

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

This report details lessons learned and recommendations from the local review of a critical life-threatening incident, aimed at enhancing 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: 2025-2026

Submitted: April 22, 2026

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April 22, 2026

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 Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
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 Pena-Melnyk:

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 February 09, 2026 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 February 09, 2026 the MCPS staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On March 18, 2026 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 March 26, 2026 MCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

Based on the critical incident review conducted by MCPS, the following lessons learned were identified by individuals participating in their review and a subsequent after-action meeting, which included MCSS.

1. An effective incident response relies heavily on the immediate availability of essential resources. This includes both internal staff and external partners, such as emergency responders. Furthermore, being fully equipped with necessary medical supplies is crucial for providing immediate support.
2. Schools require consistent system-wide training, knowledge, and clarity for all staff to effectively implement response protocols with fidelity. This ensures that every staff member understands the appropriate action for various security scenarios. For



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example, staff need to know when to use the "Secure" protocol (when a threat may exist outside the building).

3. Schools require a clear communication process for notifying staff when transitioning between response protocols. This clarity will improve situational awareness and support a more coordinated transition. Furthermore, consistent and improved communication with families is essential. This includes clear, timely, and accurate information about the nature of the incident and the safety measures being taken.
4. Reunification procedures for guardians and children must undergo regular review, testing, and updating. Schools should select appropriate reunification sites, ensure advance preparation, and verify their accessibility to central service support. These sites should be established with redundancy and clear communication protocols to manage the emotional and logistical complexities of a reunification event.
5. Following a lockdown, schools must implement clear, tested procedures for release that all parties are familiar with. A comprehensive review of current practices is essential for effective incident management, which includes evaluating resources and strategies for clearing the impacted school and managing the spillover effects on neighboring schools. This proactive approach ensures a safe and orderly transition back to normal operations and minimizes confusion for students, staff, and parents.
6. Following an incident involving law enforcement, increasing the visible presence of security personnel, staff, and, when necessary, police, in school hallways and other student areas helps to reassure and calm students and staff. This heightened presence is especially crucial during student transition periods, such as arrival, dismissal, and class changes, as these times can be associated with increased anxiety.
7. Effective incident response necessitates a strategic and coordinated approach to mental health resources to support long-term recovery. Proactively coordinating services allows for streamlined utilization and involves scaling specialized staff—such as counselors, social workers, and trauma specialists—to meet the community's specific needs. This tailored deployment ensures resources are



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directed where they will have the greatest therapeutic impact, preventing both under- and over-resourcing. The ultimate goal is to provide timely, appropriate, and compassionate support, fostering community resilience and sustained recovery.

School Safety Recommendations

1. Provide school staff with training to enhance awareness of and response to student emotional and behavioral changes that may indicate potential future inappropriate conduct. MCSS currently provides this training to school-based law enforcement (e.g., School Resource Officers and Community Engagement Officers) and School Security Employees (SSEs). Expanding this training to all school personnel, including teachers, counselors, and administrative staff, would create a more comprehensive and proactive approach to student well-being and safety. This broader outreach would ensure that all adults in the school environment are equipped to recognize and appropriately address early warning signs.
2. Schools and school systems must proactively issue master keys to law enforcement and fire departments, providing first responders with immediate access to the building, classrooms and all other spaces necessary for response operations. Furthermore, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must provide first responders with current school maps and comprehensive emergency plans. These coordination efforts position responders to have the tools and information necessary to facilitate the most effective and timely emergency response possible.
3. Strengthen the implementation of the "I Love U Guys" Standard Response Protocols (SRPs) through quarterly training and review for all staff and students to ensure consistent understanding and execution of procedures such as Lockdown, Hold, Secure, Shelter, Evacuate, and transitions from one action to another. In addition, communicating the definitions of these actions to parents, the public, and the news media can help foster consistent and accurate messaging in the future.
4. Effective reunification planning requires careful consideration of several critical factors including proactively identifying alternate reunification sites and evaluating surrounding traffic patterns to prevent congestion. Furthermore, plans must incorporate robust provisions for distributing food and water, significantly improving accessibility for all community members, and establishing contingency



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locations should primary sites become unavailable. It is essential to plan for accommodations for the school community, taking into account accessibility and disability needs, as well as providing translators for English language learners.

5. LEAs should establish a central office reunification team and equip it with the necessary technology and tools to increase the process's efficiency. This approach alleviates the need to involve school-based staff, who are often recovering from a serious incident while supporting students and colleagues. A crucial step for maximizing efficiency is to regularly exercise the reunification process at actual sites, with staff assigned to pre-designated roles. This regular practice, coupled with clear communication protocols, will ensure that all members of the reunification team understand their responsibilities and can execute the plan smoothly when a real event occurs.
6. Following any critical incident, schools must implement a structured and scalable mental health and crisis response staffing model. This model is essential to ensure that available resources are matched to the specific psychological and emotional needs of the affected school community. The key principle is proportional deployment: resources, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, and crisis intervention specialists, should be scaled up significantly in the immediate aftermath. This deployment must be carefully managed to preserve the availability of these critical resources for other schools across the system. Management strategies include rotating staff, utilizing regional or district-wide teams, and offering virtual crisis intervention and counseling services to support all students and staff.

