

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: January 28, 2026

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January 28, 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 November 4, 2025, there was an incident within Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS) 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 November 4, 2025, Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS) notified the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On November 14, 2025, an after-action meeting was held involving school representatives and a representative from MCSS.

After-Action Report [COMAR 14.40.05.04C]

On January 8, 2026, TCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

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

1. **The successful coordination between school staff, law enforcement, and emergency management teams during these incidents underscores the importance of strong partnerships.** By working together seamlessly, these agencies were able to respond promptly and effectively to the threat. This collaboration highlights the value of regular communication and training exercises to ensure a unified response in future emergencies.



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- 2. The implementation of the Incident Command System (ICS) was a key feature that streamlined communication and maximized effectiveness.** The use of ICS facilitated clear lines of communication between all disciplines and groups involved, including school administration and law enforcement. Furthermore, having the School Security Coordinator and Principal co-located with the Incident Commander at the Command Post significantly reduced stress and improved decision-making compared to prior incidents.
- 3. Comprehensive staff training on handling threats made by phone proved critical to the investigation.** The staff member who received the call performed effectively by utilizing a guidance document that had been provided and trained on prior to this incident, obtaining the caller's name, phone number, and specific verbiage of the threat. This information was instrumental in allowing law enforcement to identify the suspect.
- 4. Drills and reviews of prior incidents directly improved operational performance.** Leadership utilized lessons learned from a prior similar event—specifically regarding evacuation efficiency and the use of the "Hold" protocol prior to evacuation—to execute a smoother response. This validates the importance of continuous improvement through drills and after-action discussions.
- 5. Complex decision-making regarding evacuations requires further interagency discussion.** Effective evacuation protocols are essential, but incidents often highlight the need for in-depth discussions between school officials and law enforcement regarding the risks of evacuation versus utilizing "Hold" or "Secure" protocols during bomb threats. Determining the most appropriate course of action based on the specific circumstances remains a priority for future planning.

School Safety Recommendations

- 1. It is critical for schools to have plans in place and to test those plans for various times throughout the school day, including dismissal.** By practicing drills across the school day and at various times, schools can ensure all staff and students are comfortable and familiar with emergency procedures, leading to a coordinated and efficient response during a crisis.



2. **Schools should participate with law enforcement in regularly scheduled exercises to evaluate specific response protocols, such as Evacuation versus Shelter-in-Place.** Given the complexities of threats, exercises should be used to simulate scenarios where decision-makers weigh the risks of evacuating students against keeping them sheltered within the building. These exercises will help refine decision-making criteria and ensure alignment between school leaders and law enforcement.
3. **Threat reporting and communication protocols, which allow rapid notification to critical staff and law enforcement, should be tested regularly.** Schools should continue to explore and implement rapid notification systems to expedite the alert process. Additionally, training on protocols for receiving and documenting threat calls should be reinforced frequently to ensure staff can gather actionable information for law enforcement.
4. **Conducting an after-action review (AAR) of real-world incidents allows school staff and responders to review their response decisions and actions.** Such an after-action review process should be a standard part of school emergency preparedness activities to institutionalize lessons learned. This review helps identify what worked well and areas needing improvement in future response efforts. By documenting and applying these lessons, schools can continually enhance their emergency plans and training.