

I. Policy Statement

The Board of Education of Howard County is committed to providing a safe and nurturing school environment. The presence of weapons on school property or at any school-sponsored activity threatens this commitment. Therefore, the possession or use of any type of weapon on school property or at school-sponsored activities is strictly forbidden, except as provided herein.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish parameters for ensuring a safe and nurturing school environment for students and staff by prohibiting the possession and use of weapons on school property and at school-sponsored activities and to provide clear consequences for anyone who violates this policy.

III. 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. Law Enforcement Agent – A local, state, or federal employee vested with law enforcement authority.
- D. 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).
 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.
- E. 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
 2. firearm
 3. knife
 4. chemical spray
 5. poison
 6. taser
 7. martial arts weapon (e.g., throwing star, nunchakus)
 8. explosive devices
 9. any implement, visible or concealed, possessed under a circumstance that would reasonably lead a person to believe it was a weapon or would be used as a weapon.

IV. Standards

- A. Notification that weapons are prohibited on school property, on a school bus, in a vehicle located on school property, and at school-sponsored activities will be communicated to all students, staff, parents, volunteers, and service providers 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, on a school bus, in a vehicle located on school property, or at school-sponsored activities other than a law enforcement agent in the regular course of the agent's duty or an armored car service hired by the Board and expressly authorized in writing by the Superintendent.
- C. A student who possesses a firearm on the school property, on a school bus, in a vehicle located on school property, or at a school-sponsored activity will be expelled from the Howard County Public School System for a minimum of one year. The Superintendent may, on a case-by-case basis, and under certain circumstances, specify a shorter period

of expulsion or an alternate educational setting for a student who has brought a firearm onto school property.

- D. Unless used to threaten or harm another, the following are not considered weapons:
 - 1. Tools and materials used by employees in their normal duties.
 - 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 Student Code of Conduct and Policy 9200 Discipline.
- F. Disciplinary actions for employees taken as a result of a violation of this policy will be administered in accordance with Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline.

V. Responsibilities

- A. The school-based administrator/designee will annually notify all students, staff, parents, volunteers, and service providers of the standards included in this policy.
- B. The school-based administrator/designee will determine if a person is in possession of a weapon and take appropriate action.

VI. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures to implement this policy.

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - 18 U.S.C. §921
 - Annotated Code of Maryland, Criminal Law Article, §4-102
 - Annotated Code of Maryland, Family Law Article, §5-507
 - Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-101(c) (Informal Kinship Care)
 - Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-305(F)
 - COMAR 13A.08.01.11
 - COMAR 13A.08.01.12.1
- B. Other Board Policies
 - Policy 1040 Safe School Environments
 - Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline
 - Policy 9020 Student Rights and Responsibilities
 - Policy 9200 Discipline
 - Policy 9260 Student Search and Seizure

- C. Relevant Data Sources
(TBD)
- D. Other
Student Code of Conduct

VIII. History

ADOPTED: January 25, 1990

REVIEWED:

MODIFIED: August 14, 2014
June 9, 2016

REVISED: May 14, 1992
June 23, 1994
September 14, 1995
March 22, 2005
April 12, 2012

EFFECTIVE: June 9, 2016

I. Dissemination of Information

- A. The school-based administrator/designee will annually notify all students, staff, parents, volunteers, and service providers that weapons are prohibited on school property, on school buses, in a vehicle located on school property, and at school-sponsored activities. Notification may be:
 - 1. Given via an announcement 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/faculty handbooks.
 - 3. Posted for students and staff (e.g., on bulletin boards in the main office, teachers' lounge, guidance office, and other commonly used areas).
 - 4. Published with school lunch menus.
- B. New students and parents/guardians will receive notification through the registration process.

II. Student Violation of Policy

- A. If a person suspects that a student is in violation of this weapons policy, he or she 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.
- 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 isolate the student, and/or secure the area, and contact the local law enforcement agency.
 - 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 Student Code of Conduct and in accordance with Policy 9200 Discipline.
4. The school-based administrator/designee may, without revealing the identity of the student(s) involved, inform the PTA president and/or the school community of incidents involving the presence of weapons on school property or at school-sponsored activities.

III. Non-Student Violation of Policy

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

V. History

ADOPTED: January 25, 1990

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