



Chelan County Sheriff's Office

Brian Burnett, Sheriff

Law and Justice Bldg ★ 401 Washington Street #1 ★ Wenatchee, WA 98801
Phone: (509) 667-6851 ★ Fax: (509) 667-6860

For Immediate Release

SRO Contracts Update

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Contact: Sheriff Brian Burnett

Phone: 509-630-7599

<http://www.co.chelan.wa.us/sheriff>

Sheriff's Office, schools come to agreement on school resource officers

WENATCHEE -- The Chelan County Sheriff's Office has finalized contracts with the four schools that utilize school resource officers via its office.

The contracts begin Nov. 1 with the Cashmere and Cascade school districts and Dec. 1 with the Chelan and Manson school districts. Chelan County commissioners signed the contracts on Tuesday, Nov. 2., for Cashmere, Cascade and Chelan. Manson has given a verbal agreement as the County is just waiting to approve their signed copy.

Chelan County Sheriff Brian Burnett said that after discussion with the Sheriff's Association and the school districts, the officers will meet the requirements of the school districts, which include a COVID-19 vaccination or an approved exemption from the individual school district.

"We needed some time to work through this issue on our end, which included finding a solution that the Sheriff's Association, the officers and the schools could accept," Burnett said. "We feel comfortable moving forward."

The Sheriff's Office in early September put the annual contracts on hold following the governor's announcement a month earlier that all school employees and on-site contractors and volunteers would be required to receive a COVID vaccination or apply for an exemption.

At the time, Sheriff Burnett expressed concern about the mandate violating people's rights as well as a need to discuss the state mandate with union representatives.

"Personally, I have not asked any of my deputies or staff if they are or aren't vaccinated," Burnett said. "I have maintained the decision is a personal one, and I will not ask such a private question."

Under the new contracts, one school resource officer will serve both the Cashmere and Cascade school districts and another will serve the Chelan and Manson school districts. The contracts call for the splitting of the cost of resource officers between the school districts and Sheriff's Office, with the schools paying about 75 percent of the officers' salaries, or about \$87,400.

A former school resource officer himself, Sheriff Burnett said he understands the importance of having a law enforcement presence in the school districts. When he took office in 2011, he brought back the program to the county and has maintained it ever since.

"I'm happy to see we could come to an agreement and continue building upon our relationship with the school districts," Burnett said. "School resource officers are positive, dependable role models for our children. They are an open line of communication between the Sheriff's Office and our schools."