

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: July 15, 2024

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

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July 15, 2024

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

The Honorable Willam C. Ferguson IV
President
Senate of Maryland
State House, H-107
Annapolis, MD 201401

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 Program Management Director J. Dino Pignataro at joseph.pignataro@maryland.gov or 410-281-2335.

Sincerely,



Kate Bryan



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

On April 19, 2024, an incident occurred within Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), which 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]

MCPS staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) of the incident on April 20, 2024.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On June 03, 2024, 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 June 12, 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. An unauthorized individual, not a student at the school, gained access to the school through the assistance of another student. This event highlights the importance of schools employing a multi-layered approach to preventing unauthorized access to their facilities that includes staff monitoring and technology solutions.
2. The event took place during the lunch period, which initially presented challenges in securing the area containing the assailant. However, school staff responded swiftly, ultimately keeping the students safe.
3. During the incident, the school initiated a *shelter-in-place* protocol in an effort to clear the area and keep staff and students safe. While the *shelter-in-place* response



proved effective, issuing a *lockdown* may have more appropriately aligned with the protocols outlined in the school system's emergency preparedness response guide.¹

4. Conducting an after-action review of this real-world incident allowed school staff and responders to review their response decisions and actions. This review helped those involved identify areas of success, areas for improvement, and specific corrective actions that should improve future responses.

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"², having standardized vocabulary for response protocols, (e.g., Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter),³ 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. Finally, staff need to be trained on each protocol and its applicable situations, followed by regular practice as part of a comprehensive emergency preparedness training and exercise plan.

¹ MCPS Emergency Preparedness Response Guide (2022-2023), <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/siteassets/schools/elementary-schools/a-c/brownstationes/uploadedfiles/about/mcps-emergency-preparedness-response-quick-guide-2022-2023.pdf>.

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.

³ 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/>

