

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: October 15, 2025

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

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October 15, 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) ok(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



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

On May 13, 2025, there was an incident within Allegany County Public Schools (ACPS) 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 13, 2025 the ACPS staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On June 16, 2025 an after-action meeting was held involving school representatives, law enforcement, emergency services, and representatives from MCSS.

After-Action Report [COMAR 14.40.05.04C]

On August 22, 2025, ACPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

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

1. Effective communication between the schools and emergency services during incidents are vital to the safety of students, staff, and the community. The central incident command center was set up immediately, and communication between the schools, emergency services, law enforcement agencies, and the national weather services effectively ensured there were no injuries or deaths due to this disaster. This highlights the importance of pre-established relationships and clear communication channels.
2. Sharing accurate and transparent information from a central location is crucial for ensuring that critical messages are transmitted consistently and effectively to schools and communities. The incident command center exemplified this by including multiple agency Public Information Officers (PIOs) who collaborated to manage and disseminate information swiftly and at the appropriate times, presenting a unified message. This "one voice" approach, where all agencies share a common message, is vital for maintaining trust and preventing confusion during emergency incidents.
3. When establishing staging areas, it is crucial to assess the availability of cell service and radio coverage to ensure seamless real-time communication among all personnel. This



includes evaluating signal strength, potential dead zones, and the capacity of existing networks to support operations.

4. It was essential to quickly identify staff with specialized training, skills, and leadership abilities to assign key roles within the incident command system (ICS). This proactive approach ensures that the most qualified individuals are in positions to effectively manage and respond to critical incidents, optimizing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of incident command.

School Safety Recommendations

1. Funding for Community Schools¹ is more than just supplemental funding; it is an investment in social capital and resilience. These funds, grounded in each school's Assets and Needs Assessment and Implementation Plan (which guides resource prioritization), often provide the flexibility to acquire resources that traditional operational budgets do not cover, such as emergency supplies, communication tools, and funds for immediate post-disaster community support (e.g., food, clothing, temporary shelter needs). As such, these schools become resilience hubs. By facilitating partnerships with local non-profits and social services, the funding ensures the school can support the wider community's recovery, which in turn speeds the school's return to normalcy.
2. A well-defined and practiced emergency plan is the single most effective tool for instilling order amidst the inherent chaos of a crisis, safeguarding students, staff, and visitors. These plans should delineate ICS roles for each school, with staff possessing relevant emergency management skills formally assigned to and regularly rehearsing these specific duties. While a written plan is theoretical; drills and exercises operationalize those plans. Regular training and testing—using tabletop discussions, functional drills, and full-scale exercises—are essential for stress-testing the plan. These practices may expose critical operational gaps, such as inadequate signage, evacuation route bottlenecks, or communication failures. The core purpose of this practice is to ingrain actions so deeply (building muscle memory) that staff can react automatically and calmly in any type of emergency. This established muscle memory can be the difference between an orderly, safe response and a chaotic one. To close the readiness loop, post-drill critiques must immediately follow all exercises to identify and decisively address any remaining deficiencies.

¹ <https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DSFSS/Community-Schools/Index.aspx>