# School Safety Subcabinet Annual Report of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS)

This report includes information about activities of the Center, including aggregate data on the information collected from each local school system, an update on the current status and effectiveness of the Center, data collected on school resource officers under § 7-1508 of the Education Article, and priorities for improving school and student safety.

## MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY
### *Ed. Art. § 7-1503(h) (MSAR #11589)*

**Calendar Year: 2023**

**Submitted: November 17, 2023**

November 17, 2023

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

The Honorable William C. Ferguson IV          The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
President                                      Speaker
Senate of Maryland                             House of Delegates
State House, H-107                             State House, H-101
Annapolis, MD 21401                            Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Report required by State Government Article Ed. Art. §7-1503(h)(1) (MSAR #11589)

Dear Governor Moore, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

Pursuant to the Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018, §7-1503(h)(1) of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the School Safety Subcabinet respectfully submits this report summarizing the activities of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS).

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact me at, kate.bryan@maryland.gov or 410-281-2335.

Sincerely,

Kate Bryan
Executive Director

# MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

# 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 **2023 Maryland Center for School Safety Annual Repor**t 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.

2023 marked year five (5) since the enactment of the Safe To Learn Act 2018, prompting MCSS to review all statutory requirements to ensure compliance and assess the effectiveness of existing programs that support local educational stakeholders. Over the course of the year, each MCSS program underwent a review to: 1) consider its alignment with the statutory requirements; 2) determine the degree of effectiveness in increasing the safety of Maryland schools; and 3) identify areas of improvement. Information gleaned from these regular reviews will inform the programs and services provided to our local partners in the coming years.

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 2023

## Conference

The number and diversity of attendees at the 2023 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.

## Behavior Threat Assessment

MCSS efforts in 2023 led to increased knowledge and skill among Maryland educational leaders, and school based behavioral health staff. The development of a suite of resource tools made available to locals, and direct instruction provided by MCSS staff on various BTA related topics, is an accomplishment of note.
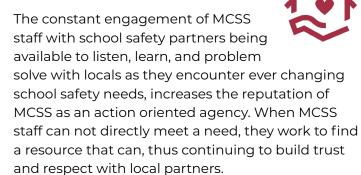
## School Emergency Preparedness

MCSS engaged school leaders in making preparedness a continuous effort during the school year through promotion of monthly tabletop exercises and increased threat management programs. MCSS observed schools and systems moving from just emergency planning to practicing and improving procedures in preparation for an incident.

## State Preparedness Coordination

Activities occurred in 2023 that increased the likelihood Maryland state agencies will respond quickly, in a coordinated manner with a range of resources, in support of a local school community if an emergency incident occurs. MCSS led this preparedness effort engaging with stakeholders and facilitating activities.

## 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.

## Student Voice

Advancing the critical nature of student voice in school safety efforts through MCSS programs (see page 19), newsletter, governing bodies, and events such as the art showcase model for locals the importance of hearing and empowering students.

# MCSS PRIORITIES 2024

## Behavior Threat Assessment

Increasing knowledge and skills of Maryland public schools Behavioral Threat Assessment teams through direct instruction, communications, resource documents, and exercises. Extending knowledge to include planning for interventions that decrease the risk a student poses allowing them to maintain healthy connections to the school community.

## 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.

## Standard Emergency Response Protocols

Through training, communications, and exercises for all Maryland schools, increase use of standard response language across agencies and jurisdictions to include the terms; Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter. Increase school leaders knowledge and skills identifying the appropriate response protocol to use given an evolving emergency situation.

# Contents

The Safe to Learn Act 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 2023 on time. This section serves as an overview and link to each required report.

The Safe to Learn Act 2018 directs MCSS to administer grants that support local school safety efforts. MCSS administered five (5) grants during 2023 that totaled over twenty million dollars. This section provides details for each grant administered.

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 2023 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 2023.

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 2023.

This section provides 2023 information regarding the School Safety Subcabinet, Subcabinet Advisory Board, and MCSS personnel.

# Required Reports

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

## 2023 Use 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.

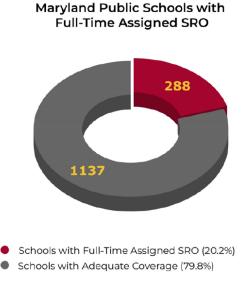## Critical Life-Threatening Incident Reports
Ed. Art. §7-1510(g)
COMAR 14.40.05
Each Local Education Agency (LEA) is required to conduct an after action review meeting following a critical, life-threatening (CLT) incident and submit a report to MCSS. MCSS is required to submit a summary of lessons learned and recommendations to the Governor and Maryland General Assembly.

## 2023 School Resource Officer - Adequate Coverage Report
Ed. Art. § 7-1502(g)(18) and § 7-1508(e)(3)
Annually, MCSS must provide the Governor and General Assembly with a summary of the SRO and adequate law enforcement coverage[1] that each LEA shares with MCSS at the start of the 2023-2024 school year. Information collected in August 2023 indicates that 288 schools have a full time SRO, a decrease of 15 schools from 2022, while 1,137 Maryland public schools are provided adequate law enforcement coverage through other means.

**Maryland Public Schools with Full-Time Assigned SRO**

288

1137

- Schools with Full-Time Assigned SRO (20.2%)
- Schools with Adequate Coverage (79.8%)

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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 FY2023 Grants Update

MCSS administered five (5) different school safety grants in FY2023. MCSS's portfolio of grants includes the Safe Schools Fund Grant (SSFG), the SRO Adequate Coverage Grant, the Hate Crimes Grant (HCG), the School Safety Grant Program (SSGP), and the Nonpublic Schools Safety Improvement Grant (NPSI). In all, **MCSS awarded over twenty million dollars** in school safety grants in FY2023. Below is a list of all five grants with their corresponding amount awarded:

| Type of Grant | Amount Awarded |
|---|---:|
| School Safety Grant Program (SSGP) | $10,000,000 |
| Nonpublic School Security Improvement (NPSI) Grant | $3,475,321 |
| Safe Schools Fund Grant (SSFG) | $549,786 |
| School Resource Officer (SRO) Grant | $3,795,336 |
| Hate Crimes Grant (HCG) | $2,000,000 |

**School Safety Grant Program (SSGP)**
MCSS administers the School Safety Grant Program on behalf of 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. Ed. Art. §5-317 requires the Governor to provide an annual allocation of $10 million for the program. Eligible projects include safety improvements to the school facility. Additional information is available in the FY2023 Notification of Funding Availability (NOFA).
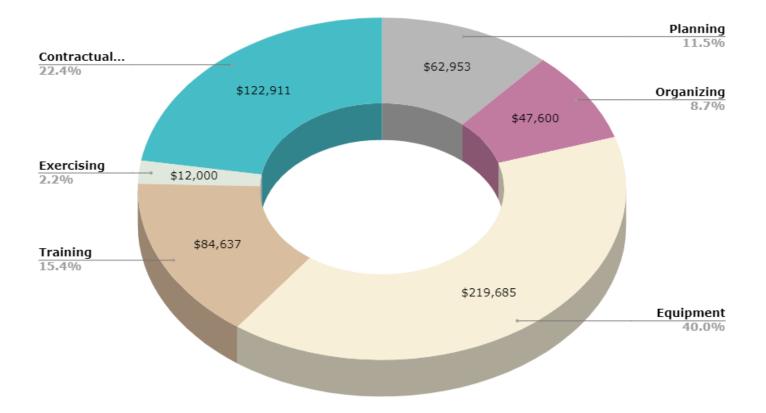
**Nonpublic School Safety Security Improvement Grant**
MCSS also administered the nonpublic School Safety Security Improvement Grant in FY2023. Of the $3.5M appropriated in fiscal year 2023 for this grant, MCSS awarded approximately $3.4M in grants. Additional information is available in the FY2023 Notification of Funding Availability (NOFA).

# MCSS FY2023 Grants Update Cont.

**Safe Schools Fund Grant**
Six hundred thousand dollars was appropriated in fiscal year 2023 for the Safe Schools Fund Grant (SSFG) program. Approximately $550,000 in grant funding was awarded to local education agencies within the state of Maryland. Grant funds were used for various school safety initiatives, including:

- Providing comprehensive wellness programming for at-risk students;
- Installing exterior lighting control systems to address the issue of trespassing and vandalism on school grounds;
- Training of school staff on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs, mental health awareness programs, and other wrap-around services;
- Installing cameras, emergency communication devices, and other safety and security equipment in and around school facilities;
- Procuring 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.

## FY2023 Safe Schools Fund Grant - Use of Funds

| Category | Percent | Amount |
|---|---|---|
| Contractual... | 22.4% | $122,911 |
| Exercising | 2.2% | $12,000 |
| Training | 15.4% | $84,637 |
| Equipment | 40.0% | $219,685 |
| Organizing | 8.7% | $47,600 |
| Planning | 11.5% | $62,953 |

# MCSS FY2023 Grants Update Cont.

**School Resource Officer/Adequate Coverage Grant**
Approximately $3.8M in grant funding was awarded to local school systems and local law enforcement agencies. The SRO/Adequate Coverage Grant funds were used to pay for:
- Salaries for officers assigned as full-time SROs;
- Overtime pay for officers providing adequate coverage;
- MCSS SRO Model training and other relevant school safety training designed for SROs and needed equipment.

**Hate Crimes Grant**
MCSS awarded $2.0M in hate crimes grant funding to public, nonpublic, private schools, and childcare centers determined to be at risk of hate crimes. In all, MCSS received sixty-three applications. Fifty-four (54) applicants were awarded grants to be used on various school safety projects to include:
- Security-related training;
- Additional Security personnel;
- Security-related equipment;
- Security-related technology;
- Door hardening; and
- Other security-related facility upgrades.

# Programs and Resources

# 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.

Ed. Art. § 7-1510 requires that LEAs regularly submit to MCSS summaries of safety evaluations done on all their schools, as well as copies of emergency plans for each public school.

**School Safety Evaluations**
In the 2022-2023 school year, **fourteen (14) local school systems submitted an evaluation summary**. These summaries found the need for additional training for staff on emergency plans and security policies and request from LEAs for additional technical assistance. Additionally, MCSS provided technical assistance to eight (8) private schools looking to conduct safety evaluations of their schools.

In response to LEA requests for additional technical support, MCSS hosted two courses, basic and advanced Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, hosted by the National Institute of Crime Prevention. There were 30 LEA staff who completed both courses and earned a CPD (CPTED Professional Designation), enabling them to assess the safety of existing school facilities and review plans for new construction. In addition, MCSS **provided LEAs with a school safety evaluation survey tool** based on the CDC CPTED School Assessment (CSA) to assist them with performing safety evaluations themselves. The MCSS school safety evaluation resource will be made available to any Maryland school as they seek to determine gaps and utilize existing local and grant money to close them.
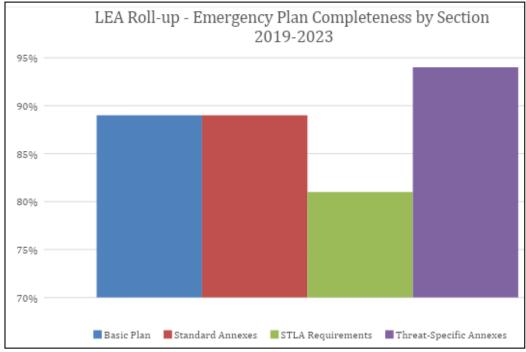
MCSS will look to advance this type of data-driven decision-making by promoting local use of the survey tool in 2024. Maryland students are particularly vulnerable when present in a location with fewer safety and security resources, such as childcare facilities. MCSS will look to develop partnerships in 2024 that allow a more efficient flow of information and available resources in this area.

# Emergency Preparedness Planning Cont.

**School Emergency Plans**
MCSS reviewed updated school emergency plans submitted by **9 LEAs** at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, which **represented plans for 403 schools**. MCSS regional staff reviewed and provided feedback on these emergency plans to each local school system 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. 88% of basic plan and standard annex elements across the state are included in the most recent plans submitted by each LEA. 81% 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.



LEA Roll-up - Emergency Plan Completeness by Section 2019-2023

**Note the y-axis starting point of 70%.

MCSS staff are currently working directly with each LEA to ensure all emergency plans, including those submitted for the 2023-2034 school year, are robust and complete to 100% of the requirements.
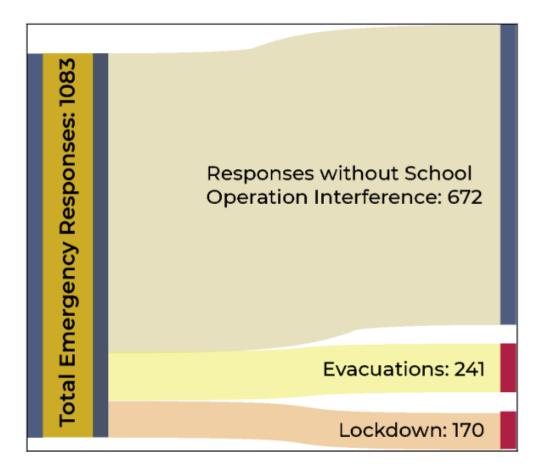
# Emergency Preparedness Planning Cont.

**2023 Local Education Agency Annual Emergency Plan Performance Summary**
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 2022-2023 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.

- 1,721 threats were made against any school or school system facility
- 1,083 emergency responses to a school
- 170 emergencies resulted in a lockdown
- 241 emergencies resulted in an evacuation
- One (1) incident occurred in which a public school's emergency plan failed in part, or whole, to function as anticipated in a real-world emergency response or drill
- 591 school hours were spent in responding to real-world incidents

The table below represents a summary of data submitted by 23 LEAs for the 2022-2023 school year.

# Emergency Preparedness Drills and Exercises

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.

**2023 Local Education Agency 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 2022-2023 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.

- 4,848 total school hours were spent engaging in emergency drills.
- One (1) incident occurred in which a public school's emergency plan failed in part, or whole, to function as anticipated in a drill.



ARE WE READY?

| Download the Tabletop Exercises | Exercise & Execute | Analyze Findings, Identify Gaps | Fix Vulnerabilities, Implement Corrective Action |

# "Are We Ready" Tabletop Exercise Program

The "Are We Ready" tabletop exercise program was developed and implemented in 2023 to provide a quick resource for schools to practice responding to realistic emergency situations. Tabletops are discussion-based activities that allow team members to discuss their roles and how they may respond 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 chooses to inject additional dynamics to an emergency scenario. The tabletop exercises developed by MCSS are built to address many different types of emergencies and

# Emergency Preparedness Drills and Exercises Cont.

audience members, to include but not limited to: SROs, Teachers, Administrators, Nurses, School Security, and students if appropriate. Thirty-two "Are We Ready" exercises were developed and made available on the MCSS website as a PDF document. Each exercise document includes a unique scenario as well as guidance on conducting the activity.

According to FEMA, 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[1]. Tabletop exercises help people build their muscle memory in terms of how they respond to an emergency, allowing them to act quickly when a real emergency happens. Conducting them not only helps acclimate school personnel to their emergency operations plan but also helps to build a teamwork mindset when reacting to an incident.

> *"This has worked well. We have been using them at our quarterly safety meetings. We typically spend about 15 minutes on them. The scenarios chosen have been spot on. We have faced many real-life situations involving those scenarios, so this has been helpful for us to review." - Received from our feedback form on 6/22/23*

The MCSS "Are We Ready" web-page has had 2,980 visitors since it became active in August 2022. MCSS will work in 2024 to make tabletops even more appealing and easy to use for all participants by creating and publishing video tabletops. The video tabletop will present a scenario with narration and an accompanying video, making the activity even more engaging.
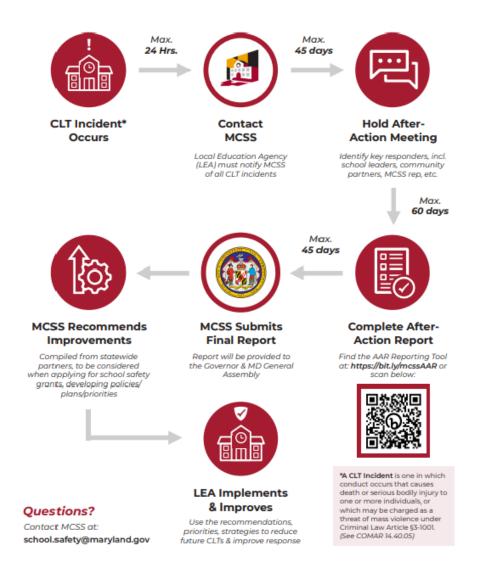
| |
|---|
| ⊙ Get Started... |
| ⊙ **MCSS TTX 01 - Rumors, Rumors Everywhere** |

Read/Download 📄 MCSS TTX 01 - Rumors, Rumors Everywhere
Expected Excercise Time: 10-15 min
Expected Participants: Principal, Administrator, SRO, SSD

| |
|---|
| ⊙ **MCSS TTX 02 - Tik Tok Challenge** |
| ⊙ **MCSS TTX 03 - Bus Crash** |
| ⊙ **MCSS TTX 04 - Under the Friday Night Lights** |
| ⊙ **MCSS TTX 05 - Bomb Threat** |
| ⊙ **MCSS TTX 06 - Protest Civil Unrest** |
| ⊙ **MCSS TTX 07 - Drop Off** |
| ⊙ **MCSS TTX 08 - Incoming Tip** |
| ⊙ **MCSS TTX 09 - Winter Treat** |
| ⊙ **MCSS TTX 10 - Tragedy** |

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

# 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 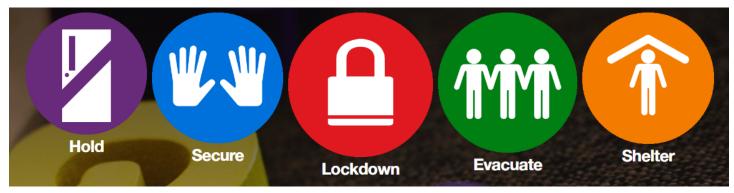process. This new tool guides the team through a series of questions related to the event and generates a summary report based upon responses. Workshops and dissemination of a guidance document and the AAR meeting tool will be held during 2024 to expand the use of after-action reviews by schools following routine drills and other events. The following graphic represents the timeline of an after-action review process.



**CLT Incident\* Occurs**

*Max. 24 Hrs.*

**Contact MCSS**
*Local Education Agency (LEA) must notify MCSS of all CLT incidents*

*Max. 45 days*

**Hold After-Action Meeting**
*Identify key responders, incl. school leaders, community partners, MCSS rep, etc.*

*Max. 60 days*

**MCSS Recommends Improvements**
*Compiled from statewide partners, to be considered when applying for school safety grants, developing policies/ plans/priorities*

**MCSS Submits Final Report**
*Report will be provided to the Governor & MD General Assembly*

*Max. 45 days*

**Complete After-Action Report**
*Find the AAR Reporting Tool at: https://bit.ly/mcssAAR or scan below:*

**Questions?**
Contact MCSS at:
**school.safety@maryland.gov**

**LEA Implements & Improves**
*Use the recommendations, priorities, strategies to reduce future CLTs & improve response*

*\*A CLT Incident is one in which conduct occurs that causes death or serious bodily injury to one or more individuals, or which may be charged as a threat of mass violence under Criminal Law Article §3-1001. (See COMAR 14.40.05)*

# After-action Review Guidance and Support Cont.

During the 2022-2023 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.

- First responders, school officials, and system level officials must establish a method to communicate together during and after an event to coordinate messages being shared with the public.
- Information about an anonymous reporting system to avert harmful events must be provided to students, staff, and parents.
- The designated space for the Incident Command Post to be set up needs to be able to hold a large number of people given a large-scale event.
- Procedures for sharing of sensitive information between agencies and school officials should be established in preparation for an event.
- School officials and emergency responders should train and rehearse together to ensure a rapid and effective response.
- Emergency planning should include cross training staff to serve multiple roles.
- Several lessons learned related to response protocols and included:
  - Common language across school officials, emergency responders, and geographic boundaries,
  - Training on the proper use of response protocols for given situations,
  - Practice for all students and staff on procedures for each protocol, and
  - Increase training and practice of the search and recovery (reunification) protocol.



Graphic provided by the "I Love You Guys" Foundation.

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.

## School Resource Officer and School Security Employee Training Program

The Maryland SRO/SSE Training Academy is a specialized learning experience required for all Maryland SROs and SSEs under Ed. Art. § 7-1510. The curriculum used for the training academy was developed by MCSS and approved by the Maryland Police Certification and Training Commission (MPCTC). The curriculum is a total of 70 hours; 16 hours of foundational training components, and 54 hours of specialized curriculum including de-escalation, disability and diversity awareness, implicit bias, and restorative approaches.

MCSS holds seven (7) SRO/SSE Training Academy sessions in different Maryland regions over the course of the year.  The program is taught by a combination of MCSS certified instructors and specially qualified Subject Matter Experts (SME).  At the conclusion of each training, participants are required to successfully complete a comprehensive written examination. The curriculum used for the training academy is reviewed by MCSS annually and re-certified by MPCTC every three years.



*MCSS Instructor Jim Hott and SME Jeneen Beck of FCPS instructing students*

Feedback from training academy attendees continues to be positive and indicates the effectiveness of the program in preparing law enforcement and security personnel for the unique situations they encounter working with youth in a school setting. Participants indicate that, "the wide range of instructors and the experience they bring to the course", as one reason for the program's effectiveness, supporting the continued use of subject matter experts.

# SRO/SSE Training Program Cont.

> *Other feedback from participants related to program elements they found most helpful:*
> - *"...how to be empathetic, understand that not all youth operate on the same level, show restraint and build relationships with all students."*
> - *"...how to deescalate stressful situations"*
> - *"...restorative circles..."*
> - *"...understanding the differences between school discipline and [law] enforcement and that SROs are not in the schools to make arrests."*
> - *"...the need for dialogue between security, SROs and educators."*

The seven programs conducted in 2023 certified a total of **278 SROs and SSEs** to work in Maryland schools. This was a significant increase from previous years and can be attributed to the increased use of SSEs by LEAs during the 2022-2023 school year. The 2024 SRO/SSE Training Academy will be held in seven locations across the State. The training academy curriculum will undergo a thorough review this upcoming year to identify additions and changes to required content, as MCSS strives to continue to meet the evolving needs of the School Safety community.



*Graduating Class 23-04 in Montgomery County, MD.*

# Behavior Threat Assessment (BTA)

MCSS first published the "Maryland's Model Policy for Behavior Threat Assessment" in September 2018, as required by the Safe to Learn Act of 2018. Thereafter, each local school system adopted its own policy to include the elements of the State-level policy. Ed. Art. §7-1507 defines specific requirements for local Behavior Threat Assessment Teams. MCSS developed and published several new documents in 2023 to increase local knowledge and expertise in the area of Behavior Threat Assessment. Additionally, MCSS staff have conducted workshops for system level and local leaders to share published resources and provide direct technical support to educators across Maryland.

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February 2023

## Behavioral Threat Assessment
Implementation Guide

MCSS
schoolsafety.maryland.gov
410-281-2335

## Behavior Threat Assessment Implementation Guide ←Click here
Published February 2023
The implementation guide provides information to support school based behavior threat assessment teams engaging in assessments to determine the level of threat a student exhibiting behaviors of concern poses. MCSS printed 1,000 copies for distribution to Maryland educators in 2023, in addition to the document being available digitally for download and reference.

## Behavior Threat Assessment Documents Crosswalk ←Click here
Published February 2023
This crosswalk document allows practitioners to walk between requirements in the 2018 Behavior Threat Assessment Model Policy and the 2023 Implementation Guide.

## Behavior Threat Assessment 2023 Workshops
MCSS staff conducted a BTA team planning workshop in each of the five Maryland regions during the month of May. These three hour workshops provided direct instruction to local educators as they increased their BTA knowledge and skills. The resource documents from above were distributed and reviewed with workshop participants. Additionally, the workshop created the opportunity to share the availability of **BTA training exercises** as a resource tool for the BTA team to hone their skills. The May workshops engaged **513 participants**. These workshops have since led to 5 LEAs inviting MCSS staff to conduct system wide training for their administrative, security, and student support teams. A November livestream workshop on the unique considerations for students with disabilities was held in coordination with MSDE and Disability Rights Maryland.

# Behavior Threat Assessment (BTA) Cont.

## [Behavior Threat Assessment Team Training Exercises](#) ←Click here
Published August 2023

The purpose of the BTA exercise activity is to prepare Behavior Threat Assessment (BTA) team members to: effectively perform their individual roles and responsibilities, collaborate as a member of the team, and consider information that culminates in a decision. Exercises are available on the MCSS web-page with a decision making resource to guide the discussion.

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SIMPLE

**MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY**

### Behavioral Threat Assessment
**TEAM TRAINING EXERCISE**

**What is Behavioral Threat Assessment?**
Behavioral Threat Assessment (BTA) is a fact-based, systematic process designed to identify, inquire, assess, and manage potentially dangerous or violent situations. BTA is crafted to gather a holistic picture of an individual that may be on a pathway to violence and to design a plan to mitigate harm and intervene effectively.

**What Behavioral Threat Assessment is Not.**
- Behavioral Threat Assessment is NOT a simple checklist of warning signs and red flags.
- Behavioral Threat Assessment is NOT criminally profiling individuals or conducting psychoanalysis.
- Behavioral Threat Assessment is NOT used to label students as trouble makers.
- Behavioral Threat Assessment is NOT used as a means to remove students from school systems.
- Behavioral Threat Assessment is NOT used to find the next school shooter.

**Purpose of Exercise**
The purpose of this exercise activity is to prepare Behavior Threat Assessment (BTA) team members to; effectively perform their individual role and responsibilities, collaborate as a member of the team, and consider information that culminates in a decision.

**RESOURCES** ⊙ Visit **schoolsafety.maryland.gov,** go to "Resources", then "Training & Exercise".

**CONTACT INFO** ⊙ **Drew Turner,** Regional Prevention and Intervention Specialist **drew.turner@maryland.gov**

**MCSS**
410-281-2335 | schoolsafety.maryland.gov | school.safety@maryland.gov

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SIMPLE

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| PREPARATION | Notes, information, and general considerations |
|---|---|
| Are steps being taken to execute the acts of violence? | |
| Has the individual made attempts to obtain materials, clothing, tools to fulfill their plans? | |
| Has the individual attempted dry runs or to alter plans to overcome potential obstacles or challenges that would prevent them from carrying out their plan? | |
| Have boundaries or restricted areas been tested? | |

*NOTE: This stage is beyond just acquiring weapons, this stage involves attempts to prepare for the violent act.

**Decision:**

| IMPLEMENTATION | Notes, information, and general considerations |
|---|---|
| What clues, facts, indicators are present that the threat is imminent? | |
| What indicators are present that the individual has moved from Ideation to Implementation? | |
| What resources and partners are readily available? | |
| What resources are available to stop the act of violence? | |

*NOTE: This step may be expedited by a sense of desperation, or influences of others encouraging escalation through social media or direct communication.

**Final Conclusion** | **Case Manager**

30 day review date: _____

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# 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.



Anonymous reports can be submitted by...

Calling
1-833-MD-B-SAFE

Visiting
SafeSchoolsMD.org

Using the
App
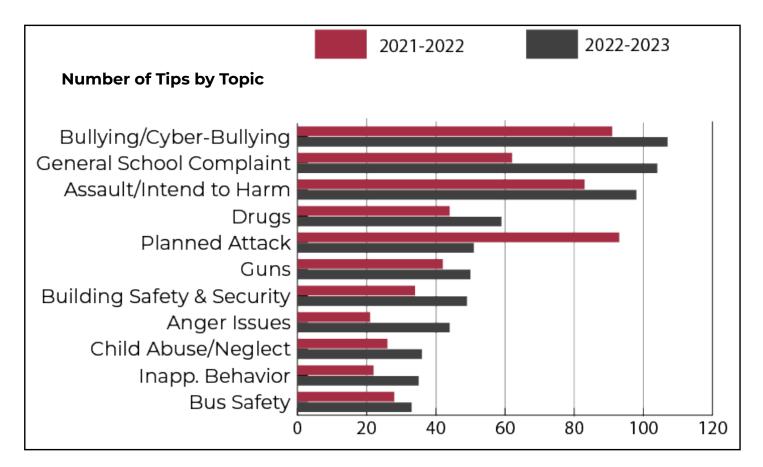
In a 2021 study titled, Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools, the USSS found that targeted school violence is preventable when communities report concerning behaviors and intervene.[1] This research[2] has indicated that **in almost all** school shooting 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; thus, having an anonymous method of reporting increases the likelihood that a bystander will report.

MCSS strives to make every Maryland student, educator, parent, and community stakeholder aware of the SSMD program. Advancing the program during public engagement events, social media advertisements, dissemination of promotional materials, monthly communications, on-line resources for educators, and the Safe Schools Maryland Award Program are all efforts continuing in 2024.

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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**

Legend: 2021-2022 (red), 2022-2023 (black)

| Topic | 2021-2022 | 2022-2023 |
|---|---|---|
| Bullying/Cyber-Bullying | 91 | 107 |
| General School Complaint | 62 | 104 |
| Assault/Intend to Harm | 83 | 98 |
| Drugs | 44 | 58 |
| Planned Attack | 92 | 50 |
| Guns | 42 | 49 |
| Building Safety & Security | 34 | 48 |
| Anger Issues | 21 | 44 |
| Child Abuse/Neglect | 26 | 36 |
| Inapp. Behavior | 22 | 35 |
| Bus Safety | 28 | 33 |

The SSMD program received **927** total reports during the 2022-2023, compared to 770 reports during the 2021-2022 school year. This increase may or may not represent an increase in school safety concerns, but does indicate the increasing awareness of the availability, and increased use of the SSMD program. Bullying/cyberbullying/teasing was the most frequent topic reported in the 2022-2023 school year, consistent with the previous four years where bullying was either the most reported, or second most reported topic. Reports continue to be most likely made through the web form.



↑CLICK HERE TO COPY & POST          CLICK HERE TO COPY & POST↑          CLICK HERE TO COPY & POST↑

# Student Voice Programs

The program formerly known as Student Focus Group was reviewed and updated in 2023 as a result of feedback from student participants and student program leaders.
The program name was changed to Student Advocates for School Safety (SASS) to more appropriately reflect the intention of the program. The SASS Program is designed to elevate student voices in the safety of their schools and communities. In addition to the programs described below there is a student member of each MCSS governing body. Students' experiences and input on school safety can occur in one of two ways; as a member of the SASS program, and/or participating in a local school safety club.

**Student Advocates for School Safety (SASS) Program**
The goal of the SASS program is for MCSS to have available as a resource, a group of students who represent the diversity of Maryland student voices to serve as advocates for school safety. Student advocates will:
- Provide insight on the student perspective related to school safety topics to MCSS staff and other state and local stakeholders,
- Be given the opportunity to expand their knowledge about school safety topics through collaboration with MCSS staff,
- Volunteer to create projects and events such as "Mix it Up Day",
- Assist MCSS staff with local school safety presentations for various audiences, and
- Serve as an advocate for school safety in their local community.

Students interested in becoming a student advocate complete this registration form.

*February 23, 2023 was Maryland's first Mix It Up Day sponsored by MCSS student advocates. Mix it up day encourages schools to host activities that prompt students to mix it up and engage with students they otherwise have not gotten to know. Students having positive connections with other students increases their sense of belonging to a school community. Join us this year on February 22, 2024 to mix it up.*

**School Safety Club**
School safety clubs occur within the local school and provide a means by which students attending that school can work with staff to identify and solve school safety concerns. SASS program members have developed resource materials to help students start and lead a club at their local school. For more information about starting a school safety club contact kimberly.buckheit1@maryland.gov.

# Maryland Annual School Safety Conference

*"This year's conference was Awesome! Thank you for all your efforts and delivery for making it a hit. Prayerfully, I will see you next year and years to come."*
*-Tylisa M. (Attendee)*

The Maryland Center for School Safety has coordinated and hosted a school safety conference each year since MCSS's inception in 2013. The conference has expanded over the years to meet the growing interest in school safety topics. The conference achieves several MCSS regulatory requirements.

*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.*

The 2023 conference occurred at the Turf Valley Resort and Conference Center in Ellicott City, Maryland on July 19th and 20th. This was the first of a three year commitment to host the event at Turf Valley. Attendance continued the growth trend from 320 attendees at the 2022 conference to **429 attendees** this July.

Over 30 presentations occurred with three keynote speakers and 27 concurrent sessions offered during the two days. This year participants were offered two pre-conference opportunities; a virtual webinar a month in advance of the conference and an in-person emergency planning session the evening before the full two-day conference began. Professional credits were made available to interested participants. MCSS used the CVent conference App this year for the first time allowing for an efficient check-in process and a digital event schedule. 79% of attendees used the app to plan and navigate their conference experience.

# School Safety Student Art Showcase

MCSS engaged students in school safety through art in 2023 with the **first annual** MCSS Art Showcase. Students were asked to create a 8.5 x 11 inch piece of art in response to the 2023 theme "What does your school safety community look like?". **Over 70 entries** were received from public, nonpublic, private and home-school students. All entries were displayed for judging at the school safety conference. First, second, and third place winners were selected by grade group (elementary, middle, high). Winning jurisdictions included Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Cecil, Somerset, St. Mary's, and Wicomico. All submitted artwork was on display in October at the House of Delegates office in Annapolis and is scheduled to be displayed at MSDE.

## First Place Winning Entries


"Sanctuary" by Connor Grabowski
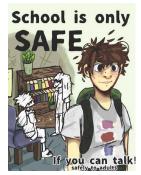

"All Means All!" By Hannah Storm Ricks


"Safety Together" by Jessie Jebaraj

## Second Place Winning Entries


"Safe to Talk" by Oliver Madelin Dix


"A Girl Holding A Candle"
by Allisson Berrios Santizo


"Greenwood Safety Community"
by Lyric Hines

## Third Place Winning Entries


"Ceaseless Plee" by Oliver Sanders


"My Social Workers" by Molly Hollifield


"Safety is Positivity"
by Jasmine Desormeaux

# Engagement and Partnerships

# Maryland Coordinated School-Based Emergency Response

MCSS is charged to "provide a comprehensive, coordinated approach to school safety". Efforts to this end expanded in 2023 to include the development of an Integrated Preparedness Plan and several coordinated response activities.

**The Maryland Integrated Preparedness Plan**
The purpose of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) Integrated Preparedness Plan (IPP) is to coordinate statewide preparedness efforts to ensure a comprehensive, effective, and efficient response to and recovery from school-based incidents in the state of Maryland. Maryland has a substantial network of law enforcement, emergency services, educational, and other relevant stakeholders at all levels of government, the private sector, and non-profit organizations, as well as community groups and individual citizens who contribute to emergency preparedness across schools in the state. The plan was developed to ensure efforts to mitigate risk and prepare for future incidents are conducted under a shared strategy, are collaborative, and are done based on priorities developed through a comprehensive, evidence-based process.

The 2023 Integrated Preparedness Planning team included members from each of the following agencies;
- Maryland Center for School Safety
- Maryland State Police
- Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services and Systems
- Maryland State Department of Education
- Maryland Department of Emergency Management
- Maryland Department of Human Resources
- Maryland Department of Disabilities
- Maryland Mental Health Response Program
- Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services

An IPP workshop was conducted in March 2023 with coordinating members to identify preparedness priorities for school-based emergency response based on an assessment of current capabilities and vulnerabilities. A school-based coordinated emergency response exercise occurred in June 2023 with representatives from state agencies and the local education agency in which the exercise was conducted, to test the team's March assessment. IPP improvement goals and strategies were defined by the team during an October 2023 workshop.



MCSS will continue to facilitate dialogue, planning, and improvement efforts in 2024 with additional exercises and coordination workshops.

# 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 as student fentanyl overdoses in school became a safety concern in 2023. 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. The MSP and MCSS collaborated in the development of a joint press release in August 2023.

**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 2023 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 2024, encouraging schools to participate in the Great Maryland Twister Test in April.

**Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)**
MCSS collaborates often with various MSDE departments as we each seek to support public and nonpublic schools. A new collaboration occurred in 2023 with the MSDE Division of Early Intervention and Special Education to create and conduct a workshop; Behavior Threat Assessment Unique Considerations; Students with Disabilities. This collaboration occurred by request of LEA leaders seeking advanced knowledge on the topic. MCSS looks forward to continuing the relationship with this Division in addition to all MSDE partners.

# Maryland State Agency Partnerships for School Safety Cont.

**Active Assailant Interdisciplinary Work Group (AAIWG)**
MCSS contributed to the development of the AAIWG document, "Support Services for Mass Casualty Incidents: Guidance and Best Practices" published in December of 2022. This document is intended to provide information to assist locals with planning for how to manage emergency people search and recovery operations following an active assailant incident. MCSS serves as a member of AAIWG.

**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 Nonpublic 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)**
Identifying and planning for the unique needs of students with disabilities occurs across MCSS programs and initiatives. MCSS staff remain vigilant when designing training and resources to prompt locals to consider the safest and most sensitive approaches for all students and staff. MDoD staff are close partners providing insight on unique considerations to MCSS staff.

# MCSS Communication and Engagement

**Collaborative Community Meetings**
MCSS continued to facilitate regular information-sharing calls with our school safety partners in 2023. MCSS hosts five unique collaboration calls every month (indicated below) each with a different targeted audience. The multi-directional flow of communications ensures MCSS best serves its various partners by supporting call participants' diverse disciplines and communities.

- **School Safety Coordinators (SSCs)** and local School Security Directors serve as the leads for school safety and security within each school system. These calls focus on safety and security issues, concerns, and trends within the twenty-four local school systems.
- **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** Local and national school safety partners join together to learn from a guest presenter and discuss a topic of shared concern.

**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 programs ("Are We Ready" exercises), events (conference), and workshops (Behavior Threat Assessment).

Currently **3,401** individuals subscribe to receive communications from MCSS through GovDelivery. This is an increase of **307** subscribers in 2023. **Sixty four (64)** communications were sent in 2023 with an average of **13.9** resource links included in each bulletin.

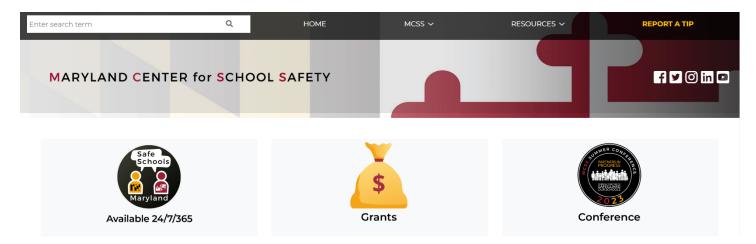# MCSS Communication and Engagement Cont.

**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 2023 was to advance the Safe Schools Maryland (SSMD) Anonymous Reporting System. MCSS and SSMD social media pages are currently one and the same. MCSS recognizes that each platform has a different purpose with a unique audience. School safety topics apply across audiences thus requiring MCSS to use a strategic approach to content posts.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Safeschoolsmd** 939 followers | **Safeschoolsmd** 1.6K followers |
| **Safeschoolsmd** 283 followers | **Safeschoolsmd** 1,104 followers |

**MCSS Webpage**
The MCSS web-page serves as a communication method as well as repository of school safety information for Maryland constituents. The MCSS web-page had a total of **48,900** visits during the 2022-2023 school year. Of the total visits, **37,800** were unique individuals visiting the webpage.



| | |
|---|---|
| Enter search term | HOME    MCSS ⌄    RESOURCES ⌄    **REPORT A TIP** |

**MARYLAND CENTER for SCHOOL SAFETY**

Safe Schools Maryland
Available 24/7/365

Grants

Conference

# Community Engagement in 2023

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 Firefighters Association (MSFA)
- Maryland Mental Health First Aid Instructors Summit
- Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP), Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)

MCSS staff engaged with the following audiences by conducting a presentation.
- 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
- SSAC/D.A.R.E. International Training Conference

MCSS staff engaged with the following audiences by attending a sponsored event.
- Maryland Emergency Management Association (MDEM) Symposium

**Baltimore Hunger Project**
MCSS partnered with the Baltimore Hunger Project in October to collect nonperishable food and pack weekend food bags with notes of encouragement for students distributed by the Baltimore Hunger Project. This has become an annual event for MCSS staff as we seek to mitigate food insecurity for Maryland students.

# Administration

# 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, Interim 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 Subcabinet, and is chaired by Dr. Michael Martirano, Superintendent, Howard County Public Schools. The Governor selects the Chair from current Advisory Board membership. The Advisory Board represents a number of agencies and stakeholder groups. The current board includes:

## 2022-2023 Advisory Board Members

**Dr. Michael Martirano,** 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

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

**Rafael Lopez**, Secretary, Department of Human Services

**Vincent Schiraldi**, Secretary, Department of Juvenile Service

**Sheriff Matthew Crisafulli**, Maryland Sheriffs' Association

**Chief Paul Kifer**, Maryland Chief's of Police Association

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

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

**Claire Cabral**, 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

**Lee-Nadine Oppenheim**, Representative of a Nonpublic Special Education School

**Scott Tiffin**, Maryland Association of School-Based Health

**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

Vacant, Representative of School Bus Drivers

Vacant, Representative of SROs

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

# Maryland Center for School Safety Staff

## Leadership



**Kate Bryan**
Executive Director

Director Bryan previously served as the Deputy Executive Director at the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). Director Bryan has a Master of Science in Law from the University of Maryland, Francis King Carey School of Law, and a Bachelor of Arts from Merrimack College in North Andover, Massachusetts. She is a Certified Public Manager (CPM) and FEMA Certified Master Exercise Practitioner (MEP).
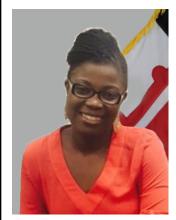


**Joseph Dino Pignataro**
Deputy Director

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.

## Finance and Grants



**Gifty Quarshie**
Fiscal and Grants Program Manager

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

## Finance and Grants Cont.



**Jesika McNeil**
Operational and Fiscal Analyst

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.

## Data and Administration



**Jeyan Jebaraj**
Business Solutions & Data Manager

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.

## Data and Administration Cont.



**Shalae Mathis**
Administrative Specialist

Ms. Matthis 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 degree In Psychology.

## Communications and Engagement



**Kimberly Buckheit**
Policy, Communications, & Engagement Manager

Mrs. Buckheit spent the majority of her professional career as a public school Principal 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 with Developmental Disabilities at the Kennedy Krieger Institute. She has a Masters of Education Leadership from Goucher College and a Bachelor of Arts from Bucknell University.



**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.

**Vacant**
Communications and Instructional Specialist

## Staff

**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, focused in Criminology, from the University of Maryland College Park.

**Brit Ayers**
Regional Prevention and Intervention Specialist

Ms. Ayers 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. Ms. Ayers earned her Master of Science in Criminal Justice from Florida State University in 2023.

**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.

## Staff

| | |
|---|---|
|  | **James Hott**<br>School Safety Training Program Coordinator<br><br>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 yearly School Safety Conference, as well as 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. |
|  | **Drew Turner**<br>Regional Prevention & Certification Specialist<br><br>Drew 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. |
| | **Vacant**<br>School Safety Program Coordinator |

# Maryland Office of the Attorney General

| | |
|---|---|
|  | **Jeaneen J. Johnson**<br>Assistant Attorney General & Counsel to MCSS<br><br>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. |