

April 14, 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 or 410-281-2335.

Sincerely,



Kate Bryan
Executive Director

Maryland Public School

Critical Life-Threatening Incident

After-Action Summary

On December 16, 2022 there was an incident of physical harm to a student involving a school within Howard County Public Schools (HCPSS) 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 December 16, 2022, the HCPSS School Security Coordinator (SSC) notified the Maryland Center for School Safety of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On January 6, 2023, an after-action meeting was held involving school representatives, law enforcement, fire rescue and a representative from MCSS.

After-Action Report [COMAR 14.40.05.04C]

On February 23, 2023 , HCPSS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

Based upon the after-action review led by the HCPSS, the following lessons learned were identified:

1. The school followed all expected emergency response procedures to ensure the safety of the students and staff in the building.
2. Two recommended actions taken by HCPSS as a result of the after action review of a similar event (CLT-22) were critical in mitigating a student's death in this response. These actions included:
 - a. The addition of more “Stop the Bleed” kits readily available within the school building.
 - b. Changes made to emergency response protocols that ensured effective communication and a unified command between

school staff, HCPSS Central Office staff, and the Howard County Police Department (HCPD).

3. School-based staff must be familiar with their role and responsibility during a crisis event as defined within the school's emergency plan. To this end, the existing skills and experiences of school staff should be identified and applied to appropriate emergency roles in the school's emergency plans, for example a staff member who is an EMT on the weekends can serve a medical role supplementing the school nurse. This was an area identified by HCPSS for further improvement as a result of the December 16, 2022 event.
4. The extensive system-wide emergency plan needs to be simplified and refined to include quick reference documents that outline specific actions for use in different types of emergencies. These quick reference sheets can be grabbed quickly, and transported easily thus appropriate for inclusion in existing go bags as well.
5. HCPSS recognizes the need for continued improvements in the area of mass communications to key stakeholders during an emergency. Communications must allow rapid notifications, and timely updates to be disseminated to Central Office staff who play a role in response and recovery efforts. Simultaneously communications with administrators at nearby schools that require an emergency response protocol to be initiated must occur.

School Safety Recommendations

1. 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.
2. An inventory of school staff skills, certifications, and specialized training as they relate to emergency response (e.g., CPR, First Aid) should be done at the start of each school year and included as part of the school emergency plan.

3. Quick reference sheets containing critical information and emergency procedures (elements of school emergency plan), 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.
4. Communication plans for making emergency notification and providing timely information updates to various stakeholder groups *must* include specific procedures including who, how, when, and where. Use of templates and statements prepared in advance can help to facilitate speed and thoughtful messaging.