



# Message from Our Chair



I am happy to present to you the 2020 School Safety Subcabinet Annual Report summarizing the activities of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS).

While our 2019 was defined by mandate-driven growth, our 2020 was presumed to be characterized by the refinement of processes and the strengthening of support systems for our school safety partners across Maryland.

Though 2020 brought with it myriad challenges, these did not deter us from meeting our goals and fulfilling our mission. In fact, as I reflect on what MCSS accomplished this year, I am struck by how much of it was the product of harnessing the challenges presented by the pandemic as a means to drive further growth and innovation. As an educator, I am inspired by the wise and optimistic words of Dr. Seuss' *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*, and it's clear to me that members of the MCSS team are as well:

"You will come to a place where the streets are not marked. Some windows are lighted. But mostly they're darked. A place you could sprain both your elbow and chin! Do you dare to stay out? Do you dare to go in? How much can you lose? How much can you win? You can get so confused that you'll start in to race down long wiggled roads at a break-necking pace and grind on for miles cross weirdish wild space, headed, I fear, toward a most useless place. The Waiting Place.....for people just waiting Everyone is just waiting...NO! That's not for you! Somehow you'll escape all that waiting and staying. You'll find the bright places where Boom Bands are playing. With banner flip-flapping, once more you'll ride high! Ready for anything under the sky. Ready because you're that kind of a guy! Oh, the places you'll go! There is fun to be done! There are points to be scored. There are games to be won. And the magical things you can do with that ball will make you the winning-est winner of all."

Many individuals and institutions are finding it difficult to adjust to our current reality. I am proud to say that those who make MCSS work, including members of the School Safety Subcabinet, Advisory Board, and Student Focus Group, are seizing the moment. Far from wondering or waiting, they are devising new and innovative ways to advance and promote school safety throughout Maryland.

Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

State Superintendent of Schools

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# About Us

The Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), an independent unit within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), collaborates with schools, educators, mental health professionals, law enforcement, students, parents, State and local agencies, and community and other organizations in order to provide a coordinated and comprehensive approach to school safety in Maryland. We share information on best practices, programs, and resources, provide grants, technical assistance, and training, collect, analyze, and integrate statewide data, and promote interagency efforts to ensure safe schools across Maryland.

Our shared efforts allow Maryland's diverse schools to better identify and address the needs and concerns of our students. In the process, we are creating inclusive educational environments free from fear, harm, trauma, and unnecessary hardship.

**Mission:** To promote and enhance safer school communities.

**Vision:** Safe schools, which are inclusive educational environments free from fear, harm, trauma, and unnecessary hardship.

**Values:** Integrity, kindness, service, respect, and professionalism.

## A New Brand in 2020

As MCSS matures and grows and our responsibilities expand, we constantly refine our internal processes and external messaging in order to promote safe schools. As schools and society change rapidly, and in order to remain Maryland's leading school safety resource, we strive to reach a broader and more diverse audience over the coming years.

With this in mind, in 2020 we sharpened and strengthened our brand by introducing a new logo, seal, and synoptic seal among other enhancements to the look, feel, and tone of MCSS materials. Our refined brand conveys that we are professional, mission- and vision-driven, objective, innovative, trusted, and resourceful.

**MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY**

*Our new logo emphasizes our full formal name and our preferred name (MCSS).*



*Our new seal is the official imprint of MCSS.*

# School Safety Subcabinet

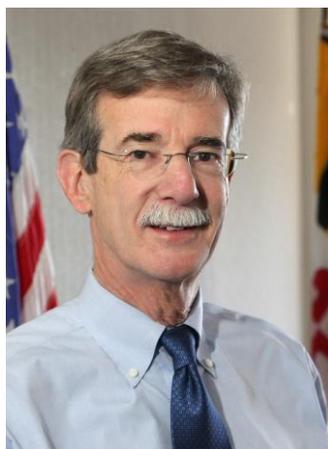
The Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018 (Senate Bill 1265), which was signed into law by Governor Hogan on April 10, 2018, significantly altered and expanded the role of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS). It also established the School Safety Subcabinet and Advisory Board. The Subcabinet serves as a regulatory authority and as the governing board of MCSS.

In 2020 the School Safety Subcabinet began holding meetings entirely online, and all such public meetings were streamed live.

Members of the Subcabinet include:



**Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., Chair**  
*State Superintendent of Schools*



**Brian E. Frosh**  
*Attorney General of Maryland*



**Colonel Woodrow W. Jones III**  
*Superintendent of State Police*



**Robert R. Neall**  
*Secretary of Health*



**Carol A. Beatty**  
*Secretary of Disabilities*



**Robert A. Gorrell**  
*Executive Director of the Interagency Commission on School Construction*

# School Safety Advisory Board

The Advisory Board provides the Subcabinet with school safety recommendations.

In 2020 the Subcabinet, MCSS, and Board welcomed two new members to the Board: Lee-Nadine Oppenheim, Ivymount School, and Chief Paul Kifer, Hagerstown Police. Chief Kifer replaced retired Chief Tim Altomare. We thank Chief Altomare for his dedication to the Board, Subcabinet, MCSS, and public safety, and we wish him well in his retirement.

Members of the Advisory Board include:

**Dr. George Arlotto, Chair**  
*Superintendent of Anne Arundel County Public Schools*

**Eric Ebersole**  
*Maryland House of Delegates*

**Katherine Klausmeier**  
*Maryland State Senate*

**Dr. Sharon A. Hoover**  
*Center for School Mental Health*

**Karin Bailey**  
*Maryland Association of Boards of Education*

**Dr. Kellie Anderson**  
*School Psychologist*

**Pamela Gaddy**  
*Maryland State Education Association*

**James T. Bell**  
*Parent of a Public School Student*

**Lourdes Padilla**  
*Department of Human Services*

**Sam Abed**  
*Department of Juvenile Services*

**Jon Carrier**  
*Maryland Association of School Resource Officers*

**Nicholas Shockney**  
*Director of Special Education  
Representative of a Non-Public School*

**Sheriff Scott Adams**  
*Maryland Sheriffs' Association*

**Chief Paul Kifer**  
*Maryland Chiefs of Police Association*

**Rachael Faulkner**  
*Maryland Assembly on School-Based Health Care*

**David Engel**  
*Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center*

**Laurel Moody**  
*Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems*

**Jayshree Srinivasan**  
*Maryland Association of Student Councils*

**Manfred Reek**  
*Representative of School Bus Drivers*

**Megan Berger**  
*Disability Rights Maryland*

**Dr. Chanta' M. Booker**  
*School Principal*

**Captain Patrick D. Herring**  
*Parent of a Child with Disabilities*

**Thomas E. Alban**  
*Representative of a Non-Public School*

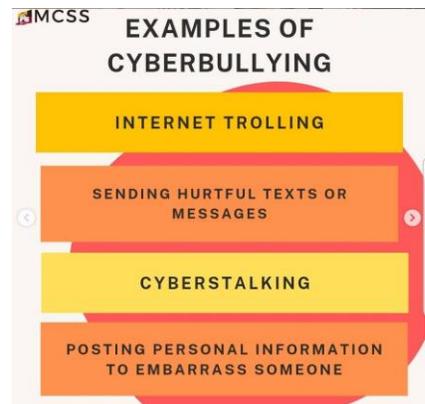
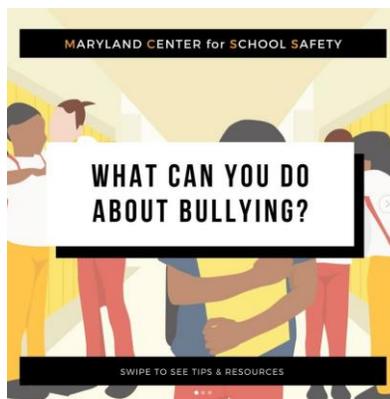
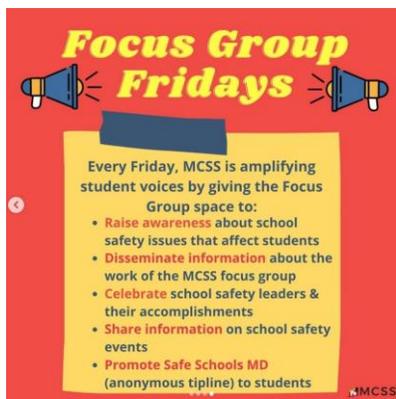
**Lee-Nadine Oppenheim**  
*Representative of Non-Public Special Education Facility*

# Student Safety Focus Group

The MCSS Student Focus Group (SFG) was created to ensure that Maryland students have the opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations regarding school safety issues pertinent to them. Members must be in eighth through twelfth grade.

SFG members meet monthly to address school safety issues, represent the perspectives present in their regions, and engage with the Maryland School Safety Advisory Board Student Safety Liaison. Members recommend marketing strategies for and provide feedback on MCSS initiatives and potential MCSS engagement projects. The SFG also welcomes guest speakers to discuss topics such as cyberbullying, the role of School Resource Officers in Maryland schools, mental health, and suicide awareness and ways to address these issues within their schools.

These student leaders have also stepped up to launch "Focus Group Fridays" on the MCSS Instagram page (@SafeSchoolsMD), which allows members to share student-authored school safety-themed content every Friday.



**Jayshree Srinivasan**  
*Focus Group Lead*  
*Howard County*



**Madeline Gordy**  
*Frederick County*



**Hiba Khan**  
*Charles County*



**Praise Ben**  
*Prince George's County*



**Grace Herron**  
*Harford County*



**Emiley Kim**  
*Carroll County*



**Kevin Bokoum**  
*Washington County*



**Lillian Hicks**  
*Montgomery County*



**Henry Meiser**  
*Saint Mary's County*



**Claire Cabral**  
*Baltimore County*



**Eleanor Karueh**  
*Howard County*



**Justin Peleska**  
*Anne Arundel County*

# The Team

The individuals who each day work to promote inclusive educational environments free from fear, harm, trauma, and unnecessary hardship.

## Leadership



**Kate Bryan Hession**  
*Executive Director*



**Joseph D. Pignataro**  
*Deputy Director & Regional Manager*

## Regional Operations



**Andrew Turner**  
*Prevention & Intervention Administrator*



**James Hott**  
*Regional Training & Certification Specialist*



**Michael Rudinski**  
*Regional Training & Certification Specialist*



**Ron Pierce**  
*Prevention & Intervention Specialist*



**Tarik Harris**  
*Prevention & Intervention Specialist*

## Finance, Data, and Administration



**Gifty Quarshie**  
*Fiscal & Grants Program Manager*



**Jeyan Jebaraj**  
*Business Solutions & Data Manager*



**Jesika McNeil**  
*Executive Assistant*

## Engagement



**Craig Meister**  
*Communications & Engagement Manager*



**Emily Allen Lucht**  
*Communications & Media Specialist*



**Sandra Caldwell**  
*School Safety Analyst*

## Maryland Office of the Attorney General



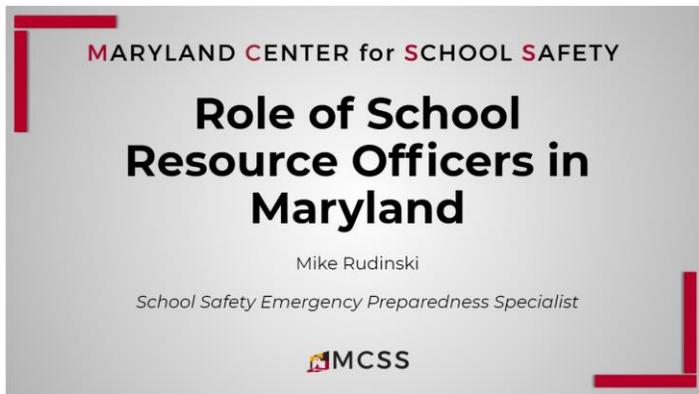
**Dawn Luedtke**  
*Assistant Attorney General & Counsel to MCSS*

# Training Reimagined

In 2019, MCSS delivered the Maryland Model SRO Training to over 900 School Resource Officers (SROs) and School Security Employees (SSEs). Training covering a variety of school safety topics was also provided to school safety partners, students, parents, and educators. In 2020, MCSS had planned to conduct various traditional trainings on school safety planning, implicit bias, behavioral threat assessments, restorative practices, hate bias/hate crimes, and the Maryland Model SRO Training.

Then came the pandemic.

MCSS completely reimagined its various trainings, and the training unit worked quickly to find new and creative ways, including but not limited to independent study options and virtual delivery, to present content to our partners.



## A Nationwide Audience

The new Understanding the Role of the SRO training had its online premiere in August 2020, and it drew quite the impressive virtual audience. Not only have professionals from across Maryland attended; officials from eighteen different states have taken part in order to learn about the dynamic role of an SRO in Maryland public schools.

## Training During a Pandemic

School Resource Officer (SRO)/School Security Employee (SSE) training has transformed in response to evolving social distancing etiquette. Prospective and current SROs/SSEs now have the ability to engage in virtual and hybrid virtual training. MCSS will provide in person training in areas where physical distancing restrictions are lifted and in a manner that meets all State and local guidelines for in-person instruction.

Training and Engagement

Fiscal Year 2020 Grants

Information Collection

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# Summer Professional Development



Each summer MCSS holds a school safety conference for its partners. While the global pandemic upended plans for a traditional in-person conference in 2020, it didn't stop MCSS from offering a summer professional development opportunity. The MCSS team transformed the conference into a four-part virtual webinar series that featured both keynote speakers and a panel discussion:

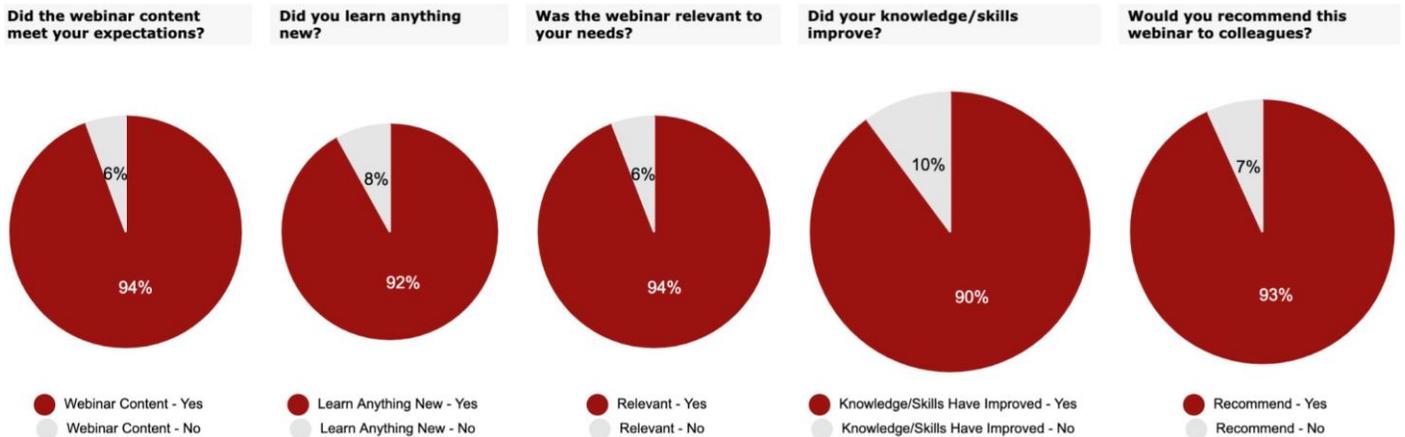
*Violence Prevention + Response in a Rapidly Changing World – July 7, 2020*

*Situational Awareness in Today's Reality – July 14*

*Suicide Prevention & Awareness Mental Health & Wellness – July 21*

*Smart Strategies to Support Students Transitioning Back to School – July 28*

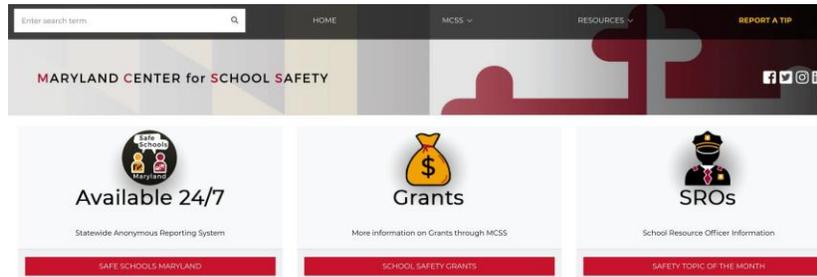
The series received 1,205 total registrants, including seventy-eight from out of state. An average of 241 people attended each seminar.



<b>Training and Engagement</b>	Fiscal Year 2020 Grants	Information Collection	Safe Schools Maryland
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# A New and Streamlined Website

The new MCSS website - [schoolsafety.maryland.gov](https://schoolsafety.maryland.gov) - launched on July 1, 2020. It's easy to use, filled with searchable streamlined content, focused on serving the needs of our diverse partners/stakeholders, and accessible for all.



While MCSS and the Maryland Department of Information Technology (DoIT) produced a website that serves as a clearinghouse of useful school safety information and resources, MCSS also worked with the Department of Disabilities to ensure that mobile and desktop devices experience the site's format, structure, and content as intended and that the site is fully accessible to those using assistive technology.

## National School Bus Safety Week During a Pandemic

October 18, 2020



For many Marylanders this October – like 2020 in general – is unlike any that we've experienced before. Masks are no longer just for Halloween. Children are home more hours of the day. The traditional rhythm of life is on hold.

While much is topsy-turvy this year, National School Bus Safety Week (October 19 through October 23) goes on!

With so many children still engaging in virtual school from home, there may be far fewer school vehicles on Maryland roads; yet, this makes noting National School Bus Safety Week that much more important.

Lots of us are out of practice interacting with school buses on our streets. Some Maryland school systems are returning cohorts of students to school this October while some Maryland independent schools have been partially or fully operational in-person since August. National School Bus Safety Week is a reminder that whether we interact with one school bus a month or one school bus an hour, we must always prioritize safety first when driving or walking near a moving school bus.

"National School Bus Safety Week is an active and evolving public education program and an excellent way for parents, students, teachers, motorists, school bus operators, school administrators, and other interested parties – to join forces and address the importance of school bus safety," according to the [National Association for Pupil Transportation](#), which also publishes a useful [one-page guide to year-round school bus safety](#).

## The Many Responsibilities of a Maryland SRO

October 8, 2020

**MARYLAND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS**

- ✓ Work everyday to keep outside dangers from coming into their schools
- ✓ Build relationships with students
- ✓ Create positive school environments
- ✓ Connect students with community resources
- ✓ Act as friendly confidants and mentors to all students
- ✓ Collaborate daily in order to be the necessary bridge between their school community and the greater community
- ✓ Draw on their de-escalation and problem solving training as needed
- ✓ Love getting into the classroom and teaching students
- ✓ Are thoughtful, friendly, social, and outgoing
- ✓ Are culturally competent and committed to uplifting Maryland's diverse students
- ✓ Complete training specific to the unique, important, and varied roles that SROs must fulfill in Maryland's public schools

**MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY**

The website includes a "News and Notes" blog, which allows MCSS to share with all interested members of the public the most up to date news and resources from the world school safety. It also feature MCSS press releases and guest blog posts from in-house and external school safety experts.

Training and Engagement	Fiscal Year 2020 Grants	Information Collection	Safe Schools Maryland
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# Communication and Collaboration

Communication is key, especially during times of great uncertainty. MCSS has always held regular information-sharing calls with our school safety partners; yet, as the pandemic has made abundantly clear, there is not a one-size fits all approach to school safety.

Therefore, at the start of the 2020-2021 school year MCSS launched an ambitious plan to offer five unique collaboration calls every month - each with a different targeted audience. The multi-directional flow of communications ensures MCSS best serves its various partners by supporting call participants' diverse disciplines and communities.

## School Safety Coordinators

School Safety Coordinators (SSCs) and local school Security Directors serve as the leads for school safety and security within each school system. These calls focus on safety and security issues, concerns, and trends within the twenty-four local school systems.

## Mental Health Coordinators

Mental Health Coordinators work within the central office of local school systems to ensure students who are referred for mental health services obtain necessary services. These calls focus on behavioral health concerns, trends, and promising practices within the twenty-four local school systems.

## Private and Non-Public Schools

School heads, administrators, and safety officials at private and non-public special education schools throughout Maryland ensure the safety of their schools and students. These calls focus on concerns, trends, and promising practices within the private and non-public school communities.

## School Resource Officers

School Resource Officers (SROs) are sworn law enforcement officers who serve in public schools throughout Maryland. SRO Supervisors oversee and manage SROs and evaluate school-based police officers and/or programs. These calls focus on security and safety concerns, trends, and promising practices throughout Maryland.

## Professional Development

MCSS school safety partners in and outside Maryland join together to learn from a guest presenter and discuss a topic of shared concern.

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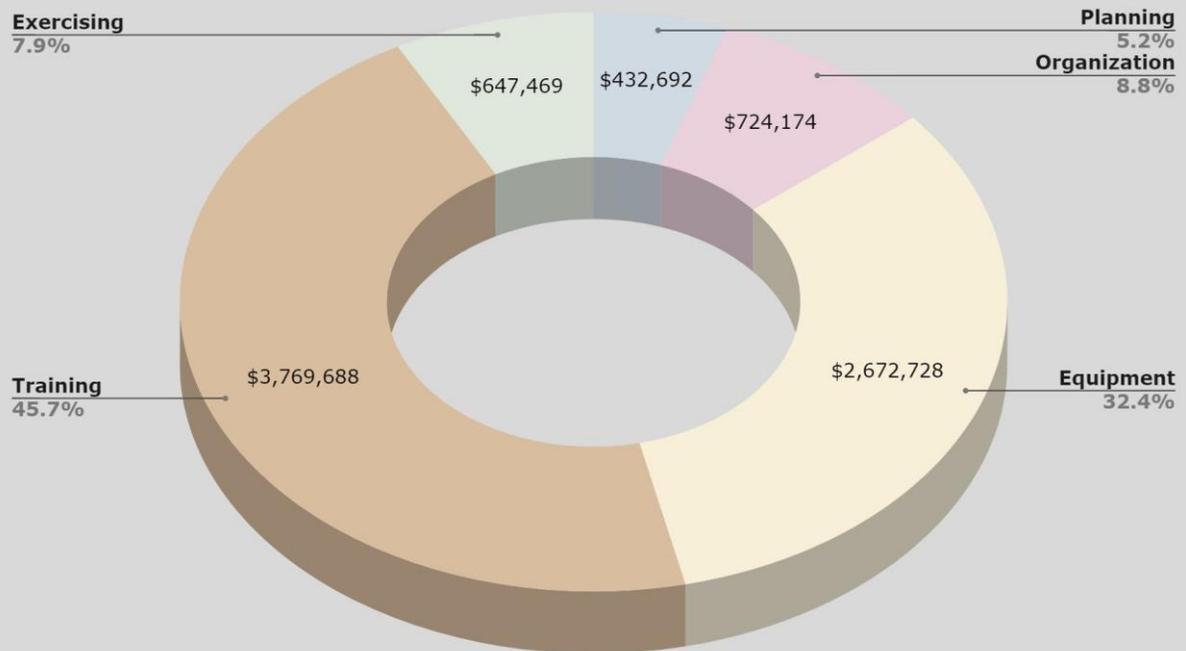
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# MCSS Administered Four Grants in Fiscal Year 2020

## Safe Schools Fund Grant

During FY2020 \$8.18 million in grant funding was awarded to local school systems in the state of Maryland. Additionally, approximately \$27,000 was awarded to local non-public special education schools.



## SRO/Adequate Coverage Grant

The School Safety Subcabinet awarded \$7.45 million in grant funds to Maryland's local school systems and local law enforcement agencies.

## Hate Crimes Grant

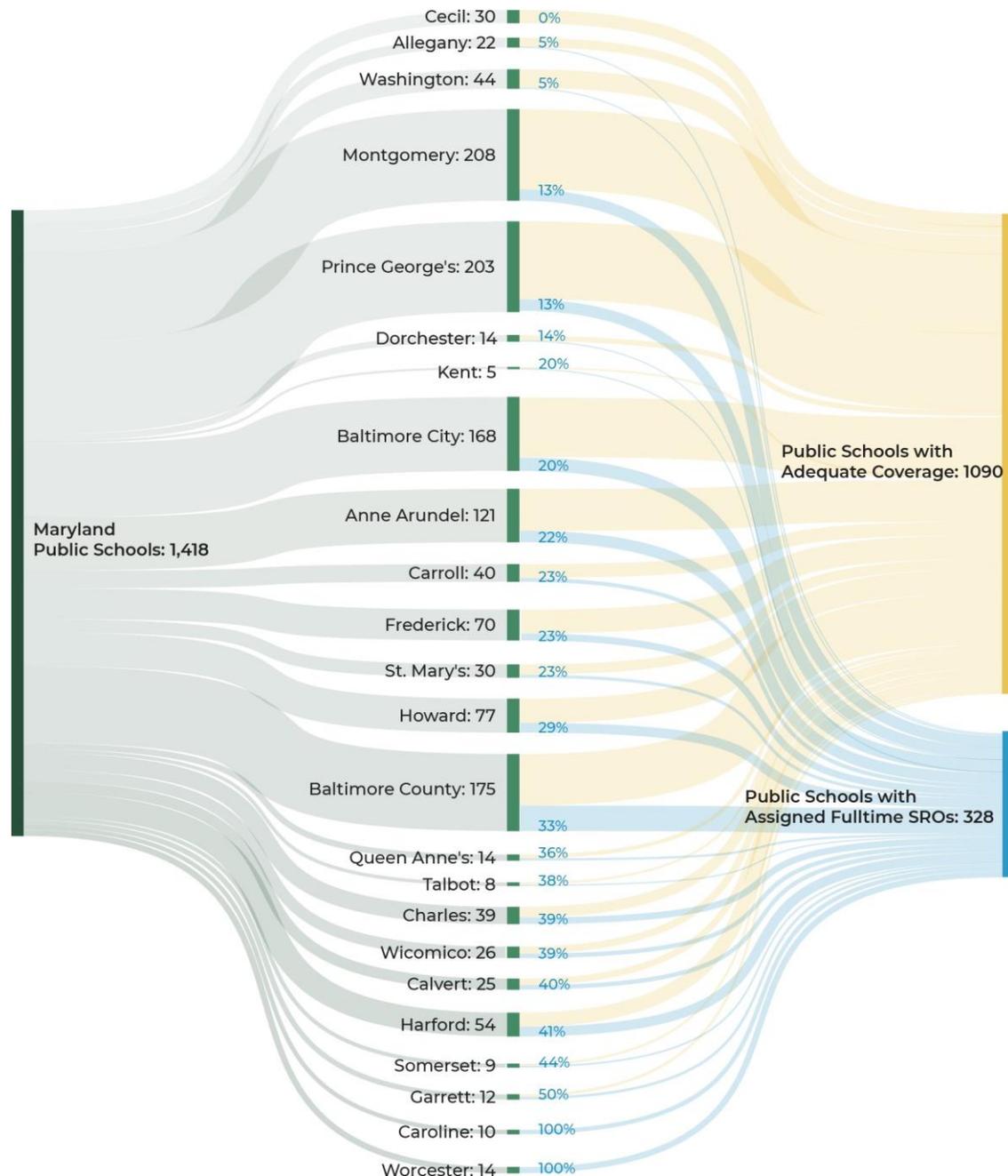
MCSS awarded \$2 million in grant funding to private, non-public, and public schools and childcare centers determined to be at risk of hate crimes.

## School Traffic Safety Enforcement Grant

The School Safety Subcabinet awarded \$600,000 in grant funding to local law enforcement agencies. The funding was used for traffic and pedestrian safety initiatives around school zones.

# School Resource Officer and Adequate Coverage

As part of the Safe to Learn Act of 2018, MCSS collects data on public schools in Maryland with an assigned School Resource Officer (SRO) and/or adequate law enforcement coverage. Of the 1,422 public schools in Maryland, local school systems identified 328 assigned SROs and 1,090 schools with adequate coverage. The Sankey diagram below is a visualization of the proportion of public schools in each local school system that are served by assigned SROs versus law enforcement adequate coverage.

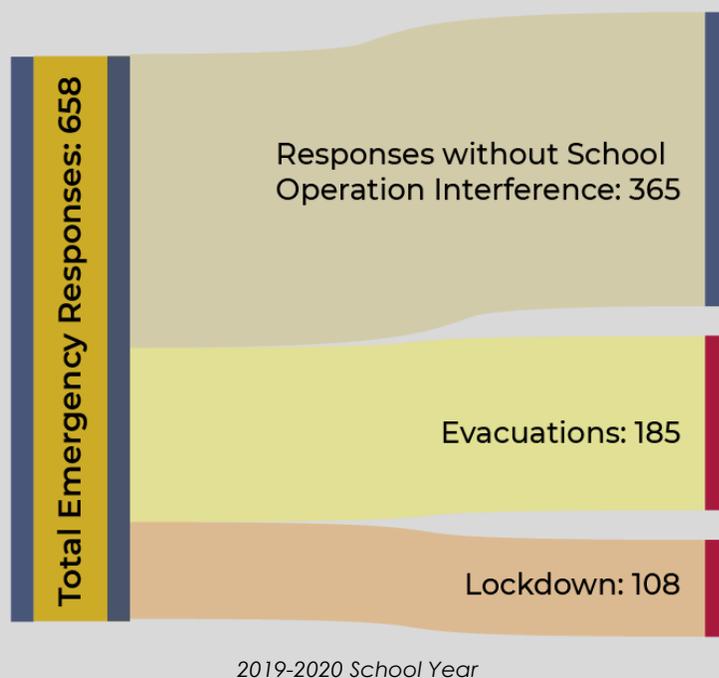


# School Emergency Plans

This summer local school systems updated each school emergency plan in order to conform to the updated 2020 MSDE Emergency Planning Guidelines. A total of 1,460 school emergency plans were submitted to MCSS for review and comment. MCSS reviews these plans to ensure that they conform to MSDE guidelines, are updated based on reviews of emergencies or drills, address emergency events and behavioral threats, and provide for accommodations for students with disabilities during emergency events.

## Threats, Responses, and Drills

Beginning in 2020, each local school system submits an annual report to MCSS for the immediately-preceding school year, which includes aggregate data on behavioral threats, information on school lockdowns and other emergency events, hours spent on drills or actual emergencies, and information regarding incidents when a school's emergency plan failed to perform as anticipated in a drill or actual emergency. The chart to the right includes data from the twenty-two local school systems that submitted a summary report for the 2019-2020 school year. In the 2019-2020 school year, there were a total of 915 threats made to a school or a school system facility.



## Emergency Responses

658 real world (non-drill) emergency responses to public school facilities were reported. These emergency responses resulted in 108 lockdowns and 185 evacuations. A total of 448.5 school hours were spent engaging in actual emergencies.

## Emergency Drills

4,741 school hours were spent engaging in a drill or exercise during the 2019-2020 school year. There were a total of 6 incidents in which the emergency plan, in part or in whole, failed to function as anticipated in an emergency drill.

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# A Second Year of Anonymous Tips



*The new Safe Schools Maryland logo*

Safe Schools Maryland is an ANONYMOUS reporting system that allows students, parents, and community members to easily and anonymously report school or student safety concerns anywhere in Maryland. Reports received via app, [SafeSchoolsMD.org](https://www.safeschoolsmd.org), or 1-833-MD-B-SAFE (1-833-632-7233) are routed to school, public safety, health, and/or social services personnel for appropriate follow up.

Since its launch in October 2018, Safe Schools Maryland has received almost 900 anonymous reports/tips, and 439 of those were received during the 2019-2020 school year despite a significant reduction in tips received starting in March 2020 as a result of COVID-19-related school closures. In addition to all Maryland public schools, over 140 non-public schools have joined Safe Schools Maryland. Through targeted outreach campaigns our goal is to grow that number over the coming months.

MCSS provides regular live webinar-style training, which gives school contacts the opportunity to brush up on how to address, update, and close the anonymous reports that they receive and ask any questions about the system.

In addition to being featured in *TechBeat* and *Campus Safety Magazine*, Safe Schools Maryland was the topic of various 2020 MCSS staff presentations. Audiences included student government associations, Scout troops, educators, independent school administrators, and parents.

MCSS also now hosts monthly national conference calls for the growing number of states offering anonymous school safety reporting systems. These calls foster collaboration in order to best promote safe schools across the country.

## Protecting Maryland's Schools

In October 2020, MCSS partnered with the Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center to offer "Protecting Maryland's School," a training that presented the diverse ways in which schools and students can engage with the Safe School Maryland in order to foster a proactive approach to student and campus safety.

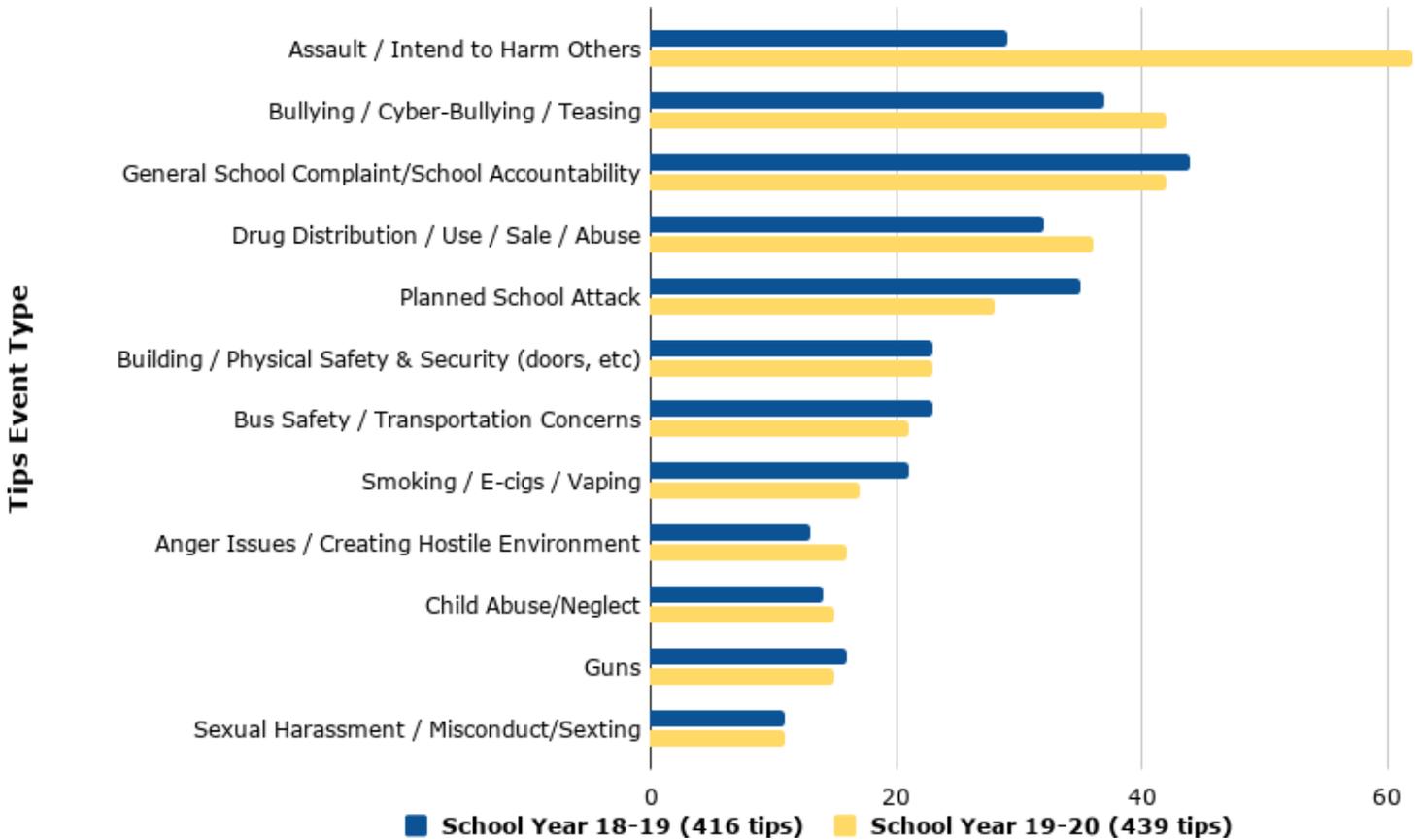
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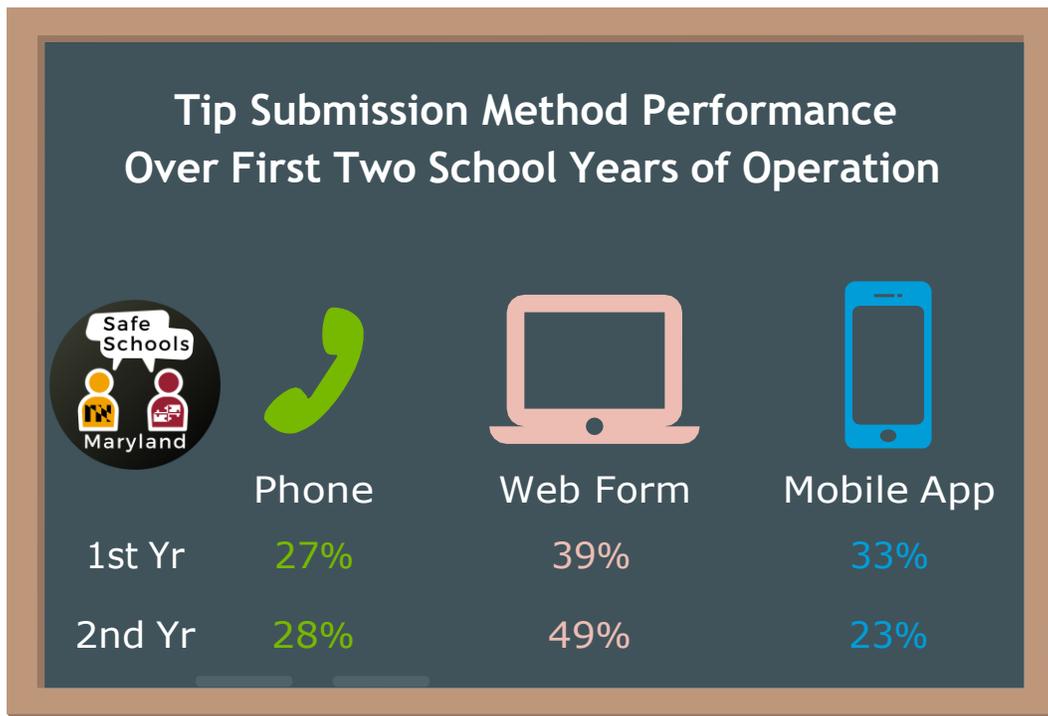
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# Tip Types Over Time

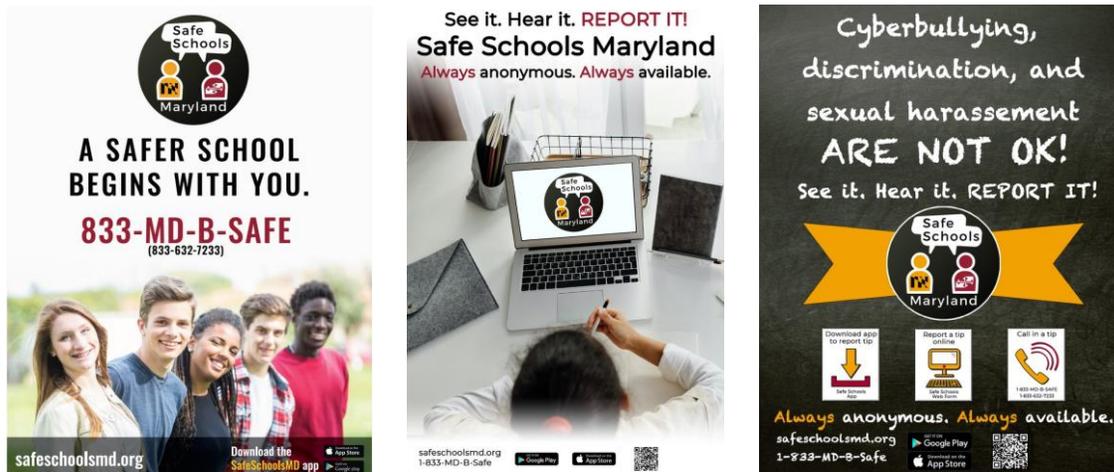


Note: Safe Schools Maryland launched in early October 2018

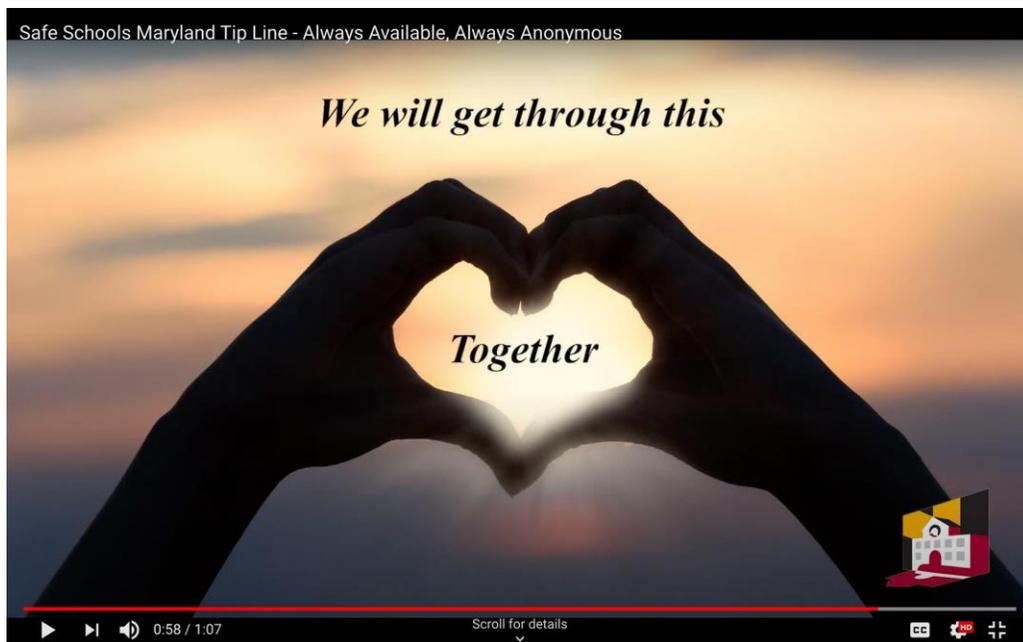


# Promotion

In addition to developing a new Safe Schools Maryland logo in 2020, MCSS also updated and created new Safe Schools Maryland promotional materials for both general and targeted audiences. All such materials - in both English and Spanish - are available to download from our website, [schoolsafety.maryland.gov](https://schoolsafety.maryland.gov), and the dedicated Safe Schools Maryland website, [safeschoolsmd.org](https://safeschoolsmd.org).



In response to schools transitioning to online learning in March 2020, and as an acknowledgment that Maryland students are facing new and diverse challenges, many of which they would normally share with teachers, staff members, or fellow students in-person at school, MCSS launched a campaign that included a press release, public service announcement, emails to school officials, and social media posts to remind everyone that Safe Schools Maryland remains active 24-7-365.



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# Awareness and Outreach

Starting during the 2020-2021 school year, Maryland schools can earn the distinction of Safe Schools Maryland Gold, Silver, or Bronze Schools by meeting the following criteria.

Bronze School Qualifications: The Maryland Center for School Safety must deliver a live 30-minute (or longer) presentation during the school year to all students at the school.

Silver School Qualifications: Fulfill Bronze School qualifications and the Maryland Center for School Safety must deliver a live 30-minute (or longer) presentation during the school year to all student-facing staff members at the school.

Gold School Qualifications: Fulfill Silver School qualifications and the Maryland Center for School Safety must deliver at least one live 30-minute (or longer) presentation during the school year to the school's parent/guardian population.

Recognition of Gold, Silver, or Bronze status will occur each May, at which point those schools meeting the criteria for Gold, Silver, or Bronze status are provided the Gold, Silver, or Bronze Safe Schools Maryland seal in decal, banner, and .png formats in order to display the school's commitment to school safety outside and inside the school building and on the school's website/print materials.



## Live Presentations

Starting in 2020, MCSS launched a seamless online sign up process for schools to set up MCSS-led live (virtual or in-person) Safe Schools Maryland appearances, demonstrations, presentations, webinars/seminars, and/or trainings that last anywhere from a few minutes to one hour depending on audience needs. This will allow MCSS team members to present at a greater diversity of events including Student/Parent/Teacher Orientations, Back-to-School Nights, Professional Development Days, Class Meetings, Board/PTSA Meetings, Club Meetings, Special Event Days, and School Assemblies.

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