Maryland State Department of Education

Process for Reviewing State Guidelines, COMAR, and Local School System Emergency Plans

Background

Maryland has a long history in ensuring that schools are safe entities for children and youth. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in collaboration with other State agencies tasked with safety and local school systems, developed guidelines on emergency planning in 2003. These were based on guidance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the United States Department of Education, and models from other states. Local School Systems (LSSs) were required to update and/or create their own system-level and school plans based on this guidance.

In 2005, the Maryland State Board of Education updated the Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.02.02, Emergency Plans, to include requirements that LSSs, in consultation with other health and safety officials, develop plans, institute a schedule of drills, and certify annually that they were in compliance with these regulations. MSDE routinely reviews these plans and offers guidance and technical assistance to LSSs.

Recent Actions

- Reviewed all district plans on file at MSDE for active shooter plans. COMAR requires plans to include responding to “violent or traumatic events on school grounds during regular school hours or during school-sponsored activities.”
- Worked with Maryland State Police to identify the number of School Resource Officers in systems.
- Reviewed current COMAR related to school safety plans. Of note, current COMAR requires LSSs to provide annual assurances that they have emergency plans. Many provide the full plans to MSDE, but this is not currently a requirement.
- Worked with members of Task Force on School Safety Center to estimate costs of establishing a State Center on School Safety based on Maryland’s needs and similar centers in other states.
- On January 16, MSDE staff met with LSS points of contact, Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention, Maryland State Police (MSP), and the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to assess their needs and gaps in planning based on their current formal plans and new local actions.

Upcoming Actions

- Based on feedback from LSS points of contact, Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention, MSP, and MEMA, MSDE will undertake an examination of its emergency planning guidelines and revise them accordingly.
- Determine what, if any, changes should be made to COMAR and the MSDE guidelines as a result of plan review and gap analysis with LSS points of contact, Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention, MSP, and MEMA.
  - If we pursue changes to COMAR, we will convene a group of stakeholders to recommend changes that can be introduced at a future State Board meeting to start the regulation revision process.
- Continue regular engagement with MSP about tracking School Resource Officers and other ways to partner more collaboratively to support local law enforcement and LSSs.
- Conduct administrative meetings with LSSs point of contacts, at least once on annual basis, to monitor implementation of guidelines, assess their needs in the area of emergency planning, and share information and resources.