

MEMORANDUM

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THROUGH: Jeri M. Mulrow
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DATE: October 3, 2017

SUBJECT: BJS request for OMB Clearance to conduct a pre-test for the Survey of Law Enforcement Personnel in Schools (SLEPS), under the OMB generic clearance agreement (OMB Number 1121-0339).

Introduction

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is planning to conduct a new data collection to gain a better understanding of the roles, functions, and supporting infrastructure of police officers in schools through a project titled the Survey of Law Enforcement Personnel in Schools (SLEPS). One of the primary goals of SLEPS is to generate detailed, accurate, and reliable national statistics describing the scope, size, characteristics, and functions of law enforcement personnel who work and interact in a school environment. To accomplish this goal, the SLEPS will employ a two-phase approach with a sample of agencies from the 2017 CSLLEA that will survey both law enforcement agencies and their officers who work in schools.

This new data collection is a component of a larger school safety agenda. As outlined in the Department of Justice Appropriations Act, 2014 (Public Law 113-76), Congress tasked the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to undertake the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative (CSSI), a research-focused program to increase the safety of schools nationwide. The CSSI identified a number of school safety-related topics for which more extensive data and research are required; one such topic is the presence of law enforcement in schools. There have been isolated local efforts to empirically examine law enforcement involvement in schools; however, no comprehensive national-level data exists on the extent of law enforcement involvement in the nation's schools or on their typical roles and responsibilities. To address the lack of national,

detailed data, NIJ entered into an interagency agreement with BJS to improve the amount of information pertaining to the roles, responsibilities, and actions of local law enforcement in schools.

Currently, BJS has limited data available on the presence of law enforcement in schools. BJS collected the number of school resource officers (SROs) or other sworn personnel whose primary duties are related to school safety on the 1997, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2007, and 2016 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) Survey (the question asking about the number of SROs was not included in the 2013 LEMAS). BJS also collected the count of SROs on the 2000 and 2008 Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies (CSLLEA) and plans to collect the number of SROs on the 2017 CSLLEA. The narrow scope of the school safety question on these questionnaires provides no insight on the roles of officers in schools or on the infrastructure in place to support these officers.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) conducts the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), which surveys principals at a nationally representative sample of over 3,000 public schools. SSOCS asks principals about the presence and activities of school security staff, including sworn law enforcement personnel. The most recent data available cover the 2009-2010 school year and contain only high level details on the school's security staff as a whole. SSOCS was fielded again in the spring of 2016 with more detailed school security questions, including a distinction between types of security staff and their roles in the school. While there is a level of overlap between the SSOCS and SLEPS data collections (e.g., both surveys ask about the functions of SROs and the equipment they carry), this overlap is not duplicative, but rather complementary. The SSOCS does not provide the detailed information we seek to gain regarding the number of law enforcement agencies with officers working in schools and the infrastructure within these agencies to support school safety. Additionally, the data collected by the SSOCS on officers working in schools do not explore officer characteristics such as training and experience.

To address the need for national-level data on the prevalence and roles of law enforcement in schools, BJS awarded a contract to RTI International under a competitive solicitation to develop and test the SLEPS. RTI has subcontracted with the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to assist with the SLEPS since PERF has experience with conducting officer-level surveys and existing relationships with law enforcement agencies.

Concepts and topics for the SLEPS were developed and prioritized through ongoing discussions among the project team, NIJ, practitioners, researchers, and other key stakeholders. The project team also convened an Expert Working Group (EWG) to solicit input and feedback on topics of interest and utility, following up with a subset of the EWG to review early drafts of SLEPS questionnaires. The EWG was included individuals who could provide the perspective of data providers and consumers of the SLEPS information. The group was comprised of officers who work in schools, those who supervise officers who work in schools, a representative from the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), experts from the academic field, and representatives from various federal agencies with vested interests in school safety topics.

In fall 2016, BJS requested and received OMB approval to conduct cognitive testing under the generic clearance agreement (OMB Number 1121-0339) of (1) a SLEPS law enforcement

agency (LEA) survey, which included a school resource officer (SRO) rostering form, and (2) a SLEPS SRO survey. The interviews were designed to (1) thoroughly test the survey instruments to ensure question clarity and reliability and (2) assess the willingness of law enforcement agencies to provide rosters of their officers working in schools. In November and December 2016, the project team completed 18 SRO interviews and received only minor suggestions to improve the clarity of the SRO instrument. The project team completed 20 LEA interviews and the findings led BJS to make significant changes to the LEA survey to make it more streamlined and to improve the flow and navigation through the instrument. During testing, most LEA participants indicated that they would be willing to complete the roster form attached to the LEA survey, but noted that they may not be able to provide the information at the level of detail requested, or that they may need departmental approval to provide the requested information.

Based upon the feedback received during the cognitive testing of the LEA survey and subsequent revisions, BJS requested and received OMB approval to conduct cognitive testing of the revised LEA survey under the generic clearance agreement (OMB Number 1121-0339) in May 2017. This round of testing was designed to (1) thoroughly test the revised LEA survey instrument to ensure question clarity and reliability and (2) assess the willingness and ability of agencies to provide rosters of their officers working in schools by requesting agencies to complete the roster form. During spring and summer 2017, the project team completed 17 LEA interviews and collected 14 rosters.

The current request is to conduct a pre-test for the SLEPS under the generic clearance agreement (OMB Number 1121-0339). The activities described below are designed to rigorously test the proposed protocol to obtain officer rosters from law enforcement agencies and subsequently survey a sample of the rostered officers, beginning in late 2017 and concluding in early 2018. Following the completion of this pre-test, BJS plans to seek OMB clearance to implement full-scale data collection in 2019.

Request to Conduct Pre-test of the LEA and SRO Survey Protocols

There are a number of challenges associated with conducting an officer-level survey, including gaining access to agencies and officer rosters, sampling, and potentially low response rates. For example, PERF previously conducted an officer-level survey on body armor that asked agencies to provide rosters of all sworn patrol officers and found that at least half of the selected agencies were unwilling to provide this information, leading PERF to rely on agency staff to draw the officer-level sample. Considering these challenges, along with the fact that the SLEPS will be BJS's first attempt at conducting an officer-level survey, BJS would like to conduct a pre-test of survey protocols to evaluate the full range of the planned data collection protocol, including obtaining rosters of officers working in schools from law enforcement agencies and subsequently sampling from the rosters and administering the SRO survey to officers.

The selection and participation of SROs within LEAs is of critical importance for obtaining accurate and precise SRO-level estimates. For the sample design to be successful, BJS needs to achieve a high level of cooperation and participation from LEAs when rostering and distributing the survey to SROs, and BJS needs a high proportion of SROs to participate in the study. By

conducting this test up front, BJS can evaluate how successful the planned SRO-level protocol will be in the full SLEPS implementation and adjust plans and protocols accordingly.

Design of the LEA and SRO Field Tests

The pre-test will be implemented through several steps and has an expected duration of 5 months. The project team has identified a sampling frame based upon BJS’s Law Enforcement Agency Roster (LEAR), in combination with SRO data from the 2008 and 2014 CSLLEA and verification calling. In order to ensure representation across varying agency sizes and number of SROs, the pre-test is designed to sample 250 law enforcement agencies with an expected sample yield of 462 SROs.

The strata are based upon the number of expected SROs employed by each agency. Analysis of the universe indicated that while the majority of SROs are employed by a small percentage of law enforcement agencies, most agencies that employ SROs only employ small numbers of SROs. The sampling is more heavily focused on agencies employing 1-5 SROs as compared to larger SROs because, of agencies with SROs, most fall under the category of 1-5 SROs (see Table 1). The sampling also allows the project team to learn more about agencies for which the number of SROs is currently unknown. The New York Police Department (NYPD) will be sampled with certainty because of their participation in the second round of cognitive testing, during which they expended significant effort to provide a roster of their approximately 4,700 officers working in schools. The project team decided to include NYPD in the pre-test to maximize the information provided in cognitive testing and make use of NYPD’s significant effort in already completing a roster.

The project team has also determined that the sampling rate of officers within agencies should vary, as doing so allows some evaluation of what factors are associated with (a) agency willingness to provide rosters, and (b) SRO willingness to respond to the survey while minimizing the total burden. Specifically, the project team developed the following sampling plan of SROs:

- Agencies with 1-5 SROs – sample all SROs
- Agencies with 6-10 SROs – sample 75% of SROs (with a minimum of 5)
- Agencies with 11-30 SROs – sample 50% of SROs (with a minimum of 8)
- Agencies with 31+ SROs – sample 10% of SROs (with a maximum of 50)

Table 1: Sample Design Information for SLEPS Pretest

| Stratum | # Agencies on Frame ¹ | # Agencies Sampled for Pre-test ¹ | Expected # of Agency Respondents | Expected # of Agencies Providing Rosters | Expected # of SROs to Receive Survey per Agency | Expected # of Sampled SROs | Expected # of Responding SROs |
|-------------|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Cert (NYPD) | 1 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 40.0 |
| 31+ SROs | 75.8 | 7.7 | 5.5 | 3.9 | 10.7 | 41.4 | 33.1 |
| 11-31 SROs | 238.9 | 24.3 | 17.5 | 12.2 | 9.3 | 112.9 | 90.3 |

| Stratum | # Agencies on Frame ¹ | # Agencies Sampled for Pre-test ¹ | Expected # of Agency Respondents | Expected # of Agencies Providing Rosters | Expected # of SROs to Receive Survey per Agency | Expected # of Sampled SROs | Expected # of Responding SROs |
|--------------|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Cert (NYPD) | 1 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 40.0 |
| 6-10 SROs | 421.2 | 42.9 | 30.8 | 21.3 | 5.7 | 121.8 | 97.4 |
| 1-5 SROs | 4,882 | 124 | 89.1 | 61.7 | 1.8 | 110.6 | 88.5 |
| 0 SROs | 9,811 | 10 | 7.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Unknown SROs | 637 | 40 | 28.7 | 20.0 | 1.3 | 25.8 | 20.6 |
| TOTAL | 16,067 | 250 | 179.8 | 120.0 | | 462.5 | 370.0 |

¹SRO strata shown do not correspond perfectly to the sampling strata on the frame. Accordingly, the number of agencies on the frame in the categories 6-10 SROs, 11-31 SROs, and 31+ SROs were estimated and can shift across draws.

LEA Field Test Protocol

Included in the universe file is a point of contact (POC) for the law enforcement agency. On day 1 of the agency pre-test, RTI will send the agency POC the agency survey materials. There will be two conditions tested and they will be split evenly and assigned randomly across the 250 sampled agencies. Under the first condition, agencies will have the option of responding online or by paper (online/paper condition), while under the second condition, agencies will only be given the option of responding online (online only condition). All agencies will receive a paper copy of the survey if they do not respond within 28 days (see below). Agencies under the first condition will receive a cover letter inviting the agency to complete the survey online or by paper (attachment A), a letter of support from PERF (attachment B), a paper LEA questionnaire (attachment C), a roster form requesting that the agency provide a roster of their officers working in schools (attachment D), an LEA informed consent form (attachment E), and a postage paid return envelope. Agencies under the second condition will receive a cover letter inviting the agency to complete the survey and roster online (attachment F) and the letter of support from PERF. When agencies login to complete the survey online, they will be prompted to read and accept the LEA informed consent. Agencies will be given the option to either designate a POC to coordinate the distribution of the SRO surveys to sampled officers or provide officer contact information on the roster so that the project team may contact the officers directly.

On day 14 of the agency pre-test, 2 weeks after the agency survey materials are mailed, a postcard (attachment G) will be sent to all sampled agencies thanking those that completed the survey and reminding those agencies that have not yet responded to complete the survey. This reminder/thank you postcard will be sent to all of the 250 sampled agencies.

On day 28 of the agency pre-test, 2 weeks after the mailing of the thank you/reminder postcard, a replacement package will be mailed to nonresponding agencies. The replacement package will consist of a reminder letter with login information (attachment H), the LEA survey and roster

form, and a postage paid return envelope. It is anticipated that 80% percent of sampled agencies (200 agencies) will receive replacement questionnaire packages.

On day 49, three weeks following the replacement questionnaire mailing, RTI telephone interviewing staff will begin telephone prompts with nonresponding agencies. The agencies will have the option to complete the questionnaire over the phone with the interviewer during the reminder call. It is estimated that 60% of sampled agencies (150 agencies) will receive nonresponse telephone prompts and that 16% of the sample (40 agencies), will opt to complete the survey over the phone during the nonresponse telephone call. The assumption of 40% response rate is based on BJS work with the Death in Custody Reporting Program and the Annual Surveys of Probation and Parole.

Agency data collection will run for just over 2 months, concluding on day 67. It is anticipated that by this point, 72% of agencies will have responded to the survey (180 agencies) and that 50% of agencies will have provided an officer roster (125 agencies). Once the agency data collection ends, RTI will take one month to use the officer rosters provided by the agencies to select a sample of officers for the officer survey and prepare the officer-level questionnaire packets.

SRO Field Test Protocol

On the first day of the SRO pre-test, RTI will send out the SRO survey materials. For those agencies that designated a POC, RTI will send a cover letter to the POC (attachment I) along with individual letters (attachment J) for the POC to distribute to each officer selected. Six POCs from each stratum identified in Table 1 above, along with the NYPD POC, will also receive a letter requesting they track the time they spend coordinating the participation of their agency's SROs in the pre-test (attachment K), for a total of 25 POCs. For those agencies that elect to have the project team contact officers directly and provided officer contact information, the invitation letter (attachment J) will be sent directly to each individual officer. The invitation letter will include the website and unique login information for each officer. Upon logging in to complete the survey online, officers will be prompted to read and accept the SRO informed consent (attachment L).

On day 14, two weeks following the initial mailout, thank you postcards and reminders will be sent. For agencies that designated a POC, RTI will send a cover letter (attachment M) along with thank you/reminder postcards (attachment N) for the POC to distribute to each sampled officer. For agencies that elected to have the project team contact officers directly, the postcards will be sent directly to the officers. This thank you/reminder postcard will be sent to all of the 462 sampled officers.

On day 28, two weeks after the thank you/reminder postcard mailing, questionnaire packages will be sent to those officers who have not yet responded. The replacement mailing will be sent to either the POC at the agency or directly to the officer, depending on the option that the agency selected at the conclusion of the LEA survey. For agencies that designated a POC, the mailing will include a cover letter to the POC (attachment O) and questionnaire packages for nonresponding officers consisting of an SRO reminder letter (attachment P), a paper version of

the SRO survey (attachment Q), the SRO informed consent form, and a postage paid return envelope. For agencies that elect for direct contact, the mailing will include the SRO reminder letter, SRO survey, the SRO informed consent form, and a postage paid return envelope and will be sent directly to the nonresponding officers at their agency’s mailing address. It is estimated that 40% of the officer sample (approximately 185 officers) will receive these replacement packages.

The officer data collection will run for about 6 weeks, concluding on day 39. It is estimated that by this point, 80% of officers will have responded to the survey (370 officers). Following the conclusion of this data collection, RTI will begin data and paradata analyses for inclusion in a summary of pre-test findings and recommendations to inform inputs for the OMB package for the main SLEPS data collection.

Burden Hours

The burden hour estimates are divided across the 2 testing activities: 1) the pre-test of the law enforcement agencies, and 2) the pre-test of the officer-level survey. Further details about the burden hour estimates are provided in the following table and text.

Table 2: Burden Estimates for SLEPS Pretest

| Data collection activity by respondent level | Average burden per respondent (minutes) | Total respondents | Est. burden hours |
|---|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Agency level | | | |
| Review rostering request materials | 10 | 250 | 41.50 |
| Complete and return agency-level questionnaire | 25 | 180 | 75.00 |
| Complete and return rostering form | 13 | 125 | 25.96 |
| Disseminate SRO-level survey ¹ | 35 | 94 | 54.55 |
| Assist in non-response follow-up ¹ | 70 | 94 | 109.10 |
| Track time to coordinate SRO survey participation | 30 | 25 | 12.50 |
| SRO level | | | |
| Review questionnaire materials | 10 | 462 | 77.00 |
| Complete and return SRO survey | 30 | 370 | 185.00 |
| TOTAL HOURS | | | 580.61 |

¹Assumes that 75% of agencies will designate a POC to disseminate the SRO-level survey rather than elect for direct contact of officers.

It is estimated that it will take respondents approximately 10 minutes to review the mailout materials. Feedback obtained during the second round of cognitive testing indicated that the survey took between 15 and 40 minutes¹ to complete, leading to an average estimated burden of 25 minutes to complete the LEA survey. The time to complete the roster varies widely, as response times during cognitive testing ranged from a couple of minutes to 16 hours. With the

exception of the very large NYPD rostering effort that took 16 hours, all other rosters were completed within 30 minutes. In determining an average burden estimate for the roster, the project team considered that while it takes more time for larger agencies to complete their roster, the majority of agencies are smaller. The project team concluded that across the number of agencies and their sizes, the average estimated time to complete the roster, weighted to reflect the different sample strata, is about 13 minutes. This excludes NYPD, because the project team will use the roster that NYPD completed during cognitive testing.

The dissemination of the SRO survey materials is estimated to average about 35 minutes, accounting for the time it will take the POC to review the package and then distribute the officer packets, either at roll call or to officer mailboxes. This is estimated to apply to 75% of agencies that provide a roster (94 agencies), assuming that 25% of agencies will allow the project team to contact officers directly, thereby eliminating the need for a POC.

The average for nonresponse follow-up, again weighted to reflect the different sample strata, is estimated to be about 70 minutes for the POC. The amount of follow-up required will vary by agency, with about an hour estimated for smaller agencies, 1.5 hours for larger agencies, and up to 2 hours for NYPD. This estimate accounts for the potential of multiple contacts between RTI and the POC, which would then be followed by the POC reaching out to the nonresponding SROs. While each exchange is likely to last only minutes, the estimate is based upon the potential for multiple contacts and the potential need to follow-up with a large number of officers. As with the distribution of materials above, this step is estimated to apply to the 75% of agencies that provide a roster (94 agencies); for the 25% of agencies that allow the project team to contact officers directly, RTI will be able to follow-up with nonresponding officers directly.

To evaluate the accuracy of the estimated burden for POCs to disseminate the SRO survey materials and conduct subsequent follow-up contacts, 25 POCs will be asked to track the time they spend on these activities. This is estimated to take about 30 minutes, accounting for the time it will take the POC to review the request, keep track of their time, and then participate in a phone call of about 15 minutes with RTI to discuss their experience.

Institutional Review Board

The project team is obtaining approval from RTI's IRB to ensure the testing protocols are compliant with informed consent and data confidentiality standards (attachment R).

Contact Information

Questions regarding any aspect of this project can be directed to:

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Attachments

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Attachment A: | LEA cover letter with link and paper survey |
| Attachment B: | PERF letter of support |
| Attachment C: | LEA survey |
| Attachment D: | Officer roster |
| Attachment E: | LEA informed consent |
| Attachment F: | LEA cover letter with link |
| Attachment G: | LEA thank you/reminder postcard |
| Attachment H: | LEA reminder letter |
| Attachment I: | POC cover letter about SRO survey distribution |
| Attachment J: | SRO cover letter |
| Attachment K: | Request to LEA POC to track time |
| Attachment L: | SRO informed consent |
| Attachment M: | LEA POC letter for SRO thank you/reminder postcard |
| Attachment N: | SRO thank you/reminder postcard |
| Attachment O: | LEA POC SRO reminder letter |
| Attachment P: | SRO reminder letter |
| Attachment Q: | SRO survey |
| Attachment R: | IRB submission confirmation |