

Communicating in Crisis Best practices for PTA leaders

Constructive communication is key in the midst of crisis. As a PTA leader, it is critical to communicate effectively with MCPS staff as well as with the parent community. Precise, timely, and relevant information is critical during any crisis, conflict, or emergency. Please keep in mind these best practices:

- The PTSA President is one of the first five people an MCPS principal will call during an emergency. Ensure that the principal and assistant principals have your full contact information and that you have theirs.
- Do not hesitate to contact the [MCPS Public Information Office](#) for updated information and messaging. Derek Turner is the Public Information Officer and he can be reached at Derek_G_Turner@mcpsmd.org or (240) 740-2387.
- If the communication lines with the school principal and administration are not working effectively, contact the [OSSI Directors for your school area](#).
- Ensure that your school community is aware of the [Maryland Safe Schools Tip-Line](#). Encourage students, families, and caregivers to download the app and save the number in their phones: 1-833-MD-B-SAFE (1-833-632-7233). Students, parents, faculty, staff, and members of communities throughout Maryland may use this anonymous, app- and web-based reporting system to share their concerns, including mental health crises, bullying, school and community violence, drug activity, abuse, harassment, and any other critical issues affecting Maryland students.
- **Ensuring safety, security, child protection and privacy are the first priority.** If law enforcement is involved, ensure that you are communicating in accordance with law enforcement directives.
- **Feed the facts, not the fears. Do not jump to conclusions.** As a PTA leader, your role is to provide essential information based on facts as they are known and understood. Rely on official sources, including MCPS and, if law enforcement is involved, MCPD. Document all of the necessary information, including:
 - A brief description of what happened
 - What is being done in response
 - Key contact information
 - Resources for student, family, and caregiver support
- **Facilitate community recovery and courageous conversations.** A crisis can affect entire communities in just a few minutes, while the recovery process may take weeks or months. Constructive and transparent communication helps to rebuild trust. As a PTA leader, you can help identify what your community needs to recover and communicate this to appropriate school officials. Work with your school, MCPS, and MCCPTA to identify individuals, programs, and resources to facilitate constructive responses to help your community recover.