MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

July 7, 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 or 410-281-2335.

Sincerely,

Kate Hession
Executive Director

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

On April 28, 2022 there was an incident involving a school within Howard 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 April 28, 2022, 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 May 18, 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 June 13, 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. Schools need access to bleeding control kits and trained staff to use such equipment to effectively respond to provide care prior to the arrival of emergency medical services (EMS).

2. Response to an emergency is more effective when (1) emergency plans are concise and include easy to follow checklists, (2) staff are trained on emergency plans and procedures, and (3) school staff and first responders practice (i.e., test, drill, exercise) emergency procedures regularly.

3. Emergency plans include roles and responsibilities, which are typically assigned to an individual position or specific staff member. However, emergency plans must identify backup (i.e., alternate) staff to serve in those positions in the event any one individual is not present during an emergency. Having backup positions pre-assigned can prevent confusion

and ensure clarity about who is handling various functions and roles, regardless of who is physically in the building at the time of an incident.

4. Emergency plans should include procedures outlining the transition from response to recovery and this procedure should be regularly tested.

5. During emergency lockdowns, school staff locked in classrooms may need additional information in order to make informed decisions.

6. To assist in making informed decisions, school system central office leadership and security staff should have direct communication with on-scene school staff as well as access to school cameras.

School Safety Recommendations

1. Emergency plans should include response checklists and one pagers that contain essential information, directions, and procedures for responding to emergency incidents of any type. These checklists should be reviewed and updated following every real-world incident or exercise.

2. Maryland requires public schools to conduct annual emergency preparedness exercises that test their emergency plans.[1] To account for staff absences that may occur during an emergency, these exercises should test both the primary and alternate staff responses.

3. Schools should develop a mechanism to identify, track, and report improvement planning activities to ensure they monitor corrective actions through completion.[2] Additionally, schools should add drills or exercises to their training and exercise schedule when plans and procedures are updated and following the implementation of corrective actions. Exercising following the implementation of corrective actions helps to ensure the improvements have the desired effect.[3]

4. School emergency communication mechanisms must include multiple systems, which allow schools to communicate with parents and staff

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[1] COMAR 13A.02.02.04C.

[2] FEMA, *Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program* 6-2 (2020), https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Homeland-Security-Exercise-and-Evaluation-Program-Doctrine-2020-Revision-2-2-25.pdf.

[3] "By continually examining the implementation of corrective actions, organizations can identify capability gaps and determine what corrective actions require validation through exercises. Improvement Planning activities can help shape an organization's preparedness priorities and support continuous improvement in the building and sustaining of capabilities." FEMA, *Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program* 6-3 (2020), https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Homeland-Security-Exercise-and-Evaluation-Program-Doctrine-2020-Revision-2-2-25.pdf.

beyond email. Additionally, while conducting required annual exercises discussed above,[4] schools should develop an exercise scenario that allows the school to test their crisis communication systems (e.g., email, text, phones, radios, intercom, and public address systems).

5. Schools should be equipped with an adequate number of bleeding control kits and school administration, nursing, security, and other critical staff should be trained on their use. Schools should also consider providing bleeding control training to all school personnel and students.

6. As part of the emergency plan review, schools should discuss and assess what information is necessary for school staff and system leadership to make informed decisions during various emergencies. When possible, systems should develop pre-canned messages or templates, and provide school system leaders with access to systems (e.g., communication, camera) to ensure necessary and appropriate information is shared and accessible.

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[4] COMAR 13A.02.02.04C.