

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY



ANNUAL REPORT

2025

*To promote and enhance
safe school communities.*



Message from Our Chair



I am pleased to share this year’s Maryland School Safety Annual Report, which provides a comprehensive overview of the work led by the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) and our partnerships with local school systems, state and local agencies, and public safety partners nationwide. As the State Superintendent of Schools and Chair of the MCSS Subcabinet, I am committed to advancing this mission through collaboration, prevention-focused strategies, and student-centered leadership.

This year’s theme, “School Safety at the Quarter Century,” marks 25 years since the Columbine tragedy, a defining moment that transformed how we approach school safety. In 1999, unlocked doors and unmonitored hallways were the norm. Today, features like secured vestibules, visitor screening protocols, and digital surveillance — once unimaginable — have become essential components of school safety.

The evolution of school safety goes far beyond physical infrastructure. Educators and administrators are now crisis managers, mental health advocates, and leaders in prevention. Counselors provide trauma-informed care. School resource officers and behavioral threat assessment teams work alongside staff to identify and intervene early. These shifts reflect a deeper understanding that true safety also means emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

Looking forward, safety practices must be integrated into school culture to support, not restrict, students. This means prioritizing prevention, equipping educators to address mental health needs, and strengthening partnerships with families, law enforcement, mental health professionals, and community organizations. When students feel valued and connected, they become key partners in safe schools.

This report highlights MCSS’s collective work with statewide partners to build safer, stronger school communities. The Subcabinet recognizes Maryland’s school staff and partners for their dedication. Together, we will continue to build a future where safety is the foundation for every child’s success.

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

Introduction

Established **2013 (MCSS), 2018 (Subcabinet Annual Report)**

Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art. §7-1503(h)

schoolsafety.maryland.gov

The 2025 Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) Annual Report is designed to meet the School Safety Subcabinet’s legislative requirement to deliver important annual public school safety data. This report capitalizes on analytics from the 2024 report to provide a clear and concise overview of MCSS 2025 programs and resources.

MCSS efforts support safe and inclusive Maryland school communities where students can learn and educators can teach without fear, harm, or unnecessary hardship. The Center works collaboratively with students, educators, staff, parents, behavioral health practitioners, law enforcement, and other partners to coordinate efforts toward creating and maintaining school environments that prioritize the well-being of the entire school community. MCSS staff sponsor regular professional learning community meetings bringing together Maryland professionals with similar roles and responsibilities to facilitate multi-directional communication and learning. These approaches, combined with on-demand technical assistance, training, grants, and other resources, serve as the foundation of the Center’s work.

The commitment in Maryland to school safety was evident in 2025 as interested parties and partnerships expanded. Coordination with other state agencies will be demonstrated by including the agency’s logo in the footer of the corresponding program and resource page. School safety is accomplished using a comprehensive approach with effort in each of the four areas: security, emergency preparedness, personal connections, and school culture and climate. The icons below visually represent each layer and will be displayed in the header to demonstrate the layer supported by the MCSS program or resource.

Safety and Security



Emergency Preparedness



Personal Connection



Culture and Climate



Safe schools require a continuous cycle of improvement as emerging circumstances and the threat landscape are ever evolving. MCSS works to remain current through dialogue with experts and practitioners to provide timely support and resources to Maryland schools. Opportunities to identify patterns and trends through research and study will be capitalized upon in 2026. Additionally, MCSS commits to making findings and other school safety-related data available to allow local and state agencies to make informed decisions and prioritize of efforts.

MCSS KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2025

Safe School Maryland

The 2024-2025 school year saw the highest number of tips of any school year that SSMD has been in operation, with 1,282 tips — a 35% increase over the 2023-2024 school year. General school complaint was the most reported category.



Behavior Threat Assessment

Direct engagement with each public school system in 2025 will allow for customization of support to achieve consistent implementation of BTA practices across Maryland in 2026. A community of practice for public school system leaders and a centralized resource hub were created.



Conference

School safety partners came together to learn, reflect upon, and discuss the evolution of school safety over the past 25 years; since the Columbine High School Tragedy in 1999. 480 attendees heard from passionate speakers who shared their knowledge and experiences. Stop the Bleed training was made available throughout the two day conference.



SRO/SSE Training Academy

A continuing education virtual experience was developed and delivered for 1,253 veteran SROs and SSEs who previously participated in the training academy. Additionally, seven regional training academy sessions were conducted across the state for new SROs and SSEs.



Expansion of Programs & Partnerships

Several new programs and initiatives in 2025 included:

- ▶ The Handle with Care program became a cooperative effort between MSDE and MCSS.
- ▶ New resources to support transportation safety were designed for students, bus drivers, parents, and drivers.



Coordinated Emergency Preparedness

The coordination of emergency preparedness across local agencies and school personnel was facilitated in 2025 through statewide exercises conducted for public, nonpublic, and private schools. Additionally, state agencies engaged in coordination efforts developing a three year Integrated Preparedness Plan.



MCSS PRIORITIES

2026

School-Based Violence Prevention

Proactively identify, assess, and mitigate potential threats of school-based violence by integrating a comprehensive, public health-informed approach across all Maryland schools. Capitalize upon existing partnerships to expand BTA practices and interventions beyond the expertise of K-12 school personnel.



Anonymous Reporting System & Bystander Reporting

Maximize the utilization and effectiveness of the Safe Schools Maryland (SSMD) anonymous reporting system as a primary tool for early detection and prevention of school safety incidents. Codify the existence in Maryland of an anonymous reporting system.



Coordinated Emergency Response & Preparedness

Optimize rapid and coordinated emergency response and recovery across Maryland schools and jurisdictions through the adoption of "I Love You Guys" standard protocols, multi-agency training, and improvements informed by after-action reviews. Capitalize on existing partnerships to assist locals in implementing response protocols.



Digital Safety

Safeguard students and school systems from digital threats by promoting responsible online behavior, enabling rapid tracing of online threats, and strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure. Capitalize on the expertise of local and national partners to include Engaging students as partners in designing and promoting safe online behaviors.



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The Safe to Learn Act 2018 directs MCSS to support local school safety efforts through technical assistance, programs, activities, and training. Programs were initiated and expanded upon during 2025 to address identified areas of need through analysis of data and dialogue with local school safety partners. This section provides details for each program active in 2025.

Engagement 16

The Safe to Learn Act 2018 directs MCSS to collaborate with local school systems in the State, law enforcement agencies, State and local government, community organizations, parents, and other stakeholders to provide a comprehensive, coordinated approach to school safety. The law also directs MCSS to maintain and maximize relationships with emergency responders, law enforcement personnel, parents, and other emergency preparedness stakeholders to ensure seamless execution in an emergency event. This section provides details of collaborative efforts occurring in 2025.

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This section provides 2025 information regarding the School Safety Subcabinet, Subcabinet Advisory Board, and MCSS personnel.

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Safe Schools Maryland

Established 2018

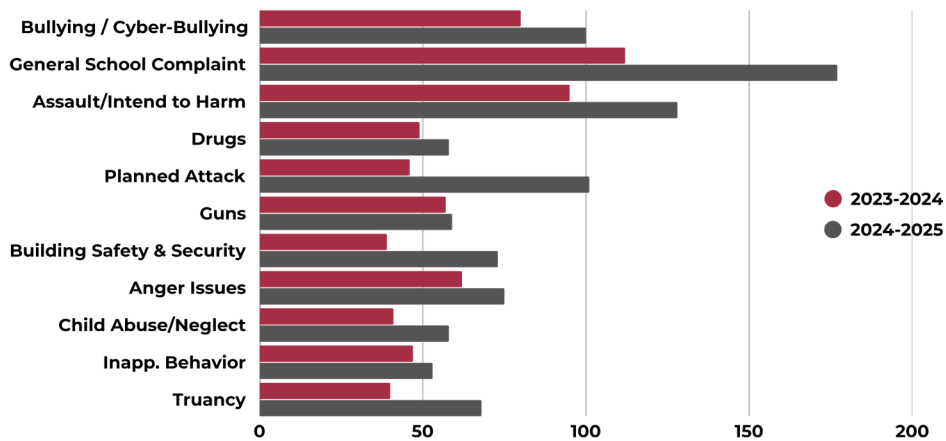


schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Pages/Tipline.aspx

The Safe Schools Maryland Anonymous Reporting System is a 24/7/365 anonymous school safety tipline made available for free to Maryland public, nonpublic and private schools. It allows students, school staff, parents, and community members to quickly and easily report school safety concerns via phone, webform, or app, which are then routed to the proper local contacts to address the concern.

1,282 reports were received during the 2024-2025 school year, the highest number since the system began operation. Bystanders reporting with the website form remains the most popular reporting method. Examining annual data by day of the week, Wednesdays and Thursdays are the days with the highest volume, with approximately 60% of reports being made during school hours. “General school complaint” was the most reported category with 166 total reports, followed by the category “assault/intend to harm” with 126 total reports.

MCSS staff conducted **23 presentations** to various local partners, on the importance of bystander reporting and promoting the system. Direct instruction was provided to over **200** local school officials responsible for receiving and managing reports. In addition to local technical support, MCSS collaborates regularly with other states that operate anonymous reporting systems to share best practices.



The expansion of awareness and use of the SSMD reporting system remains a priority in 2026. Consideration of the impact of cell phone bans in public schools on reporting will be examined, particularly given existing day of week and time of day analytics. Collaboration with other statewide school safety reporting systems will continue as MCSS seeks to enhance best practices and improve operations.



Behavior Threat Assessment

Established 2018

Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art §7-1507

schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Pages/RES-BTA.aspx



Behavioral Threat Assessment (BTA) is a fact-based, systematic process designed for school officials to use when they become aware of concerning behaviors demonstrated by an individual. The process prevents violence and crime by intervening early to identify and respond to an individual's underlying grievances and unmet needs. BTA principles are implemented in Maryland public, private, and nonpublic schools.

MCSS 2025 efforts were to advance a public health-informed approach to preventing school-based violence by building partnerships with community-based organizations to increase knowledge and understanding of BTA principles. Collaboration with the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission allowed MCSS to provide BTA training to Community Behavior Health Providers through the Maryland Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports. Partnership with experts at Maryland Coordination Analysis Center and local law enforcement BTA teams in Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, and Montgomery County have created opportunities to move toward community based prevention and intervention.

Local public school BTA leads met quarterly during the 2024-2025 school year as part of a community of practice. These meetings were used to learn from experts, share resources, and seek support from their peers. The collective expertise from the BTA leads was used to create needed resources identified by them to include three Frequently Asked Question documents for parents, and a resource portal for leads to use in support of their local implementation efforts. Meetings with 19 public school systems occurred in 2025 to gather information about local implementation practices, review local BTA data, and provide technical support.

Meetings with the final five (5) public school systems to gather this information will occur in 2026 and information obtained during all meetings will be used to customize support and provide for a standardized level of implementation across the state. Efforts to expand community partners will continue by providing training on recognizing behaviors of concerns to caregivers and other adults who work closely with students. MCSS will continue to capitalize on partnerships with local, state, and national BTA experts to develop resources and provide services.



PREPARE 2025

Established 2014

Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art §§7-1502(1), 7-1503(4)(5)

schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Pages/RES-Events.aspx



MCSS hosts annually a two day conference to provide training and resources to local school safety officials. **480** Maryland school safety partners participated in the two-day conference organized and hosted by MCSS. PREPARE 2025 occurred at the Turf Valley Resort and Conference Center in Ellicott City on July 16 & 17, 2025.

The 2025 conference theme, “School Safety at the Quarter Century,” offered **22** presentations, **three (3)** keynote speakers, and **19** concurrent breakout sessions, which included a bonus opportunity for attendees to be trained and certified in Stop the Bleed made available through the Maryland Committee on Trauma. Additionally, professional credits and in-service hours were made available to interested participants. MCSS continued to use the InEvent conference App, allowing for an efficient check-in process and a digital event schedule and engagement.

MCSS recognized **“SRO of the Year”, Corporal Kiron Harrison** of the Howard County Police Department, nominated by his colleagues, students, and community for the outstanding work he has done and continues to do. A panel consisting of members of the MCSS Advisory Board selected Corporal Harrison from 24 nominations representing 16 jurisdictions. This recognition will continue to be part of future PREPARE conferences.



ART PREPARE 2025 SHOWCASE

“Community Heroes”



Congratulations to the winners!



Students were asked to create an 8.5 x 11-inch piece of art in response to the 2025 theme “Community Heroes.” Entries were received from public, nonpublic, private, and homeschool students across the state. All entries were displayed for judging at the PREPARE conference.

The 2026 PREpare conference will be held on July 22 & 23 at the Turf Valley Resort and Conference Center. The theme will be “School Safety: A Layered Approach” keeping with 2026 efforts to reinforce this important message.



SRO & Security Personnel

Established 2018

Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art. §7-1508(b)(4)

schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Pages/RES-Training-Academy.aspx



The SRO/SSE training academy is a specialized curriculum developed and approved by the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commission (MPCTC). The curriculum is taught by MCSS staff and local subject matter experts. The training academy is conducted in seven regionally based training sessions to assist locals in meeting the legislative requirement of security officials to participate.

In 2025, updates to the curriculum in accordance with MPCTC guidelines and the legislative three-year re-evaluation mandate were made, launching Training Academy 3.0. The curriculum was refined following a review of existing content conducted by MCSS to expand upon core requirements and integrate new topics that reflect the evolving needs for school safety. The 2025 curriculum content is made available in the May 2025 publication "[School Resource Officer \(SRO\) & School Security Employee \(SSE\) Training Academy](#)". **239 new SROs and SSEs** were certified in 2025.

New for the 2024–2025 school year, MCSS developed and delivered a continuing education virtual experience for SROs and SSEs who previously participated in the training academy. This experience was **completed by 1,253 participants** statewide. MCSS intends to develop and deliver a new learning module each year in response to unique challenges impacting school safety. The 2026 topics will focus on Youth Problem Gaming and Gambling, and the Maryland Action Plan to Prevent Suicide in Schools (MAPS).

MCSS plans to develop a new Adequate Coverage Officer Training for law enforcement personnel assigned to schools without dedicated SROs. This new learning opportunity would help provide consistent, high-quality services by any law enforcement officer supporting a Maryland school.

Required Reports

All mandated reports are posted publicly on the MCSS website at [Resources - Reports, Documents, and Data](#).

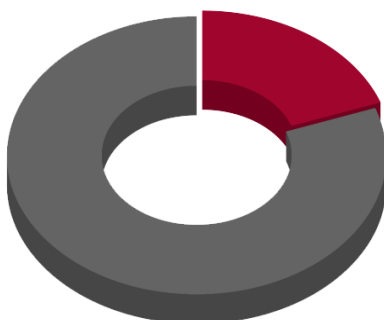
[2025 Incidents of Force Report](#)

Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art §7-1508(h)(2)

[2025 School Resource Officer - Adequate Coverage Report](#)

Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art §§7-1502(g)(18), 7-1508(e)(3)

Maryland Public Schools with Full-Time Assigned SRO



- Schools with Full-Time Assigned SRO (19.5%) 277
- Schools with Adequate Coverage (80.5%) 1145



Grant Administration

Established 2018

Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art §§7-1502(g)(24), 7-1503 (g)(7),7-1505 (b), 7-1508(g)(1)(2), 7-1510.1(c)(d)(1), 7-1512, 7-1513

schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Pages/RES-Grants.aspx



MCSS administers school safety grants to local public schools, nonpublic schools, and childcare centers as legislatively directed. Four (4) grant programs were administered in 2025, in all providing approximately **21 million dollars** to Maryland schools for their school safety efforts. The Notification of Funding Availability (NOFA) for each grant is available on our website.

Type of Grant	Amount Awarded
<p>Safe Schools Fund Grant Program Local school systems used their SSFG funds on various school safety initiatives, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing School Safety and Student Well-being • Physical Security Enhancements • School Security Personnel, Staff Development and Training • Student and Community Support 	<p>\$ 440,000</p>
<p>The Hate Crimes Grant was available to eligible entities such as local school systems, nonpublic schools, private schools, and childcare centers identified as being at risk of hate crimes. Out of 126 applications received in 2025, 102 were approved.</p>	<p>\$ 3,000,000</p>
<p>The School Resource Officer Grant is a State-funded, non-competitive grant program available to local school systems and law enforcement agencies in Maryland.</p>	<p>\$ 8,300,000</p>
<p>The School Safety Grant Program, administered by MCSS in collaboration with the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC), provides funding for school security projects.</p>	<p>\$ 9,700,000</p>

Five (5) grant programs will be administered by MCSS in 2026, to include two new grant programs.

- Available now, NEW for the 2025-2026 School Year - School Facility Mapping Grant
- Coming in September 2026 - Secure Schools Emergency Response Grant Program
- Hate Crimes Grant
- School Resource Officer Adequate Coverage Grant
- Safe Schools Fund Program

Emergency Planning

Established 2018, 2024

Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art §§7-1510(f), 7-1502(g)(15)(19)(20), COMAR 14.40.06, COMAR 13A.02.02.04



Planning for an emergency is central to effective school safety response and recovery efforts. Plans exist for all types of hazards, natural and human, that may occur at different times of day and in different locations. These plans should be reviewed and updated regularly using information gleaned from After Action Reviews, Drills, and Exercises.

Five (5) public school systems submitted a school safety evaluation summary identifying the following common physical safety concerns: access control (locks and doors), cameras, and fencing. They also identified school safety concerns related to: issues with visitor management, and communication gaps between school staff. **Fourteen (14)** systems submitted updated school emergency plans for review, representing **1,166** schools.

MCSS collects data annually from each public school system on the performance of emergency drills and information on real-world emergency responses. Data submitted for the 2024-2025 school year from all 24 LEAs indicated **4,642 total school hours** were spent engaging in emergency drills, while **529** school hours were spent responding to real-world incidents. It was reported that **516** threats were made against a public school or public school system facility during the 2024-2025 school year.

There were **1,155** total emergency responses to a public school during the 2024-2025 school year. **853** responses DID NOT interfere with the operation of school. Of the **302** responses that DID interfere with regular school operations; **211 resulted in an evacuation and 91 resulted in a lockdown. Six (6) incidents** occurred in which a public school's emergency plan failed in part, or whole, to function as anticipated during the drill.



HOLD



SECURE



LOCKDOWN



EVACUATE



SHELTER

MCSS will expand professional growth opportunities for educational leaders in the area of emergency planning in 2026. Statewide implementation of the "[I Love You Guys](#)" Foundation standard response protocols in 2026 across all jurisdictions will enable first responders, educators, students, parents, and community members to have common knowledge and understanding of emergency response protocols and procedures.



Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



Maryland
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



IACP

Lessons Learned

Established 2018

Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art §7-1510 (g)(21), COMAR 14.40.05

schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Pages/RES-CLT.aspx



Maryland public schools are required to report critical, life-threatening (CLT) incidents to MCSS. Local safety teams meet to conduct an after action review following a CLT. Through this process systems plan for ways to improve. CLT reports submitted to MCSS allow for the identification of important lessons learned to develop practical recommendations. CLT reports are summarized for the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly and made available on the MCSS website.

Twenty-five (25) CLT reports for the 2024-2025 school year provided lessons emphasizing the continuous improvement of prevention and preparedness strategies through a **multi-layered approach** to school safety. These insights shape MCSS's current and future priorities.

Priority 1: School-Based Violence Prevention and the need to focus some of MCSS efforts on integrating comprehensive threat assessment processes across all schools. After action reviews highlighted the urgency of addressing anonymous online threats and the critical importance of bystander reporting. These findings drive **Priority 2: Anonymous Reporting Systems & Bystander Reporting**, with the aim of maximizing the Safe Schools Maryland system as a primary tool for early detection.

Effective response outcomes require robust inter-agency coordination and communication through the Incident Command System and consistent staff training on emergency operations plans. These lessons informed **Priority 3: Coordinated Emergency Response & Preparedness**, which aims to optimize rapid, coordinated response through the use of standardized protocols and continuous improvement.

The increased prevalence of anonymous online threats explicitly drives **Priority 4: Digital Safety**. This requires strong relationships between law enforcement and telecommunication providers to enable rapid threat tracing, ultimately safeguarding students and school systems from digital harm through improved cybersecurity and responsible online behavior.

By prioritizing robust prevention strategies, inter-agency coordination, clear communication, consistent staff training, and proactive management of online threats, Maryland's educational environments can continue to foster safe, prepared communities.

Active Assailant “Lockdown” Drills

Established 2024

Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art §§7-1502(g)(22)(23), 7-1509

schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Pages/RES-AAEP.aspx



Emergency preparedness includes the development of plans for all types of hazards, both natural and human-caused, that could occur at different times or in various locations. The purpose of emergency exercises and training—including walkthroughs, drills, and other activities—is to provide students and staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to respond effectively in a crisis.

The [2025 Best Practice Guidelines for Active Assailant Emergency Preparedness](#) assists all Maryland schools with designing and conducting any type of emergency training or exercise in accordance with Maryland law and in a manner that supports the psychological well-being of students and faculty. Balancing the need to teach students and school staff what actions to take during an emergency with the appropriate amount of information about the emergency for context can be incredibly challenging.

Research conducted in 2025 by MCSS and the National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH) at the University of Maryland School of Medicine represented six (6) public school systems and yielded initial results that informed updates to the 2025 Guidelines. Information was provided to all Maryland stakeholders through print and digital documents as well as a virtual webinar. [The 2024-2025 School Year Technical Report](#) includes information about how the study is being implemented and comprehensive results from year one. Highlights of year one were made available through a [three page infographic](#) and shared with locals in meetings and through the monthly MCSS newsletter.

Effectiveness and Psychological Impact of Active Assailant Lockdown Drills in Maryland Schools

SY 2024-2025 Highlights



The State of Maryland launched a statewide study to understand the effectiveness and psychological impact of active assailant lockdown drills.

Voices Represented



- Schools: 62 (out of 1,422)
- Districts: 6 (out of 24)
- Students: 7,597
- School Staff: 1,054
- Parents/Caregivers: 696

Study Approach

- Four surveys developed for students, families, and school staff
- Administered online shortly after schools conducted a lockdown drill
- Data collected January-June 2025

73%

of students reported drills improved their preparedness

85%

of staff felt more prepared to respond in a real emergency

78%

of parents gained confidence in school safety procedures

Most respondents viewed drills as effective, though feedback highlighted areas for further improvement.

“Students and staff can use more training...[We] need more clarification about [different techniques] and when to do each. – Middle School Teacher

Year 2 of the study will be representative of all 24 Maryland jurisdictions and provide additional data to inform the 2026 Best Practice Guidelines. School Safety Coordinators will be provided with information specific to the schools in their jurisdiction to inform local drill and exercise practices.

Coordinated Statewide Preparedness

Established 2022

Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art §7-1502(6)

schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Pages/RES-Training-SWE.aspx



MCSS continues to strengthen Maryland's coordinated approach to school emergency preparedness through the integration of initiatives that establish consistent frameworks for planning, evaluation, and continuous improvement. Are We Ready?, Statewide Tabletop Exercises (TTX), and the After-Action Review (AAR) Tool enhance the state's capacity to respond to and recover from school emergencies.

The Statewide TTX initiative incorporates scenarios designed to test communication, coordination, and decision-making processes among LEAs, school system personnel, and local emergency response partners under simulated crisis conditions. The spring exercise focused on a complex inter- and intra-county sporting event involving multiple schools and jurisdictions; the fall exercise addressed a hazardous materials incident based on real-world events to evaluate updates to protective measures, unified command, evacuation and reunification procedures. Tools for each exercise are [available to download](#) and be used by any school (state or national) to enhance their preparedness.

The coordinated emergency response program expanded in 2025 to include an opportunity for non-public special education and private schools to participate in an exercise customized for their unique needs. The August 2025 event was a scenario prompting discussion for emergency response coordination, implementing lockdown and evacuation protocols, and post-incident recovery planning. Are We Ready? exercises and the AAR Tool provide complementary resources that help schools strengthen preparedness and evaluate response performance.



The [Are We Ready?](#) downloadable resources on the MCSS website drew **2,795 visitors** to the page in 2025, reflecting strong statewide engagement. Webpage analytics in 2025 indicate that the AAR Tool which guides schools and LEAs through structured evaluations of real incidents and exercises was accessed **3,044 times**.

MCSS will continue to refine and expand its coordinated emergency response programs. Future goals include enhancing statewide participation, integrating updated scenarios that reflect emerging threats, and increasing alignment between public and non-public school preparedness efforts. MCSS remains committed to fostering a unified, data-driven approach to school safety and emergency management across Maryland through these initiatives.

Student Voice

Established 2020

schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Pages/RES-Students.aspx



Students are a key partner in school safety. MCSS encourages schools to develop methods for engaging students to identify school safety gaps and determine solutions that positively impact the whole community. The Maryland Association of Student Councils appoints two Maryland high school students to join the MCSS governance structure, representing students in school safety efforts.

The Student Advocate for School Safety (SASS) Program continued to provide MCSS with a group of student representatives from across the state to provide feedback and recommendations on initiatives in 2025. Students provided valuable feedback during the development of the lockdown drill student survey that helped to further clarify and refine the final survey for distribution. These students were also instrumental in helping to share with their peers the value of completing the survey.



SASS leaders were provided the opportunity to present information on the influence of digital media (social media, gaming, online chat and Artificial Intelligence) in their lives to Maryland school executives and behavior health professionals. A student panel recorded a podcast episode related to their perspective on lockdown drills for

the new **MCSS Prepare Podcast** released in November 2025. Additionally, Advisory Board student member, **Zaria Naqvi** has been serving as an MCSS intern supporting efforts related to weapon detection systems and requirements defined in House Bill 782 from the 2025 legislative session.



SASS members are energized and enthusiastic students who want to positively influence school safety efforts throughout the State of Maryland. Student voice panels will be a regular part of the Prepare podcast series in 2026 with one full series focused on the importance of student voice and ways schools should be engaging students in school safety solutions. MCSS will continue to look for opportunities to elevate student voice at the local, state, and national level.



A Comprehensive Approach

Established 2024

<https://bit.ly/MCSSLayeredApproach>

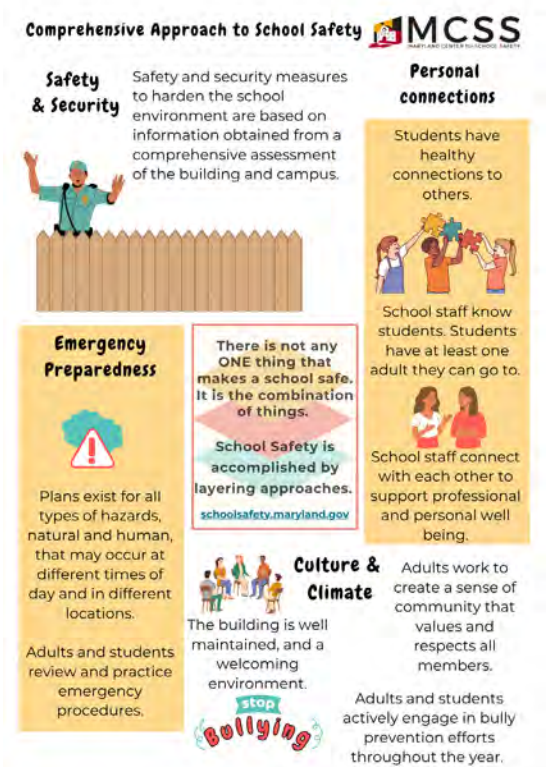


There is no one single thing that makes a school safe, rather it is the combination of things. School safety is accomplished by layering approaches. A multi-layered approach is essential to comprehensive school safety. This layered approach combines several elements, including safety and security measures to harden the school environment, emergency preparedness activities, a positive school culture and climate, and strong personal connections among students and staff.

The use of a layered or comprehensive approach to school safety is something that MCSS has promoted through the years. Efforts to further clarify for Maryland stakeholders the specific layers and approaches occurred in 2025 with the publication of a one-page infographic and a more detailed tri-fold brochure. Each document was distributed through the monthly MCSS newsletter, at the summer conference, and is available online.

An examination of existing MCSS programs and services through this lens will inform the expansion of certain efforts and partnerships to reinforce the importance of each layer. Visual icons to represent each layer have been embedded in this Annual Report to increase transparency and agency accountability to this end.

In 2026, schools and systems in Maryland will be provided with additional resources that will encourage them to evaluate their local allocation of resources (money, time, human capital) and efforts (programs, services) allowing them to make informed decisions about future allocation of resources in a comprehensive manner.



Handle with Care

Established with MCSS & MSDE 2025

Handlewithcaremd.org



Handle with Care is a partnership between schools and law enforcement designed to support students who may have experienced trauma outside of school. Through a confidential notification, school personnel directly involved with the student are notified to allow them to handle the student with particular care being mindful of the likelihood that their affect and behavior may be different because of the experience.

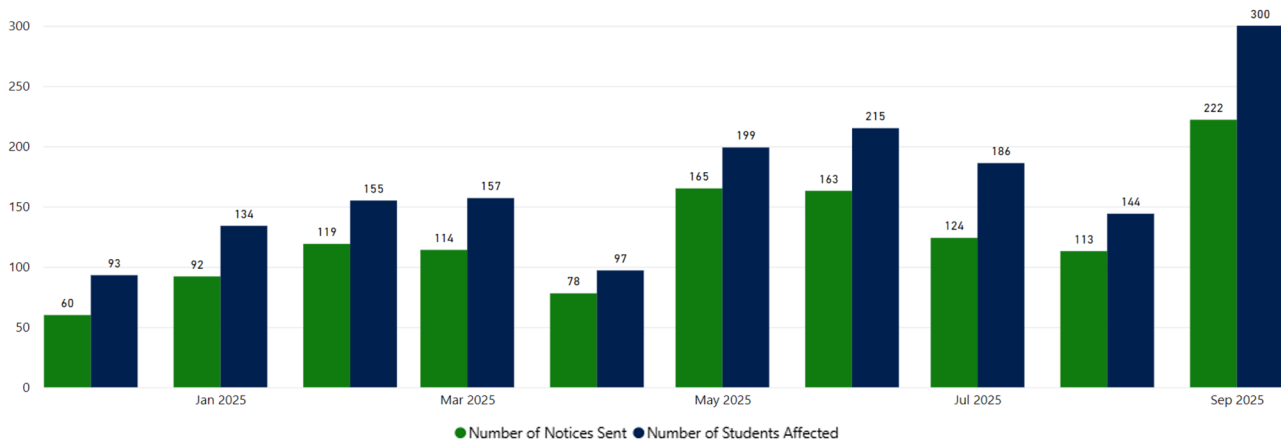
In 2025 the Handle with Care program became a joint effort between the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and MCSS. A centralized data collection system was set up to collect just the number of Handle with Care referrals by jurisdiction; no personally identifiable information is collected by the system. Staff from MSDE and MCSS engaged directly with all jurisdictions as part of the start up to provide training and encourage participation in the program. A Handle with Care webpage was created to provide information about the program and trauma responsive strategies for law enforcement and school personnel.

Currently **20** local jurisdiction participate and report data to the centralized data base during the 2024-2025 school year. Data from December, 2024 through September, 2025 indicated **1,397** notices sent to schools from law enforcement impacting **1,888** students.



HANDLE WITH CARE MARYLAND
PROTECT • HEAL • THRIVE

Number of Notices Sent and Number of Students Affected by Select Month/Year Reporting



The Handle with Care program will focus efforts in 2026 on expanding to all 24 jurisdictions. Training and technical support will be customized to meet the unique implementation needs of local public school systems.

Transportation Safety

Established 2020

Md. Ann. Code. Ed. Art. §7-1502(7)

schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Pages/RES-Topics.aspx



MCSS is directed to provide safety information on traveling to and from school to parents and students twice a year, which includes strategies for ensuring personal safety. Efforts prior to 2025 have focused on the distribution of print and digital resources related to the rules of the road for drivers when encountering a school bus transporting students.

Maryland STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PARENTS - KNOW THE LAW

Incidents of parents trying to board school buses in Maryland are on the rise. While reasons for these unauthorized boarding attempts vary, they always endanger students. School buses are an extension of school and are meant to be safe spaces. Bus drivers are trained in safety protocols that include not allowing parents to board.

MARYLAND LAWS ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

MARYLAND TRANSPORTATION LAW (§16-816) WHO CAN RIDE A SCHOOL BUS?
School bus drivers are not allowed to let anyone who is not a student or a school employee board or ride the bus. This rule is in place to ensure the safety of students. Exceptions may apply in specific situations, as outlined by the law.

MARYLAND EDUCATION LAW (§26-104) PROTECTING SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS
It is a crime to interfere with, disrupt, or obstruct a school bus driver while they are doing their job.

CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATING THIS LAW
Anyone who disrupts a school bus driver's duties can face serious penalties, including:
• a fine of up to \$1,000,
• up to 90 days in jail,
• or both.

THESE LAWS AIM TO ENSURE STUDENT SAFETY DURING SCHOOL COMMUTES AND ALLOW BUS DRIVERS TO PERFORM THEIR DUTIES WITHOUT DISTRACTIONS. PARENTS CAN ASSIST BY REINFORCING BUS RULES AND RESPECTING BUS DRIVERS' RESPONSIBILITIES.

BEST PRACTICES

- For the safety and security of all children, only authorized personnel and students are permitted on the bus.
- To report school bus related concerns contact the school's administration.
- If you need to speak with the driver, approach the driver's side window. Instead of the bus's service door. For everyone's safety, the bus's flashing lights will remain activated during this time.
- Keep conversations with the driver brief to ensure traffic flows smoothly and routes are not delayed.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Evacuating the bus during an emergency is the Driver's decision. You must evaluate where students will be the safest. If the safety threat is inside of the bus, evacuation may be the safest option. If the safety threat is outside, decide if leaving the bus is safer than remaining onboard.

- Choose a safe assembly point that is at least 100 ft from the bus.
- Call 911 and your supervisor to request emergency assistance.
- Instruct students to the safe assembly point and to wait for further instructions.
- Be attentive and aware of your surroundings. Track evacuation progress by ensuring all students have exited the bus and have made it to the assembly point.

Tips for Students

Waiting for the bus to arrive:

- Be cautious and be patient. The bus stop is not a place to run or play. Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before moving toward the bus.
- Cross in FRONT of the bus to stay visible. If you can see the driver they can see you too.
- Stay alert and look both ways when crossing in front of the bus.

When getting on and off of the bus:

- Wait for the bus to be fully stopped before getting up from the seat.
- Carry your backpack in front of you as you walk down the aisle.
- Use the handrail as you step down.

When riding on a bus:

- Find your seat and stay seated, facing forward, for the entire trip.
- Place and hold your backpack in your lap.
- Talk quietly and follow all directions given so the driver can focus on the road.
- Keep your body and personal items inside the bus; never stick your arm or your head out of the window or throw things out the window.
- Keep your feet and legs in the seat area so the aisle stays clear.
- Help your driver keep the bus neat and clean.

MCSS
MARYLAND CENTER FOR SCHOOL SAFETY

In 2025, several new resources were developed and distributed through the monthly newsletter and on social media in response to identified areas of need.

MCSS and the Maryland State Department of Education collaborated to create an [infographic for parents](#) to inform about the laws regarding boarding a bus and appropriate methods of communicating with the driver or reporting a concern.

Bus drivers encounter situations that require a unique set of emergency procedures. A [two page infographic](#) was designed that includes strategies to prevent and respond to a variety of emergency situations. Information related to emergency evacuations, managing extreme behaviors on the bus, and driver self-care were included.

Students travel to school in many different ways. A [two-page infographic](#) was created with tips for students traveling to school by bus, walking, or riding a bike.

In 2026, MCSS will once again partner with the Maryland Department of Transportation, Motor Vehicle Administration, Highway Safety Office (MDOT MVA HSO) to conduct the next [Maryland Schools Traffic Safety Study](#). This upcoming study will review school-based crash data from **2021 to 2025**. The

previous study, which serves as the foundation for this ongoing work, analyzed vehicular crashes that occurred within a one-mile radius of the 1,449 public schools in service during the 2016 to 2020 study period.

Integrated Preparedness Plan

Established 2022
Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art §7-1502(6)



The MCSS Integrated Preparedness Plan (IPP) is intended to coordinate statewide preparedness efforts to make it more likely that Maryland state agencies will respond to a school-based incident in the most comprehensive, effective, and efficient manner. Maryland has a substantial network of law enforcement agencies, emergency services, state agencies, educational institutions, and other relevant school safety partners at all levels of government, in the private sector, and non-profit organizations. This network of partners includes community groups and individual citizens who contribute to schools' emergency preparedness across the state. The IPP was developed to leverage all partners in a coordinated way to mitigate risks and prepare for future emergency incidents impacting Maryland schools.

The 2025 plan is intended to be for a three-year period. It was developed strategically with MCSS serving as the lead agency, however, goals within the IPP are not the sole responsibility of MCSS, rather shared by the whole Maryland community of partners. In an effort to engage each partner agency MCSS conducted individual meetings with twelve (12) state partner agencies to learn more about their existing priorities and efforts that could be leveraged in support of school safety. Notes from these meetings were collated and used to guide a coordinated discussion with a lead person from each agency at attending in-person workshop in June. The outcome of this workshop identified the following priorities and activities for the next 3 years.

1. Strategize ways to elevate school safety as a priority within each partner agency.
2. Develop school-based violence prevention strategies.
3. Expand planning and training opportunities that support safe schools to a wider audience.
4. Support school systems in emergency preparedness efforts.
5. Promote state-level coordination efforts during steady state and in response to an emergency.



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MCSS Committee Representation

MCSS staff are active members of state and national committees advocating on behalf of school safety for Maryland students and educators.

- Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention, Member
 - Committee on Addressing Hate Crime in Schools, Co-chair
- Violent Extremism Prevention Task Force (VEPTF), Member
- Education Health Community of Practice, Member
- Maryland Active Assailant Interdisciplinary Work Group (AAIWG), Member
- National School Safety Alliance, Member
- School Safety Tiplines National Workgroup, Member
- Student Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee (SSWAC), Member
- Maryland Equitable Justice Collaborative, Support
- Queen Anne's County Drug-Free Coalition, Member
- Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention Interagency Convening, Member



MCSS Communication and Engagement

MCSS actively partners with various organizations, participating in conferences, training, exhibits, and events, to engage the community and promote school safety programs. MCSS staff engaged with the following audiences through an exhibit.

- Maryland Association of Counties (MaCo)
- Maryland Municipal League (MML)
- Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC)
- Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)
- Maryland State Firefighters Association (MSFA)
- Maryland Mental Health First Aid Instructors Summit
- Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP)
- Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)
- Maryland Association of School-Based Healthcare
- National School Social Workers Conference
- National Student Safety and Security Conference
- Safe Schools Maryland Trainings
- Teach Maryland Conference
- Internet Safety for Middle School Students
- Danger of Devices training
- Maryland D.A.R.E. Officer's In-Service Training
- Cumberland Police Youth Summer Camp
- Professional Development Trainings
- Maryland School Bus Summer Conference
- AIMS CFO/Business Officers for Risk Management Programs
- Baltimore County Public Safety Day
- Montgomery County Police Outreach
- Back to School Events
- Cecil County DES Community Safety Day

Additionally, MCSS has partnered with the **Baltimore Hunger Project** (BHP) on an annual basis to support their efforts to mitigate food insecurities for Maryland students by collecting nonperishable food items and hosting packing sessions to assemble weekend food bags with notes of encouragement for students, which will be distributed by BHP and its partners.

Communication and Engagement

 <p>Safeschoolsmd 1,038 followers</p>	 <p>Safeschoolsmd 1,810 followers</p>
 <p>Safeschoolsmd 415 followers</p>	<p>govDELIVERY 2,901 subscribers</p>

2025 Webpage Snapshot



34,000
UNIQUE VISITORS

247,270
VISITS TO PAGE

:54
Average engagement time per user



Landing Page	# visitors	# visits	Go forward
MCSS Home	9,427	47,405	46.90%
Report a Tip	11,359	47,041	62.60%
MCSS Grants	2,262	17,180	17%
Tabletop Exercises	2,763	14,897	48.70%
Training	1,497	7,256	20.10%
Hate Crimes Grant	1,112	6,828	38.10%
Conference	1,499	7,682	44.70%

HOW VISITORS SEARCH FOR THE PAGE



Go directly	18,000
Google search	10,000
From LEA webpage	1,555
Bing search	734
Facebook	546

SEE IT, HEAR IT, REPORT IT TO SAFE SCHOOLS MARYLAND

↓ EASY WAYS TO REPORT ↓



Visit the website

SafeSchoolsMD.org



Call to report

1-833-MD-B-SAFE



Report directly on the app

**Download the App,
Safe Schools MD**

REPORT ON:

- Bullying
- Threats
- Mental Health Crisis
- Drug Activity
- Violence
- Weapons
- Harassment
- Building Safety
- School Bus Safety



**ALWAYS ANONYMOUS.
ALWAYS AVAILABLE.**



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School Safety Subcabinet

The Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018 (Senate Bill 1265), which was signed into law 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.

The School Safety Subcabinet provides virtual and hybrid public meetings streamed live for public viewing.

2024-2025 Subcabinet Members



Dr. Carey Wright
Chair, State
Superintendent of
Schools



Anthony G. Brown
Attorney General
of Maryland



Colonel Michael Jackson
Superintendent of State
Police



Dr. Meena Seshamani
Secretary of Health



Carol A. Beatty
Secretary of Disabilities



Alex Donahue
Executive Director of the
Interagency Commission
on School Construction

Recordings of School Safety Subcabinet meetings can be found and viewed at SchoolSafety.Maryland.gov.

School Safety Advisory Board

The Advisory Board serves as counsel to the School Safety Subcabinet. The Advisory Board represents a number of agencies and stakeholder groups, and they are as follows:

2024-2025 Advisory Board Members

Dr. Maria Navarro, Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland

Zaria Naqvi, Maryland Association of Student Councils

Eric Ebersole, Maryland House of Delegates

Dr. Brittany Patterson
Representative of the Center for School Mental Health a

Karin Bailey, Maryland Association of Boards of Education

Megan Berger, Disability Rights Maryland

Dr. Kellie Anderson, Coordinator of Psychological Services, Anne Arundel County Public Schools

Joseph Cormier, Parent of a Child with Disabilities

Pamela Gaddy, Maryland State Education Association

Thomas E. Alban, Representative of a Nonpublic School

Jacquetta Lavon Jacobs, Parent of a Public School Student

Gina R. James, Representative of a Nonpublic Special Education School

Natalie Miller, Secretary's Designee, Department of Human Services

Michael Brown, Representative of School Principals, **Chair**

Jennifer Wimbrow-Jenkins
Designee, Secretary Department of Juvenile Services

Patrick Graveline, Director of Special Education, Washington County Public Schools

Sheriff Matthew Crisafulli, Maryland Sheriffs' Association

Leigh Weihs, MPH, CRNP Maryland Assembly on School-Based Health

Chief Paul Kifer, Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Carol Ellen Johnson, Representative of School Bus Drivers

Laurel Moody, Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems

Sgt. Kevin Britt, Representative of SROs appointed by the Maryland Association of School Resource Officers

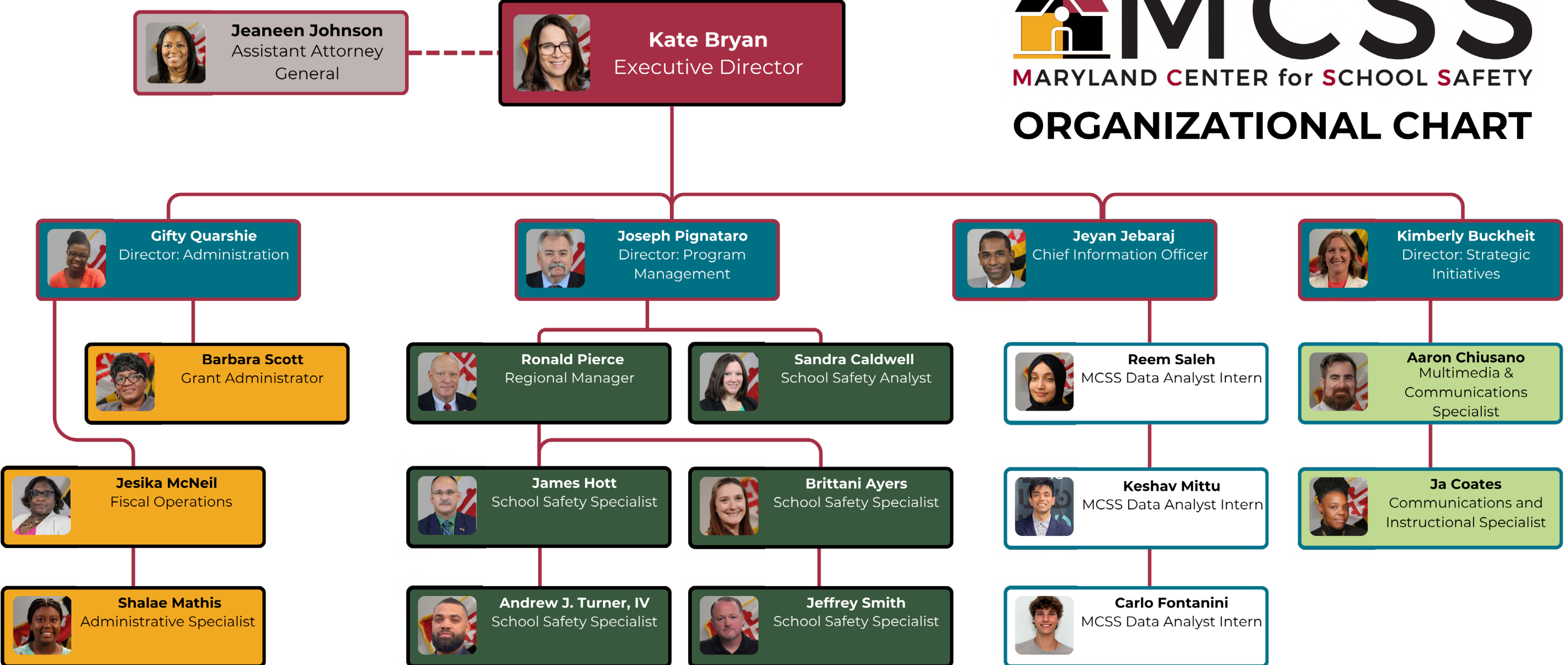
David Engel, Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center

Recordings of School Safety Advisory Board meetings can be found and viewed at SchoolSafety.Maryland.gov.



MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



PREPARE 2026

PLAN REFLECT EDUCATE

Join us for **PREPARE 2026**,
School Safety: A Layered Approach.

July 22nd-23rd, 2026
Turf Valley, Ellicott City MD

