

# PTACHC School Safety Advocacy Update

## December 4, 2024

### HCPSS School Safety Advocacy

Lisa Krausz<sup>met</sup> with Mr. Michael Braun, HCPSS Director of Security, and Mr. Michael Rudiniski, Safety & Security Program Manager, on Tuesday, 11/14/23, to go over the PTACHC School Safety Report, how it came about, its data gathering process, and the recommendations made. Mr. Braun and Mr. Rudiniski were very amenable to the recommendations of this report.

They also gave feedback on what has been happening with HCPSS school safety efforts in the past year (in the aftermath of the River Hill High School lock-downs and swatting incidents throughout the county, as well as nation). Here is the update they provided me with (I took quick notes, so this is not a detailed recounting of what they shared, though I got all the main points):

1. The Howard County Police Department (HCPD) conducted their own in-house trainings over the summer, going through every school; the fire department also conducted their own trainings.
2. HCPSS has reviewed and will continue to review the School Reunification Plan in the event of a school lock-down and subsequent need for a separate reunification site. They will do a practice run of this process.
3. HCPSS is continuing to review the communications process (in the event of a school safety threat) and are working to make sure that the communications happen quickly if there is a threat; they are also practicing drills in this area as well.
4. Regarding communication in the school buildings (i.e., cell phone reception), Mr. Braun stated that AT&T is the carrier, and that they are looking at enhancements here to reduce "dud" cell zones.
5. Regarding the safety of children with disabilities, improvements have been made at River Hill High School to make the main entry/exit point ADA accessible. Mr. Braun reported that they have done a lot of work in this area with other schools as well.
6. HCPSS has conducted Emergency Preparedness drills, with new administrative trainings in response to what they learned last year.
7. HCPD reported earlier in the Fall that a perpetrator in the swatting incidents in Howard County schools (from last year) was apprehended. Here is a link to that information: <https://patch.com/maryland/columbia/australian-teen-cited-swatting-after-threatening-hoco-high-school>

### BOE School Safety Advocacy

Meanwhile, the Board of Education (BOE) is currently reviewing the PTACHC School Safety Report through Dr. Perry, HCPSS Policy Manager. We are recommending that the BOE vote

on and approve an addendum to Policy 3010, The Emergency Response and Preparedness Policy (<https://policy.hcpss.org/3000/3010/>) as follows (as detailed in the recommendations section of the report, pp. 26-27):

## I. Lockdown Process

### 1. Emergency Preparedness – Recommended Policy Addendum (under IV.A)

A. The HCPSS Board of Education should create a new line in Policy 3010, under Section IV. Standards, A. Preparedness, which would dictate the need for the school system to also provide education training to parents and students for emergency preparedness; specifically, this line would call for the need for pre-incident training to increase cooperation from parents, and help students better understand the strategies they should employ during a school safety threat. Language recommendation: “The HCPSS will develop education training materials for parents and students to be distributed prior to the beginning of each school year. These materials will provide information and guidance to students and parents regarding school safety and emergency response.” This policy addendum would serve as the basis for the development of the trainings noted in the recommendations below.

Please review the next two recommendations of the Recommendations Report (contained in the PTACHC School Safety Report, pp 27-28 -which is posted on the PTACHC website, located here: <https://www.ptachc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/PTACHC-School-Safety-Committee-Report-11-6-23.pdf>) to read about the types of possible training material that could be produced and the issues that should be addressed (not limited to these issues); we would like to see the issues listed addressed in the training material (like, for instance, guidance on best practices for cell phone usage during a threat, among other issues).

Types of training materials could be brochures, video, or fact sheet, etc. I personally think HCPSS should develop a short video that can be easily watched by parents at any time (and possibly watched multiple times throughout the year as a refresher). Likewise, they could develop a similar training for students, but tailored to information that students need in the event of a school safety threat, developmentally appropriate. If the BOE does approve this policy addendum, it will be up to HCPSS how to implement it. Parent advocacy here could be helpful in creating a product that would be effective.

Dr. Perry reports today, December 4<sup>th</sup>, that he has shared the document with HCPSS's office of General Counsel to review. Mr. Braun and he will meet to further discuss after the legal review of the proposals contained in the PTACHC School Safety Report above. Furthermore, Dr. Perry hopes to soon get this item on the Board Policy Committee agenda for further discussion.

If you are interested in participating in county-wide school safety advocacy, please contact **Lisa Krausz** at **[lisalkrausz@comcast.net](mailto:lisalkrausz@comcast.net)** Thank you!