

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)

Education Article §7-1510(g)

COMAR 14.40.05.04

School Year: 2024-2025

Submitted: November 12, 2024

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

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November 12, 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), Education Article §7-1510(g) (MSAR #11594), and COMAR § 14.40.05.04 (MSAR #15583).

Dear Governor Hogan, 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 August 26, 2024, an incident occurred within Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) 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 August 27, 2024, MCPS staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On September 04, 2024, 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 October 09, 2024, MCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

A related series of incidents took place at three different schools. Based upon the after-action review led by MCPS, the following lessons learned were identified by individuals participating in the after-action meeting:

1. The successful coordination between school staff, law enforcement, and emergency management teams during these incidents underscores the importance of strong partnerships. By working together seamlessly, these agencies were able to respond promptly and effectively to the threats. This collaboration highlights the value of regular communication and training exercises to ensure a unified response in future emergencies.
2. The need for improved communication protocols, particularly during off-campus or open lunch periods, has been identified. By implementing a system that effectively informs students of emergency situations and provides clear instructions, schools can better protect students and staff. This will involve developing clear procedures



for notifying students via multiple channels, such as text messages, email, and social media.

3. These incidents highlighted the importance of comprehensive staff training in emergency response procedures. Proper phone etiquette and threat assessment protocols are crucial to ensure timely and accurate reporting of threats. Additionally, it is essential to review and update emergency plans regularly to address evolving threats and best practices.
4. The need for a thorough review of decision-making protocols, particularly during evacuations, has been recognized. By analyzing the factors that led to the unnecessary evacuation, schools can identify areas for improvement and develop more precise guidelines for future incidents. Additionally, closer supervision of students, particularly those who drive to school, during evacuations is essential to prevent unauthorized departures and ensure their safety.
5. Accurate and up-to-date floor plans are critical for effective emergency response. Outdated or inaccurate plans can hinder the efforts of first responders, leading to confusion and delays. By maintaining accurate floor plans and regularly updating them, schools can ensure that emergency personnel have the information they need to respond swiftly and efficiently to incidents.

School Safety Recommendations

1. It is critical for schools to have plans in place and to test those plans for various times throughout the school day, including school opening, class transitions, lunch periods, and specialized activities (e.g., field trips). By practicing drills across the school day and at various times, schools can ensure all staff and students are comfortable and familiar with emergency procedures, leading to coordinated and efficient response during a crisis. Gaps and issues with current protocols can be identified during these drills and addressed.
2. Conducting an after-action review of this real-world incident allowed school staff and responders to review their response decisions and actions. This review helped those involved identify areas of success, areas for improvement, and specific corrective actions that should improve future responses. Such an after-action review process should be a part of school emergency preparedness activities. Issues



identified in drills and actual events, such as inaccurate school maps, can then be used to prioritize corrective actions.

3. Threat reporting and communication protocols, which allow rapid notification to critical staff and law enforcement, should be tested regularly to ensure designated individuals know how to respond. Schools should participate with law enforcement in regularly scheduled discussion-based exercises designed to test their response to school threats, both from online and direct sources. School staff training on protocols for handling these types of incidents should be reinforced frequently.

