

April 26, 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
Maryland 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 §7-1501(g)(3) (MSAR #11594)

Dear Governor Moore, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

Pursuant to Education Article §7-1502(g)(21), Education Article §7-1501(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.

Any questions related to this report or for 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 December 16, 2022 there was an incident of physical harm to a student involving a school within Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) 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 16, 2022, the PGCPS School Security Coordinator (SSC) notified the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) of the incident.

After-Action Meeting [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On January 30, 2023, an after-action meeting was held involving the PGCPS system and school representatives, law enforcement, and a representative from MCSS.

After-Action Report [COMAR 14.40.05.04C]

On March 24, 2023, PGCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

Lessons Learned

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

1. The PGCPS school system emergency management plans include procedures for communicating critical information to parents and the media as well as procedures for reunifying students with their families. However, this incident highlighted the need for schools to be prepared to handle an unplanned and rapid influx of parents and media to a school. Without an established and practiced procedure to swiftly communicate to parents and media information about the incident--including a location they should go to receive the most accurate and up to date information--schools may end up having to manage a second emergency.

2. The PGCPs school system emergency management plans include procedures to lockdown¹ the school in response to a potentially life-threatening incident. However, PGCPs recognizes the need for schools to have multiple response protocol options that allow for the school campus to transition to an option less restrictive than lockdown. For example, school hallways and other areas may need to remain off limits to ensure officials can continue investigation, but once there is no longer an immediate threat to life-safety, schools should consider moving to less restrictive protocol. In particular, operation of the food service program during emergency responses other than a lockdown could and should take place. If students are in their classrooms for a hold or secure response that extends into a meal time, food service should be considered, especially for those students that have special medical concerns.

Therefore, staff should be trained in how to utilize the least disruptive and appropriate response, as well as how to transition between different response protocols (e.g., hold, secure, lockdown) as an event unfolds. When a school does not transition properly through the levels of response protocols or does not use the proper level of response for an incident, they risk unintended consequences including unnecessary loss of instruction time, inaccurate implementation of a protocol, and desensitization to the serious nature of a lockdown protocol.

3. School security personnel must monitor the arrival and departure of students. In some instances, this requires the adjustment of work hours for security personnel. School administrators should work closely with the PGCPs security division and other school personnel to ensure adequate coverage for all student times of the school day.

School Safety Recommendations

1. School leaders should lead monthly discussions reviewing safety procedures with all employees. The continued reinforcement will build muscle memory that staff can draw upon in times of emergency. Conducting tabletop exercises to test plans and staff's knowledge of plans should be part of this process. Additionally, school staff should be provided the opportunity to assume different roles during these

¹ Lockdown is a procedure that is used to ensure students and staff secure themselves in a classroom or other location that can be locked to prevent access by an intruder. Lockdown procedures include procedures to turn off lights, turn off sounds from phones, and remaining quiet.

exercises to practice various responsibilities and be prepared to respond to various types of emergency situations.

2. A family notification location,² which may or may not be the future reunification site, should be established early on in an incident as a method of directing caregivers to gather at a physical location. Because some responses may include numerous officials and lots of equipment coming to the school campus, schools should consider selecting notification and reunification locations away from the school. Additionally, media should be provided a separate location--away from families--that allows them to receive incident information directly from school and jurisdiction officials.
3. Communication plans for sending emergency notifications and providing timely information updates to various stakeholder groups *must* include specific procedures for individuals to follow including who, how, when, and where. It is recommended that schools develop and use templates and statements prepared in advance to facilitate speed and thoughtful messaging.

² Notification centers allow caregivers to receive accurate information directly from school officials in a controlled location and provides school personnel the opportunity to address misinformation immediately.