

# MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

March 28, 2022

The Honorable Larry Hogan  
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) and Education Article §7-1510(g)(3) (MSAR #11594)

Dear Governor Hogan, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

Pursuant to Education Article § 7-1502(g)(21), Education Article §7-1510(g)(3), and State Government Article §2-1257, 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 MCSS Deputy Director, J. Dino Pignataro at [joseph.pignataro@maryland.gov](mailto:joseph.pignataro@maryland.gov) or 410-281-2335.

Sincerely,



Kate Hession  
Executive Director



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

On December 16, 2021 there was an incident involving a school within Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) 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 December 16, 2021, the FCPS School Security Coordinator (SSC) notified the Maryland Center for School Safety of the incident.

## **After-Action Meeting** [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On January 21, 2022, 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 January 23, 2022, FCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

## **Lessons Learned**

Based upon the after-action review led by FCPS, the following lessons learned were identified:

1. Law enforcement officers who know how to submit emergency information disclosure requests<sup>1</sup> to social media companies are a valuable asset during investigations into the credibility of online threats.
2. School system emergency management standard operating procedures should be clear on how the school will address threats made against the school or school community regardless of how the threat is made (e.g., phone call, online) or the nature of the threat (e.g., bomb, shooting, chemical release). Sharing these procedures and the methods used to

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<sup>1</sup> Most social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Twitter) provide an online form for law enforcement to submit requests to obtain information about an account user or online post when they can show that there is an immediate threat to the life or safety of an individual or the information is needed to prevent an emergency. See e.g., <https://www.tiktok.com/legal/report/EDR?lang=en>.

investigate threats of violence against schools with students and parents may alleviate fears and reduce confusion.

3. Having one individual designated to communicate with families throughout the threat investigation is ideal.

## **School Safety Recommendations**

1. Maryland schools and school systems should continue to encourage students to report threats of violence to a trusted adult. Additionally, schools have access to Safe Schools Maryland,<sup>2</sup> which provides a mechanism to anonymously report threats of violence.
2. Schools should participate with law enforcement in annual discussion-based exercises<sup>3</sup> that test their response to school threats. Additionally, schools should develop a mechanism to track corrective actions to completion.<sup>4</sup>
3. Md. Ed. Art. §7-1507(c) requires school systems to adopt a behavioral threat assessment team policy that is consistent with the School Safety Subcabinet model policy.<sup>5</sup> At the start of the 2021-2022 school year, the Subcabinet directed the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) to work in partnership with experts throughout the state to conduct a review of the 2018 behavioral threat assessment policy and make updates as determined necessary. During this review, MCSS will ensure that the policy effectively addresses assessment of threats made online.

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<sup>2</sup> 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, including mental health concerns. Safe Schools Maryland serves all Maryland public schools and currently over 200 private schools in Maryland. Safe Schools Maryland operates twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. Anonymous reports can be submitted by calling the tip line (1-833-MD-B-SAFE / 1-833-632-7233), completing an online form at <http://safeschoolsmd.org/>, or downloading the free Safe Schools Maryland app from the App Store or Google Play.

<sup>3</sup> "Discussion-based exercises include seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises (TTXs), and games. These types of exercises familiarize players with or develop new plans, policies, procedures, and agreements ... [and] focus on strategic, policy-oriented issues." FEMA, Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program 2-6 (2020), <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Homeland-Security-Exercise-and-Evaluation-Program-Doctrine-2020-Revision-2-2-25.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id* at 6-2.

<sup>5</sup> Maryland Behavioral Threat Assessment Team Model Policy (2018), <https://schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Documents/Reports-Docs/Maryland%20Model%20Policy%20for%20Behavior%20Threat%20Assessment-2018-19.pdf>.