

Effective: July 1, 2025

Policy Outline

- I. Policy Value Statement
- II. Purpose
- III. Standards
- IV. Responsibilities
- V. Delegation of Authority
- VI. Definitions
- VII. References
- VIII. History

I. Policy Value Statement

The Board of Education of Howard County (Board) is committed to providing a safe and supportive school environment. The presence of weapons on school property or at any school-related activity is strictly forbidden, except as provided herein.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish parameters for ensuring a safe and supportive school environment by prohibiting the possession or use of weapons on school property and at school-related activities.

III. Standards

- A. Notification that weapons are prohibited on school property, in a vehicle located on school property, and at school-related activities will be communicated to all students, Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) employees, parents, volunteers, and third parties, annually, to any new student upon enrollment, and when deemed necessary by the principal.
- B. It is a violation of this policy for any person to carry or possess any weapon on school property, in a vehicle located on school property, or at school-related activities other than a law enforcement agent in the regular course of the agent's duty. Additionally, an armored car service hired by the Board who has been expressly authorized in writing by the Superintendent.
- C. A student who is found to be in possession of a firearm on school property, in a vehicle located on school property, or at a school-related activity, the incident will be reported to the Howard County Police Department (HCPD), and the student will be

expelled/excluded from their regular school program from the HCPSS for a minimum of one year. Upon the conclusion of any legal action taken as a result of reporting the incident to HCPD, the Superintendent/designee may, on a case-by-case basis, specify a shorter period of removal or provide access to an alternative learning environment.

- D. Unless used to threaten or harm another, the following are not considered weapons:
 - 1. Tools and materials used by students or HCPSS employees in their normal duties and as part of instructional activities.
 - 2. Any antique firearm rendered permanently inoperable.
 - 3. Permanently inoperable rifles used by JROTC cadets during instructional time and at other times when under the direct supervision of JROTC instructors.
- E. Any disciplinary action taken for students as a result of a violation of this policy will be administered in accordance with the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct and Policy 9200 Student Discipline.
- F. Disciplinary actions for HCPSS employees taken as a result of a violation of this policy will be administered in accordance with Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline.
- G. Possession of a weapon by a third party on school grounds will result in referral to HCPD to address the violation.

IV. Responsibilities

- A. The school-based administrator, supervisor, or designee will annually notify all students, HCPSS employees, parents, and third parties of the standards included in this policy.
- B. The school-based administrator, supervisor, or designee will determine if a person is in possession of a weapon and take appropriate action.

V. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop appropriate procedures for the implementation of this policy within the limits set forth by this policy.

VI. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Expulsion – The exclusion of a student from the student’s regular school program for 45 school days or longer as determined by the Superintendent/designee.

- B. Firearm – Any weapon (including a starter gun) which is designed to, or may readily be converted to, expel a projectile by the action of an explosive. This includes:
 - 1. The frame or receiver of any such weapon.
 - 2. Any firearm muffler or firearm silencer.
 - 3. Any destructive device (such as a pipe bomb).
- C. HCPSS Employee – Any individual who is a permanent or temporary employee of the HCPSS whose compensation is paid in whole or part by the Board, including but not limited to, school-based administrators, teachers, substitute teachers, paraeducators, and other school-based and Central Office support staff.
- D. Law Enforcement Agent – A local, State, or federal employee vested with law enforcement authority.
- E. Parent – Any one of the following, recognized as the adult(s) legally responsible for the student:
 - 1. Biological Parent – A natural parent whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 - 2. Adoptive Parent – A person who has legally adopted the student and whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 - 3. Custodian – A person or an agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 - 4. Guardian – A person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 - 5. Caregiver – An adult resident of Howard County who exercises care, custody, or control over the student but who is neither the biological parent nor legal guardian, as long as the person satisfies the requirements of the Education Article, §7-101(c) (Informal Kinship Care) or has been issued a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Verification of Release form entering into a custodial arrangement with the federal government.
 - 6. Foster parent – An adult approved to care for a child who has been placed in their home by a State agency or a licensed child placement agency as provided by the Family Law Article, §5-507.
- F. School Property – Any property owned or leased by HCPSS for school-related activities. The concept of property extends to school activities such as field trips, use of parks and recreation facilities, proms at hotels, etc. School buses, school bus stops, and facilities scheduled by the school system for student use are considered an extension of school property.

- G. School-Related Activity – Any school system activity, whether held on or off school property, in which a student directly participates (e.g., school field trip, athletic event, or class/graduation activity), or an activity in which the student does not directly participate but represents the school or student body simply by being there (e.g., spectator at a school event).
- H. Third Party - Parents, mentors, volunteers, vendors, contractors, and others with whom students or HCPSS employees interact during school or school-related activities.
- I. Weapon – Object or implement capable of causing harm to another or used in such a way as to cause harm to another. The term weapon can include:
 - 1. Gun and gun facsimiles including pellet and BB guns
 - 2. Firearm or other firearm facsimile
 - 3. Knife
 - 4. Chemical spray
 - 5. Poison
 - 6. Taser
 - 7. Martial arts weapon (e.g., throwing star, nunchakus)
 - 8. Explosive devices
 - 9. Any object, whether visible or concealed, that under the circumstances could reasonably be perceived as a weapon or intended for use as a weapon.

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - 18 U.S.C. §921
 - Md. Ann. Code, Criminal Law Article, §4-102
 - Md. Ann. Code, Family Law Article, §5-507
 - Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, §7-101(c)
 - Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, §7-305(F)
 - COMAR 13A.08.01.11
 - COMAR 13A.08.01.12.1
- B. Board Policies
 - Policy 1040 Safe and Supportive Schools
 - Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline
 - Policy 8080 Responsible Use of Technology, Digital Tools, and Social Media
 - Policy 9020 Student Rights and Responsibilities
 - Policy 9200 Student Discipline
 - Policy 9260 Student Search and Seizure
 - Policy 9280 School Use of Community or Reportable Offenses
- C. Relevant Data Sources
- D. Other
 - HCPSS Student Code of Conduct

VIII. History¹

ADOPTED: January 25, 1990
REVIEWED: January 17, 2024
MODIFIED: August 14, 2014
 June 9, 2016
REVISED: May 14, 1992
 June 23, 1994
 September 14, 1995
 March 22, 2005
 April 12, 2012
 April 9, 2025
EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2025

¹ Key: ***Adopted***-Original date the Board took action to approve a policy; ***Reviewed***-The date the status of a policy was assessed by the Superintendent's Standing Policy Group; ***Modified***-The date the Board took action to alter a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee did not require a comprehensive examination; ***Revised***-The date the Board took action on a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee needed a comprehensive examination; ***Effective***-The date a policy is implemented throughout the HCPSS, typically July 1 following Board action.

WEAPONSEffective: July 1, 2025

I. Dissemination of Information

- A. The Superintendent, school-based administrator, supervisor, or designee will annually notify all students, Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) employees, parents, and third parties that weapons are prohibited on school property, in a vehicle located on school property, and at school- related activities. Notification may be:
 - 1. Given via an announcement in person or over the public address system at the beginning of the school year and at other times as deemed appropriate.
 - 2. Published in the school newsletter and/or student/parent/staff handbooks.
 - 3. Posted for students and HCPSS employees (e.g., on bulletin boards in commonly used areas that may include the main office, teachers' lounge, cafeteria, school counseling office, staff lounge, health room, stadium, and front entrances).
 - 4. Reviewed during student, HCPSS employee, and/or community presentations.
- B. New students to HCPSS and their parents will receive notification through the registration process.
- C. On a quarterly basis, school safety lessons will be provided and shared with students that reiterate proactive approaches and policy highlights.

II. Student Violation of Policy

- A. If a person suspects that a student is in violation of this weapons policy, they should immediately report the student and a description of the incident to a school-based administrator/designee, who will determine if a violation has occurred. If a firearm or gun are in sight, HCPSS emergency protocols should be immediately followed.
- B. If a school-based administrator/designee determines that a student is in possession of a weapon, the school-based administrator/designee will assess the severity of the situation and take appropriate action as follows:

1. If the student is in possession of a firearm or other weapon that poses a serious and immediate threat to the student or others, the school-based administrator/designee will, whenever possible, isolate the student, secure the area, contact the local law enforcement agency, and activate emergency protocols as appropriate.
2. If the student is in possession of a weapon that does not pose a serious and immediate threat to the student or others, the school-based administrator/designee will secure the weapon.
3. Disciplinary action will be taken using the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct and in accordance with Policy 9200 Student Discipline. When applicable, the weapons policy and any consequences imposed will be in accordance with Policy 9210 Student Dress Code.
4. The school-based administrator/designee will communicate with the Division of Schools to determine what type of community and Board message, if any, is needed as it relates to incidents involving the presence of weapons on school property or at school-related activities. For incidents where a firearm or gun are involved, communication to the community and Board will always occur.

III. HCPSS Employee Violation of Policy

- A. If a person suspects that a HCPSS employee is in violation of this weapons policy, they should immediately report the person and a description of the incident to a school-based administrator, supervisor, or designee who will determine if a violation has occurred. If a firearm or gun are in sight, HCPSS emergency protocols should be immediately followed.
- B. If a school-based administrator, supervisor, or designee determines that a HCPSS employee is in possession of a weapon, the school-based administrator, supervisor, or designee will assess the severity of the situation and take appropriate action as follows:
 1. If the employee is in possession of a firearm or other weapon that poses a serious and immediate threat to others, the school-based administrator, supervisor, or designee will contact the local law enforcement agency.
 2. If the employee is in possession of a weapon that does not pose a serious and immediate threat to others, the school-based administrator, supervisor, or designee will secure the weapon.
- C. If a person suspects that a HCPSS employee is in possession of a weapon and no school-based administrator, supervisor, or designee is available, they should report the incident to the local law enforcement agency.

D. Employees who violate this policy will be disciplined in accordance with Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline.

IV. Possession of a weapon by a third party on school grounds will result in referral to Howard County Police Department (HCPD) to address the violation.

V. **Other**

With prior approval of the school-based administrator/designee, permanently inoperable weapons of significance may be brought to school as part of an instructional activity.

VI. **Monitoring**

Policy 9250 implementation procedures will be overseen by the Division of Schools.

VII. **History¹**

ADOPTED: January 25, 1990

REVIEWED: January 17, 2024

MODIFIED:

REVISED: May 14, 1992

June 23, 1994

September 14, 1995

March 22, 2005

April 12, 2012

April 9, 2025

EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2025

¹ Key: **Adopted**-Original date the Board took action to approve a policy; **Reviewed**-The date the status of a policy was assessed by the Superintendent's Standing Policy Group; **Modified**-The date the Board took action to alter a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee did not require a comprehensive examination; **Revised**-The date the Board took action on a that policy based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee needed a comprehensive examination; **Effective**-The date a policy is implemented throughout the HCPSS, typically July 1 following Board action.