

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY



ANNUAL REPORT

2024



*To promote and enhance
safe school communities.*



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Executive Summary

The Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) promotes a Statewide coordinated approach to safer schools through the collaboration among schools, students, educators, staff, parents, behavioral health practitioners, and law enforcement partners. This approach, combined with technical assistance, training, grants, and other resources provided to public, nonpublic special education, and private PK-12 schools throughout Maryland, serves as a foundation for Maryland's diverse schools to better identify and address the needs and concerns of our students. Additionally, through a review of major incidents--in Maryland and nationwide--MCSS identifies and shares best practices and lessons learned with local partners. In the process, we are working toward creating inclusive educational environments free from fear, harm, trauma, and unnecessary hardship.

The following **2024 Maryland Center for School Safety Annual Report** is submitted by the School Safety Subcabinet in compliance with Md. Ann. Code Ed. Art. § 7-1503(h). This report aims to deliver important data and insights into the ongoing school safety efforts of MCSS.

While securing entrances and developing emergency plans are important aspects of school safety, it is essential to understand that safe learning environments require communication, coordination, and collaboration across various organizations. Equally, creating safe learning environments is not just the responsibility of educators and administrators. It requires the collective effort of local, state, and federal officials, students, parents, staff, and community members to care about the learning experience, being vigilant, and knowing how to support safe schools. By working together, we can make schools a safe place for students to learn and educators to teach.

MCSS KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2024

SRO/SSE Training Academy

The SRO/SSE Training Academy, established by the Safe to Learn Act, has certified over 1,800 individuals since 2019. This year alone, the team has trained 250 new SROs/SSEs. To maintain the highest standards of school safety, we've launched annual in-service training for over 1,300 professionals state-wide.



Behavior Threat Assessment

2024 efforts included the expansion of the 2023 BTA Implementation Guide to address internal and other adult threats. State and National experts convened to inform this new document, published in 2024.



Conference

The number and diversity of attendees at the 2024 school safety conference was an exciting accomplishment. Attendees came from public, nonpublic and private schools with equal representation of student support staff, school leaders, parents, emergency responders and law enforcement officers.



State Coordination

In 2024, activities were undertaken to increase the likelihood that Maryland state and local agencies will respond quickly, in a coordinated manner, and with a range of resources to support a local school community in the event of an emergency incident. MCSS led this preparedness effort by engaging with local school leaders and emergency response stakeholders to practice emergency response planning and procedures through discussion-based exercises.



Technical Assistance

The constant engagement of MCSS staff with school safety partners being available to listen, learn, and problem solve with locals as they encounter ever changing school safety needs, increases the reputation of MCSS as an action oriented agency. When MCSS staff can not directly meet a need, they work to find a resource that can, thus continuing to build trust and respect with local partners.



Best Practice Active Assailant Guidelines

Best Practice Guidelines for Active Assailant Emergency Preparedness Exercises and Training were released to the public in 2024 and will serve as a resource to increase positive student and staff outcomes following training and drills.



MCSS PRIORITIES 2025

Behavior Threat Assessment

Increasing knowledge and skills of Maryland public schools Behavioral Threat Assessment teams to utilize a public health-informed approach that includes community-based organizations and resources as they work to identify resources and supports for individuals who may be on a pathway to violence.



Safe Schools Maryland Anonymous Reporting System

Expanding awareness and access to Maryland's anonymous school safety tipline, Safe Schools Maryland (SSMD), through communication and outreach. Empowering bystanders to come forward with information about behaviors of concerns and providing school officials with the knowledge and skills to appropriately respond to reports.

Maryland Coordinated Emergency Response

Coordinating emergency response and recovery planning, training, and exercises across State agencies in an effort to support a rapid and coordinated response to a school-based incident in all jurisdictions. MCSS will continue to collaborate with key Departments including Emergency Management, State Police, Disabilities, and Education, as well as other local and State agencies to develop and test a coordinated school-based emergency response plan.

School Resource Officer and School Security Employee Training Academy 3.0

An updated SRO/SSE Training Academy curriculum developed following a thorough review and re-evaluation as per MPCTC guidelines will be implemented in 2025. The updated curriculum includes new content added by condensing previous material in addition to improving upon core requirements.

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY



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The Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) was established in 2013 through House Bill 453. The Safe to Learn Act of 2018 expanded MCSS’s responsibilities, set school safety standards, required training for school resource officers, and mandated behavioral assessment teams for at-risk students.

Required Reports 7

The Safe to Learn Act of 2018 directs MCSS to collect data and publish reports to inform legislators, the Governor, and the Maryland public on school safety topics. MCSS submitted and published each required report during 2024 on time. This section serves as an overview and link to each required report.

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The Safe to Learn Act 2018 directs MCSS to administer grants that support local school safety efforts. MCSS administered five (5) grants during 2024 that totaled over twenty million dollars. This section provides details for each grant administered.

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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 2024 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 2024.

Engagement and Partnerships 38

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 2024.

Administration..... 45

This section provides 2024 information regarding the School Safety Subcabinet, Subcabinet Advisory Board, and MCSS personnel.

Legislation and Regulations

MCSS was established in 2013, [House Bill 453 \(Chapter 372\)](#), as an independent unit of State government. In 2018, the Maryland [Safe to Learn Act of 2018, Senate Bill 1265 \(Chapter 30\)](#), was signed into law. This legislation increased responsibilities and funding for MCSS and local school systems, established stringent statewide school safety standards, mandated standardized training and certification for all school resource officers, and required each school system to develop behavioral assessment teams to identify and intervene with students who may pose a safety risk.

In order for MCSS, public school systems, and local law enforcement officials to fulfill their obligations under the Safe to Learn Act, the School Safety Subcabinet has since adopted several regulations to provide better clarification for mandated activities. These include:

Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)

14.40.04 - Certification and Training for School Security Employees and School Resource Officers

The Subcabinet promulgated COMAR 14.40.04 in 2019. In 2023, those regulations were amended to provide additional clarification and better define various school safety roles. The amended regulation also allows MCSS to make adjustments to the School Resource Officer and Security Employee training, without the need for future regulatory changes.

14.40.05 - Critical, Life-Threatening Incidents

This regulation sets a standardized definition of “critical, life-threatening incident” and “school grounds”. It also provides standardized time-frames for all local school systems and ensures the timely reporting and action necessary to assist with improving school safety in the aftermath of an event.



14.40.06 - Data Collection and Reporting

This regulation went into effect on September 2, 2024. It sets specific deadlines for local school system reports and data collection required under the Safe to Learn Act, including evaluations of public school facilities and the review and update of school emergency plans.

NOTE: All public reports are available on our website. School emergency plans, school facility evaluation/assessments, digital school maps, and school resource officer and adequate coverage plans are protected from public disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act, Gen. Prov. §4-314.1(a).

Required Reports

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

Incidents of Force Report

Ed. Art. § 7-1508(h)(2)

Annually, MCSS shall submit a report on the data on incidents of use of force between any school resource officer (SRO) or school security employee (SSE) and a student, while an SRO or SSE is carrying out their duties.

Critical Life-Threatening Incident Reports

Ed. Art. §7-1510(g)

COMAR 14.40.05

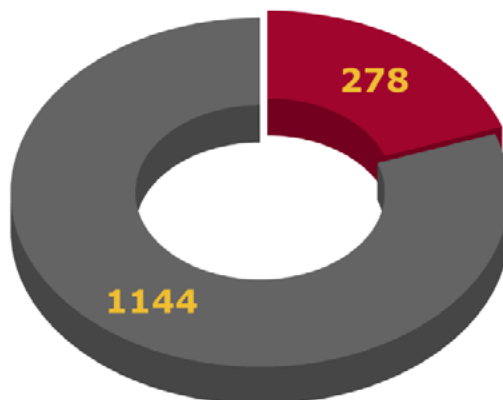
Each Local Education Agency (LEA) is required to conduct an after action review meeting following a critical, life-threatening (CLT) incident and submit a report to MCSS. MCSS is required to submit a summary of lessons learned and recommendations to the Governor and Maryland General Assembly.

School Resource Officer - Adequate Coverage Report

Ed. Art. § 7-1502(g)(18) and § 7-1508(e)(3)

Annually, MCSS shall provide the Governor and General Assembly with a summary of the SRO and adequate law enforcement coverage¹ that each LEA shares with MCSS at the start of the school year. Information collected in August 2024 indicates that 278 schools have a full time SRO, a decrease of 10 schools from 2023, while 1,144 Maryland public schools are provided adequate law enforcement coverage through other means.

Maryland Public Schools with Full-Time Assigned SRO



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

¹ Each LEA's report must include the public schools in the LEA's jurisdiction that have a full-time SRO assigned to the school; and, if a public school in the LEA's jurisdiction is not assigned a full-time SRO, the adequate local law enforcement coverage that will be provided to the public school.

Grants

MCSS FY2024 Grants Update

The Maryland Center for School Safety continues to provide school safety grants to local school systems, nonpublic schools, and childcare centers within the State of Maryland, in accordance with the Safe to Learn Act of 2018. In FY2024, MCSS administered five different school safety grants. They include the Safe Schools Fund Grant (SSFG), the SRO Adequate Coverage Grant, the School Safety Evaluation Grant (SSEG), the Hate Crimes Grant (HCG), and the School Safety Grant Program (SSGP); with the latter administered in coordination with the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC). In all, MCSS awarded approximately **twenty-one million dollars** in school safety grants in FY2024. Below is a list of all five grants and the approximate amount that was awarded under each grant:

Type of Grant	Amount Awarded
School Safety Grant Program (SSGP)	\$9,800,000
School Resource Officer (SRO) Grant	\$6,300,000
Hate Crimes Grant (HCG)	\$3,000,000
School Safety Evaluation Grant	\$1,400,000
Safe Schools Fund Grant (SSFG)	\$497,000

School Safety Grant Program (SSGP)

MCSS administers the School Safety Grant Program on behalf of and in coordination with the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC). This funding provides grants to local education agencies and the Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) to fund school security projects. MD. Code Ann., Educ. §5-317 requires the Governor to provide an annual allocation of \$10.0M for the program. Eligible projects include most safety and security improvements to the school facilities located in each of the twenty-four jurisdictions. Additional information is available in the [FY2024 Notification of Funding Availability \(NOFA\)](#).

MCSS FY2024 Grants Update Cont.

School Resource Officer/Adequate Coverage Grant

Approximately \$6.3M in SRO grant funding was awarded to local school systems and local law enforcement agencies in FY2024. The SRO/Adequate Coverage Grant funds were used to pay for:

- Salaries for officers assigned as full-time school resource officers (SROs);
- Overtime pay for officers providing adequate coverage;
- Other relevant school safety training designed for SROs; and
- Needed equipment.

The SRO Adequate Coverage Grant is a non-competitive, State-funded grant program designed for local school systems and law enforcement agencies located within the State of Maryland. During the 2024 legislative session, Senate Bill 1077 was established to allow the use of the SRO Grant to cover the salaries of School Security Employees (SSEs). This eligibility was included in the FY2025 SRO Adequate Coverage Grant rollout.

School Safety Evaluation Grant

In FY2024, MCSS administered the School Safety Evaluation grant as a one time grant opportunity for local school systems to conduct a school safety evaluation or address gaps that were identified in a previous evaluation, accordingly. The SSEG was first made available in FY2019. Under Md. Code Ann., Education Article §7-1510, local school systems are required to conduct safety evaluations regularly to:

- Identify and, if necessary, develop solutions for physical safety concerns, including issues with building security; and
- Identify and evaluate any patterns of safety concerns on school property or at school-sponsored events.

Three million dollars was appropriated in FY2024 specifically for public school systems to perform facility assessments; re-evaluate and update their existing safety evaluation tool, policy, or procedures; train staff on the policy, procedures, and use of the tool; acquire software for digital mapping; test communication and video equipment; and overall, implement a sustainable school safety evaluation process that enables the school systems to complete evaluations on all their schools on a regular basis.

Additional information is available in the [FY2024 Notification of Funding Availability \(NOFA\)](#).

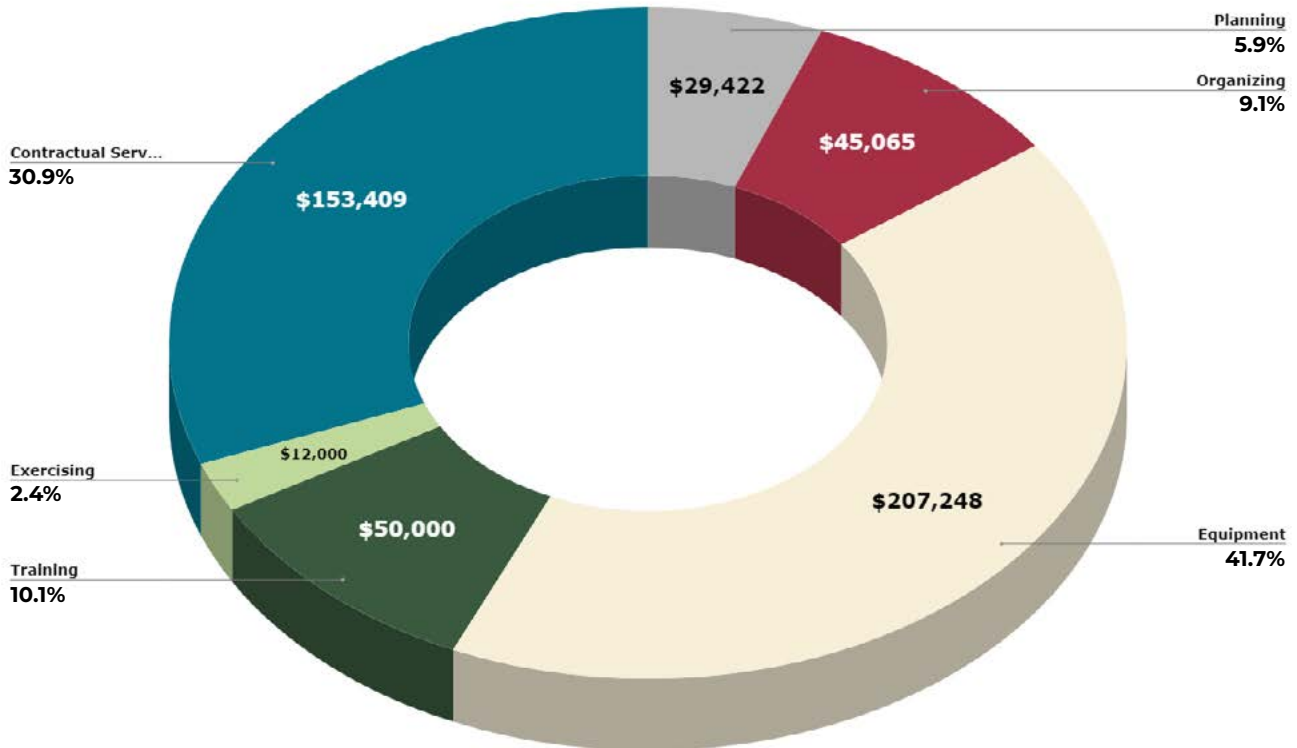
MCSS FY2024 Grants Update Cont.

Safe Schools Fund Grant (SSFG)

Six hundred thousand dollars was appropriated in FY2024 for the Safe Schools Fund Grant (SSFG) program. Approximately \$497,000 in grant funding was awarded to local school systems within the state of Maryland. The grant funds were used for various school safety initiatives as provided under [§7-1512\(f\)\(1-10\)](#). Some examples of how systems used the funding in FY2024 includes:

- Installing CCTV cameras, emergency communication devices, and other safety and security equipment in and around school facilities;
- Providing comprehensive wellness programming for at-risk students;
- Installing exterior lighting control systems to address the issue of trespassing and vandalism on school grounds;
- Using the funds to supplement the salaries of school security employees;
- Training of school staff on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs, mental health awareness programs, and other wrap-around services;
- Securing software to monitor student technology use on school-issued equipment;
- Providing outreach to the broader school community to improve school safety;
- Providing mental health services for students and their families; and
- Conducting and training teams to conduct school safety assessments.

FY2024 Safe Schools Fund Grant - Use of Funds



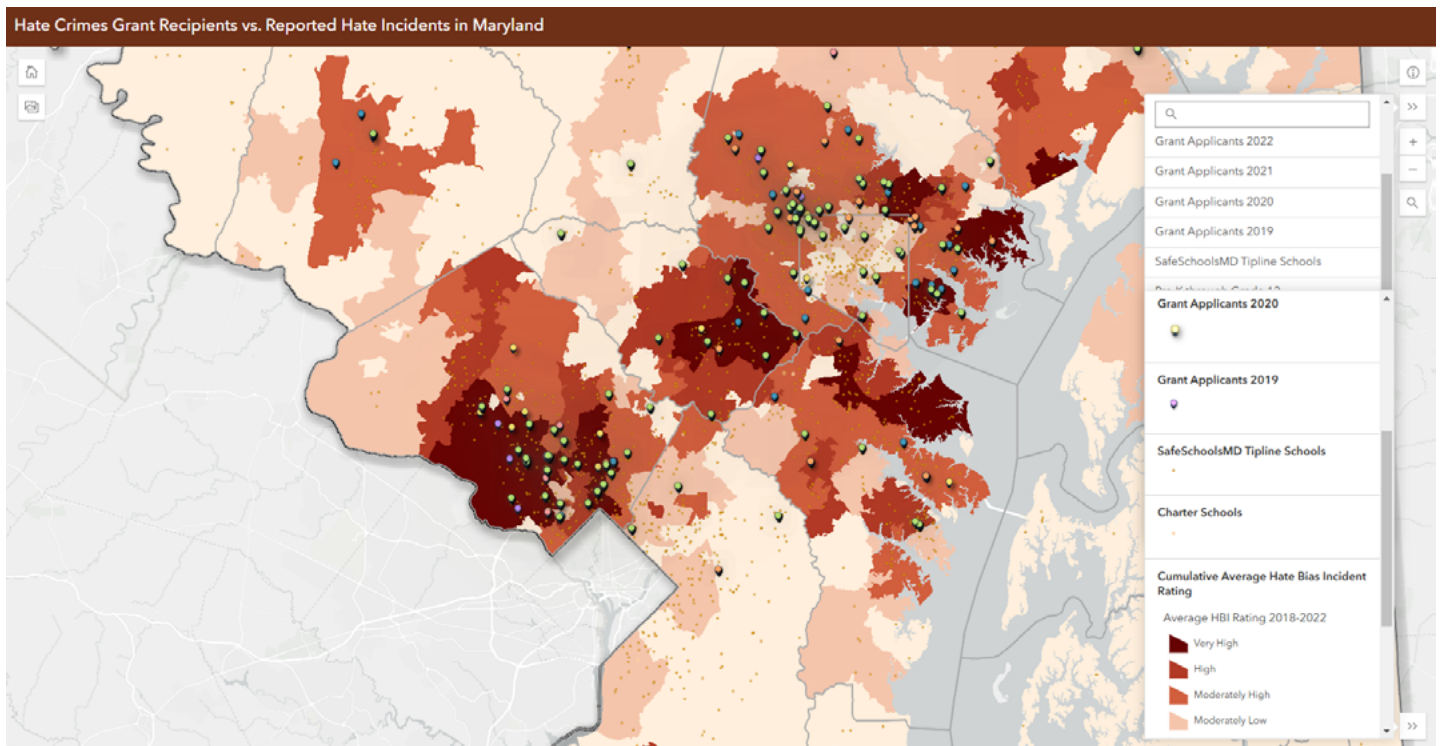
MCSS FY2024 Grants Update Cont.

Hate Crimes Grant (HCG)

In FY2024, MCSS awarded the full \$3.0M that was appropriated for the Hate Crimes Grant. Eligible entities include local school systems, nonpublic special education schools, private schools, and childcare centers determined to be at risk of hate crimes. In all, MCSS received one hundred thirteen (113) applications. Ninety-one (91) applications were approved with funding used on various school safety projects that include:

- Security-related training;
- Additional Security personnel;
- Security-related equipment;
- Security-related technology;
- Door hardening; and
- Other security-related facility upgrades.

A comparison of MCSS Hate Crimes Grant awards to reported hate incidents within Maryland reveals a strong correlation between grant distribution and areas affected by hate incidents.



MCSS FY2024 Grants Update Cont.

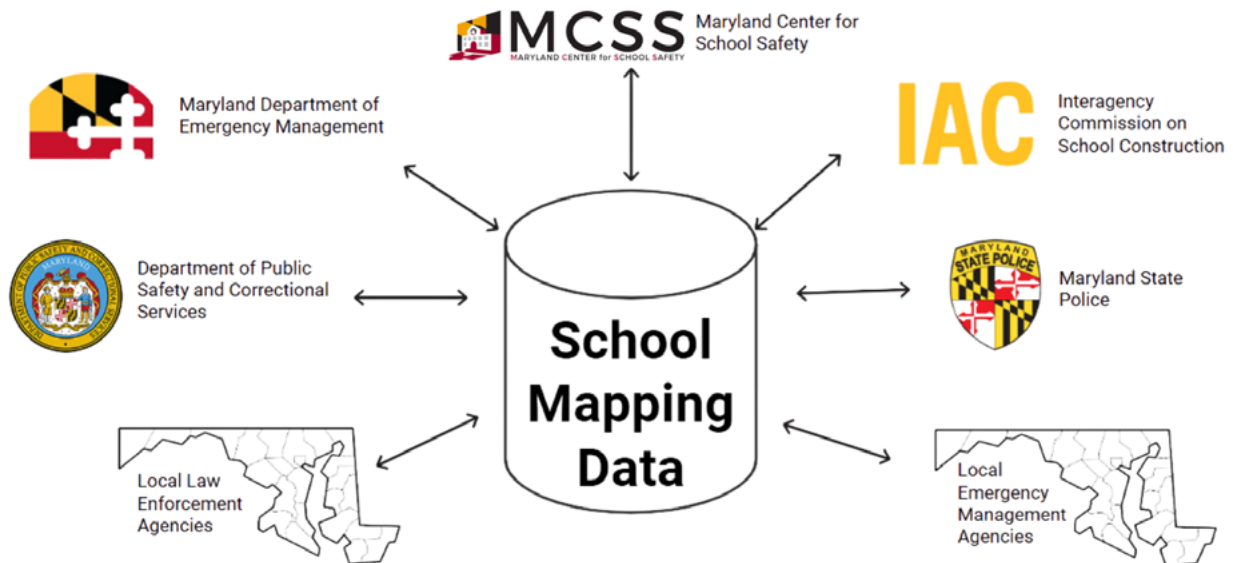
MCSS FY2026 Grants Outlook

MCSS rolled out its primary portfolio of grants in FY2025, including the Safe Schools Fund Grant (SSFG), the SRO Adequate Coverage Grant, and the Hate Crimes Grant (HCG). MCSS also continued its collaboration with the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) to administer the School Safety Grant Program (SSGP) in FY2025.

Additionally, the 2024 legislative session saw an addition of two new programs to MCSS portfolio of grants. Senate Bill 540 established the School Mapping Data Program, which was proposed to take effect within the next fiscal year. Likewise, House Bill 1167 established the Secure Schools Emergency Response Grant Program, which is due to take effect on or before September 1, 2026.

School Mapping Data Program:

Senate Bill 540 (2024 Md. Laws, Ch. 167) established the School Mapping Data Program within MCSS. Pursuant to Education Article §7-1510.1, the School Mapping Data Program allows MCSS to establish a grant program that provides funding for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to produce school mapping data for each public school, including public charter schools; while directing the Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC) to adopt uniform standards for the mapping of physical attributes of public schools. MCSS is working closely with IAC and many other state and local partners to implement both the standards and the grant program. Both the mapping standards, and the grant program are expected to be released at the beginning of FY26.



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Emergency Preparedness Planning

Preparing for an emergency is a continual process of activities, which never ends. MCSS assists public, nonpublic, and private schools in their efforts to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters of all types. These processes build emergency preparedness by collaboratively evaluating school environments and creating and testing school emergency plans.

This year, COMAR 14.40.06 was approved by the School Safety Subcabinet. This new regulation on data collection stipulates the dates each year that all reports from public school systems are due to the Center and specifies that school systems need to submit school emergency plans to the Center for review at least every two years. It further stipulates that school systems must submit an aggregated summary of school safety evaluations done at each school at least every two years.

School Safety Evaluations

In the 2023-2024 school year, **nine (9) local school systems submitted an evaluation summary**. These summaries found the need for additional staff training on policies regarding securing doors, as well as physical safety concerns about gaps in communications, both internally through school PA systems, and communication challenges between schools and public safety.

Additionally, MCSS provided technical assistance to seven (7) private schools that were seeking to conduct safety evaluations of their schools.

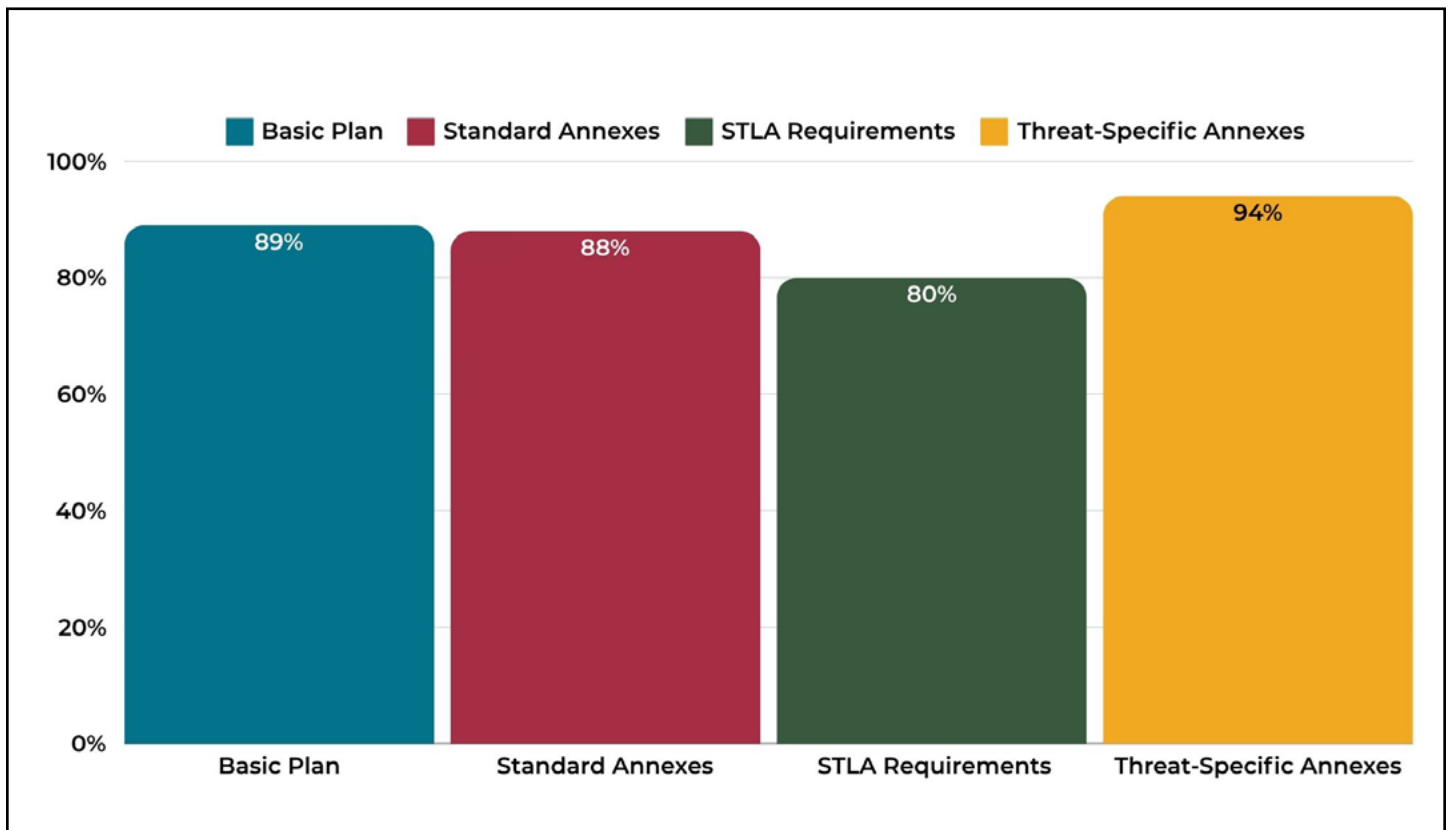
In addition to the recent creation of the [CDC/MCSS CPTED School Safety Evaluation Tool](#) to assist school systems with performing safety evaluations themselves, in FY2024, MCSS offered the school safety evaluation grant program to assist local education agencies with these evaluations. This program allocated three million dollars in FY2024 specifically for LEAs to perform facility assessments; re-evaluate and update their existing safety evaluation tool, policy, or procedures; train staff on the policy, procedures, and use of the tool; acquire software for digital mapping; test out their communication and video equipment; and overall, implement a sustainable school safety evaluation plan and processes that enable them to complete evaluations on all their schools every two years as COMAR 14.40.06 requires. Each local education agency that applied received a minimum of \$50,000 in grant funding to complete these tasks.

Emergency Preparedness Planning Cont.

School Emergency Plans

MCSS reviewed updated school emergency plans submitted by **11 LEAs** at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year, **representing plans for 494 schools**. MCSS regional staff reviewed and provided feedback on these emergency plans to each LEA and noted both the completeness of plans and areas needing improvement.

This table represents an overview of the completeness of emergency plans for all 24 LEAs. 89% of basic plan and 88% standard annex elements across the state are included in the most recent plans submitted by each LEA. 80% of all plans include all the emergency plan elements required by Ed. Art. § 7-1510, and 94% of emergency plans include all required threat-specific annexes.



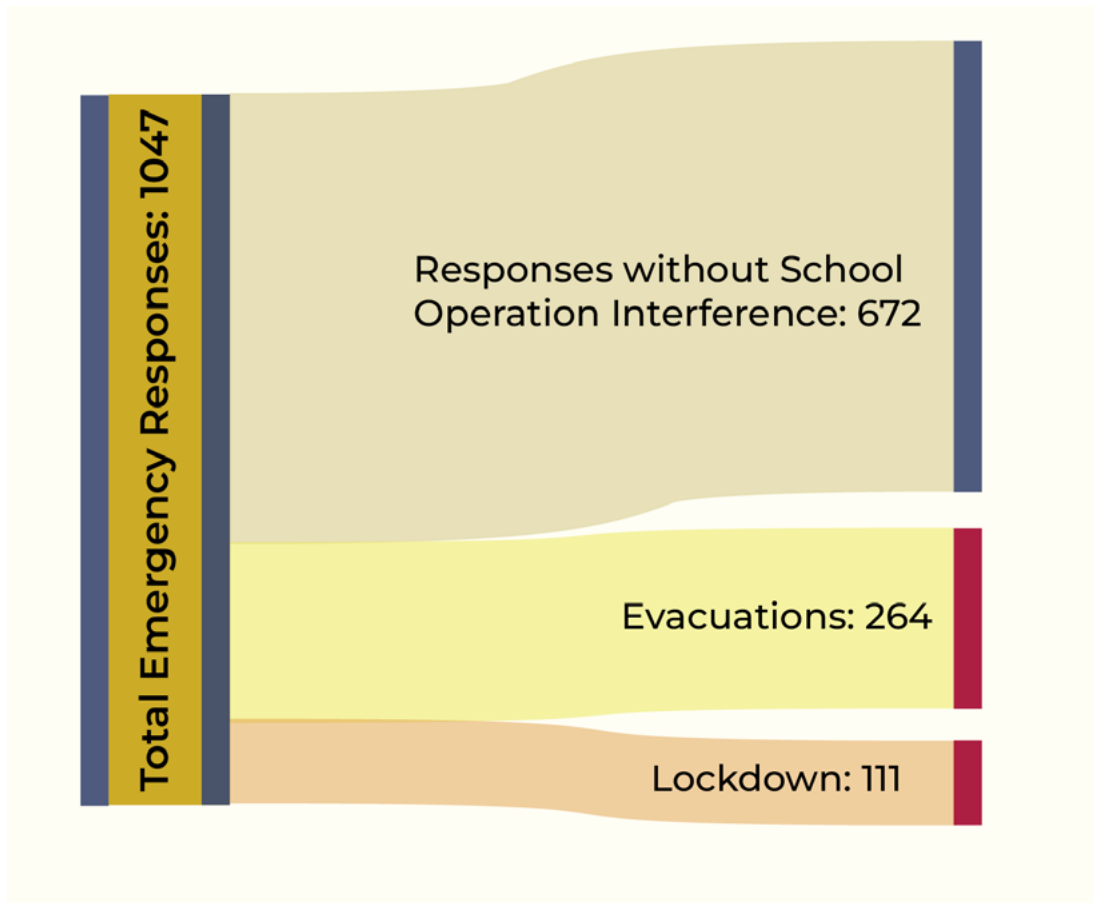
MCSS staff are currently working directly with each LEA to ensure all emergency plans, including those submitted for the 2024-2025 school year, are robust and meet 100% of the mandated requirements.

Annual Emergency Plan Performance During an Emergency Response

Pursuant to Ed. Art. § 7-1510(f), MCSS collects data annually from each LEA in the form of a report on the **performance of emergency plans**. The following information represents the school year 2023-2024 data from all LEAs, with the exception of Baltimore City. At the time of this report's submission, Baltimore City has not yet reported the required information to MCSS.

- **456** threats were made against any school or school system facility
- **1,047** emergency responses to a school
- **111** emergencies resulted in a lockdown
- **264** emergencies resulted in an evacuation
- **0** incidents occurred in which a public school's emergency plan failed in part, or whole, to function as anticipated in a real-world emergency response
- **407** school hours were spent in responding to real-world incidents

The table below represents a summary of data submitted by **23** LEAs for the 2023-2024 school year.



Annual Emergency Plan Performance During a Drill or Exercise

Pursuant to regulations promulgated by the State Board of Education, Maryland public schools are required to conduct fire drills and six (6) emergency drills annually, COMAR 13A.02.02.04. The six (6) required emergency drills are: evacuation, reverse evacuation, shelter in place, lockdown, drop/cover/hold, and severe weather. It is important that schools approach drills and exercises with a developmentally appropriate lens, engaging in activities that teach and assuage anxiety through preparation. Emergency drills are a critical component of school safety for several reasons.

- Drills provide the opportunity to teach students and staff defined procedures to follow in the event of an emergency.
- Drills provide school safety personnel and local emergency response partners with valuable information that informs the next steps in preparing for an emergency.
- Drills and exercises can alleviate student and staff fear, by building confidence through knowledge of what to do in the event of an emergency.

2024 LEA Annual Emergency Plan Performance Summary

Pursuant to Maryland Ann. Code Ed. Art. § 7-1510(f), MCSS collects data annually from each LEA in the form of a report on the **performance of emergency drills**. The following information represents the school year 2023-2024 data from all LEAs, with the exception of Baltimore City. At the time of this report's submission, Baltimore City had not yet reported the required information to MCSS.

- **4,168** total school hours were spent engaging in emergency drills
- **0** incidents occurred in which a public school's emergency plan failed in part, or whole, to function as anticipated during a drill

Emergency Preparedness Drills and Exercises Cont.



Maryland Statewide School-Based Tabletop Exercise

The MCSS Statewide Tabletop Exercise (TTX) is a new initiative successfully launched in 2024 to enhance the coordination of local emergency response efforts. The initiative is a collaborative effort between LEAs, MCSS, MSDE, and MDOD. Three statewide exercises were facilitated in 2024: May and October events for public school systems, and an August event for Maryland nonpublic special education schools. The 2024 Statewide exercises presented three different all-hazard simulations testing multiple standard response protocols and operational procedures: an active shooter event, an emergency weather event, and an evacuation event leading to reunification.

The purpose of the statewide tabletop exercise is to serve as a means by which schools and systems can engage their local partners to practice and refine emergency response strategies through the simulation of a real-time scenario. LEAs' responses and discussions during the exercise allow MCSS and MSDE to identify areas of strengths and gaps across the state. This information is used by MCSS to adapt resources and trainings to enhance school, system, and state-level emergency preparedness and response. The simulation of real-time scenarios for exercises immerse educational personnel, and local partners in relevant situations testing their plans and core capabilities. These exercises allow teams to practice responses that align with the complex realities they might face in an actual crisis.

Emergency Preparedness Drills and Exercises Cont.



Statewide School-Based Incident TTX LEA Checklist

How the TTX will work:

- All LEAs in the state are invited to join this TTX
- Each participating LEA will come together in-person in their respective counties
- Each LEA will log into a virtually hosted exercise facilitated by MCSS
- Throughout the exercise the facilitation will pause for each LEA to discuss their response operations
- At the end of the exercise the LEAs will facilitate a discussion for their jurisdiction's participants
- In the afternoon, only the LEA leader, will rejoin a virtual hotwash

Why this format?

- Statewide coordination during a major school-based incident is imperative
- Each LEA has unique capabilities, resources, and difficulties; participating in a statewide exercise helps the state and neighboring jurisdictions identify and support one another
- During a school-based incident it is most likely that the jurisdiction's impacted with be together in-person, coordinating with neighboring jurisdictions and the state in a virtual capacity

Who to invite?

- SSCs
- Principal Supervisors
- Student Services Supervisor
- Director of Food
- Director of Transportation
- Local Emergency Management Agency
- Local Fire and Police

Contact Kim Buckheit with questions

Register [HERE](#)

2 Months before TTX

- Review invitation, schedule of events, and TTX checklist
- Identify participants in your jurisdiction
- Identify a location to host the LEA participants
Send an invitation to all of those who should attend

1 Month before TTX

- Send reminder to TTX participants
- Review pre-reading materials

2 weeks before TTX

- Participate in SSC briefing (only one person per LEA)

Thank you for your commitment to statewide school safety!

Intended TTX Outcomes:

- Identify triggers for requesting resources outside of the local jurisdiction
- Identify capabilities and gaps in jurisdictions and regions
- Encourage coordination with other local agencies
- Identify opportunities for improved state support

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Key Components of the Statewide TTX

MCSS has created and made publicly available an exercise tool kit with materials used during each of the exercises. The tool kit includes:

- Materials to help exercise leads prepare for in-person facilitation;
- The exercise scenario PowerPoint; and
- Discussion prompts for each inject element of the scenario.

Each event uses a hybrid format. Local school and emergency response officials meet in person at a location convenient for them while MCSS facilitates the exercise scenario virtually, live streaming to them. This format has helped to engage broad participation and local collaboration. The state team comprised of MCSS and MSDE staff working collaboratively with an external partner to determine the date and time, develop the scenario, and provide all materials necessary for the local leader to engage local participants.

Every exercise requires that a local person operate as the lead facilitator, serving as the primary contact with MCSS and overseeing the exercise with the local team. To enhance the effectiveness of the exercise, participants are encouraged to involve local emergency response personnel who are experienced in conducting simulations.

It is recommended that the LEA lead delegate the following key supportive roles to their team.

- A Logistical Coordinator to manage practical aspects such as securing space, coordinating with partners, and managing technology requirements.
- An On-site Facilitator trained by MCSS to guide the discussion on the simulation day, keeping conversations focused and productive.
- An Objective Observer/Recorder to document the discussion and feedback, contributing insights to refine the team's emergency response strategies.

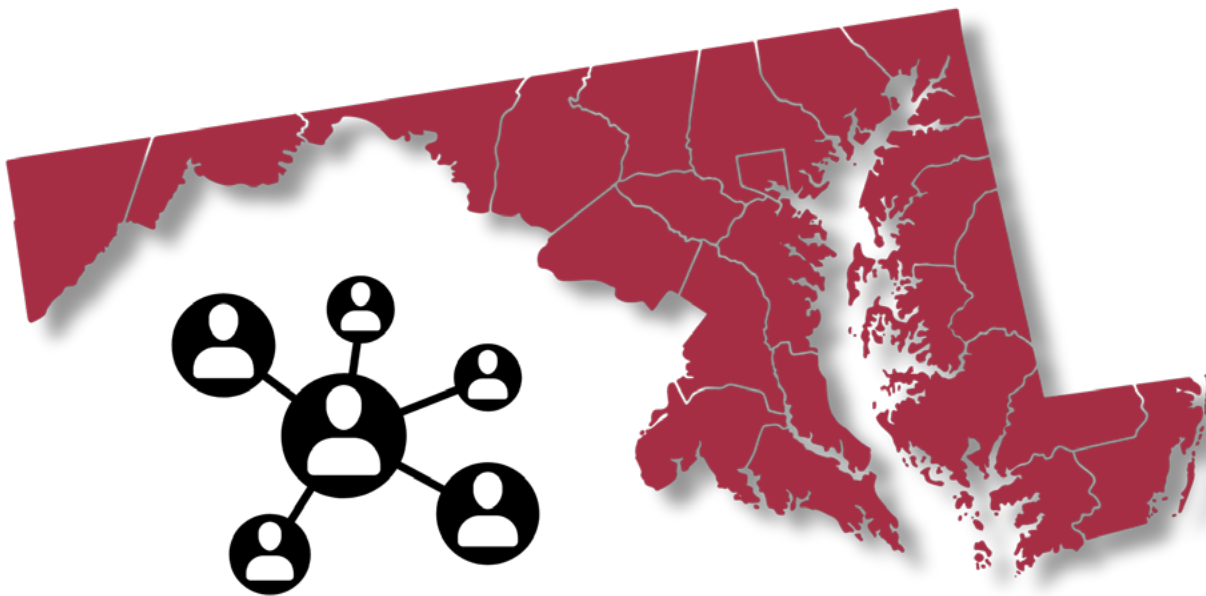
Emergency Preparedness Drills and Exercises Cont.

Outcomes and Future Development

The statewide exercises provided a platform to clarify decision-making processes, allowing local teams to navigate complex scenarios and understand how their choices could impact both immediate response and long-term recovery. As local teams debriefed and evaluated their responses, they identified areas where additional knowledge and skills were necessary. This exploration deepened the understanding of how strategic decisions could impact immediate response efforts and the organization's long-term recovery. Participants indicated that they were able to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. The key takeaways expressed by participants were:

1. Individuals had a clearer understanding of individual roles during an emergency;
2. Local schools and systems determined and planned for targeted training in the immediate future; and
3. Local partners refined decision-making frameworks in an effort to enhance local resilience in future emergency incidents.

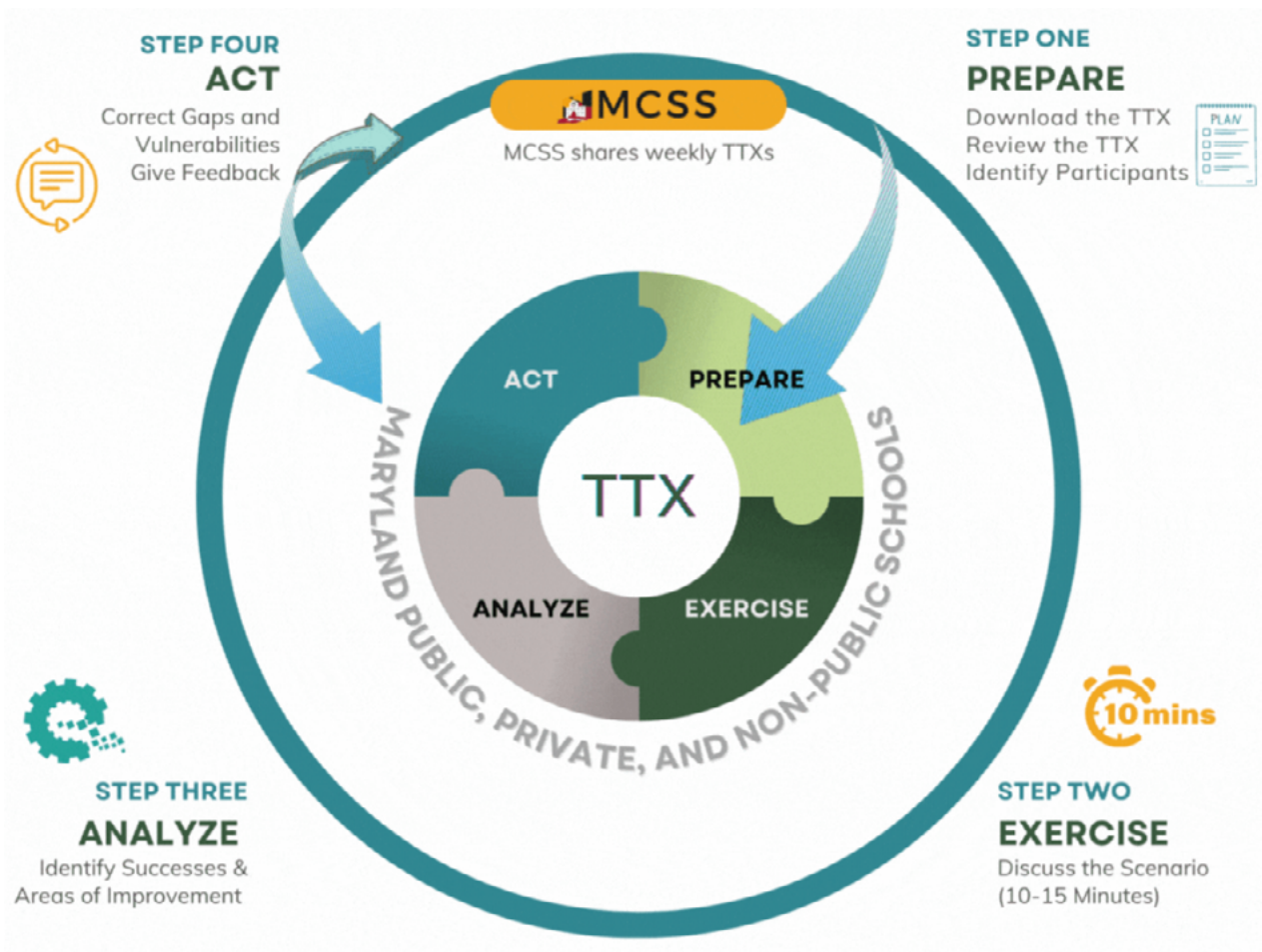
Moving forward, MCSS plans to host a February and October exercise each year for all Maryland public school systems and an August event for all Maryland nonpublic special education schools. LEAs will be encouraged to engage private schools within their jurisdiction to maximize coordination and communication efforts. MCSS will continue to refine and expand the scope of the Statewide Coordinated exercise by incorporating participant feedback and addressing emerging threats, to ensure it remains a vital resource and tool for enhancing the safety and security of Maryland schools.



Emergency Preparedness Drills and Exercises Cont.



The “Are We Ready” tabletop exercise program was developed and implemented in 2022 to provide a quick resource for schools to practice responding to realistic emergencies. Tabletops are discussion-based activities that allow team members to discuss their roles and how they may react during a particular emergency. MCSS’s “Are We Ready” tabletops are built to last about 10-15 minutes but can be longer if a school injects additional dynamics into an emergency scenario. The tabletop exercises developed by MCSS are built to address many different types of emergencies and audience members, including but not limited to SROs, Teachers, Administrators, Nurses, School Security and students if appropriate. Forty “Are We Ready” exercises were developed and are available on the MCSS website as a PDF document. Each exercise document includes a unique scenario and guidance on conducting the activity.



Emergency Preparedness Drills and Exercises Cont.

According to FEMA¹, even complex tabletop exercises can be conducted in a few hours, so they are cost-effective tools to validate emergency plans and capabilities, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and build consensus toward improving emergency response preparedness.

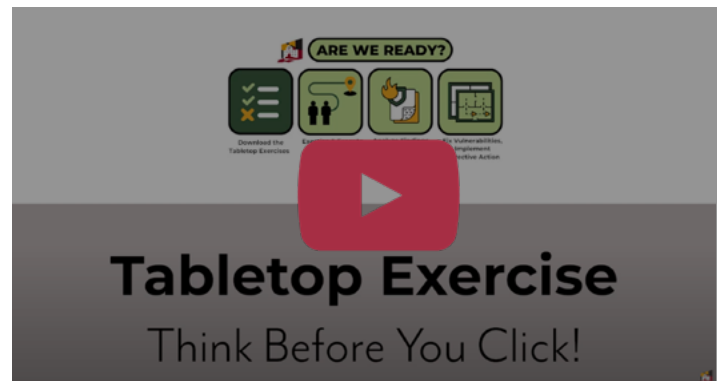
Tabletop exercises help people build muscle memory regarding how they respond to an emergency, allowing them to act quickly when a real emergency happens. Conducting these activities helps school personnel acclimate to their emergency operations plan and builds a teamwork mindset when reacting to an incident. The MCSS “[Are We Ready](#)” web page has had **3,487** visitors since it became active in August 2022.

In the 2024 school year, MCSS published two TTX videos, a tool that adds a different facilitation element for schools’ participation. Videos are an engaging method that adds a layer for learners who prefer visual tools. Video exercises can help school personnel sharpen their skills and further develop retention of their emergency plan knowledge.

TTX - Violent Warning



TTX - Think Before You Click



¹ https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fact-sheet-3_pre-event-exercises-training.pdf


Emergency Preparedness Exercises and Training Guidelines

In an effort to increase positive student and staff outcomes following training and drills, Maryland enacted legislation, Maryland House Bill 416, 2024 Session (Chapter 182), that specifically prohibits schools from using techniques that simulate an active assailant scenario. These banned techniques include simulated gunfire, explosions, and individuals acting as intruders. Additional MCSS requirements were enacted within the bill, which have led to the development of the following resources and initiatives.


October 2024


MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

**BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES
FOR ACTIVE ASSAILANT
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**
Exercises and Training



This document's information reflects current recommended practices, regulations, and legislative requirements for Maryland PreK-12 schools and will be reviewed and updated regularly.

 **MCSS**
schoolsafety.maryland.gov
410-281-2335



[Best Practice Guidelines For Active Assailant Emergency Preparedness Exercises and Training, October 2024](#)

MCSS, in consultation with multiple subject matter experts, developed the first edition of best practice guidelines. The guidelines include information based on current recommended practices, regulations, and legislative requirements for Maryland PreK-12 schools. The document will be reviewed and updated to reflect current data trends and evidence-based practices.

MCSS and the National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH) Partnership

MCSS has entered a five-year partnership with NCSMH at the University of Maryland to gather data from Maryland students, school personnel, and parents following an active assailant drill or training on the impact of the activity. A unique survey for each stakeholder group was developed for distribution in 2025. Insight from the survey results will be made public annually and used to inform future drills and training guidelines. NCSMH will annually complete a literature review on the “Effectiveness and Psychological Impact of Active Assailant Lockdown Drills In Maryland Schools” that will also be made publicly available on the MCSS webpage.

Emergency Preparedness Exercises and Training Guidelines Cont.



Best Practice Guidelines for Active Assailant Exercise & Training OVERVIEW FOR SCHOOL LEADERS



Requirements

- Provide parents, staff, and students a schedule of drills to start the school year.
- Announce in advance to everyone that a drill is happening.
- Determine students and staff who may be negatively impacted by drills because of past trauma and make accommodations for them in advance and after the drill.
- De-brief and provide emotional support to students and staff following a drill and training.
- Communicate with parents after a drill.
- Distribute the drill response survey to students, staff, and parents.

Best Practices

Use a **multi-disciplinary team** to plan and respond to drills and trainings (p.11).

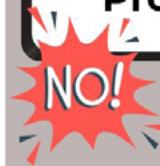
Prepare for drills using training materials and activities that are language inclusive and accessible to individuals with disabilities (p. 14).

Conduct drills at different times of the school day to test different procedures (p. 15).

After a drill gather information from students and staff to provide support to those who experienced distress and make improvements to procedures (p. 16).

Plan in advance of drills to make sure **students with unique needs** can participate with success (p. 18).

Prohibitions



- Noises to mimic gunfire, explosions, or an assailant trying to gain entry to a locked space.
- People pretending to be injured victims.
- People pretending to be an active assailant.
- Conducting a drill in a way that may cause trauma.

Key Terms

Active Assailant/Active Attacker/Active Shooter are all terms used to refer to one or more individuals actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area.

DRILL is a practice exercise designed to test a function of a school emergency plan in an effort to prepare students and staff for how to respond to various emergency situations.

Training is an education and practice designed to prepare individuals and organizations to effectively respond to and manage crisis situations.

Emergency Preparedness Exercises and Training Guidelines Cont.

Gun Safety Storage Laws Information to Parents

Maryland House Bill 416 also required MCSS to create a publication for all LEAs to distribute to parents about the legal requirements for safe gun storage. A flyer was developed and will be shared with LEAs for distribution in 2025.

MCSS
MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

A Parent's Guide to Firearm Storage

Maryland law **PROHIBITS** loaded firearms from being stored or left where an unsupervised minor has access.

Take these simple steps to protect children and prevent tragedy.

- ① Store and lock firearms unloaded.
- ① Store and lock ammunition separately from firearms--every time.
- ① Make sure keys and combinations to gun safes are not accessible to minors or anyone at risk of violence against self or others.
- ① If someone is in crisis in the household, temporarily remove firearms from your home.
- ① Avoid storing firearms unattended in vehicles to prevent theft.

Make Maryland a safe place for children.

IT'S THE LAW. mdsp.maryland.gov

For more information and resources scan the QR code or visit:
schoolsafety.maryland.gov

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Safety is YOUR Responsibility!

There are several ways to safely secure and store a firearm. Choose the way that works best for you.

Device Cable Lock

(Free—\$50) The device blocks the chamber to prevent firing. It typically requires a key or combination to unlock and is usable on most firearms. This method prevents a person from using the gun without removing the cable.



Lock Box

(\$25-\$350) Small safe used to store handguns/small firearms. Typically, it requires a key, combination, or fingerprint to unlock the box. Lockboxes can be permanently mounted in a home to prevent theft.

Trigger Lock

(\$5-\$50) Two-piece lock that fits over the trigger guard and typically requires a key or combination to unlock. It blocks the trigger but does not prevent a loaded gun from being fired. This method is not usable on lever-action firearms.



Safe

(\$100-\$2,500) A safe is able to store a variety of firearms and typically requires a key, combination, or fingerprint to unlock. A safe is the best option to secure multiple firearms, and to prevent theft.

The content above was taken from Maryland Department of Health (2024) Firearm Safe Storage

<https://health.maryland.gov/bha/Documents/MDH%20FirearmSafeStorage%26YouthSuicidePrevention.pdf>

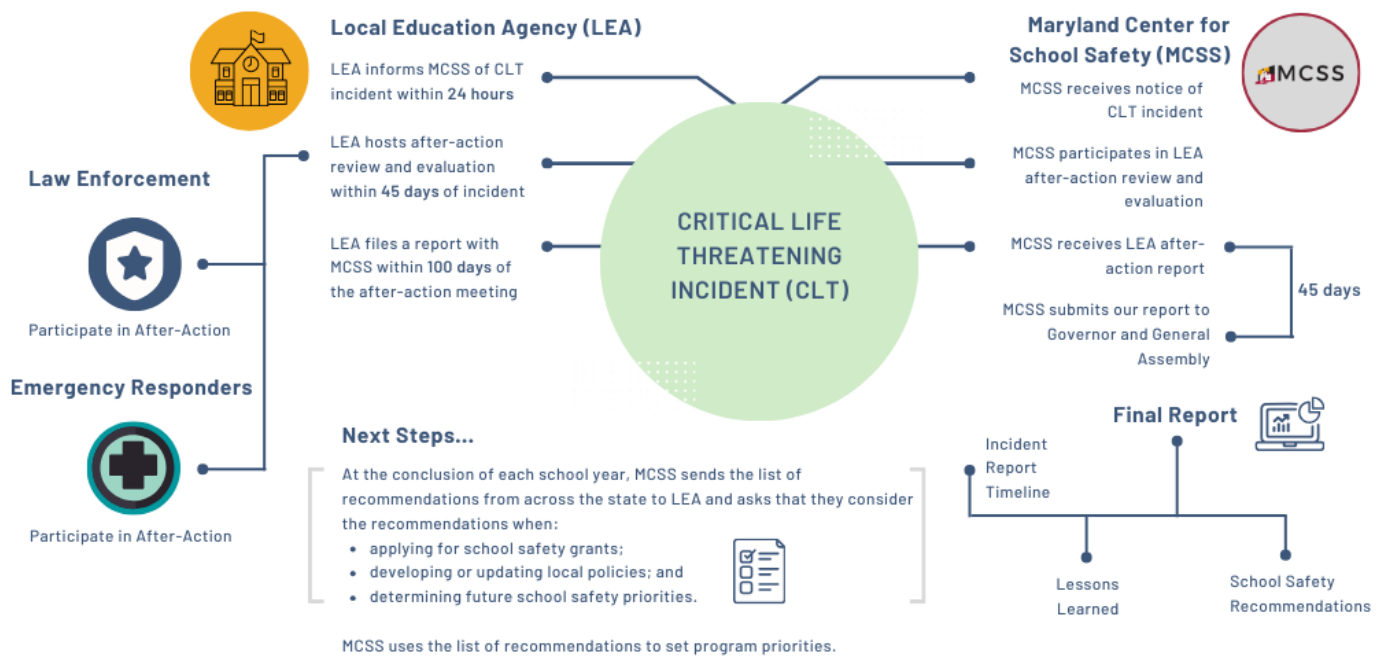
Published 2025

After-Action Review Guidance and Support

An after-action review is a discussion based meeting that follows an event during which information and details of the event are examined by individuals involved to determine lessons learned and future corrective actions. Ed. Art. [§7-1510\(g\)](#) and COMAR [14.40.05](#) require each LEA to conduct an after-action review meeting following a CLT incident. MCSS staff participate in the after-action meeting conducted by the LEA for CLT incidents and generate a report for the Governor, Maryland General Assembly, and Maryland public.

In an effort to ensure local teams conduct thorough after-action reviews and that submitted after-action reports are consistent across LEAs, MCSS rolled out a resource tool at the end of 2023 to support the review and reporting process. This [new tool](#) guides an individual or team through a series of questions related to the event and generates a summary report based upon responses. MCSS has made this tool publicly available for use by schools and school systems throughout Maryland and the nation.

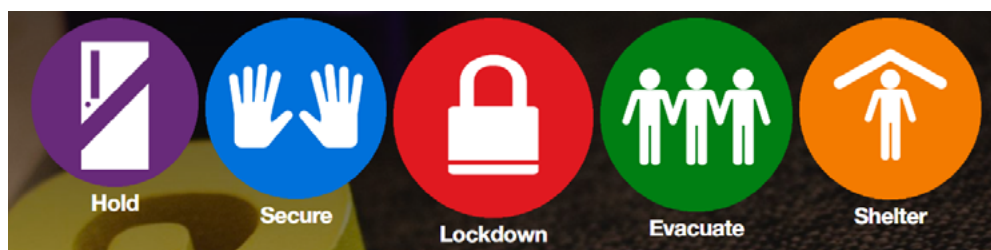
Reporting Requirements for Critical Life-Threatening (CLT) Incidents



After-Action Review Guidance and Support Cont.

During the 2023-2024 school year, eighteen (18) incidents met the definition of CLT and thus required an after-action review by the LEA and subsequent report by MCSS. [Individual reports](#) are available on the MCSS web-page. Lessons learned from these after-action reviews yielded the following trends. These trends inform future efforts in training and resources at the local and state level.

- School safety plans must incorporate predefined procedures for effective communication and collaboration with law enforcement as soon as a threat is detected, aiming for a coordinated response to emergencies. It is crucial that these procedures are tested, refined and enhanced by conducting training and exercises and by identifying corrective actions to be implemented as part of improving preparedness.
- Local school systems should include their respective response agency partners when conducting facility assessments, developing emergency operations plans, and conducting regular exercises that allow the school staff, the system and response partners to test their school emergency operations plans. Attention should be given to the identification of roles and responsibilities as well as communication procedures used, for all responding school staff and agencies.
- Training and exercising school emergency operations plans should be conducted in coordination with the school community, including local responding agencies, school staff, and school system-level personnel and at various times throughout the school day, including school opening, class transitions, lunch periods, and specialized activities (e.g., field trips).
- Schools should work with responding agencies to test communication capabilities, including equipment (e.g., public safety radios), signals, and protocols, in an effort to strengthen communication among agencies. This testing should include school communication systems, i.e., intercoms, public address systems, and school two-way radios.
- Procedures for placing a school on lockdown should include procedures that account for students and staff outside the school facility when a lockdown protocol is initiated.
- The importance of the use of common terms across school officials, emergency responders, students and parents is critical to ensure an effective response and appropriately direct individuals. MCSS is advancing use of the “I Love U Guys” standard response protocols as they are evidence based, clear, and free resources available to all.



[Graphic provided by the “I Love You Guys” Foundation.](#)

School Resource Officer and School Security Employee Training Academy

The SRO/SSE Training Academy is a specialized curriculum developed and delivered by the Maryland Center for School Safety staff and Local Subject Matter Experts in education. The Safe to Learn Act mandates the curriculum, which is re-evaluated and certified every three years. The training team certified over **250** SROs/SSEs in the State of Maryland over the course of seven regionally based sessions. Seven more sessions of the Training Academy will be held across the state in 2025.



MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY



Per the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commission's (MPCTC) regulations, the SRO/SSE Training Academy underwent a comprehensive review and update in 2024. The curriculum consists of 54 hours of MPCTC-certified material over 26 classes. Each of these classes was reviewed, updated, and re-certified. The new course, to be implemented in 2025, will begin with a two-hour self-paced video outlining the role of the SRO/SSE in Maryland schools. It then moves to four days of virtual classes delivered asynchronously, followed by five days of in-person class sessions. The 2025 Training Academy curriculum adds one additional day of in-person training. This extra day was added based on feedback from 2024 attendees requesting more in-person class time.

Additions to the 2025 curriculum include sessions on Multicultural and Generational differences, Human Trafficking in Schools, Current Trends, Pathways to Violence, Self-Care for SROs/SSEs, Tabletop Exercises for SROs/SSEs, and a renewed version of the Bullying class. The Tabletop Exercises class will depict everyday school situations affecting SROs/SSEs. This class was created after veteran SROs/SSEs' suggested that real-life role-play scenarios may prove beneficial for new SROs/SSEs decision-making. The scenarios will include discussions involving the differences between school discipline and criminal offenses.

SRO/SSE Training Academy Cont.

Participant feedback is encouraged and collected after each session, and overall remains positive. This feedback is essential as it helps update and provide current, up-to-date information. 2024 feedback includes:

- “My takeaway is the importance of establishing relationships, communications, and understanding your staff, students, climates, and cultures of each school within your district.”*
- “I understand a wide variety of issues that are going on in my school, and they helped to equip me with tools and skills to help the students in my building.”*
- “I now have a better knowledge of my role as an SRO. All those in the public school system should know about this course if they are involved with or around children in schools.”*

2024 SRO/SSE Continuing Education Program

The initial training provided in the [SRO/SSE Training Academy](#) is essential to help security officials begin to perform their duties well, but equally important is continued, regular professional growth opportunities. Existing school safety regulations require the following:

“School resource officers and school security employees shall complete additional hours of training annually in content areas approved by the Center, including:

1. Updated legislative and regulatory changes affecting the work of school resource officers and school security employees;
2. Expanded training in existing content areas;
3. Any training identified or approved by the Center; or
4. Any other mandates under State, federal, or local law.”¹

MCSS developed continuing education in-service training through interactions with practitioners and available research. Topics for the course were discussed and decided upon based on the required regulations and current issues in school safety. These topics included:

1. Current Trends – identifying dangerous on-line trends in the school safety realm.
2. Pathways to Violence – assisting the SROs/SSEs in recognizing distressing signs and symptoms in students to help prevent violence.
3. Current Drug Trends in Maryland Schools – identify the current drugs being seen in and around Maryland schools.
4. Maryland School Law – updating the new laws and regulations involving schools in Maryland.



¹ COMAR 14.40.04.03

SRO/SSE Training Program Cont.



The major challenge for the continuing education course was determining the number of SROs/SSEs still active in their positions and the format in which to deliver the course. Confirming the active SROs/SSEs in Maryland was accomplished by contacting supervisors of all Law Enforcement Agencies and all LEAs in Maryland and updating the MCSS training files, resulting in the need to deliver continuing education to over **1,300** SROs/SSEs statewide.

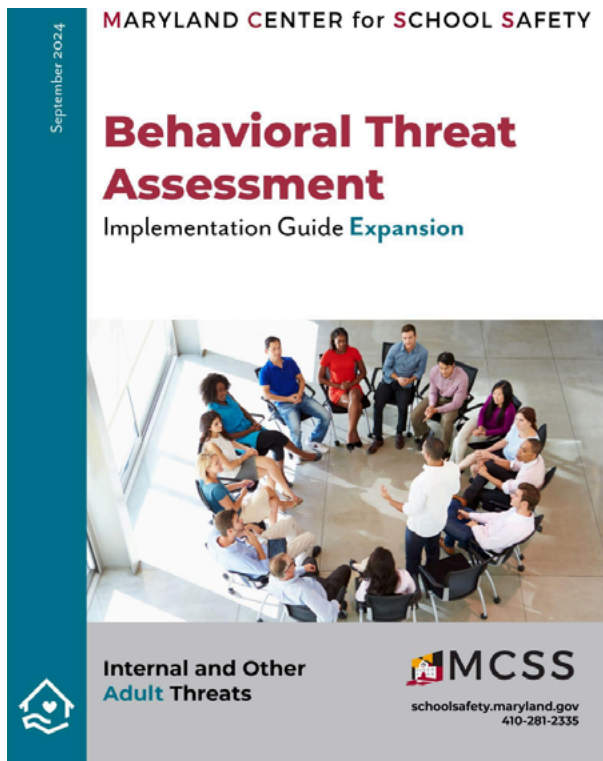
Based on this information it was determined that a self-paced video format, using learning management software school security officials were already familiar with, would be the most effective. The curriculum was developed, recorded, and uploaded to the learning management system by MCSS for release in November 2024. All participants must complete an on-line exam for accountability purposes.



Behavioral Threat Assessment (BTA)

BTA is a fact-based, systematic process designed to recognize, inquire, evaluate, and intervene in potentially dangerous or violent situations. BTA is designed to gather a holistic picture of an individual displaying behaviors or communications of concern to determine how best to intervene and plan to mitigate harm. MCSS continued its collaboration with Maryland schools to build capacity for every school to have an operational multidisciplinary team as defined in Ed. Art. §7-1507. Upon request, MCSS staff conducted workshops for system-level and local leaders, advancing practices defined in the [“2018 Maryland’s Model Policy for Behavior Threat Assessment”](#) and the [“2023 Behavioral Threat Assessment Implementation Guide.”](#)

The 2023 BTA Implementation Guide provides foundational information on practices involved in the BTA process and is primarily intended for students. During the spring of **2024**, MCSS convened a diverse group of experts to develop guidance that expands upon the 2023 implementation guide to address internal and other adult threats. The group of twenty practitioners included representation from the following school system roles and state and federal agencies:



- Behavioral Health Coordinator
- Director of Student Services
- Coordinator Psychological Services
- School Safety Coordinator
- School Principal
- School Counselor
- Coordinator of Internal Investigation, Human Resources
- Parent
- Coach
- Teacher
- Local Law Enforcement
- Maryland Center for School Safety
- Maryland State Department of Education
- Maryland Department of Disabilities
- Maryland Assistant Attorney General
- Maryland Coordinated Analysis Center
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- United States Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center

The 2024 “Behavior Threat Assessment Implementation Guide Expansion: Internal and Other Adult Threats” document also includes BTA terms and definitions for Maryland Schools and other helpful information that was identified as needs through workshops and other interactions with local implementers.

Locals will be provided with customized technical support and training for implementation of the Expansion document to meet the individual needs of each LEA. Locals were asked to complete a simple survey indicating what type of support would be needed in their system in order to successfully implement the recommended practices for internal and other adult threats. The results of this survey were analyzed in November 2024 to inform and plan MCSS workshops, support sessions, and 2025 team training.

Behavioral Threat Assessment (BTA) Cont.



Behavior Threat Assessment Expansion - Internal and Other Adults

The BTA Expansion document is intended to move beyond information in the 2023 Behavior Threat Assessment Implementation Guide to provide additional guidance for responding to internal and other adults who pose a threat to a school.

Planning for internal and other adult threats is an unfortunate reality for schools.



Systems should engage in the BTA process with care applying a human first approach.



Insider Threats

Situations can arise when an employee, a former employee, or an employee's domestic partner engage in concerning behavior(s).

Caregivers

Parents, grandparents, siblings can be experiencing circumstances that lead them to have a grievance directed at a school or person in the school.



Unaffiliated



An unaffiliated adult is a person not connected to the school as a current; student, caregiver, or employee. Generally, an adult who has been removed from one of these categories for over a year would be considered unaffiliated.

Central BTA Team

- Consisting of system-level executive leaders.
- Objective and neutral
- Collaborate with a wider cross section of community partners



Community Based Multi-Disciplinary Team

The team uses a public health informed approach to violence prevention to evaluate an individual's risk of violence or serious harm, share information, and coordinate resources and services.

The intent of the team is to prevent violence and criminal behavior from occurring.



Recognize & Report Concerns

Observed behavior that elicits concern in others regarding the safety of an individual or those around them should be reported for further inquiry.

- Share with various stakeholders (parents, staff, public) **WHAT to report.**
- Make it easy and clear **HOW TO safely report concerns.**

Determine Level of Threat

Gather information from multiple sources.



A multi-disciplinary team meets to examine information and determine the level of threat a person poses.

Manage the Situation NOT the Person

Behavior Threat Assessment is intended to support an individual in crisis before an act of violence occurs.

Schools when made aware of an adult that poses a threat can only manage the situation through safety planning.

Safe Schools Maryland Anonymous Reporting System



The Safe Schools Maryland (SSMD) anonymous reporting system allows students, school staff, parents, and community members to easily and anonymously report school or student safety concerns anywhere, anytime. The SSMD program is one of 25 statewide programs across the country. These statewide programs have saved countless lives and prevented tragedies by allowing the proper contacts to intervene before a tragedy occurs. Suicide, self harm, and fights have been reported and prevented in Maryland.

In a 2021 study titled, *Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools*, the USSS found that targeted school violence is preventable when communities report concerning behaviors and intervene. In addition to making threats of violence, many plotters had histories of mental health symptoms, substance use, bullying, stressors, and interpersonal grievances.¹ [This research](#)² has indicated that **in almost all** school shooting incidents or averted attacks, someone knew about the attacker's plans prior to the incident. The reasons that kept bystanders from reporting were they didn't know who to report it to, weren't sure how to report it, or were scared to report for fear of retaliation. Research also shows that having an anonymous method of reporting increases the likelihood that a bystander will report. As such, Maryland identified the need for a system to allow anyone to report concerns anonymously. SSMD is completely free for any K-12 school and free to anyone who makes a report.

The system does not replace calling 9-1-1 or telling a trusted adult, therefore, MCSS encourages students to make a connection with a trusted adult in their lives. If they can't report it to someone they know and trust, SSMD is available.

Reports can be submitted via the mobile app, SafeSchoolsMD.org, or 1-833-MD-B-SAFE (1-833-632-7233) and are routed to school, public safety, health, and/or social services personnel for appropriate follow-up.

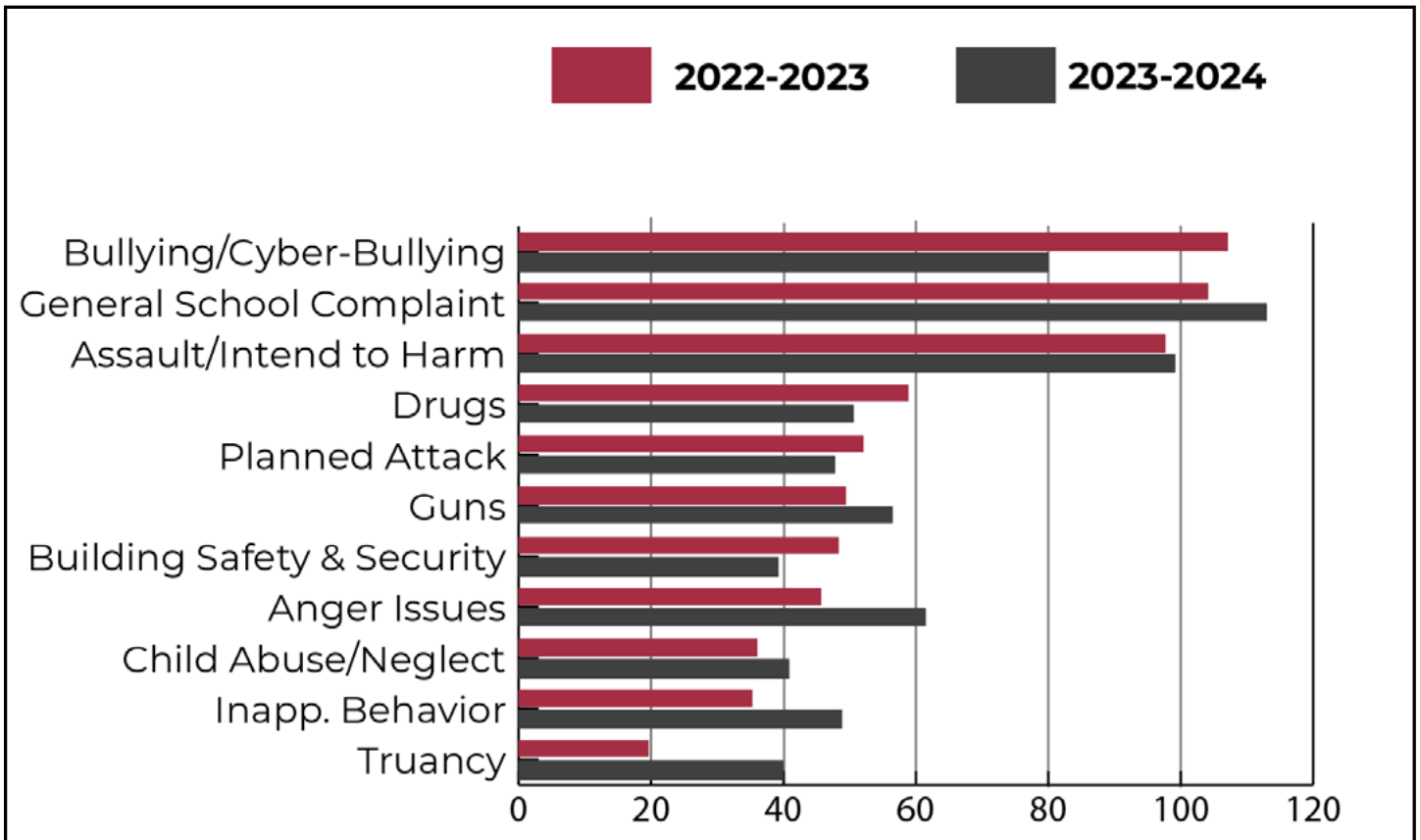
The goal of the program is to put this very important prevention tool in the hands of all Maryland students. Age-appropriate live training is available for students, school staff, and parents/families.

1 [Improving School Safety Through Bystander Reporting: A Toolkit for Strengthening K-12 Reporting Programs](#)

2 [U.S. DHS and USSS National Threat Assessment Center Report titled "2021 Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against School"](#)

Safe Schools Maryland Anonymous Reporting System Cont.

Number of Tips by Topic



The SSMD program received **929** total reports during the 2023-2024 reporting year, compared to 927 reports during the 2022-2023 reporting year. General School Complaint was the most reported category and saw an increase over last year. Thursday is the day of the week on which most tips are reported, followed by Wednesday. The webform continues to be the most popular method of reporting, followed by the app. Tips are more often reported during the hours of 6 AM to 4 PM or “school hours” (560 tips or 60%) versus after school between the hours of 5 PM to 5 AM (369 tips or 40%).



[ACCESS PDF VERSION HERE TO COPY & POST](#)

[ACCESS THE SSMD VIDEO HERE](#)

[ACCESS PDF VERSION HERE TO COPY & POST](#)

Student Voice Programs

The MCSS Student Advocates for School Safety (SASS) program is designed to support students in efforts to be upstanders and engage directly with students, school personnel, and parents within their school and surrounding community to keep schools safe. Student leaders are encouraged to identify and pursue solutions through local school safety projects. MCSS works closely with the Maryland Association of Student Councils to engage student voices on school safety topics.

Student Advocates for School Safety

In addition to student-led programs and initiatives, there is a student member on the School Safety Advisory Board. In 2024, SASS members represented Maryland in several national discussions on school safety, including;

- [National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine's study on the Effects of Active Shooter Drills on Student Health and Wellbeing for the Board on Children, Youth, and Families.](#)
- Readiness and Emergency Management for School (REMS) Technical Assistance Center's "[Preventing and Addressing Gun Violence in Schools: Youth and Young Adult Experiences as School Violence Survivors and Advocates](#)" webinar.



Step #1 Establish a school safety organization at your school through the existing process.

1. Get school administration and staff support.
2. Determine student leadership and meeting logistics.
3. Recruit students to join that represent all aspects of the student body.
4. **Name it!!**

Step #2: Apply to the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) for recognition.

Recognition provides the organization with monthly newsletters that share ideas from other students across the state. Applying for recognition requires providing evidence of an active organization (defined as meeting at least 4 times a year and sponsoring at least 2 school safety strategies for your school and community). Your organization's name will be listed on the official MCSS online registry. [MCSS recognition form](#)

Step #3: Lead events that promote school safety solutions.

Go to the MCSS Student Voice webpage for strategy and event ideas [Bitly/MCSS_StudentVoice](https://bit.ly/MCSS_StudentVoice).



Step #4: Promote the Safe Schools Maryland (SSMD) Reporting System.

1. Place SSMD posters around the school building.
2. Arrange times for school officials and students to talk about the importance of reporting concerns to adults at school and using SSMD to keep school safe.
3. Promote SSMD on social media.
4. Create SSMD posters, flyers, or video/audio messages and share them with your community.

Safe Schools MD Reporting System



Anonymous reports can be submitted by...

- Calling 1-833-MD-B-SAFE
- Visiting SafeSchoolsMD.org
- Using the App

→ 

help marginalized students make connections. [This flyer](#) shares information with schools about the challenge and provides resources to get started.

School Safety Organizations

MCSS has worked with students over the years to consider how best to engage school-level organizations led by students in safety initiatives. Harnessing existing organizations operating within schools to be recognized for their safety efforts and creating a new organization are all recognized and encouraged. SASS program members created and published [this flyer](#) with specific steps to take to start or expand an organization. Each organization is asked (step 4) to promote the use of the SSMD anonymous reporting system.

Mix it Up in the Middle

Students having strong, healthy connections to peers and adults is a critical aspect of school safety. In an effort to promote the importance of expanding peer connections, the SASS program in 2024 is promoting the monthly Mix It Up in the Middle initiative. Data trends demonstrate that students in middle school are particularly vulnerable to social isolation. Devoting one day each month to organize a Mix It Up activity can

PREPARE 2024

PLAN REFLECT EDUCATE

MCSS has coordinated and hosted a school safety conference each year. The conference has expanded over the years to meet the growing interest in school safety topics. The conference achieves several MCSS statutory requirements and has been branded **PREPARE** (P-Plan, R-Reflect, E-Educate).

"Thank you for continuing to provide this opportunity to those involved with school leadership and safety. It is vitally important to maintain a focus on school safety and remain vigilant with strategies and resources to respond to a variety of situations."

-T. F. Washington County Public Schools

Ed. Art. §7-1502(g)(2) In partnership with stakeholders: (i) Disseminate information on best practices, programs, and resources; (ii) Provide technical assistance and training; (iii) Collaborate on collection, analysis, and integration of statewide data; and (iv) Promote interagency efforts that support safe schools for all students, school staff, parents, and community members.

Ed. Art. §7-1502(g)(5) Initiate collaborative partnerships and facilitate coordination among local school systems, law enforcement agencies, State and local government, and community organizations to leverage existing resources to deliver school safety services uniformly to local school systems.

PREPARE 2024 occurred at the Turf Valley Resort and Conference Center in Ellicott City, Maryland, on July 17th and 18th. This was the second of a three-year commitment to host the event at Turf Valley. Attendance continued the growth trend from 420 attendees at the 2023 conference to 482 attendees this July. This year's conference theme was "Safer Schools Together," and over 20 presentations, two keynote speakers, two general sessions, and 27 concurrent breakout sessions were offered over the two days. This year, participants were offered three pre-conference opportunities; two virtual webinars, one per month leading into the conference; and an in-person behavioral threat assessment workshop the evening before the full two-day conference began. Professional credits were made available to interested participants. MCSS used the InEvent conference App, allowing for an efficient check-in process and a digital event schedule and engagement.



School Safety Student Art Showcase

MCSS engages students in school safety through art with its **annual [MCSS Art Showcase](#)**. Students were asked to create an 8.5 x 11-inch piece of art in response to the 2024 theme “Safe Spaces.” **Entries** were received from public, nonpublic, private, and home-school students across the state. All entries were displayed for judging at the **PREPARE** conference. First, second, and third-place winners were selected by grade group (elementary, middle, high). Winning jurisdictions included Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Baltimore City, Howard, and Wicomico. All submitted artwork was on display in September and part of October at the Maryland State Department of Education in Baltimore and will be on display starting mid-December, through the legislative session at the House of Delegates office in Annapolis.

First Place Winning Entries

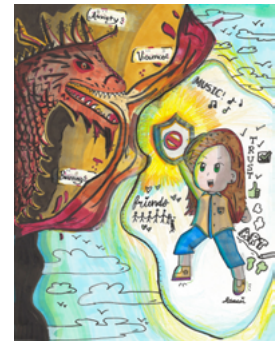


“Lost in the magic” by Adalyn Bunuan



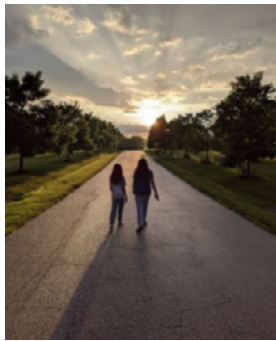
In all the madness you still lend
your hand to me. your hands are the
Safe Space I need to protect me from this world

“A Gentle Hand” By Harley Marie Graves



“Raising my Shield” by Jessie Jebaraj

Second Place Winning Entries



“Sunset Dream” by Safia Puthawala



“Classmates” by Layla Bowers



“My School Safe Space” by Mya Mathis

Third Place Winning Entries



“Philosophy” by Liam Dugan Digges



“Spill the Paint” by Joshita Mylavarapu



“Colorful Space” by Victoria Michel

Engagement and Partnerships

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MCSS Committee Representation

MCSS Representing School Safety Through Membership

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

The Maryland Office of the Attorney General has established the Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention to seek ways to improve Maryland's response to incidents of hate.

Committee on Addressing Hate Crimes in Schools, Co-chair

<https://nohomeforhate.md.gov/pages/commission>

Violent Extremism Prevention Task Force (VEPTF), Member

Established to address the concern of targeted violence in Maryland communities.

Education Health Community of Practice, Member

This community was established to meet a requirement of the [Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMSHA\)](#) Project AWARE grant administered by the MSDE.

Maryland Active Assailant Interdisciplinary Work Group (AAIWG), Member

The AAIWG uses a multidisciplinary approach to prevention, intervention, and response to active assailant incidents and overall public safety and emergency management planning. This collaborative effort helps to ensure the safety, security, and resiliency of Maryland's diverse communities.

National School Safety Alliance, Member

The Alliance is a network of state-level school safety practitioners from all 50 states and the District of Columbia whose purpose is to examine and share information about trends in school safety, training opportunities, resources, and best practices from the field.

School Safety Tiplines National Workgroup, Member

Comprised of representatives from the states that have a statewide tip line program. Members share trends, best practices, and concerns around their programs.

Student Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee (SSWAC), Member

Representing the MCSS as a representative on an ad-hoc committee under the Board of County Commissioners of Calvert County.

Maryland Equitable Justice Collaborative, Support

Community partnerships across Maryland working together to develop a comprehensive plan to reduce the over-incarceration rate of Black men and other marginalized groups in Maryland prisons and jails.

Queen Anne's County Drug-Free Coalition, Member

Representing the MCSS as a member of a local jurisdiction work group working towards reduction in usage of intoxicating substances.

Maryland State Agency Partnerships for School Safety

Maryland Department of Health (MDH)

MCSS assisted the Maryland Department of Health in their effort to increase access to Naloxone in schools in 2024. MCSS staff participated in training on the administration of Naloxone and were able to provide training to local school staff on how to administer, as well as distribute free Naloxone across Maryland.



Maryland Department of State Police (MSP)

Each year, MCSS collaborates with state agencies to advance the importance of school bus safety. These efforts generally occur in the back-to-school months of September and October in an effort to remind motorists of the road laws related to school buses.



Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM)

Emergency preparedness in schools requires close collaboration with the Maryland Department of Emergency Management throughout the year. A new collaborative project in April 2024 related to promoting the importance of schools preparing for weather-related emergencies, particularly [tornadoes](#). MCSS staff worked with MDEM to develop a quick visual reference for school staff to learn the steps that should be rehearsed and used in the event of a tornado. This effort will continue in 2025, encouraging schools to participate in the Great Maryland Twister Test in April.



Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

MCSS and MSDE maintain a strong collaborative relationship, working together to support public and nonpublic schools throughout the state. Our joint efforts include monthly meetings for Behavioral Health Services Coordinators from all 24 local school systems. Additionally, MSDE has been essential to the development and execution of our statewide tabletop exercises. MCSS values this partnership and looks forward to future collaborations.



Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC)

MCSS is co-located and works closely with the MCAC, which serves as the focal point between federal, state, local, public and private sector partners in the coordination, gathering, analysis, and dissemination of homeland security and criminal information to keep Maryland safe.



Maryland State Agency Partnerships for School Safety Cont.

Active Assailant Interdisciplinary Work Group (AAIWG)

The AAIWG is dedicated to enhancing Maryland's capacity to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from active assailant incidents. The AAIWG's multidisciplinary membership, composed of subject matter experts from across the state, facilitates the identification, updating, and sharing of best practices and current activities. As a member of this group, MCSS is committed to contributing to these efforts and leveraging the collective expertise of its members.



Interagency Commission on School Construction (IAC)

Grant funding to locals for school safety projects is managed jointly by MCSS and the IAC. The State-funded capital improvement grant, [School Safety Grant Program](#), and the [Non-public School Security Improvement Grant](#), are each jointly administered. In addition, the IAC and MCSS coordinate school safety evaluations to identify issues with public school facilities that could impact school safety.



Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD)

MDOD staff are close partners providing insight on unique considerations for individuals with disabilities. MCSS and MDOD have been working closely together over the last several years on various initiatives. MCSS relies heavily on the expertise at MDOD to ensure that all training, resources, and exercises meet the needs for the whole community.



Maryland Department of Information Technology (DoIT)

To enhance the cybersecurity posture of our school community, MCSS engages in ongoing collaboration with DoIT throughout the year. We actively cultivate partnerships among the state's senior technology leaders and promptly refer any school-related cyber threats to the Security Operations Center (SOC) and the Office of Security Management (OSM) for immediate attention. In 2025, we will further strengthen our collaboration with DoIT and MDEM to deliver a suite of school-based cybersecurity resilience initiatives, encompassing comprehensive assessments, robust incident response plans, and targeted training and exercises.



MView

MCSS actively promoted and collaborated with MView to bring on board users from local law enforcement and public/private schools, expanding the platform's reach.



MCSS Communication and Engagement

Collaborative Community Meetings

MCSS continued to facilitate regular information-sharing meetings and calls with our school safety partners in 2024. The multi-directional flow of communications ensures MCSS best serves its various partners by supporting participants' diverse disciplines and communities.

- **School Safety Coordinators (SSCs)** and local School Security Directors serve as the leads for school safety and security within each school system. These meetings focus on safety and security issues, concerns, and trends within the twenty-four local school systems.
- **Behavioral Health Services Coordinators** work within the central office of local school systems to ensure students in need obtain necessary services. These calls focus on behavioral health concerns, trends, and promising practices within the twenty-four local school systems.
- **Private and Nonpublic School** heads, administrators, and safety officials at private and nonpublic 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 nonpublic school communities.
- **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** partners join together to learn from a guest presenter and discuss a topic of shared concern.
- **Behavior Threat Assessment Leads** meet quarterly to share practices and engage in solutions.

GovDelivery Communications

MCSS utilizes GovDelivery to communicate with school safety stakeholders. GovDelivery communications are intended to increase stakeholder knowledge and awareness of various school safety topics.





- [Monthly newsletters](#) include information on upcoming events hosted by MCSS and other reputable nonprofit organizations, and school safety topics with resources.
- Topic Bulletins are communications focused on a single topic allowing for more expanded content and resources.
- Promotional communications for MCSS resources including Active Assailant Best Practice Guidelines, upcoming events, and future workshops.

Currently **3,688** individuals subscribe to receive communications from MCSS through GovDelivery. This is an increase of **287** subscribers in 2024. **Forty four (44)** communications were sent in 2024 with an average of **15** resource links included in each bulletin and a **44%** open rate.

MCSS Communication and Engagement Cont.

Engagement Through Social Media


MCSS uses social media as one of several methods to bring awareness to school safety topics and resources. Social media posts by MCSS are intended to increase public knowledge and promote an MCSS event or activity, for example the school safety conference and when hiring staff. The primary objective of social media engagement during 2024 was to advance the Safe Schools Maryland (SSMD) Anonymous Reporting System. MCSS and SSMD social media pages are currently one and the same.

 <p>Safeschoolsmd 967 followers</p>	 <p>Safeschoolsmd 1,743 followers</p>
 <p>Safeschoolsmd 312 followers</p>	 <p>Safeschoolsmd 1,295 followers</p>

MCSS Webpage


The MCSS web-page serves as a communication method as well as a repository of school safety information for Maryland constituents. The MCSS web-page had a total of **82,143** visits during the 2023-2024 school year. Of the total visits, **44,818** were unique individuals visiting the webpage.

MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY f x @ in v




Available 24/7
Statewide Anonymous Reporting System

[SAFE SCHOOLS MARYLAND](#)



Grants
Learn more about school safety grants

[SCHOOL SAFETY GRANTS](#)



Conference
July 17 - 18, 2024

[LEARN MORE](#)

Community Engagement in 2024

School safety requires a community effort of all Maryland citizens. MCSS strives to engage Marylanders in joining efforts to keep our schools safe by promoting programs and services available through MCSS and within their local community. MCSS staff participate in conferences sponsored by various Maryland organizations to capitalize upon the central audience.

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

MCSS staff engaged with the following audiences by conducting a presentation or training:

- National Student Safety and Security Conference
- SSMD Trainings across jurisdictions for students, parents, and school staff
- Teach Maryland Conference
- Internet Safety for Middle School Students
- Danger of Devices training for students and parents
- Maryland D.A.R.E Officer, in-Service training
- Cumberland Police Youth Summer Camp
- Professional Development Trainings at various Public Schools
- Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)
- Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC)
- Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP)
- Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)
- Maryland School Bus Summer Conference
- ASBO Fall Conference
- AIMS CFO/Business Officers for Risk Management Programs

MCSS staff engaged with the following audiences by attending a sponsored event:

- Maryland Emergency Management Association Symposium
- Engaged and/or presented at GIS conferences (TUGIS/FedGIS) on school mapping.

Baltimore Hunger Project

Additionally, MCSS has partnered annually with the Baltimore Hunger Project (BHP) to support their efforts to mitigate food insecurity among Maryland students. This partnership involves collecting non-perishable food items and hosting packing sessions to assemble weekend food bags with encouraging notes for students. These food bags are then distributed by BHP and its partners.

Administration

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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.

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

2023-2024 Subcabinet Members



Dr. Carey Wright
Chair, State
Superintendent of
Schools



Anthony G. Brown
Attorney General
of Maryland



Col. Roland L. Butler, Jr
Superintendent of State
Police



Dr. Laura Herrera Scott,
MD, MPH
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:

2023-2024 Advisory Board Members

Dr. Maria Navarro, Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland

Katherine Klausmeier, Maryland State Senate

Eric Ebersole, Maryland House of Delegates

Karin Bailey, Maryland Association of Boards of Education

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

Pamela Gaddy, Maryland State Education Association

Jacquetta Lavon Jacobs, Parent of a Public School Student

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

Vincent Schiraldi, Secretary, Department of Juvenile Service

Sheriff Matthew Crisafulli, Maryland Sheriffs' Association

Chief Paul Kifer, Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Laurel Moody, Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems

David Engel, Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center

Zaria Naqvi, Maryland Association of Student Councils

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

Megan Berger, Disability Rights Maryland

Joseph Cormier, Parent of a Child with Disabilities

Thomas E. Alban, Representative of a Nonpublic School

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

Michael Brown, Representative of School Principals

Dr. Tia McKinnon, Director of Special Education, Charles County Public Schools

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

Carol Ellen Johnson, Representative of School Bus Drivers

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

Recordings/minutes of School Safety Advisory Board meetings can be found and viewed at [SchoolSafety.Maryland.gov](https://www.schoolsafety.maryland.gov)

Maryland Center for School Safety Staff

Leadership



Kate Bryan
Executive Director

Ms. Bryan has served as the Executive Director of MCSS since 2018. Prior to joining MCSS, she served as the Deputy Executive Director at the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). Executive Director Bryan holds a Master of Science in Law from the University of Maryland, Francis King Carey School of Law. She is also a Certified Public Manager (CPM) and FEMA Certified Master Exercise Practitioner (MEP).



Joseph Dino Pignataro
Director of Program Management

Mr. Pignataro retired from Montgomery County, Maryland Police as a Sergeant, served as the Centreville, Maryland Chief of Police, and as the Public Safety Officer in College Park, Maryland. His public safety career began as a volunteer firefighter and as a career fire technician, prior to serving in law enforcement, and he continues to serve as a volunteer firefighter. Mr. Pignataro is a graduate of the University of Potomac, and the Academy of Excellence in Local Government at the University of Maryland.



Gifty Quarshie
Director of Administration

Ms. Quarshie has experience working as a fiscal director, manager, and officer in the public and private sectors, having managed approximately \$13 billion in operating and capital budget and \$200 million in cash fund accounting. She earned her Master of Business Administration from Hood College and her Bachelor of Applied Science at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

Maryland Center for School Safety Staff Cont.

Leadership Cont.



Kimberly Buckheit

Director of Strategic Initiatives

Mrs. Buckheit spent the majority of her professional career as a public school Principal, where she was recognized as a National Distinguished Principal and Breakthrough School Principal for her leadership. Prior to becoming a Principal, she provided wrap-around behavioral supports for individuals at the Kennedy Krieger Institute. She has a Master's of Education Leadership from Goucher College and a Bachelor's of Arts from Bucknell University.



Jeyan Jebaraj

Chief Information Officer

Mr. Jebaraj is a Business Solutions Manager with over 15 years of experience in project management, big data, spatial databases, and enterprise systems. Skilled in incident management and emergency management data analysis for informed decision-making & risk reduction strategies. He is a certified Geographic Information Systems Professional and a graduate of the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

Safe Schools Maryland



Sandra Caldwell

School Safety Analyst

Prior to her position at MCSS, Ms. Caldwell spent eight years as a Criminal Intelligence Analyst working for the Maryland State Police. She is also a certified Maryland teacher and taught middle school-aged students for four years in Baltimore County. She is a graduate of Towson University. Ms. Caldwell primarily supports the Safe Schools Maryland Anonymous Reporting System.

Maryland Center for School Safety Staff Cont.

Regional Programs



Ron Pierce
Regional Manager

Mr. Pierce is an experienced public safety administrator with a demonstrated history of managing public safety agencies and private sector programs focused on crime prevention and intervention strategies. Skilled in Public Safety Training, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, Emergency Management and Law Enforcement. Mr. Pierce has a Bachelor of Arts in Criminology from the University of Maryland College Park.

Training and Certification



James Hott
School Safety Training Program Coordinator

Mr. Hott has a wide range of public safety experience. He is an experienced Police Trainer, School Resource Officer, Police Sergeant and DARE Officer/Mentor. He was previously employed at the Cumberland Police Department. He is the agency lead for Training and the co-creator and co-developer of the Maryland SRO/SSE Training Academy. Mr. Hott has a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice with a Minor in Political Science.



Jeffrey S. Smith
School Safety Training Program Coordinator

Mr. Smith retired after he served as a law enforcement officer for 29.5 years. During his time in law enforcement he served as an instructor, beginning in 1996, in numerous areas. Jeff served on the department's tactical team as a tactical officer for 11 years and 12 years as a Crisis Negotiator and Assistant Commander of the Crisis Negotiations Team. Jeff served almost 20 years in the Criminal Investigation Division in Major Crimes, Special Enforcement and Narcotics. After retiring from law enforcement, Jeff went into law enforcement training where he taught officers all over the United States in survival science, surveillance, and undercover operations. Jeff recently spent time as a School Security Coordinator for the Talbot County Public Schools.

Prevention and Intervention



Drew Turner

Regional Prevention and Intervention Specialist

Mr. Turner is a native of Salisbury, Maryland, and a graduate of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice. Drew comes to MCSS with 16 years of law enforcement experience with a wide variety of knowledge and experience. He specializes in Behavioral Threat Assessment/ Pathway to Violence research and planning, developing tools to assist locals when conducting BTA's and developing safety plans for schools and their community.



Brittani Florey

Regional Prevention and Intervention Specialist

Mrs. Florey brings to MCSS 10 years of experience in the field of Human Services. As a former Director of Community Case Management for a large nonprofit, she helped individuals graduate from Drug Court, provided resources and support to inmates at a local detention center, and assisted individuals facing homelessness. Mrs. Florey earned her Master of Science in Criminal Justice from Florida State University in 2023.

Maryland Center for School Safety Staff Cont.

Administration and Grants



Jesika McNeil

Administrator - Fiscal Operations

Ms. McNeil is a graduate of Towson University with a Bachelor of Science degree with a double major in Economics and Sociology. She has over twenty years of experience as a corporate administrator in the field of Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC), where she was responsible for the coordination of operations in the public and private sectors.



Barbara Scott

Grant Specialist

Ms. Scott is a seasoned business professional having worked in the banking industry for over 20 years as an Operations Manager. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree with a concentration in Finance from Towson State University.



Shalae Mathis

Administrative Specialist

Ms. Mathis is an experienced administrative professional with a demonstrated history of working in the health and child-care industry. Prior to coming to MCSS, she worked at MSDE, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Maryland Medical Center. Ms. Mathis earned her Bachelor of Science Degree from Towson University with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology.

Communications and Engagement



Ja Coates

Communications and Instructional Specialist

Mx. Coates is a Baltimore native with an educational background in Film and Theatre. They bring over 10 years of experience in the learning and development industry. While in the federal government, Mx. Coates excelled in managing and developing role-specific training programs tailored for hybrid adult learning. Their commitment to fostering effective communication and providing impactful instructional support has been a driving force throughout their career. As the Communications and Instructional Specialist, they will contribute to the safety and well-being of our educational communities through innovative communication strategies and robust instructional programs.



Aaron Chiusano

Communications and Multimedia Specialist

Mr. Chiusano's background is in video and audio production. He has over 10 years of experience in the A/V field. He earned his Bachelor of Arts from McDaniel College, where he studied cinema, which led him to an internship and eventual employment at the Community Media Center in Carroll County, where he gained experience in LIVE television broadcast and A/V logistics/operations management. He is apt with graphic design and information technology; he is where tech meets art.

Mr. Chiusano is a combat veteran who served over five years as an active-duty infantryman in the U.S. Army.

Maryland Center for School Safety Staff Cont.

Maryland Office of the Attorney General



Jeaneen J. Johnson

Assistant Attorney General & Counsel to MCSS

Ms. Johnson earned her law degree from Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, and a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice and Political Science from the University of Delaware. Ms. Johnson has practiced in state and federal courts in both the public and private sectors.

Internship



Reem Saleh

MCSS Data Analyst Intern

Ms. Saleh is a senior Information Science major at the University of Maryland, College Park. Ms. Saleh joined MCSS as the Data Analyst Intern in January 2024 and primarily works on tasks for the SRO Adequate Coverage program. She applies her technical skills as an intern at MCSS. Ms. Saleh was selected as one of Glamour Magazine's College Women of the Year 2024. Outside of MCSS, she has gained research experience in the tech and policy fields and held leadership positions both on and off campus. She will be graduating in May 2025 and is looking forward to continuing her work in the data analytics field and applying her skills to meaningful and impactful projects.

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