

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

January 21, 2022

The Honorable Larry Hogan
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: Report required by Education Article §7-1510(g)(3) (MSAR #11594)

Dear Governor Hogan, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

Pursuant to Education Article §7-1510(g)(3), the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) respectfully submits its report regarding an after-action review and report submitted by Anne Arundel County Public Schools. The report concerns a critical, life-threatening incident that occurred at Annapolis High School on September 29, 2021. This MCSS report contains lessons learned from this incident and associated recommendations that can be used to improve school safety.

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 Hession
Executive Director



After Action Summary

	Location	Address	Date	Time
Incident	Annapolis High School	Riva Road Riva, MD. 21140	September 29, 2021	8:47 a.m.
After Action Meeting	Virtual		November 5, 2021	10:00 a.m.

DATE MCSS NOTIFIED OF INCIDENT

September 29, 2021

DATE AFTER ACTION REPORT SUBMITTED TO MCSS

November 23, 2021

SUMMARY

On September 29, 2021 at 8:43 a.m. a felony assault resulting in life-threatening injuries occurred as part of a larger fight at Annapolis High School as students transitioned after the first period of the school day. One student approached another student from behind and punched him. Both of these students were accompanied by friends at the time, and this action immediately touched off a multiple-student affray at the top landing of a second-floor stairwell inside the school within sight of the two SROs assigned to the school. One of the involved students retrieved a folding knife and stabbed another student. School staff and an SRO identified the student with the knife and were able to disarm him and recover the weapon. Because of the number of students and staff involved, a lockdown was put in place.

The student with the knife suffered a significant hand injury in this assault and was treated on the scene and transported to a medical facility for more advanced care. The student who was stabbed received only minor injuries and was treated on the scene. Both of these students were charged with criminal offenses.

Inaccurate information on social media had a negative impact on the school's ability to manage this incident. Some of this information came from students

inside the school. This was countered by more accurate official communication from Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) that was quickly sent out advising parents not to respond to the school. This instruction was ineffective, because many parents did respond to pick up their children. Because of the number of parents responding to campus, AACPS Central Office staff members were sent to assist with on-site reunification.

LESSONS LEARNED

While It is difficult to combat inaccurate information from reaching parents and social media, quickly releasing accurate information and instructions through official channels can help mitigate panic and overreaction to a lockdown. With school staff busy addressing a wide variety of concerns during the emergency and immediate aftermath, additional staff from outside schools or a central office are needed to address the hundreds of parents who arrive at a school to remove students. Plans for this should be included in school emergency on-site reunification plans.

STATE LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE SCHOOL SAFETY

Local school systems should:

- be prepared to immediately provide accurate information to stakeholders through official communication platforms in the event of a lockdown/lockout that provides necessary information for parents, including clear directions for picking up students; and
- include provisions to address the potential need for additional school system staff to respond to assist with on-site reunification in school emergency plans.