

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: 2025-2026

Submitted: January 8, 2026

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

- 2 -

January 8, 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 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



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

On September 29, 2025 there was an incident within Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) 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 October 6, 2025 the GCPS staff notified the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On October 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 December 19, 2025 GCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

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

1. Effective and swift communication between schools and law enforcement is essential for the rapid investigation of incidents affecting the school community. Establishing a strong communication protocol fosters a vital partnership among school administrators, staff, and School Resource Officers (SROs) or local law enforcement agencies. This rapid notification system's chief advantage is the ability to launch a timely investigation. Immediate alerts from school officials enable SROs or responding officers to arrive quickly, evaluate the situation, and begin the investigative process while the details are fresh in everyone's mind.
2. The incident was reported directly to school administration, instead of sharing it on social media, which allowed the school to manage the situation effectively. Information shared outside of formal communication channels can quickly lead to



rumors, misinformation, and unnecessary escalation among the wider school community.

3. School systems should incorporate procedures for providing resources and support to staff and students that have been identified as a target of a threat. These resources should be readily accessible and tailored to the specific needs of those affected. Providing timely support is crucial for mitigating the emotional and psychological impact of being targeted by a threat.

School Safety Recommendations

1. To better support staff through traumatic incidents, school systems should expand the resources available, specifically by increasing counseling services for personnel involved in or affected by these events. Furthermore, systems ought to implement a policy that provides appropriate paid leave for staff experiencing trauma, recognizing the need for time off to address the mental and emotional impact of these incidents.
2. It is crucial that schools continue to actively promote and clarify the established channels for reporting concerns to school administration and appropriate authorities. By ensuring that students, staff, and parents are aware of *how* to report concerns confidentially and safely, individuals will feel more empowered to share vital information directly with the school. This clear promotion of official reporting procedures is essential to encourage direct communication and mitigate the rising tendency for individuals to broadcast concerns or sensitive information on social media, which can lead to misinformation, panic, or interference with official investigations.

