

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. It includes lessons learned and recommendations identified following a local review of the incident and aims to identify 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: January 23, 2025

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

- 2 -

January 23, 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 September 16, 2024 there was an incident within Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS) 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 September 16, 2024 Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS) notified the Maryland Center for School Safety of an incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On October 20, 2024 an after-action meeting was held involving school representatives, and a representative from MCSS.

After-Action Report [COMAR 14.40.05.04C]

On October 20, 2024 TCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

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

1. Successful coordination between school staff, law enforcement, and emergency management teams during these incidents underscored the importance of robust partnerships. Seamless collaboration facilitated prompt and effective responses. This highlights the value of regular communication and training exercises to ensure a unified approach in future emergencies.
2. All parties involved, including TCPS, law enforcement, students, and parents, reported successful communication channels.
3. The implementation of ICS proved crucial in streamlining communication and maximizing effectiveness across all disciplines and groups involved.
4. TCPS and law enforcement agree that, in future similar situations, the decision to evacuate will involve more in-depth discussions between the school, the School



MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

- 4 -

Safety Coordinator (SSC), and law enforcement to assess the situation and determine the most appropriate course of action (evacuation or shelter-in-place). This scenario will be incorporated into future training exercises for the LEA.

5. These incidents emphasized the importance of comprehensive staff training in emergency response procedures. The staff member who received the initial call effectively utilized a guidance document designed for such threats. While effective in this instance, the TCPS School Security Coordinator has updated the guidance document for further comprehensiveness.
6. TCPS expressed satisfaction with the prompt and active response of the Talbot County Sheriff's Office in resolving the criminal aspect and conducting a thorough investigation.
7. Notification of all students and staff was swift and efficient. This reinforces the LEA's interest in exploring more rapid notification systems, such as personal emergency remote (panic button) devices for key staff.

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. The occurrence of this incident at the approximate time of dismissal introduced a new dynamic that should be included in planning and training. 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.
2. Conducting an after-action review of a real-world incident allows school staff and responders to review their response decisions and actions. These reviews help those involved identify areas of success, areas for improvement, and specific corrective actions that should improve future responses. After-action reviews should be a part of school's formal emergency preparedness activities.
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.

