

June 2, 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  
Maryland 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 §7-1501(g)(3) (MSAR #11594)

Dear Governor Moore, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

Pursuant to Education Article §7-1502(g)(21), Education Article §7-1501(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.

Any questions related to this report or for additional information, please contact MCSS Deputy Director, J. Dino Pignataro at [joseph.pignataro@maryland.gov](mailto:joseph.pignataro@maryland.gov) or 410-281-2335.

Sincerely,



Kate Bryan  
Executive Director

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

On March 6, 2023 there was an incident of a reported threat involving a school within Allegany County Public Schools (ACPS) 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 March 6, 2023, the ACPS School Security Coordinator (SSC) notified the Maryland Center for School Safety of the incident.

## **After-Action Meeting** [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On March 21, 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 April 19, 2023, ACPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

## **Lessons Learned**

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

1. The incident occurred when several school officials who historically make decisions related to an emergency response were not available. This led to an awareness of the importance of duplicating emergency response plan responsibilities to ensure that multiple individuals have the knowledge and experience to respond appropriately.
2. The threat came to the school by way of the main school phone line, which was answered by a student aid. Participants in the after action meeting acknowledged the importance of ensuring all individuals working in the front office receive training in responding to a variety of potential threatening situations.

## School Safety Recommendations

1. Schools should participate with law enforcement in annual discussion and operational-based exercises<sup>1</sup> that test their response to multiple school threats. Additionally, school and systems leaders should develop a mechanism to track corrective actions to completion.<sup>2</sup>
2. Schools should test emergency staff communication plans at the beginning of each school year, and during the year to account for staffing changes and ensure effectiveness.
3. School leaders should lead monthly discussions reviewing safety precautions with all employees. The continued reinforcement and refinement of safety expectations and procedures will build muscle memory that staff can draw upon in times of emergency. Conducting tabletop exercises to test plans and staff's knowledge of plans can be part of this process. School staff should be provided the opportunity to assume different roles during these exercises to practice various responsibilities and be prepared to respond.
4. Quick reference sheets containing critical information and emergency procedures (e.g., elements of school emergency plan including the receipt of threats by phone), in a simple and easy to follow format, should be placed in classrooms and front office go bags to start every school year. These sheets should be reviewed and updated as part of the emergency plan update process. Staff should be surveyed to assist the school system in identifying what elements of the comprehensive plan would be helpful to have available as part of a quick reference resource.

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<sup>1</sup> "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>

<sup>2</sup> Id at 6-2