

# **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: December 1, 2023**

# MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

- 2 -

December 1, 2023

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 Moore, 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](mailto:joseph.pignataro@maryland.gov) or 410-281-2335.

Sincerely,



Kate Bryan  
Executive Director



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

On October 4, 2023 there was a threat of mass violence incident within an Allegany County Public School (ACPS) that 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 October 18, 2023 the ACPS staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) of the incident.

### **After-Action Meeting** [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On October 11, 2023 an after-action meeting was held involving school representatives, and law enforcement. A representative from MCSS was not present at the after action meeting as they had not been notified of the incident.

### **After-Action Report** [COMAR 14.40.05.04C]

On October 18, 2023 ACPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

### **Lessons Learned**

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

1. The school's efforts to encourage students to report behaviors of concern proved effective in this situation as students reported a threat made on social media to school administrators. The incident was resolved quickly without creating undue fear among parents, staff and students because students chose to inform trusted adults in the school and those adults took immediate action.
2. The Emergency Plan was activated, and the "Hold" status was implemented. Classroom teachers and other school staff followed the "Hold" procedure continuing to provide instruction to students in their current location. There was only a minimal disruption to the instructional school day because of the incident.



3. Information to school administrators specifically identified the student of concern and officials took quick action to initiate the appropriate emergency protocol. It was determined the student did not arrive at school by way of the school bus, however officials failed to take immediate steps to contact the student's parents and identify the exact location of the student. The student arrived at the school by way of a parent and a law enforcement officer was able to meet them in the parking lot to assess any threat to the school. While this situation was resolved without harm or disruption, procedures should be developed and reviewed to ensure steps are taken to immediately locate and safely contain an individual who may pose a threat.

## School Safety Recommendations

1. Students should be provided information throughout the school year about their responsibilities as a digital citizen.<sup>1</sup> Students posting threatening statements or images to social media demonstrates poor digital citizenship and may be charged with a threat of mass violence. By reinforcing the expectations of healthy internet usage throughout the school year, and clearly communicating with students the harm and potential consequences of poor behavior, the hope is that these negative examples will be decreased.
2. Maryland schools and school systems should continuously encourage students to immediately report school safety concerns to a trusted adult or through a 24/7 reporting system like [Safe Schools Maryland](#). Information on reporting methods should be available on the school and system webpage, in newsletters, print materials disseminated, and any other means to ensure a wide distribution. These materials should be accessible and available to the public in multiple languages.
3. Threat reporting and communication protocols, which allow rapid notification to critical staff and law enforcement, should be tested regularly to ensure designated individuals know how to respond. School leaders should participate with their school security officials, and local law enforcement officers providing adequate coverage, in discussion and operational-based exercises<sup>2</sup> that test their response to

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<sup>1</sup> Digital citizenship can be defined as the successful and positive engagement with digital technologies that allows individuals and communities to cultivate values, skills, attitudes and knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> "Discussion-based exercises include seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises (TTXs), and games. These types of exercises familiarize players with or develop new plans, policies, procedures, and agreements ... [and] focus on strategic, policy-oriented issues." FEMA, Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (2020), <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Homeland-Security-Exercise-and-Evaluation-Program-Doctrine>



school threats. Additionally, school and systems leaders should develop a mechanism to track corrective actions to completion following these exercises to ensure identified problem areas are addressed.

4. School leaders and school security officials should be familiar with an established procedure for quickly and safely locating and containing an individual, student or adult, that poses a threat to the school community. This procedure should take into consideration methods for engaging with the individual when they are in various locations (classroom, hallway, school bus, outdoors, lunch room, gym, etc); determining what school officials are best suited to engage with the individual; and identifying areas of the building that are best suited to safely hold an individual that may pose a threat during an investigation or while awaiting law enforcement support.

