

Enhancing School Resource Officers' Effectiveness through Online Professional and Job Embedded Coaching

The University of Florida is proposing a large-scale project to the National Institute of Justice that is aimed at promoting the skills of School Resource Officers (SROs), through an innovative online professional development platform. The 36 month project will pilot a system of job-embedded professional development to train at least 140 Miami-Dade County Public Schools SROs in research-based techniques for addressing the unique needs of the school environment, using a combination of both online and in-person supports. The system will target four areas found to be important for the SRO's success, but rarely included in current training: 1) Social/emotional learning; 2) Trauma informed care; 3) Cultural Competence/Implicit Bias/Intersectionality; and 4) Restorative Practices/Problem-Solving. SRO supervisors will receive coaching training so they can have the skills to help SROs effectively bridge the concepts learned to their day-to-day work. The School Police Department, District, and School Board have all committed to partnering on the project to ensure success.

The research design for this project will be an experimental time-series design where 70 SROs are randomly assigned to participate in the program (Cohort 1), and a control group of 70 SROs is placed on a waiting list to participate in the program starting six months after the first group completes the program (Cohort 2). The design includes a short time-series with treatment and control SROs measured simultaneously at three waves. The three measurements will occur before treatment assignment, after the treatment group completes the program, and six months after participation. After these three measurements are taken, the control group will receive the program. Measures used will include the: Knowledge of child development, classroom management, child problem behaviors, and behavior management strategies, Knowledge of Behavioral Principles As Applied To Children Test (KBPAC) – Short Form; Trauma-Informed Self-Assessment Test; General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE); Self-Assessment of Social and Emotional Competencies (SASEC); Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS); Implicit Association Test (IAT); and LGBT Ally Identity Measure. Multiple-group latent growth models (M-LGM) (Muthén & Curran, 1997) with three measurement waves will be used to estimate the effect of program participation on all outcomes. The results of the project will be: 1) A technological prototype that will be tested and ready for scaling at the local, state, and national level; 2) the submission of findings to the academic journals and presentations at conferences as detailed in the dissemination plan and 3) a webinar series to share the study, its findings, and implications.