

Del Norte schools may be getting second resource officer

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There may soon be more police presence on campus at Crescent City schools.

The Crescent City police chief is hoping to add another school resource officer, he announced Tuesday.

Earlier in August Crescent City and the Del Norte Unified School District agreed to extend a contract for the current school resource officer. The city entered a memorandum of agreement to cover 31 percent of the \$122,000 salary and benefits package of a resource officer. The school district agreed to cover the remaining 69 percent. The officer will spend most of their time on campus.

"It's about establishing a relationship with children early," said Crescent City Police Chief Griffin.

Now Griffin has applied for a tobacco grant to hire the second officer and hopes to hear "any day now."

The Del Norte Unified School District first entered into an agreement with Crescent City for a resource officer in 2016. The latest approved contract will be in place through 2023.

“We’re focused on prevention and overcoming barriers so students can remain in school” according to Schools Superintendent Jeff Harris.

The resource officer serves schools within city limits: Del Norte High School, Crescent Elk Middle School and Joe Hamilton Elementary.

“It’s not about a punitive police presence, but about building connections and helping our kids stay in school,” said Harris, who acknowledges truancy as among the chief issues. “We’ve had to get creative. We’ve bought alarm clocks to help students get up in time. Sometimes we’ve figured out rides and we’ve spoken with parents about school being compulsory.”

The police chief echoed the sentiment. “We’ve established reading programs in schools where we’ve read to third graders. Sometimes we’ve taken the canine into schools. We want that connection with young people so that we can intervene before any issues become serious.”

The Office of the Attorney General established the California Department of Justice Tobacco Grant Program in 2017 to provide annual funds to local enforcement agencies throughout California. To date, the Tobacco Grant Program has distributed approximately \$124 million dollars in grant funding to approximately 260 grantees through a competitive process. If the Crescent City Police Department wins its grant it will work with the school district to add a second officer to compliment the Resource Officer just hired.