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 8, 2023

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

December 8, 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

MCSS

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

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

On September 5, 2023 there was a threat of mass violence incident within Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) 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 September 11, 2023 the WCPS staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On October 16, 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 26, 2023 WCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

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

1. Information about the threat posted on social media came by way of a student in a neighboring state reporting it to their school administrator, who in turn contacted school administrators at the targeted school in Washington County. Administrators at both schools deeming the situation urgent and assuming responsibility for notifying their peers of the threat, demonstrates understanding of the importance of taking all threats seriously.

2. Washington County administrators enlisted the support of their School Resource Officer to identify the origin of the social media post and the individual's current location. It was determined that the individual was not currently enrolled in a WCPS school, but did reside in the area. The level of threat was not diminished with this information. The WCPS partnership with the Washington County Sheriff's Office allowed local Deputies to engage with the individual and their parents to determine the appropriate next steps to ensure the safety of schools and students. .

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School Safety Recommendations

1. Students should be provided information throughout the school year about their responsibilities as a digital citizen.[1] Individuals posting threatening statements or images to social media demonstrates poor digital citizenship and may be charged with a threat of mass violence. Schools should consider methods of providing this type of information beyond the student body, to include others in the general public. By reinforcing the expectations of healthy internet usage, and clearly communicating 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 (SSMD). 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. SSMD provides a means to share information across local jurisdictions and state boundaries.

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[2] that test their response to 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.

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[1] 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.
[2] "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

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