



ALLEGAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE -NEWS RELEASE-

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SUBJECT: New School
Safety Initiative Announced

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Sheriff Frank Baker and the Allegan County Sheriff's Office are pleased to announce a new initiative that hopes to improve School Safety in Allegan County. Starting next week you will begin seeing an increased presence of Deputies in Allegan County Schools. The Sheriff's Office Command Staff has been meeting with schools about this important community safety topic. These meetings have been very productive and some schools have even offered space for Deputies to work on police reports and other administrative paperwork during the day in an effort to assist in this initiative. The School Administrators and Officials have been very excited about the possibilities of Deputies being in their buildings again. This initiative is designed to facilitate opportunities for Deputies to be in their buildings interacting with students and staff; as well as patrol cars being in and around their parking lots. We hope the increased law enforcement presence will create a safer environment and help relieve some of the concerns parents might be having regarding school safety.

The Sheriff's Office no longer has dedicated School Resource Officers; however, we will be making every effort to dedicate available patrol time to being a presence in our schools. This initiative is not designed to replace school resource officers but we feel this is a worthwhile priority. We don't want the first thought a parent has upon seeing a patrol car or Deputy at a school to be "what's wrong or what's happening?" We want the presence of our patrol cars and Deputies to be a common sight and the new "normal".

Sheriff Baker indicated that preliminary talks with School Administrators and Officials have been overwhelmingly popular. Sheriff Baker feels that they are excited about this initiative to help improve school safety and at no cost to the schools or impact on the Sheriff's Office budget. Sheriff Baker said that "this partnership with the schools is necessary and needed now; we can't wait for the State or Federal Government to solve this issue or provide funding; we need to act now". Additionally, Allegan County Police Chiefs and Area School Superintendents have met to discuss school safety issues and begin collaboration on working toward achieving our goals of seeing more uniformed police in our schools.

William Brown, Allegan Area Education Service Agency Superintendent, has been very helpful in facilitating this initiative and we look forward to working with him to make our schools safer. His leadership and willingness to collaborate will help ensure success.

State Representative Mary Whiteford said “making sure our local law enforcement and schools have the resources needed to protect our children will always be my priority while working through the next budget process”.

The Sheriff’s Office plans to begin rolling this initiative out today and hopes to increase the number of schools as we move forward.