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: July 7, 2025

July 7, 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 CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

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

On April 10, 2025 there was an incident within Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) 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 April 10, 2025 the CCPS staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On May 14, 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 June 3, 2025 CCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

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

1. Fostering strong, trusting relationships with students and parents is paramount for cultivating a safe and supportive learning environment. These positive relationships encourage open communication, empowering students to feel comfortable reporting concerns. Schools should actively promote an environment where students feel safe and encouraged to communicate concerns and potential issues to staff. Additionally, students should be instructed to "report, don't share" threats they observe or receive, and parents should be provided with resources on responsible digital citizenship to help reduce the spread of false information. The use of anonymous reporting systems, such as Safe Schools Maryland (SSMD)[1], is essential as it provides a confidential and free mechanism for students, staff, parents, and the public to report school and student safety concerns, including

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[1] **Safe Schools Maryland** is an ANONYMOUS and FREE reporting system available to students, teachers, school staff members, parents, and the general public to report any school or student safety concerns.
https://schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Pages/Tipline.aspx

mental health issues, without fear of reprisal. This system allows for ease of reporting and enables prompt notification to appropriate Local Education Agency (LEA) staff and, when necessary, law enforcement partners, facilitating timely intervention and preventing escalation of unsafe actions.

2. Accurate and immediate internal communication within an affected facility is crucial for staff to have a clear understanding of the incident and to ensure proper protocol decision-making within the school. Implementing clear communication protocols that inform students and staff of emergency situations and provide clear instructions is vital to protect them. Schools should establish a site-specific chain of command to outline clear responsibilities and enhance order and control in evolving emergency situations. The use of common terminology for emergency response actions, such as the Standard Response Protocol (SRP)[2] from the "I Love U Guys" Foundation (e.g., Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, Shelter), provides a consistent and easily understood framework for schools to manage various safety situations.

3. Prompt and transparent external communication to parents, guardians, and the broader community is vital to reduce fear and anxiety that can arise when an incident occurs. Schools should proactively communicate accurate and appropriate information to prevent panic from misinformation and empower parents to make informed decisions regarding their child's well-being. Consistent messaging from school leadership delivered across multiple platforms ensures timely and accurate dissemination of information. Comprehensive emergency communication plans should include pre-scripted messages for parents and the general public, specifying school status and the meaning of emergency terms. Efficient management of inquiries from parents and media can be achieved through pre-prepared scripts for front office staff. Furthermore, these plans should include clear procedures for managing media presence during school emergencies, such as designating on-site staff to establish an off-campus media staging area. Effective reunification plans are paramount for the safe and rapid return of students to their families, requiring proactive collaboration between law enforcement and school personnel to establish clear roles, responsibilities, and coordinated approaches.

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[2] https://iloveuguys.org/The-Standard-Response-Protocol.html

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

School Safety Recommendations

1. Prioritizing comprehensive and regular emergency preparedness training for all school personnel is essential to cultivate a resilient and responsive school environment. This commitment of time and effort by system and school leaders should include incorporating school safety into new employee training programs to orient new staff to building-specific procedures and to commence emergency preparedness. School leaders should continually reinforce the importance of safety with all employees through direct learning opportunities and consistent messaging. Staff should be actively encouraged to monitor and test their individual readiness by reviewing various scenarios within their facility emergency operations plan and by seeking information from school leaders and safety/security personnel that meets their unique needs. This training should emphasize clear communication protocols, emergency scenarios, response procedures, and the defined roles and responsibilities of all staff during an incident. Regular drills, including those at various times throughout the school day and at different locations (such as dismissal from evacuation points), are crucial for building "muscle memory" and identifying gaps in existing protocols.

2. Developing robust and adaptable communication protocols for emergency situations is paramount for effective response and recovery. To this end, assigning and preparing multiple school staff members to serve as communication liaisons within the Incident Command System (ICS) or Unified Command is highly beneficial. This approach allows for cross-training, ensures continuity, and enables the selection of an individual best suited to a given situation. These designated individuals should be prepared in advance by becoming familiar with established procedures, having access to pre-scripted communication templates, and maintaining up-to-date contact information for coordinated messaging. Furthermore, establishing clear and timely communication channels among staff and between the school and emergency responders is vital for prompt and accurate information sharing, enabling efficient action upon arrival. Transparent and immediate external communication to parents, guardians, and the community, through consistent messaging across multiple platforms, helps reduce fear and anxiety by preventing the spread of misinformation and empowering families to make informed decisions regarding their child's well-being. Comprehensive emergency communication plans should also include clear procedures for managing media presence, such as designating on-site staff for an off-campus media staging area.

MCSS

3. Fostering and maintaining strong, trusting relationships with students and parents/guardians is a continual and critical effort for the school system to create a safe and supportive learning environment. Schools should actively promote an environment where students feel safe and encouraged to communicate concerns and potential issues to staff. Students should be reminded of the importance of reporting unsafe actions and instructed to "report, don't share" threats they observe or receive, as early reporting is crucial for timely intervention. Additionally, establishing opportunistic relationship-building initiatives with parents and guardians through various programs will foster trust within the school community. This includes providing parents with resources on responsible digital citizenship to help mitigate the spread of false information. The promotion and accessibility of confidential and anonymous reporting systems, such as Safe Schools Maryland (SSMD), is essential to provide a secure avenue for students, staff, parents, and the public to report school and student safety concerns, including mental health issues, without fear of reprisal.