

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: June 21, 2024

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June 21, 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 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 Joseph 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 February 1, 2024 there was an incident within Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) 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 February 2, 2024 the MCPS staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On March 21, 2024 an after-action meeting was held involving school representatives, and a representative from MCSS.

After-Action Report [COMAR 14.40.05.04C]

On April 30, 2024 MCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

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

1. The incident occurred at the end of the lunch hour. This made it challenging for staff to clear the area of those not involved and determine where students belonged. However, the staff's quick response and decisions led to a well-coordinated effort, minimized confusion, and ultimately improved the chances of a successful outcome.
2. By activating the school's *Shelter-in-Place* protocol, emergency medical services (EMS) were able to navigate through the building, locate individuals requiring medical attention, and provide care. As such, accidental collisions and disruptions to patient care were minimized by keeping students and staff out of the hallways. In essence, activation of a protocol to *hold* students in their current locations created a controlled environment that allowed EMS to provide care efficiently and safely.



3. Timely communication with the parents of involved students and the broader school community helped reduce the need for further questions and anxiety among parents and the community. That's why, if there's an emergency at your school, the most important thing (after keeping everyone safe) is to give your school community clear and truthful information about what's going on. This helps prevent unnecessary fear and confusion.
4. When student safety plans are in place that include steps to keep specific individuals separated, it is essential that the plan details are effectively communicated with staff. This will contribute to improved safety, which is particularly important during times when students may not be directly supervised.

School Safety Recommendations

1. It is critical for schools to have plans in place and to test those plans for various times throughout the school day, including school opening, class transitions, lunch periods, and specialized activities (e.g., field trips). By practicing drills across the school day and at various times, schools can ensure all staff and students are comfortable and familiar with emergency procedures, leading to coordinated and efficient response during a crisis.
2. Public and private schools across Maryland would benefit from implementing common terminology for response and reunification protocols. Similar to national standards like NIMS that recommends the use of “shared vocabulary, systems, and processes”¹, having standardized vocabulary for response protocols, (e.g., Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter),² allows everyone involved, both within and outside the school, to clearly understand the actions any school is taking during an emergency. For students and staff, standardized vocabulary and emergency response protocols ensure they remain prepared even when they move schools, especially when that move is across school districts. Because the core language would remain consistent, it would not be necessary to relearn entirely new protocols or terminology. Additionally, shared language and protocols create a more predictable incident scene, facilitating clear communication and coordinated action among different responding agencies.

¹ 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.

² MCSS recommends schools and school systems adopt the research-based response and reunification protocols developed by the “I Love U Guys” Foundation. These protocols are created by identifying best practices of school administrators, psychologists, public space safety experts, families, and first responders. <https://iloveuquys.org/>



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3. In preparing for emergencies, schools should identify and train select staff in emergency first aid techniques including bleeding control (i.e., “Stop the Bleed”) and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Additionally, schools should maintain a sufficient stock of readily accessible emergency equipment, such as automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and severe bleeding control kits.

