



Board of Education

POLICY 9290
CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS, CRIMINAL
ORGANIZATION ACTIVITY,
AND SIMILAR DESTRUCTIVE
OR ILLEGAL GROUP BEHAVIOR

Effective: July 1, 2025

Policy Outline

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I. Policy Value Statement

The Board of Education of Howard County (Board) is committed to providing a safe, engaging, productive, and supportive school environment that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Board is also committed to fostering a climate where individuals are valued and their safety and rights are protected. Criminal organizations and criminal organization activity disrupt this environment. Thus, the Board prohibits any criminal organization activity and any similar destructive or illegal group behavior on school property and at all school-related activities. The Board recognizes that incidents of criminal organization activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior should be reported to the appropriate Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) authority and will be investigated appropriately.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines, standards, and implementation procedures for:

- A. Preventing and eliminating criminal organization activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior on school property and at school-sponsored functions.
- B. Prohibiting reprisal or retaliation against individuals who report criminal organization activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior or who are targets, witnesses, bystanders, or have reliable information about an act of criminal organization activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior.
- C. Supporting and intervening for students, families, and HCPSS employees who are targets, witnesses, and/or alleged offenders of activities prohibited by this policy.

III. Standards

- A. Criminal organization activity is prohibited on all HCPSS school property and at all school-related activities.
- B. It is a violation of this policy for any student, HCPSS employee, or third party to engage in criminal organization activity or similar destructive or illegal group behavior on school property or at school-related activities.
- C. It is a violation of this policy for any criminal organization or criminal organization member to threaten, defame, harass, intimidate, bully, cyberbully, or physically attack another individual when these actions occur on school property or in connection with any school-related activity. These behaviors also constitute a violation of this policy when they have a direct effect on the order and general welfare of the school (such as negatively affecting the safety or learning environment of a classroom), even if they do not occur on school property or at a school-related activity.
- D. It is a violation of this policy for any individual or suspected criminal organization member to threaten or carry out reprisal or retaliation against individuals:
 - 1. Who report criminal organization activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior.
 - 2. Who are targets, witnesses, bystanders, or others with reliable information about criminal organization activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior.
- E. Violations of this policy are cumulative; subsequent offenses may affect the nature and severity of the consequences.
- F. A written notice will be posted at each school stating that criminal organization activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior is prohibited on school property or at school-related activities.
- G. A written notice will be posted at each school stating that reprisal or retaliation against individuals who report criminal organization activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior or those who are targets, witnesses, bystanders, or others with reliable information about criminal organization activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior are prohibited.
- H. All suspected violations of this policy will be reported to school-based administrators, supervisors, or designees. School-based administrators, supervisors, and designees will collaborate with HCPSS employees, students, and their families to address the report to determine if the report can be confirmed.
- I. School-based administrators or supervisors may recommend appropriate support for individuals who have been targeted.

- J. A HCPSS student or employee engaging in behaviors which violate this policy is subject to disciplinary and/or legal action. Interventions will be recommended, as appropriate, for HCPSS students and employees who violate this policy.
- K. Whenever a report of on-going or threatened criminal organization-related violence appears accurate and reliable, the principal, supervisor, or designee will contact the appropriate law enforcement officer and will keep school administration informed.
- L. The Superintendent/designee will meet at least once a year with all school-based administrators to provide training on awareness, prevention, and intervention.
- M. For any HCPSS student or employee who engages in criminal organization activity or similar destructive or illegal group behavior that does not occur on school property, the administrator, supervisor, or designee will adhere to the guidelines set forth by Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline and Policy 9280 School Use of Community or Reportable Offenses.

IV. Responsibilities

- A. The Superintendent/designee will ensure that students, parents, and HCPSS employees are notified of the provisions of this policy annually.
- B. The principal or supervisor will report confirmed incidents of criminal organization activity to the Office of Safety and Security who will then notify law enforcement.
- C. The Superintendent/designee will report incidents of criminal organization activity to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) as stipulated in Education Article §7-424.2 of the Annotated Code of Maryland.
- D. The school-based administrator or supervisor will take action in response to a violation of this policy and ensure that the action taken is in accordance with Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline, Policy 7140 Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, and Intimidation Involving HCPSS Employees, Policy 9200 Student Discipline, Policy 9460 Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, and Intimidation Involving Students, the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct, and the Procedures for the Threat Management Process.
- E. School-based administrators or supervisors will ensure appropriate assistance is offered to students, families, or HCPSS employees who have been the target of or affected by behavior prohibited in this policy.
- F. The Superintendent/designee will ensure administrators and supervisors receive training on awareness and reporting suspected criminal organization incidents in compliance with Education Article §7-424.2 of the Annotated Code of Maryland.
- G. The Division of Schools will coordinate training with school-based administration.

- H. If specific school awareness, prevention, or intervention training is determined to be needed based on community or school incidents, the Superintendent/designee will coordinate training with school-based administration.

V. Delegation of Authority

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

VI. Definitions

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

- A. Criminal Organization – A group of three or more individuals who engage in a pattern of destructive or illegal activity for the benefit of the group’s members and/or for furthering the reputation of the group or individual. A criminal organization shares a common identity, and members view themselves as a cohesive group.
- B. Criminal Organization Activity – Committing, attempting to commit, or soliciting of a crime; or acts by a juvenile that would be a crime if committed by an adult.
- 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. Illegal – Failure to do what is required by law.
- 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 parent 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. School Security Officer – The individual responsible for oversight of the security at a specific school or school-related activity. The security officer may be the principal, another school administrator, a local law enforcement officer, or another designated individual.
 - I. School Security Partnership – A group of school-based administrators, school resource officers, school security officers, and Central Office leaders, as well as other members of the police department who meet quarterly to review topics and information surrounding the safety of HCPSS students, schools, and communities.
 - J. Threat – Expression, conveyed by word or action, of intent to do harm to another.

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 1681
 - Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C., Sec 601 and Sec. 2000e.2
 - Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, §7-304
 - Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, §7-305
 - Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, §7-424.2
 - COMAR 13A.01.04.03, School Safety
 - COMAR13A.08.01.11, Disciplinary Action
 - COMAR 13A.08.04.03, Student Behavior Interventions
- B. Board Policies
 - Policy 1000 Civility

Policy 1010 Anti-Discrimination
 Policy 1040 Safe and Supportive Schools
 Policy 3020 Trespassing or Willful Disturbance
 Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline
 Policy 7140 Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, and Intimidation Involving
 HCPSS Employees
 Policy 9020 Students' Rights and Responsibilities
 Policy 9200 Student Discipline
 Policy 9210 Student Dress Code
 Policy 9280 School Use of Community or Reportable Offenses
 Policy 9460 Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, and Intimidation Involving Students

C. Relevant Data Sources

D. Other
 Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, and Intimidation (BCHI) Reporting Form
 HCPSS Incident Reporting Form
 HCPSS Student Code of Conduct
 Procedures for the Threat Management Process

VIII. History¹

ADOPTED: June 9, 2011
 REVIEWED: January 27, 2023
 MODIFIED:
 REVISED: August 18, 2011
 February 13, 2025
 EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2025

This policy is consistent with Maryland Criminal Law Code 9-801 that applies to criminal organizations.

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.

**CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS,
CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION
ACTIVITY, AND SIMILAR DESTRUCTIVE
OR ILLEGAL GROUP BEHAVIOR**

Effective: July 1, 2025

I. Announcement/Dissemination of Information

- A. Written notices will be posted in every Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) school containing information regarding criminal organization activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior.
- B. Annually, the principal will notify students, parents, HCPSS employees, and third parties of the general provisions of this policy. Notification may be:
 - 1. Given via announcement over the school public address system.
 - 2. Published in newsletters, on the school/system websites, or in student/employee handbooks.
 - 3. Posted on bulletin boards in offices and other commonly used areas.

II. Reporting Procedures

- A. From Internal Sources:
 - 1. Any incidents of suspected criminal organization activity or similar destructive or illegal group behavior must be reported to the school-based administrator, supervisor, or school security officer, in accordance with Education Article §7-424.2 of the Annotated Code of Maryland. Reports can be made verbally or using a HCPSS Incident Reporting form or Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, and Intimidation (BCHI) Reporting form.
 - 2. If a student, parent, or other individual informs a HCPSS employee about any criminal organization-related activity or similar destructive or illegal group behavior, the HCPSS employee must report that information to the school-based administrator, supervisor, or school security officer as outlined above in Section II.A.1.
 - 3. Upon receipt of a report, the school-based administrator, supervisor, and/or the school security officer will notify the Office of Safety and Security who may notify law enforcement.

4. School-based administration will apply consequences and interventions consistent with Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline, Policy 7140 Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, and Intimidation Involving HCPSS Employees, Policy 9200 Discipline, Policy 9460 Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, and Intimidation Involving Students, the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct, and the Procedures for the Threat Management Process.
5. School-based administrators will notify parents of both the alleged offender and target, if any, of the allegation within two (2) school days of the incident.
6. The school-based administrator or supervisor will create or update the record of the criminal organization-related incident through the bullying reporting tool (for acts that include bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation or through the HCPSS Incident Report or Office Disciplinary Report (based on the level of infraction).
7. HCPSS will maintain a monitoring/tracking system through the reporting tools listed above in Section II.A.

B. From External Sources:

1. The Office of Safety and Security is the HCPSS point of contact for law enforcement for criminal organizations and criminal organization activity. They can then transmit the information to the principal or supervisor in accordance with Education Article §7-424.2 of the Annotated Code of Maryland.
2. External sources will be directed to report suspected criminal organization activity to the Office of Safety and Security.
3. The Superintendent/designee for reportable offenses will transmit those reports to the principal or supervisor and the Office of Safety and Security in accordance with Education Article §7-424.2 of the Annotated Code of Maryland
4. The Superintendent/designee for reportable offenses will:
 - a. Maintain a central repository for the arrest/disposition information and information from courts.
 - b. Maintain a log by school year of each notification received from the courts, law enforcement, and the State's Attorney's Office.
 - c. Provide recommendations to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) on ways to improve the notification process, if any, in order to better serve students.

- d. Destroy arrest/disposition information and the information received from the courts when the student graduates, permanently leaves school, or turns twenty-two.
5. Information received about arrests, dispositions, and Child In Need of Assistance (CINA), or delinquency adjudication is confidential information. This information cannot be made a part of the student's permanent record.

III. Violations of Policy

A. Student Violations

If an individual believes that a student has violated this policy, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The individual will refer the student to a school-based administrator through a verbal report, HCPSS Incident Reporting form, or BCHI Reporting form.
2. The Office of Safety and Security will collaborate with school-based administrators and supervisors on the investigation.
3. The school-based administrator will begin an investigation of the alleged violation within one (1) school day and take appropriate action to address the behavior as quickly as possible.
4. If the investigation reveals that a violation of policy has occurred, the school-based administrator will notify the students' parents and take specific action in accordance with Policy 9200 Student Discipline, Policy 9460 Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, and Intimidation Involving Students, HCPSS Student Code of Conduct, Procedures for the Threat Management Process, and the Safe Schools Act of 2010.
5. A student who violates the policy is also subject to interventions designed by law enforcement and/or the Office of Safety and Security or the school-based administrator to increase the student's understanding of the impact of involvement in a criminal organization or criminal organization-related activity. The following interventions are required:
 - a. Parent/student conference.
 - b. Skill building social-emotional learning, and/or reflective lesson/activity.

The following interventions are recommended:

- a. Counseling with school counselor, school psychologist, or school safety/police resource staff.
- b. Education about the effects of criminal organizations or criminal organization-like activity.

- c. Positive Behavioral Supports such as a functional behavioral assessment, behavioral intervention plan, or remediation of problem behaviors that takes into account the nature of the offenses, the developmental level of the student, and the student's behavioral history.
 - d. Referral to an external agency.
 - e. Participation in professional counseling (delivered by the school or a community mental health provider).
 - f. Participation in a behavioral management program, such as mentoring or criminal organization awareness prevention, developed in consultation with a mental health professional or a community-based resource which may include law enforcement and safety professionals.
6. A student who violates the policy is also subject to additional consequences, including but not limited to:
 - a. The issuance of a trespass notice.
 - b. Referral to law enforcement for criminal or other legal action.

B. HCPSS Employee Violations

If an individual believes that a HCPSS employee has violated this policy, it must be reported and investigated. The following procedures will be followed:

1. The individual will refer the HCPSS employee to an appropriate supervisor.
2. The supervisor will promptly notify the Office of Safety and Security who may notify law enforcement.
3. The Office of Safety and Security and the supervisor will collaborate to determine which agency/individual will conduct the investigation and address the behavior.
4. If the investigation reveals that a violation has occurred, the supervisor will take appropriate action. Disciplinary action against a HCPSS employee, if appropriate, will be taken in accordance with Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline.

- C. For any HCPSS student or employee who engages in criminal organization activity or similar destructive or illegal group behavior that does not occur on school property, the Superintendent/designee will adhere to the guidelines set forth by Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline and Policy 9280 School Use of Community or Reportable Offenses.
- D. For any non-HCPSS student or staff who violates this policy, the information will be reported to law enforcement for follow up.

IV. Intervention and Prevention Procedures

- A. Principals will provide professional learning to HCPSS employees on how to respond appropriately to students who may be involved with criminal organization activity, on an as needed basis.
- B. As issues in the community and/or school system dictate the need for professional learning in the area of the prevalence, causes, and consequences of criminal organization involvement, the Office of Safety and Security will include these topics in meeting with school-based administrators and supervisors and direct them to take the training back to their employees.
- C. Principals may request further training or support for their staff from the Office of Safety and Security on an as needed basis
- D. Criminal organization prevention education will be included in the elementary and secondary curriculum as developmentally appropriate.
- E. Principals will communicate with students, families, and the community to inform them of the policy, to include consequences of criminal organizations and criminal organization activity.
- F. Principals may request support from the Office of Safety and Security to provide students, families, and/or the community with information on the prevalence, causes, and consequences of criminal organizations on public health. This information can be communicated through newsletters, PTA presentations, parent information nights, and other school activities.
- G. School-based administrators will collect, analyze, and use school-specific data regarding the number of incidents of criminal organizations or criminal organization-related activities to guide school improvement efforts to ensure safe and nurturing environments.
- H. Principals of supervisors will provide appropriate assistance to students or HCPSS employees who have been affected by behavior prohibited in this policy.
- I. A HCPSS student or employee who expresses an interest in becoming involved in criminal organization activity may be required to participate in appropriate counseling/intervention to increase their understanding of the potential consequences of being involved with criminal organization.
- J. When warranted, follow-up assistance will be provided to targets.

V. Definitions

Within the context of these implementation procedures, the following definitions apply:

- A. Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) – A proactive plan designed to address problem behavior exhibited by a student in the educational setting through the use of positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports.
 - 1. Clear and specifically defined targeted behaviors;
 - 2. Data on the targeted behaviors, as collected through a functional behavior assessment;
 - 3. Specific methods of data collection for progress monitoring; and
 - 4. A hierarchy of responses to address student behavior.
- B. External Source – Person who provides information from outside of the school system.
- C. Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) – A systematic process of gathering information to guide the development of an effective and efficient BIP for the problem behavior.

Functional behavior assessment includes the:

- 1. Identification of the functions of the problem behavior for the student;
 - 2. Description of the problem behavior exhibited in the educational setting; and
 - 3. Identification of environmental and other factors and settings that contribute to or predict the occurrence, nonoccurrence, and maintenance of the behavior over time.
- D. Internal Source – Person who provides information from within the school system, including students, parents, HCPSS employees, and third parties.
- E. School Day – Day, including a partial day, when a public agency is open and students are required to be in attendance for instruction.

VI. Monitoring

Policy 9290 implementation procedures will be overseen by the Division of Schools.

VII. History¹

ADOPTED: June 9, 2011
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