

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

This report, compiled in response to a life-threatening incident on public school grounds, details lessons learned and recommendations gathered from a local review to enhance the safety of Maryland public schools.

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

Education Article § 7-1502(g)(21)

Education Article §7-1510(g)

COMAR 14.40.05.04

School Year: 2024-2025

Submitted: August 29, 2025

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August 29, 2025

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), Education Article §7-1510(g) (MSAR #11594), and COMAR § 14.40.05.04 (MSAR #15583).

Dear Governor Moore, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

Pursuant to Education Article § 7-1502(g)(21), Education Article §7-1510(g), and State Government Article §2-1257, and COMAR § 14.40.05.04, 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 Joseph 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 May 29, 2025 there was an incident within Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) 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 May 31, 2025, staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On June 11, 2025, 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 July 15, 2025, BCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

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

1. The school's pre-developed emergency checklist proved to be an invaluable tool in the aftermath of the incident. This checklist, created with input from a multidisciplinary team, allowed the staff to systematically address all critical actions needed, ensuring that nothing was overlooked during a chaotic and stressful time. It provided a clear, consistent, and calm framework for the response.
2. Middle school is already a socially challenging time, and an emergency can cause students whose first language isn't English to feel especially fearful and withdrawn. In these situations, providing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)¹ services are crucial. These services offer a safe space for students to practice language, build confidence, and, during a crisis, help them better understand the situation while feeling supported by the school.

¹ <https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/Multilingual-Learners/Eligibility-Guidance-Laws.aspx>

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3. In response to a school emergency, clear, timely, and accurate communication with families is paramount to a successful outcome. The swift dissemination of information ensures that parents and guardians are promptly notified of student safety, which effectively reduces fear and anxiety within the community. Furthermore, this proactive approach helps to dispel rumors and mitigate the chaos that can often arise during and after a school-wide emergency.

School Safety Recommendations

1. Schools should create a comprehensive emergency checklist with a multi-disciplinary team before an incident occurs. This ensures all critical actions are included, from the immediate response to long-term recovery efforts like parent notification and student counseling. To stay effective, the checklist should be reviewed annually to reflect new risks and align with changes in local, state, and federal regulations.
2. Schools should embed ESOL strategies into all schoolwide instruction to normalize the program and better support students. This approach also helps to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for students and their families where they feel supported. To ensure everyone knows what resources are available, school personnel and ESOL-certified staff must maintain a collaborative partnership.
3. For an effective communication plan, schools must form a dedicated communications team at both the school and district levels. This team needs to prepare pre-drafted templates in multiple languages for various emergencies, along with clear roles and responsibilities for each scenario. These communication teams must also work closely with school administrators, teachers, and first responders to ensure accuracy. Finally, schools should conduct training and drills throughout the year to ensure a smooth and effective response.
4. When considering how to resolve a conflict, schools should consider restorative practices as a valuable tool for healing and building healthier relationships.² These methods, like restorative circles, can help resolve conflicts through dialogue and understanding while creating a safe space for healing after a traumatic event.

² Restorative practices offer schools an alternative to traditional disciplinary actions that center on punishment for misbehavior and breaking rules. They focus on resolving conflict, repairing harm, and healing relationships. However, restorative practices are not a one-size-fits-all solution and should be applied thoughtfully. Schools should avoid using them when there is insufficient training, a lack of a community-wide restorative mindset, an imbalance of power, or when a significant trauma is involved. Poorly implemented restorative practices may re-traumatize victims. <https://www.nextgenlearning.org/equity-toolkit/school-culture#:~:text=The%20Restorative%20Practices%20Guide%20from.and%20social%20emotional%20skills%20instruction.>

