

Student accuses SRO of assault

TMP Reports

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A 14-year-old student attending the School Resource Officers' "Operation Integrity" program Saturday accused an SRO of assaulting him, Murfreesboro Police reported.

Operation Integrity is a highly structured intervention program for Rutherford County youth exhibiting behavioral problems at home and/or at school or may be showing signs of drug use or experimentation.

This is a performance-based program emphasizing personal accountability, team achievement and relationships, interpersonal skills, self-esteem, self-confidence, victim restitution, respect and empathy for others, and a positive work ethic. The camp is run one Saturday a month from 6:00am - 6:00pm, with two additional follow-up sessions, and regular contact for six months afterwards between one of the instructors and the individual youths and their parents or guardians.

The boy, his mother and stepfather accused Officer Dustin Cox of pushing him to the ground, causing him to strike his elbow on the ground, Murfreesboro Police Officer Matthew Roe reported. The boy accused Cox of dragging him by his pants down the hallway of Central Middle School.

Later, the boy told Roe he fell while running an obstacle course.

Sgt. Don Fanning reported the boy told him other students were present but were touching the lockers with their noses. He was unsure if anyone saw the incident.

Murfreesboro Police spokesman Kyle Evans said the probe was forwarded to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation.

Sheriff's spokesman Dan Goodwin reported Cox, who serves at Smyrna High School, remains on duty pending results of the investigation.

The teen was among a group of 15 juveniles taking part in the 12-hour, boot-camp-type program Saturday at Central Middle School, Goodwin reported. The same number of parents, including his mother, was present at the parent component of the training. Eight SROs ran the training.

This is the first complaint leveled against Operation Integrity in five years of operation. Since 2004, more than 200 at-risk Rutherford County children have successfully completed the course.

"To comment further would be inappropriate as such allegations usually result in civil litigation," Goodwin said.

