

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

March 11, 2020

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education
From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools
Subject: Student Evacuation Procedures (02-10-20-01-B)

During *Public Comments*, Mrs. O'Neill requested the following information:

Question B

Please have Mr. Clarke provide an update regarding the current state of MCPS' evacuation procedures. Also, what would be the cost of acquiring the emergency evacuation devices referenced by the public commenters? Additional, will MCPS be in compliance with HB 1061, *Education - Emergency and Evacuation Plans - Individuals With Disabilities* by the August 2020 deadline?

Response

Under COMAR 13A.02.02.03-.04—*Emergency Plans*, all public schools are required on an annual basis to conduct the following drills: evacuation (to include fire evacuation); reverse evacuation; lockdown; shelter-in-place; drop, cover and hold; and severe weather. In addition, the *Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018* recommends schools conduct active assailant (lockdown with options) drills. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) conducts all of these drills to ensure schools are prepared to address a multitude of emergency/crisis situations.

After a thorough review, it again was determined that MCPS is in compliance with House Bill 1061, *Education—Emergency and Evacuation Plans—Individuals with Disabilities*, enacted July 1, 2017. The law requires the following:

(C) If a student with an IEP requires specific accommodations for evacuation in an emergency, the student's IEP shall include accommodations for the student during an emergency.

(D) If a student with a 504 plan requires specific accommodations for evacuation in an emergency, the student's 504 team shall discuss and address the student's needs as necessary.

In summer 2017, MCPS established a cross-functional work group composed of at least one principal at each school level, principals at special schools, and central services representatives in the Department of Systemwide Safety and Emergency Management (DSSEM), Risk Management, the Office of General Counsel, the Office of Special Education, and the Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement. This work group met on three occasions to discuss current practices and challenges with meeting the needs of students with disabilities during emergency evacuations. Additionally, work group participants benchmarked with other jurisdictions and consulted with the Montgomery County Fire Department.

As a result, the work group members developed resources for Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Section 504 teams to determine appropriate accommodations. In December 2017, MCPS Form 336-2, *Emergency Evacuation Accommodations*, and the accompanying attachments were revised and published for school use. The Maryland Online IEP system was revised by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) on July 1, 2017, to incorporate a section for emergency evacuations, which states:

Does the student require a specific accommodation for an emergency evacuation?
YES NO. If yes, state the evacuation accommodation(s) here.

There is no indication that the accommodations are equivalent to the physical supports in the supplementary aids, services, and supports section of the IEP that includes adaptive equipment. Furthermore, the MCPS online Section 504 platform, PowerSchool, also was customized to include a section on emergency evacuations. IEP teams and Section 504 teams are making determinations for emergency evacuations based upon the individual needs of each student, as required by the law. There are approximately 2,344 students with IEPs who have emergency evacuation accommodations. The individual accommodations determined to be appropriate generally include access to adult support; however, there are some students who require access to a wheelchair, adaptive equipment, a stroller, gait trainer, or Rifton chair, for example. Nevertheless, these accommodations note that adult support can be provided for mobility during egress. Therefore, at the time of the enactment of the law, there were no data to suggest that the purchase of evacuation equipment was necessary to effectuate students' emergency evacuation accommodations on their IEPs or Section 504 Plans.

Action Steps

- A thorough review of the information from the Maryland Online IEP system is being conducted by the DSSEM cluster security coordinators to confirm alignment of the individual student accommodations at the school to the School's Emergency Plan.
- A school survey will be developed to gauge the number of affected students, the provision and effectiveness of accommodations, the opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in emergency evacuation drills, and any emergency evacuation equipment needs.
- Staff will contact school safety coordinators at Anne Arundel, Calvert, Frederick, and Prince George's county public schools and the Howard County Public School System

to ascertain their use of mobility devices for students and staff who may need a specific accommodation during an emergency evacuation, as well as the cost of such devices.

- MSDEs updated Emergency Planning Guidelines (required by the *Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018*) for Local School Systems and Schools to accommodate, safeguard, and evacuate students, staff, and visitors with disabilities on public school grounds will be reviewed to ensure MCPS is in alignment with the updated guidelines.
- A meeting will be scheduled with the Montgomery County Fire Marshal and municipal fire marshals to discuss areas of refuge relative to emergency evacuations for students and staff who may need specific accommodations.

Cost of Mobility Devices

Based on contact with the identified school systems, it was determined the primary mobility devices used and related costs include the following:

- The more commonly used device is a MedSled, which costs \$395 per unit and \$250 for the storage cabinet, for a total of \$645. Freight, installation, and training costs are being determined. This device can be lowered down a set of stairs, and one person easily can drag it across the floor during evacuation.
- The second device is the Garaventa Evacu Trac, which is an evacuation chair that allows one person to transfer a patient to the device while the student remains seated. The evacuation occurs utilizing a patented braking system. The system costs \$2,200 for the chair, \$425 for the storage cabinet, and \$110 for freight. Total cost, not including installation and training, is \$2,735.

We are in the process of evaluating the purchase of emergency evacuation equipment and will provide an update to the Board.

If you have questions, please contact Dr. Andrew M. Zuckerman, chief operating officer, at 240-740-3050 or Mr. Edward A. Clarke, chief safety officer, Department of Systemwide Safety and Emergency Management, at 240-740-3066.

JRS:AMZ:EAC:sro

Copy to:

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