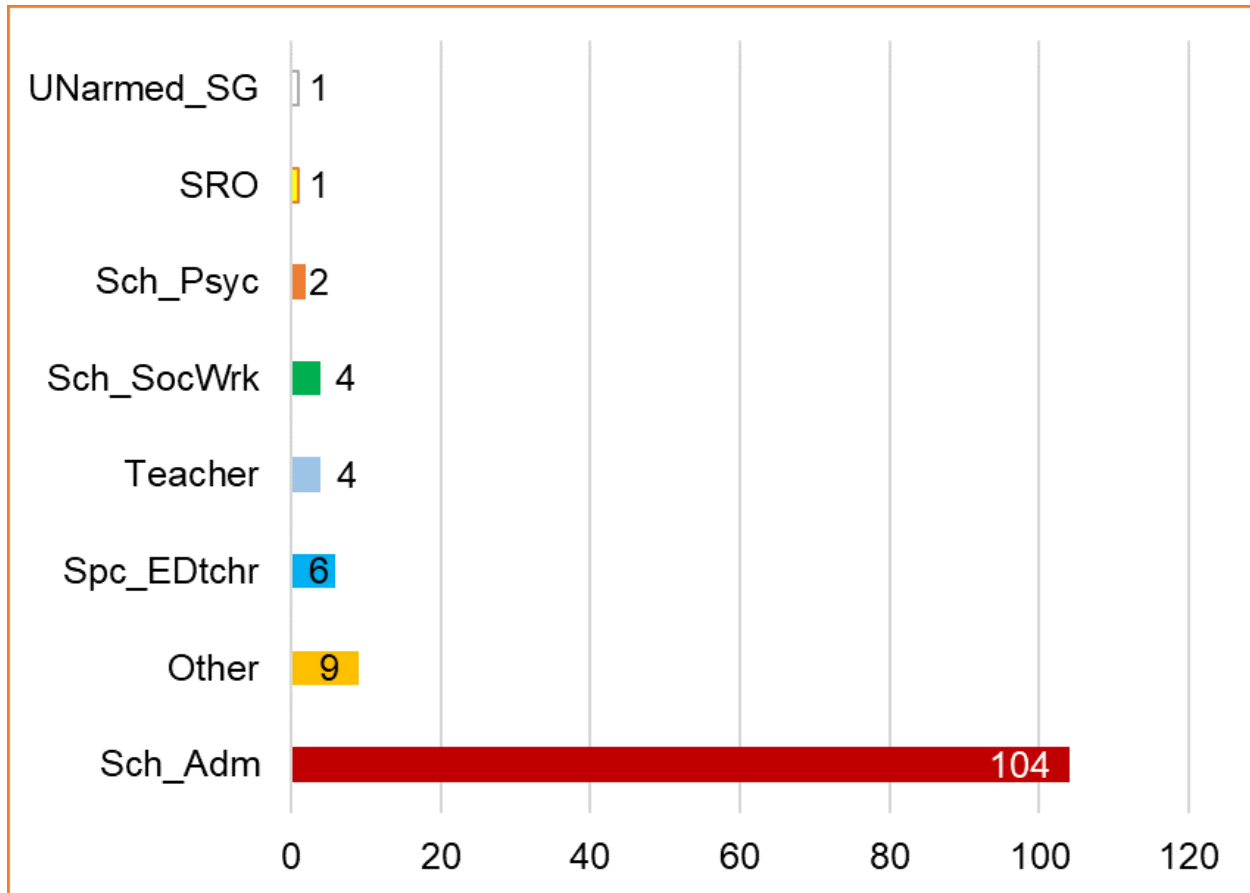
Scenario 4: Physical restraint of behaviorally "out of control" student with disabilities. Who responds? (Select all that apply).

Respondents answered as follows: School Administrator (n=111), Special Education Teacher (n=100), School Psychologist (n=93), School Social Worker (n=83), School Counselor (n=73), Teacher (n=52), School Nurse (n=40), Unarmed Security Guard (n=37), School Resource Officer (n= 33), Other (n=31), Armed Security Guard (n=11), Emergency Medical Responder (n=7) (see Figure 12: Scenario 4 Who Responds).

Figure 12: Scenario 4 Who Responds

Scenario 4: Physical restraint of behaviorally "out of control" student with disabilities. Who is in charge of the crisis? (Select only one).

Respondents answered as follows: School Administrator (n=93), Other (n=12), Special Education Teacher (n=11), School Psychologist (n=8), School Resource Officer (n= 3), School Social Worker (n=3), Armed Security Guard (n=1), Teacher (n=0), Unarmed Security Guard (n=0), Emergency Medical Responder (n=0), School Counselor (n=0), School Nurse (n=0) (see Figure 13: Scenario 4 Who is in Charge).

Figure 13: Scenario 4 Who is in Charge

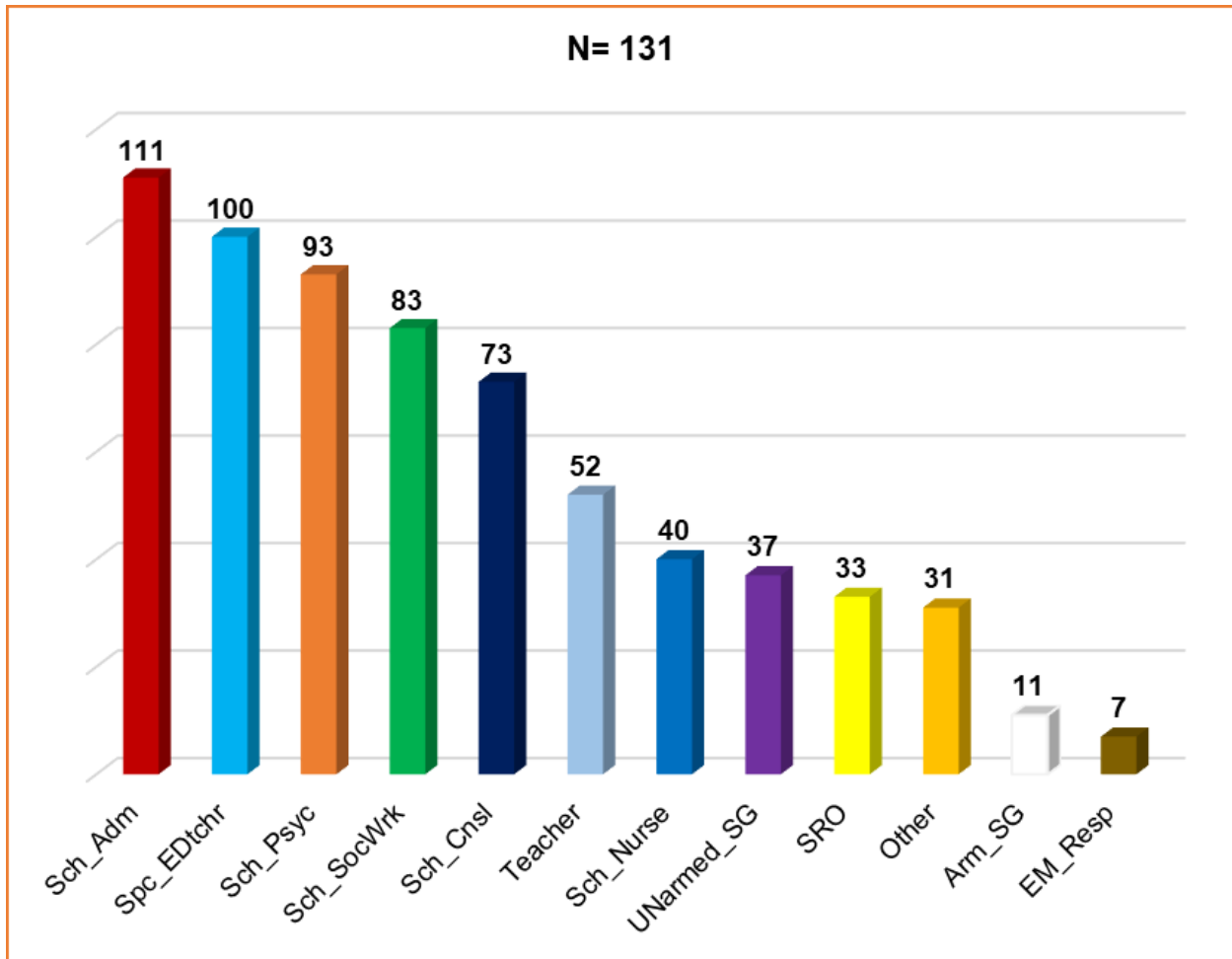*Scenario 5: Seclusion of behaviorally "out of control" student with disabilities. Who responds?* (Select all that apply).

Respondents answered as follows: School Administrator (n=108), Special Education Teacher (n=100), School Psychologist (n=93), School Social Worker (n=88), School Counselor (n=77), Teacher (n=56), School Nurse (n=33), Unarmed Security Guard (n=29), Other (n=29), School Resource Officer (n= 25), Armed Security Guard (n=6), Emergency Medical Responder (n=4) (see Figure 14: Scenario 5 Who Responds).
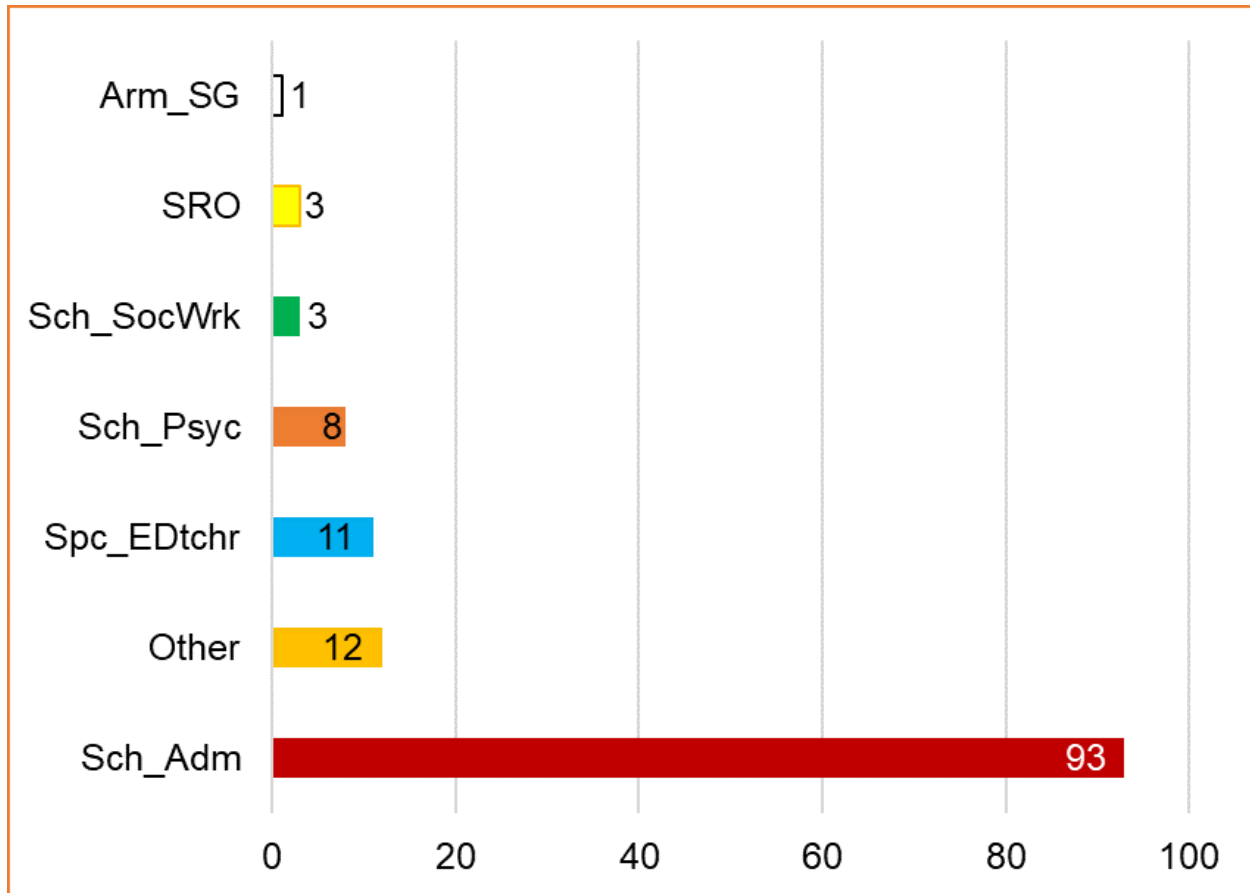
Figure 14: Scenario 5 Who Responds
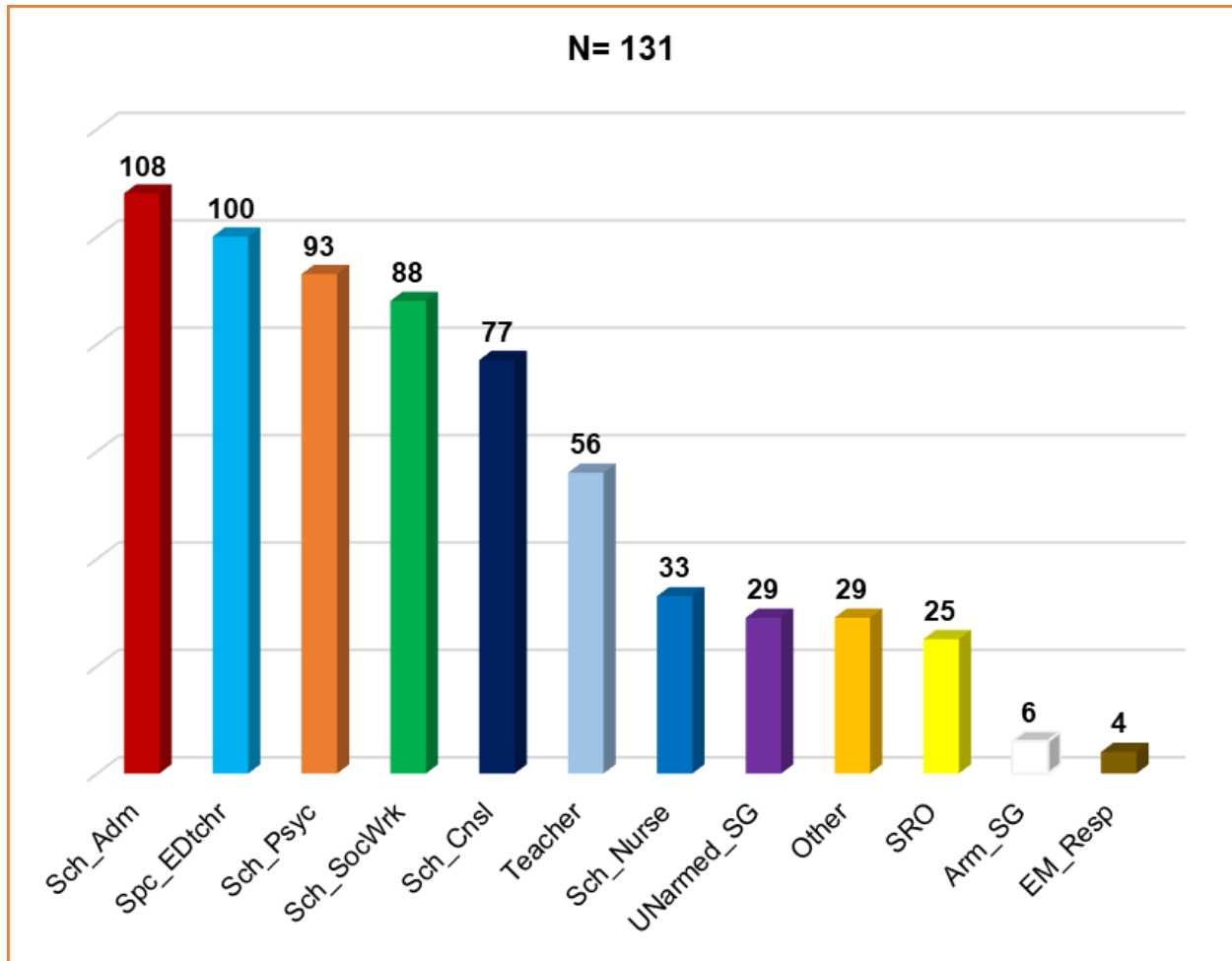
Scenario 5: Seclusion of behaviorally "out of control" student with disabilities. Who is in charge of the crisis? (Select only one).

Respondents answered as follows: School Administrator (n=88), Special Education Teacher (n=19), Other (n=11), School Psychologist (n=7), School Social Worker (n=4), School Counselor (n=2), Armed Security Guard (n=1), School Resource Officer (n=0), Teacher (n=0), Unarmed Security Guard (n=0), Emergency Medical Responder (n=0), School Nurse (n=0) (see Figure 15: Scenario 5 Who is in Charge).

Figure 15: Scenario 5 Who is in Charge
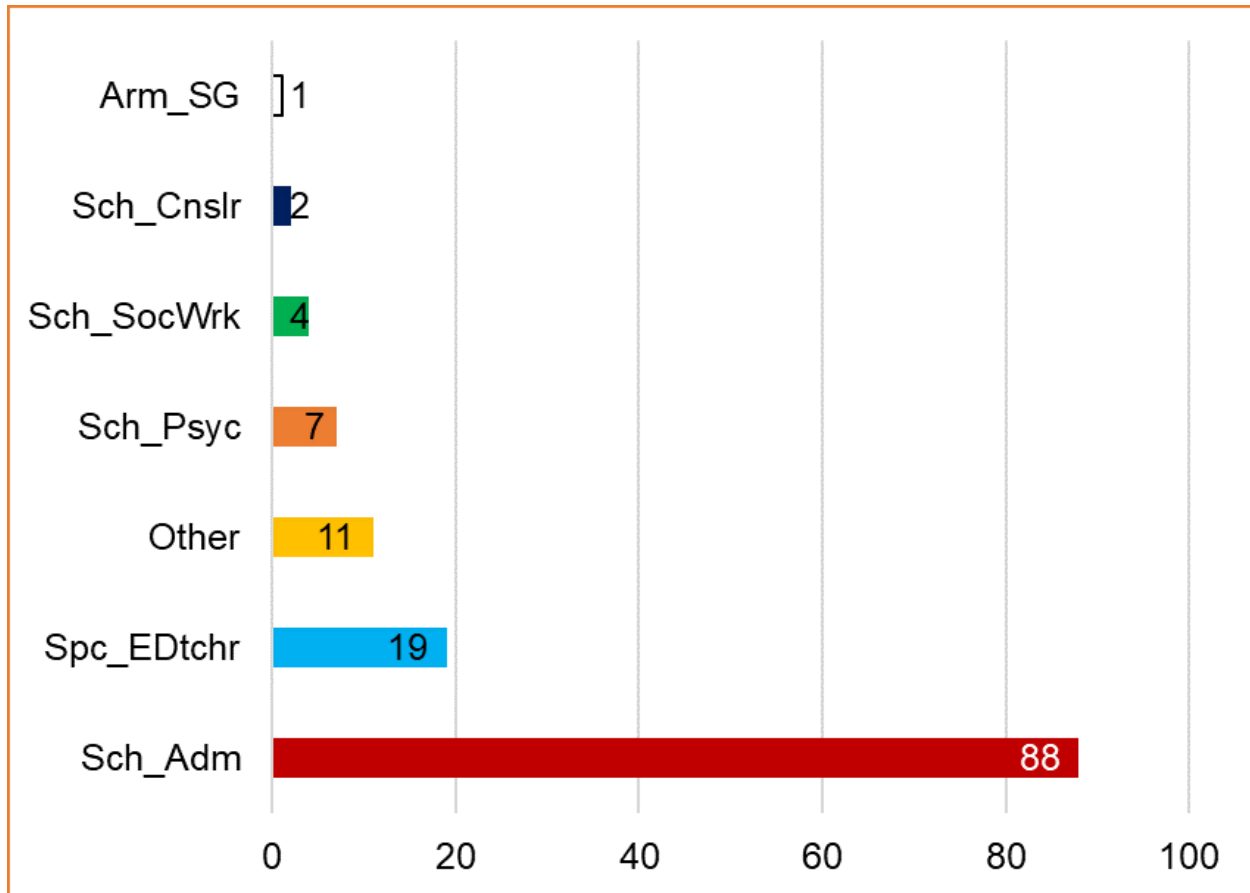
Results Question 5: MOU Process for SROs

Question 5- Determine what the process is for entering into memoranda of understanding between school districts, boards of education and school resource officers, and public accessibility to such a process.

Regarding the process for formalizing the relationship between the SRO and the school, the survey inquired if there was a written MOU between the school district and the law enforcement agency and received 131 responses. However, some schools reported having no SRO. For fairness in reporting, the researchers have included only those schools with SROs (n=91). Of those, 82% (n=75) indicated there is a written MOU between the school and law enforcement. Six percent (n=5) indicated there is no MOU in place between the two agencies, and all others selected "I don't know" 12% (n=11). In our focus group research, respondents were unanimous that a signed MOU between the school district and law enforcement agency was appropriate. Figure 16, below, reports information on the MOU between the two agencies.

Figure 16: MOU Between Agencies

Does your School District / Local Education Agency have a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Police Department? [N= 91] *Only included schools with SROs

No
6%

I don't know
12%

Yes
82%
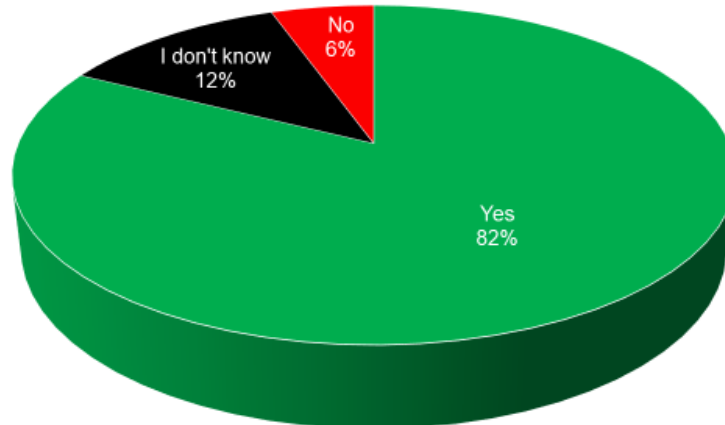
Addressing public involvement in the MOU process, 131 participants responded, but some schools did not have SROs. For fairness in the process, only schools with SROs are reported below (see Figure 17: Public Involvement in the MOU). Results revealed 27% (n=25) indicated there was public involvement in the MOU process, 24% (n=22) indicating there was no public involvement in the process, and 46% (n=42) indicating they did not know if there was public involvement in the MOU process. Focus group comments were consistent that the general public does not have a clear understanding of the role of the SRO and the involvement of the public may not be helpful.

"*The public does not possess the institutional knowledge and operational issues, [and] they would be blindly inputting their opinion.*" Participant Comment

Figure 17: Public Involvement in the MOU

Was there public involvement in the MOU process? For example, was it previously announced at the Board of Education or town hall meeting or via media as a public notice? **(N= 91)** *Only included schools with SROs
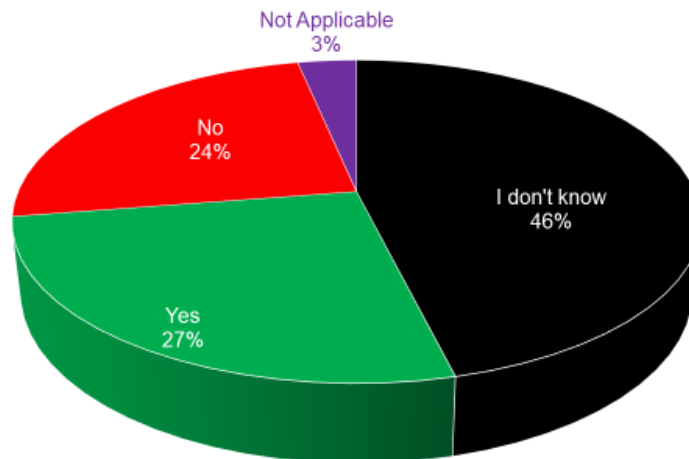
Addressing the question of the MOU document being publicly accessible, 131 total participants responded, but those without SROs were removed, yielding an N of 91. From that group, 30% (n=27) indicated Yes, 15% (n=14) indicated No, and 52% (n=47) indicated "I don't know." Figure 18 offers a representation of the public accessibility of the completed MOU as reported by participants.

Figure 18: Public Accessibility of Completed MOU

Is the MOU document publicly accessible? (N= 91) * Only included schools with SROs
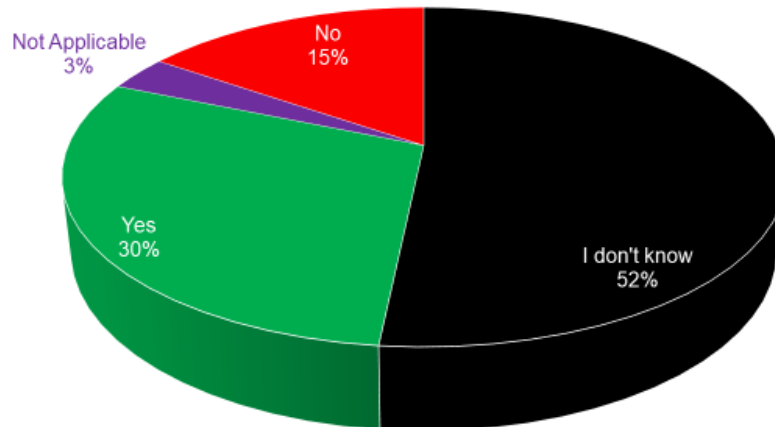
Results Question 6: Other Relevant Issues

Question 6- Explore other issues that the public institution of higher education conducting the study deems relevant to such study.

This study had several aims, primarily concerned with identifying how many SROs are in the state, their funding source, chain of command, and SRO interactions with students having disabilities. Additionally, the research team examined the types of training that respondents perceive to be high value. Figure 19 below illustrates the distribution by training area, with NASRO Basic being 22%, Crisis Intervention ranking second at 21%, NASRO Advanced ranking third at 17%, Seclusion and Restraint Training ranking fourth at 9%, and Autism training (7%) and Disability training (7%) sharing the fifth most popular ranking. It is important to note that participants, both law enforcement and non-law enforcement, all rated NASRO training as high value but focus group participants indicated limited accessibility.

Figure 19: Desired SRO Training

N = 91
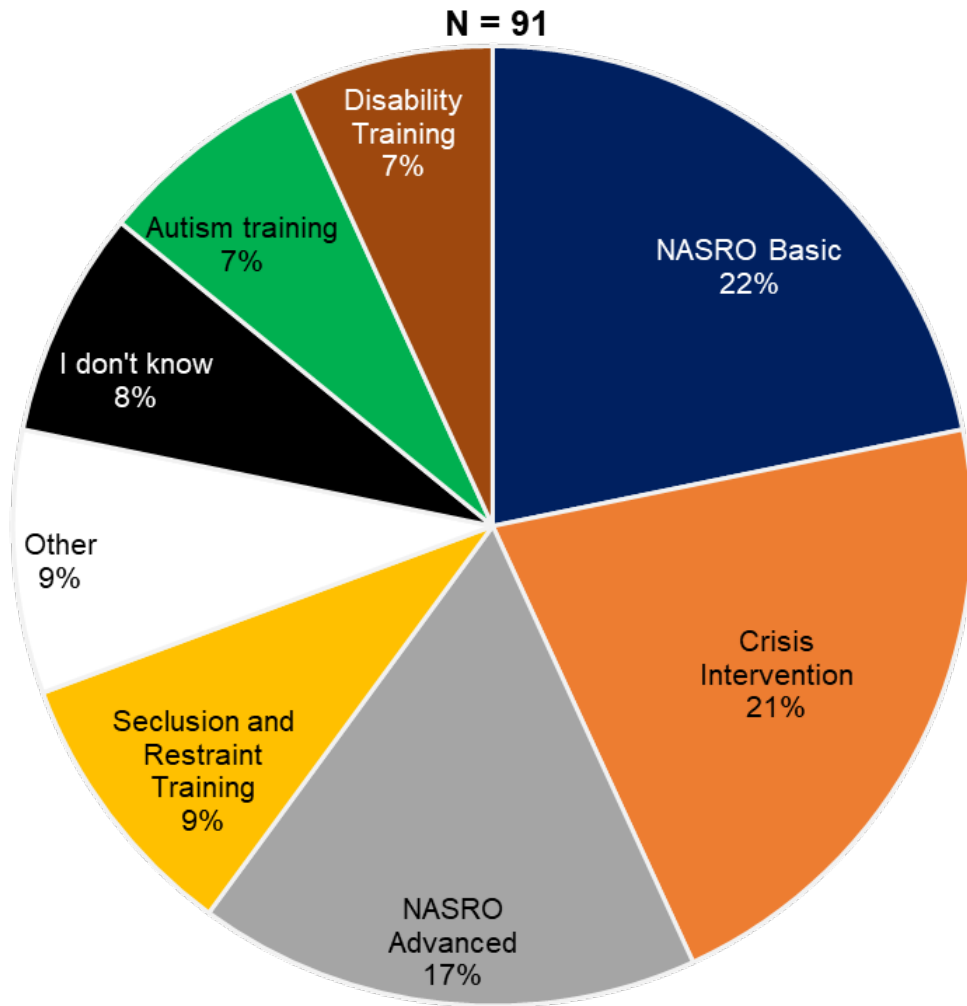
Additionally, the researchers asked about the value of disability-related training by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) categories and found that training for working with students who have Emotional Disturbance and Autism were identified as the highest priority (see Figure 20: Additional IDEA Training That Would Benefit Crisis Response).

Figure 20: Additional IDEA Training That Would Benefit Crisis Response
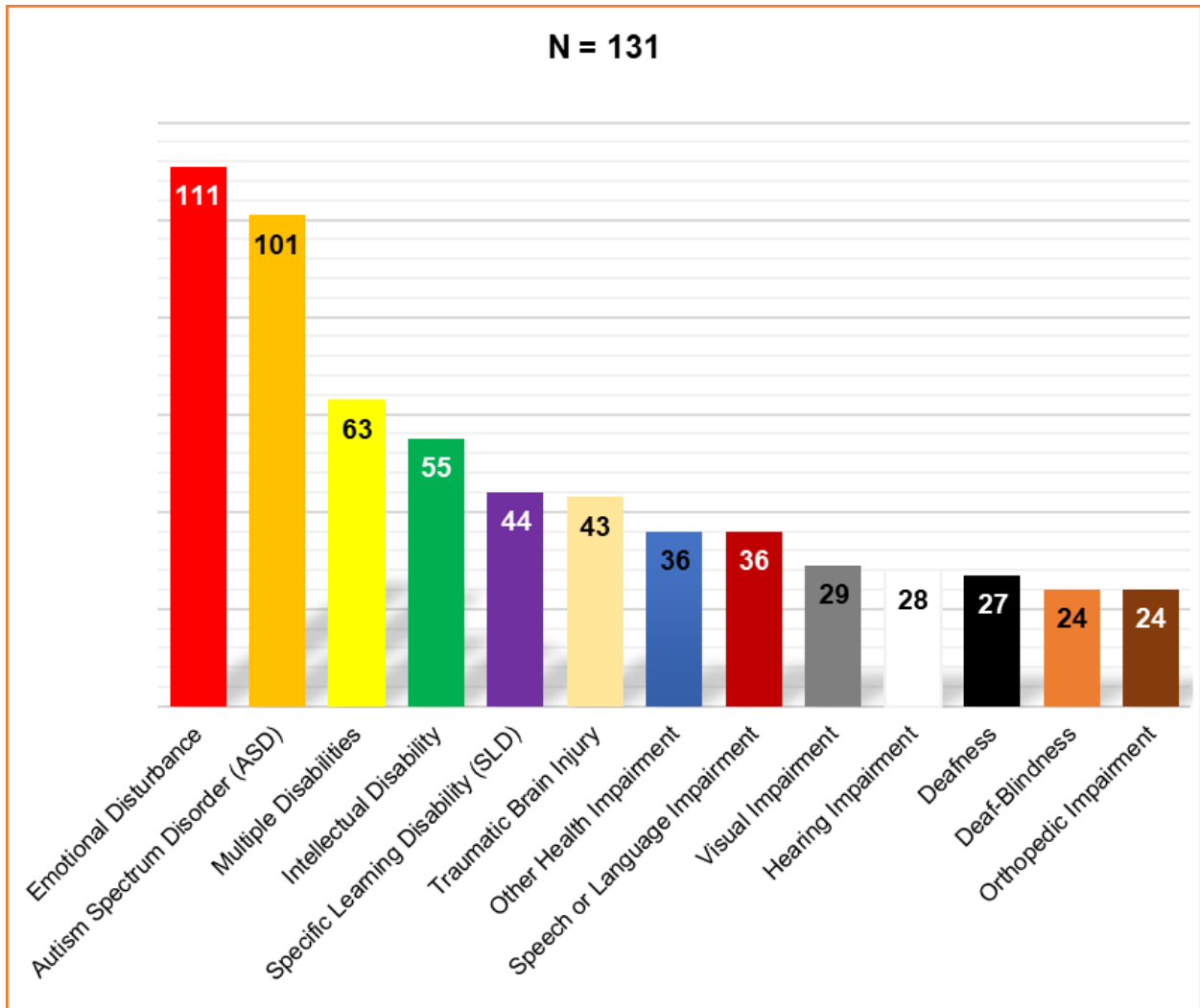
Conclusions/Discussion

To communicate clear answers to the questions addressed, this portion of the report has been divided into six sections with each question as a header. There are discussions on the results to provide elaboration and where appropriate, there are some basic conclusions drawn from the data.

Question 1: Number of SROs

(1) Determine how many school resource officers are employed in this state and the number of such officers in each school district;

According to Public Act No. 15-168, "school resource officer" means a sworn police officer of a local law enforcement agency or a sworn officer of the Division of State Police with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection who as been assigned to a school pursuant to an agreement between the local or regional board of education and the chief of police of a local law enforcement agency or the commanding officer of the Division of State Police. There are 236 SROs working in ninety-one (91) school districts in the state of Connecticut. Table 1 - *Number of SROs and the Funding Source* illustrates the specific districts and the number of SROs in each district.

Question 2: Funding Source of SROs

(2) Detail the funding mechanisms each district uses to employ school resource officers;

The survey results revealed four different types of funding for the SROs. One mechanism was the law enforcement agency, the second was the school district, the third was the local municipality, and the fourth was split between the school district and the law enforcement agency. Thirty-eight (38) or 42% of the districts had the SROs funded by the law enforcement agency, twenty-three (23) or 25% of the districts had the SROs funded by the school district, twenty-five (25) or 27% of the districts had the SRO funded by the town/municipality, and five (5) or 6% of the districts had the SROs funded by a split between the school district and the law enforcement agency. Table 1 - *Number of SROs and the Funding Source* details the specific districts and the funding source.

Question 3: Metrics for SRO Efficacy

(3) Develop metrics for assessing the efficacy of school resource officers, particularly in the context of interactions with students with disabilities;

The results of the study yielded 25 metrics, all of which were categorized with a recommendation of high, medium, or low. The categories were based on feedback by the focus group participants. It is important to recognize that the metrics for SRO efficacy expand beyond the scope of the SROs interactions with students with disabilities. This was discussed in the focus group and the consensus was that it was important to start more broadly and then narrow down to interactions with specific groups within the school's community. For example, SRO relationships with students with disabilities was considered to be foundational before any specific knowledge and skill can be addressed. The broader metrics provide a premise on which individual interactions could be built.

Twenty-two (22) of the metrics were rated as high, two (2) metrics were rated as medium, and one (1) metric was rated as low. These metrics are generally clustered into four categories. The first category is the MOU and the district participation in the SRO selection. Readers are referred to Table 4: Metrics to Measure SRO Efficacy to review metrics 1 - 4, in which participants strongly supported all metrics with the exception of public participation in the MOU. There was concern that public involvement may result in damaging the already fragile public perception of the SRO. Focus group respondents believe that, if necessary, public input could be done at a town meeting prior to law enforcement involvement. Once the town has taken public input, they could subsequently meet with law enforcement privately to formalize the MOU. This method, or something similar, would ensure that schools have SRO resources without creating or contributing to heated public discussions. Metrics 5-11 were generally rooted in role statements from NASRO. All respondents indicated a high desire to include these areas in the metrics. Metrics 12 - 16 all focus on SRO training. These areas were all heavily weighted in measuring the need for an SRO to engage in essential training to improve their understanding of schools and school mental health. The only one listed as Medium was Restorative Practices as this framework is recent in Connecticut legislation and related roles may be in process. Finally, metrics 17-25 were focused on the relationship the SRO has with stakeholders. With the exception of one, all were rated as high. Feedback from the focus group identified that collecting information on the number of type of interactions between the SRO and students may be tedious, or impossible, and may take time away from the interactions that the SRO should be having with students. Taken together, the outcomes show a metric with 25 different areas, 22 of which were highly endorsed by participants in this study.

Question 4: Students with Disabilities in Crisis

(4) Determine the chain of command structure when students with disabilities experience crises in school, including who responds and when;

Responses obtained from the survey provide a glimpse into the chain of command for students with disabilities in crises. As mentioned in the results section, survey participants were given five

scenarios describing increasingly serious crisis incidents with children with disabilities. For each scenario, respondents indicated "who responds" and "who is in charge."

Who responds to a school crisis involving children with disabilities was fairly consistent across scenarios and to be expected. There appeared to be four levels of personnel groupings who responded in a crisis to help a special education student. First, respondents overwhelmingly identified a school administrator as the number one person who responds to the crisis scenarios described, with the exception of the first scenario (student with disabilities crying uncontrollably in class). Similarly, in scenarios 2-5, the next often identified responders to a crisis after school administrator were the special education teacher, mental health support staff (school psychologist, school social worker and school counselor), and teacher, nominated in that order. The next group cited as assisting a student with disabilities in crisis included unarmed security guard, school resource officer, school nurse, and "other" in a close cluster but varying order across scenarios. The distant fourth group included armed security guard and emergency medical responder, in that order.

When respondents were asked to identify one person *who is in charge of the crisis,* the clear standout across the five scenarios was school administrator. There were many fewer mentions of other professionals than the school administrator. Several positions received no nominations for being in charge of a crisis across the five scenarios, including school counselor, school nurse, armed security guard, emergency medical responder,

Perhaps the first scenario about a student with disabilities who is crying uncontrollably in class is very common and, therefore, the school administrator did not receive the most votes for *who responds*. Instead, the special education teacher was cited the most as responding, followed closely by the school psychologist, school social worker, school counselor- in that order. Only after the mental health team, is the school administrator identified as someone who responds. This is a clear departure from the other scenarios. However, when asked *who is in charge* of this scenario*,* school administrators are the top choice as they are for all scenarios.

The data raises several questions. Interestingly, the category of "other" was mentioned numerous times as someone *who responds* and *who is in charge of a crisis.* There is no indication of who is being referred to as "other." Taking into account context, reasonable hypotheses may be that "other" refers to a paraeducator or a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). Future research might provide a text box for respondents to write-in the position title of "other." Additionally, it would be helpful to have data regarding whether the staff are full- or part-time employees and who is trained in physical restraint and seclusion.

In conclusion, generally speaking, the chain of command when responding to a crisis involving students with disabilities, with little variation based on the crisis situation, are the school

administrator, special education teacher, and the mental health team (school psychologist, school social worker, school counselor). On the other hand, when it comes to the one person in charge of a crisis situation involving students with disabilities, overwhelmingly, the school administrator is cited. Of note, the SROs, unarmed/armed security guards were not mentioned as being in charge, except once each for the classroom evacuation and physical restraint scenario. In the latter scenario, an explanation might be that the security guard may be the one with the appropriate training to physically restrain a student.

Question 5: MOU Process for SROs

(5) Determine what the process is for entering into memoranda of understanding between school districts, boards of education and school resource officers, and public accessibility to such process.

According to CT Gen Stat § 10-233m each local board or regional board of education that assigns SROs to their schools shall enter into an MOU. The statute also requires that the MOU includes provisions that address daily interactions of the school resource officer with students and school personnel, a graduated model for discipline, and the completion by the SRO of social-emotional learning and restorative practices as provided to certified employees of the school district. The survey results revealed that not all of the school districts with SROs have a written MOU between the school district and the law enforcement agency. 82% (n=75) indicated there is a written MOU between the school and law enforcement and six percent (n=5) indicated there is no MOU in place between the two agencies. All others responses were "I don't know" 12% (n=11). In our focus group research, respondents were unanimous that a signed MOU between the school district and law enforcement agency was appropriate.

To understand the process for entering into the MOU, the researchers looked at public accessibility to the process. Results revealed 27% (n=25) indicated there was public involvement in the MOU process, 24% (n=22) indicating there was no public involvement in the process, and 46% (n=42) indicating they did not know if there was public involvement in the MOU process. Focus group comments were consistent that the general public does not have a clear understanding of the role of the SRO and the involvement of the public may not be helpful.

Finally, the researchers looked at public accessibility to the MOU. 30% (n=27) indicated Yes, 15% (n=14) indicated No, and 52% (n=47) indicated "I don't know."

Question 6: Other Relevant Issues

(6) Explore other issues that the public institution of higher education conducting the study deems relevant to such study.

The results of this study clearly point to some interesting conclusions. For example, there was strong support for training done by the National Association of School Resource Officers. While desirable, NASRO training is not required for school resource officers in Connecticut and access to NASRO training is lacking across the state. This sentiment was clear in the focus groups where one participant stated, "*Presuming the training is still available, this can be considered a minimum threshold. The district/school should still have their own training responsibilities to orient the SRO to their local context and needs….*"

In addition to training by NASRO, respondents also felt strongly that training on interacting with students with disabilities should be part of the SRO baseline. Interestingly, the top two training areas for disability training were Emotional Disturbance and Autism. Focus group members made multiple comments about this area, including these three statements: "*Training in interactions with special needs students should be included as well.*" The next statement addressed the gravity, as interactions between SROs and students with disabilities are inevitably high: "*The SRO will have tons of interactions with the special needs population so any additional training [in] this area will be a benefit.*" This respondent emphasized the depth of integration into the special education program: "*While general training is fine, what is more important is for the SROs to be intimately familiar with the specific behavior plans and interventions for individual students in the school. If the SRO does not have a knowledge of the specific student's plans, then they may approach a student very differently.*" In all data collection, it was clear that SRO training on working with students who have disabilities is vital to success in the role. It is important to note that many other training areas were also endorsed positively. For example, role descriptions from the NASRO framework such as safety educator, mentor and informal counselor, all received high support. Additionally, training areas that are common for helping professionals, such as SEL and adolescent mental health, were also held up by participants. Thus, there is consensus that SROs should participate in an interdisciplinary manner in appropriate mental health professional development opportunities offered to school-based mental health staff.

On a related note, 79% of respondents indicated there is a policy on handling students with disabilities who are in a crisis, but only 62% reported having a written policy. As training should focus on compliance with laws and policies, this appears to be a growth area for schools in this study. This study gave respondents different scenarios, scaled from mild student dysregulation to more serious behaviors, and asked respondents to indicate who responds to provide support and who is in charge. It should be noted that the school administrator was consistently identified as the person in charge of crisis incidents. Thus, training of school administrators must include both working with students who have disabilities and determining the role of the SRO, if any, in their response to a crisis situation involving a special needs student.

Regarding an MOU between the school district and law enforcement, most (82%) indicated there was an MOU and some (6%) indicated there was not an MOU in place. Multiple agencies, including NASRO, recommend an MOU as a best practice as the MOU defines roles and responsibilities for both parties. Participants in the study had significant discussion when we addressed public involvement in the MOU process. There was concern across all respondents that the general public misunderstands the role of the SRO and public involvement may lead to widespread contention. The public perception of the SRO was deeply concerning for all respondents. This was also amplified when asked about relationships, and specifically relationships with minority students. While all participants agreed that positive relationships with students and staff are essential, there was concern that focusing on interactions with minority students may also lead to public scrutiny of the SRO. One participant stated, "[*We] should not separate school community members' relational importance based on skin color*." Another stated, "[*This would be] very difficult to measure.*" It is also worth noting that one of the respondents was a school district employee who had been elected to the local police commission board in the town where they work. This has allowed this participant to take an active role in advocating for their school district, building deeper and more positive connections with local law enforcement.

Finally, it is important to note that this study was primarily designed to focus on the interactions of SROs and students with disabilities. While participation by diverse stakeholders was strong, the number of schools without SROs was not examined. With school security being a national priority, it is likely that many Connecticut schools are engaged in agreements with private security agencies or have their own security workforce. The training, knowledge, and skill of this sizable community is also worthy of examination, as the bar for their training is typically lower than that of an SRO.

Suggestions for future Research

1. Engage in research on all security providers who are not SROs. This includes armed security officers, unarmed security guards, and any others who provide this service. The role of non-SROs, their training, and their interactions with students who have disabilities is also worth examining.
2. Most school districts reported having an MOU. However, it would provide valuable insight to understand what specifics are in the MOUs.
3. Engage in research that helps to identify violence disrupted by SROs and stakeholders. The majority of related research is focused on school violence, as well as perceived negative correlates of an SRO at a school. There appears to be limited efforts to identify the potential positive impact of a properly trained SRO on a campus.
4. Considering that school administrators were overwhelmingly identified as the person in charge of all crises, it would be interesting to document their training and role perceptions as it relates to SRO involvement.
5. It would be helpful to conduct research on what kinds of training schools require of their SROs beyond what is required to be a sworn law enforcement officer in Connecticut. It would be helpful to know what is already being done across the state around SRO-student interactions.
6. The role of the SRO is much more complex than may be captured in a rubric. Thus, further examination of metrics from other states as well as other resources may be warranted.
7. It would be beneficial to study the existing written policies for students with disabilities in crises.
8. There are many districts that have SROs and it would interesting to research what variables determine the presence of SROs and the number of SROs per school building/school district?