

# MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

June 17, 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 October 17, 2021 there was an incident involving a school within Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) 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 19, 2021, the HCPS School Security Coordinator (SSC) notified the Maryland Center for School Safety of the incident.

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

On October 20, 2021, 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 May 11, 2022, HCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

#### **Lessons Learned**

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

1. When students and families promptly notify school officials of threats of violence made against the school or students it allows school officials to begin investigating the threat and conducting behavioral threat assessments<sup>1</sup> of those involved.
2. Preventing harm to the school community requires effective communication, coordination and collaboration among school, school system central office, and law enforcement personnel. School system emergency management standard operating procedures should be clear

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<sup>1</sup> "The goal of the behavioral threat assessment process is to take appropriate preventive or corrective measures to maintain a safe and secure school environment, to protect and support potential victims, and to provide assistance, as needed, to the individual being assessed." Maryland Behavioral Threat Assessment Team Model Policy (2018), at 11, <https://schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Documents/Reports-Docs/Maryland%20Model%20Policy%20for%20Behavior%20Threat%20Assessment-2018-19.pdf>.

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).

3. School staff and law enforcement must be familiar with how to investigate and address online threats made against the school or student(s).

## **School Safety Recommendations**

1. Md. Ed. Art. §7-1507(c) requires school systems to adopt a behavioral threat assessment team policy that is consistent with the State model policy.<sup>2</sup> Schools should annually train and test behavioral threat assessment procedures with school and law enforcement personnel.
2. Threat reporting and communication protocols, which allow rapid notification of critical staff and law enforcement, should be easily accessible and regularly tested. 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. Maryland schools and school systems should continue to encourage students to report threats of violence to a trusted adult. Additionally, schools should provide students and families a mechanism to anonymously report threats of violence. MCSS provides all K-12 schools with access to Safe Schools Maryland,<sup>5</sup> the State's anonymous reporting system.

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<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<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> 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.