

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: March 21, 2024

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

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March 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 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 September 11, 2023, there was an incident involving a threat of mass violence within Worcester 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 12, 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 11, 2023, an after-action meeting was held involving school representatives, law enforcement, and representatives from MCSS.

After-Action Report [COMAR 14.40.05.04C]

On January 8, 2024, 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. Collaboration between local law enforcement and school officials allowed for rapid identification of the individual of concern. It remains essential for local officials to maintain positive relationships that lead to effective communication and response.
2. Local school system efforts to advance the message of the importance of bystander reporting proved effective in motivating the student bystander to share information with officials.
3. Training provided for school officials and security personnel serving as a Behavior Threat Assessment team members allowed the school to quickly gather information and meet as a multi-disciplinary team to determine whether or not the identified student was on the pathway to violence.



School Safety Recommendations

1. Maryland schools and school systems should continuously encourage students to immediately report 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, student handbooks, in schools, in newsletters, in print materials disseminated, and in any other means to ensure a wide distribution. These materials should be accessible and available to the school community in multiple languages.
2. Local school officials need to determine whether or not an individual is on the pathway to violence¹, starting with identifying the presence of an actual or perceived grievance using the Behavior Threat Assessment² process. The absence of a grievance should lead school officials to consider the presence of risk factors³ that provide information to assist in determining appropriate intervention approaches to allow a student to succeed in school and the community. Schools assisting students using approaches within the existing multi-tiered system of support capitalizes upon programs and people within the school that are already in place.

¹ Pathway to violence is one of several models to describe a progression of steps from grievance to attack. See MCSS Behavioral Threat Assessment Implementation Guide (2023), p. 18, <https://schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Documents/Reports-Docs/MCSS%20Behavioral%20Threat%20Assessment%20Implementation%20Guide%20-%202023.pdf>. See also Department of Homeland Security, Pathway to Violence, <https://www.cisa.gov/resources-tools/resources/pathway-violence>.

² Behavior Threat Assessment is a systematic, fact-based method of investigation and examination that blends the collection and analysis of multiple sources of information with published research and practitioner experience, focusing on an individual's patterns of thinking and behaviors to determine whether, and to what extent, an individual is moving toward an attack. *National Threat Evaluation and Reporting Office, US Department of Homeland Security.*

³ Risk factors are existing realities about an individual that may increase the risk of violence they may pose in a given situation.

