

March 1, 2023

The Honorable Wes Moore
Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable William C. Ferguson IV
President
Senate of Maryland
State House, H-107
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker
House of Delegates
State House, H-101
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Critical Life Threatening Incident Report required by Education Article § 7-1502(g)(21) (MSAR #11851) and Education Article §7-1510(g)(3) (MSAR #11594)

Dear Governor Moore, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

Pursuant to Education Article § 7-1502(g)(21), Education Article §7-1510(g)(3), and State Government Article §2-1257, the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) respectfully submits the following report, which contains identified lessons learned and school safety recommendations following a critical life-threatening incident on public school grounds.

If you have any questions about this report or would like additional information, please contact MCSS Deputy Director, J. Dino Pignataro at joseph.pignataro@maryland.gov or 410-281-2335.

Sincerely,



Kate Bryan
Executive Director

Maryland Public School

Critical Life-Threatening Incident

After-Action Summary

On November 23, 2022 there was an incident of a reported threat involving a school within Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) that met the criteria to be considered a *Critical Life-Threatening Incident* pursuant to Md. Ed. Art. § 7-1510 (g) and COMAR 14.40.05.

Notification [COMAR 14.40.05.04A]

On December 13, 2022, the BCPS School Security Coordinator (SSC) notified the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) of this critical life-threatening incident following the arrest and charge of the perpetrators with *making threats of mass violence* under Criminal Law Article, §3-1001, Annotated Code of Maryland.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On January 6, 2023, an after-action meeting was held involving school representatives, law enforcement, and a representative from MCSS.

After-Action Report [COMAR 14.40.05.04C]

On January 30, 2023, BCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

Based upon the after-action review led by the BCPS, the following lessons learned were identified by individuals from BCPS participating in the after-action meeting:

1. School personnel who received the threats via email reported the situation immediately. The nature of investigating and addressing online threats and school safety concerns differ from threats and concerns that occur person to person and within the school building (i.e., notes, verbal statements, writing on a surface). School staff and law enforcement officials must develop and become familiar with the response to online threat procedures to ensure an effective response.

2. With Swatting¹ incidents on the rise, it is imperative that school personnel notify law enforcement as soon as a threat is received so that an investigation can be initiated immediately. School personnel should be kept abreast of information regarding Swatting that is disseminated by local, state and federal agencies and other school safety organizations. Swatting is defined as a false report of an ongoing emergency or threat of violence intended to prompt an immediate tactical law enforcement response

School Safety Recommendations

1. Threat reporting and communication protocols, which allow rapid notification to critical staff and law enforcement, should be tested regularly to ensure designated individuals know how to respond. Schools should participate with law enforcement in regularly scheduled discussion-based exercises designed to test their response to school threats, both from online and direct sources.
2. Communication teams from both the police and school need to coordinate for a clear and consistent message when dealing with cases that are open criminal investigations. While it is understood that not all details can be released, parents need to be reassured that both school and law enforcement officials are committing resources to remedy the situation. Below are the types of information that should be communicated to parents and the greater community:
 - a. *Acknowledge the incident* by listing only the facts, and pertinent information from law enforcement officials when applicable.
 - b. *Describe the actions* being taken to address the incident.
 - c. *Assure parents and the community* that student safety is the highest priority for police and school officials.
 - d. *Inform parents* the way in which the school will continue to communicate with them and how they can contact the school for and with additional information.
3. Students should be provided information throughout the school year about their responsibilities as a digital citizen. Digital citizenship can be defined as the successful and positive engagement with digital

¹ Swatting is making a hoax call to 9-1-1 to draw an immediate response from law enforcement as defined within [The Crime of 'Swatting': Fake 9-1-1 Calls Have Real Consequences — FBI](#).

technologies that allows individuals and communities to cultivate values, skills, attitudes and knowledge. Cyberbullying, swatting, plagiarism, and cell phone disruptions during the school day, are all examples of poor digital citizenship. By reinforcing the expectations of healthy internet usage throughout the school year, the hope is that these negative examples will be decreased.

4. Maryland schools and school systems should continuously encourage students to immediately report school safety concerns to a trusted adult and/or through a 24/7 electronic reporting system like [Safe Schools Maryland](#). Information on reporting methods should be available on the school and system webpage, in newsletters, print materials disseminated, and any other means to ensure a wide distribution. These materials should be available to the public in multiple languages.