

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

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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 or 410-281-2335.

Sincerely,



Kate Bryan
Executive Director



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

On August 23, 2023 there was a threat of mass violence incident within Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) 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 August 23, 2023 the FCPS staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On September 13, 2023 an after-action meeting was held involving school representatives, law enforcement, and a representative from MCSS.

After-Action Report [COMAR 14.40.05.04C]

On October 4, 2023 FCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

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

1. School officials should seek to provide emergency preparedness training to staff, particularly those new to the building, prior to the student's first day of school. Emergency preparedness training should occur throughout the school year thus it may be advantageous for school officials to create a training sequence that prioritizes training on various procedures. Early in the sequence of knowledge and skills, priority should be given to information about how to notify and engage with first responders in the event of an emergency. Staff not knowing this information will create confusion during an emergency and may delay response time of emergency personnel.
2. Communication procedures should be established to ensure all relevant school officials are included in various processes and that all relevant stakeholders are provided information expeditiously. It may be beneficial for schools to designate as



part of the emergency response team a communication liaison that has pre-identified duties and responsibilities.

School Safety Recommendations

1. Emergency preparedness training that prepares all school staff, given their unique role within a school, requires a commitment of time and effort by system and school leaders. Incorporating school safety into new employee training programs can help to orient new staff to building specific procedures and begin the process of preparing for emergencies. School leaders should reinforce the importance of safety with all employees in messaging by providing direct learning opportunities. Staff should also be encouraged to monitor and test their own preparedness by considering [“Am I Ready”](#) to respond to various emergency scenarios and seeking information from leaders and security personnel to meet their individual needs.
2. Communication during emergency situations is complicated, yet critical for effective response and recovery. Assigning 2 to 3 school staff persons to be prepared to serve as the communication liaison within the Incident Command System can be beneficial. Designating multiple people allows for cross training and the ability to select an individual based upon the given situation. These individuals can be prepared in advance by becoming familiar with procedures, have available communications templates, and have contact information for coordination of messaging.
3. School leaders should participate with their school security officials in discussion and operational-based exercises¹ that test their response to multiple school threats. Additionally, school and systems leaders should develop a mechanism to track corrective actions to completion² following these exercises to ensure identified problem areas are addressed.

¹ “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>

² Id at 6-2