

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: May 23, 2025

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May 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 January 23, 2025, there was an incident 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 January 23, 2023, the MCPS staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On March 13, 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 April 28, 2025, MCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

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

1. School staff responded promptly to students' reports of a firearm. However, the 9-1-1 call was made several minutes after the initial report, which resulted in a delayed police response. Emergency reporting procedures should be reviewed and tested annually to allow for more immediate notification of law enforcement upon the first report of a weapon on school grounds.
2. It is best practice to review student search protocols to reinforce trauma-informed practices, particularly during emergency situations. Schools should ensure counseling and wellness teams are prepared to provide immediate and ongoing social-emotional support to students impacted by lockdowns or searches.



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3. Upon report of a weapon on school grounds, security and administrative staff should begin campus surveillance. This includes coordinating security camera footage with verbal updates from hallway monitors to track individual's movements.
4. During the lockdown, numerous students and staff were observed in the hallways, indicating a failure to adhere to proper lockdown procedures. This may stem from confusion between the protocols for "Secure/Shelter" and "Lockdown." To address this, it is necessary to clearly reiterate the correct actions for both students and staff during each type of response protocol.

School Safety Recommendations

1. To streamline emergency responses, schools should collaborate with safety officials, local law enforcement, and emergency dispatch to establish clear critical incident call procedures. Emergency reporting protocols must be reviewed and refined to guarantee immediate police contact upon the initial report of a weapon on school grounds. This procedure should be included in annual staff training on emergency protocols.
2. During any drill or actual emergency response, schools and local education agencies must be prepared to support students and staff who may be negatively impacted. This includes having additional social-emotional supports readily available and developing trauma-informed plans for future drills or emergencies. Following an active threat emergency or drill, schools must ensure all staff and students receive a debriefing and access to additional emotional support.¹
3. During active threats, schools should follow their emergency protocols using the most current information. These protocols can change as the situation evolves, a process called sequencing. For instance, a school might initially lockdown the school due to a threat inside the building and later shift to a hold when the situation stabilizes but they still want to keep hallways clear. Sequencing helps maintain safety and allows for transitions to less or more restrictive measures. Quick access to information like camera footage is crucial for staff to determine the location of a threat and implement or sequence to the appropriate protocol.

¹ Maryland House Bill 416, 2024 Session, ([Chapter 182](#))



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4. Implementing common terminology for emergency response and reunification protocols would benefit both public and private schools throughout Maryland. The Standard Response Protocol (SRP) from the [I Love U Guys Foundation](#) offers a free solution using standardized vocabulary for response actions, such as Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter. This shared language ensures that everyone, both inside and outside the school, clearly understands the actions being taken during an emergency. Standardized vocabulary and protocols also help students and staff remain prepared when transferring between schools, even across districts. Furthermore, consistent language and procedures create a more predictable environment during an incident, improving communication and coordination among responding agencies. To ensure effectiveness, staff must receive training on each protocol and its appropriate use, followed by regular drills as part of their comprehensive emergency preparedness planning efforts.

