

Maryland Public School Critical Life-Threatening Incident After-Action Summary Report

This report has been compiled in response to a life-threatening incident that occurred on public school grounds. The report includes lessons learned and recommendations identified following a local review of the incident and is aimed at identifying ways to improve the safety of Maryland public schools.

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

Education Article § 7-1502(g)(21) (MSAR #11851)

Education Article §7-1510(g)(3) (MSAR #11594)

COMAR 14.40.05

School Year: 2023-2024

Submitted: May 9, 2024

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

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May 9, 2024

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable William C. Ferguson IV
President
Senate of Maryland
State House, H-107
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker
House of Delegates
State House, H-101
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Critical Life Threatening Incident Report required by Education Article § 7-1502(g)(21) (MSAR #11851) and Education Article §7-1510(g)(3) (MSAR #11594)

Dear Governor Hogan, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

Pursuant to Education Article § 7-1502(g)(21), Education Article §7-1510(g)(3), and State Government Article §2-1257, the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) respectfully submits the following report, which contains identified lessons learned and school safety recommendations following a critical life-threatening incident on public school grounds.

If you have any questions about this report or would like additional information, please contact MCSS Deputy Director, J. Dino Pignataro at joseph.pignataro@maryland.gov or 410-281-2335.

Sincerely,



Kate Bryan
Executive Director



Maryland Public School Critical Life-Threatening Incident After-Action Summary

On January 03, 2024, an incident occurred within Prince George's County Public Schools (PGPS) met the criteria to be considered a *Critical Life-Threatening Incident* pursuant to Md. Ed. Art. § 7-1510 (g) and COMAR 14.40.05.

Notification [COMAR 14.40.05.04A]

On January 04, 2024 PGPS staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On February 16, 2024 an after-action meeting was held involving school representatives and a representative from MCSS.

After-Action Report [COMAR 14.40.05.04C]

On February 26, 2024 PGPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

Based upon the after-action review led by PGPS, the following lessons learned were identified by individuals participating in the after-action meeting:

1. School emergency plans should clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of staff in response to an emergency. Additionally, when determining these roles and responsibilities, it is essential to identify staff with special skills (e.g., first aid training or experience with assisting students with disabilities or others with access and functional needs) that should be assigned specific roles or positions as part of the incident response.
2. A school can be at risk when a threat is outside of the school building. This may occur when criminal activity or concerning individuals are identified to be on or near the school grounds. In these situations, it becomes critical that as soon as a school becomes aware of an exterior threat that all of the school facility's exterior



doors are locked (“Secure”),¹ especially when the whereabouts of an alleged assailant outside the facility are uncertain. These procedures should be included as part of the school emergency operations plan.

School Safety Recommendations

1. Effective emergency response begins with well-planned and practiced command and control of an incident. National standards, including the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS)² provide guidelines on the organizational structure and incident management operations that can be used in response to an incident of any size or complexity. As such, schools should pre-designate school or school system members to serve on the incident command team or within the incident’s unified command structure, as appropriate. The pre-identification of a school representative to serve as the incident commander or a unified command representative before and after emergency responders arrive is critical for effective incident response. Additionally, schools and school systems should include responding agencies as part of the planning team as they develop and test their school emergency response plans.
2. Schools should test emergency plans regularly and include exercises that allow the school to practice command and control operations as part of their annual emergency preparedness training and exercise schedules. Conducting regular discussion and operations-based exercises allow schools and central office personnel to test their plans and test the response of the school and partner agencies to all-hazards incidents.

¹ MCSS recommends schools and school systems adopt the “I Love U Guys” Foundation’s programs for crisis response and post-crisis reunification. These programs are used in more than 45,000 schools, districts, departments, agencies, organizations and communities around the world. They are created through the research-based best practices of school administrators, psychologists, public space safety experts, families, and first responders. <https://iloveguys.org/The-Standard-Reunification-Method.html>

² National Incident Management System, Federal Emergency Management Agency, October 2017 (3rd Edition), https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_nims_doctrine-2017.pdf.

