



# OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL MONTGOMERY COUNTY MARYLAND

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INSPECTOR GENERAL

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## Review of MCPS Background Screening Office

Montgomery County Public Schools

Montgomery County OIG Publication #26-01

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is the largest school system in the state of Maryland with 211 schools and more than 24,400 employees, supporting the educational needs of over 160,000 students. Ensuring the safety and protection of students, staff, and visitors is critical to MCPS' success. As such, Maryland law and MCPS regulations and procedures require various background checks for employees and others who may have unsupervised access to students. These include criminal background and Child Protective Services checks.

During this review we found MCPS has more than 12,000 current employees who have outdated criminal history checks and approximately 4,900 individuals that have not undergone a CPS check and may have access to children. Additionally, while MCPS contractors and certain volunteers with unsupervised access to students are required to have criminal history checks, we found that some began work prior to those checks being completed. We also determined that MCPS does not have a process to ensure volunteers completed required training regarding child abuse and neglect and that MCPS continues to monitor the criminal histories of persons no longer employed or providing services to MCPS. Lastly, we observed that MCPS does not have formal procedures governing suitability determinations when negative information is discovered through a criminal history check.

### OBJECTIVES

Through this review we sought to determine whether MCPS' process for conducting background checks for employees and contractors that have access to students complies with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

### SCOPE AND STANDARDS

Our review was conducted from October 2024 through May 2025, in accordance with the Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspectors General, Quality Standards for Inspections, Evaluations, and Reviews* (July 2024).

## RESULTS

- MCPS is not monitoring criminal histories for all employees.
- MCPS is not ensuring initial criminal history checks are conducted for contractors and volunteers prior to them beginning work.
- Not all individuals with access to students have undergone a Child Protective Services check.
- MCPS has no formal procedures governing suitability determinations.
- MCPS does not consistently remove people from the criminal history monitoring program as required.
- MCPS does not consistently ensure volunteers have taken required child abuse and neglect training.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Take immediate action to eliminate the backlog of existing employees that have not been entered into the criminal history monitoring program.
- Ensure applicable contractors and volunteers that may have unsupervised access to students have the required criminal history check completed prior to starting work.
- Provide training for relevant staff on the requirements and process to initiate a criminal history check.
- Take immediate action towards eliminating the backlog of CPS checks.
- Implement regulations for investigating and making suitability determinations.
- Remove persons who have separated or are no longer providing services to MCPS from the monitoring program.
- Ensure child abuse and neglect training is completed and tracked.

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## BACKGROUND

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is the largest school system in the state of Maryland with 211 schools and more than 24,400 employees, supporting the educational needs of over 160,000 students. MCPS' operating budget in fiscal year (FY) 2025 exceeded \$3.32 billion with more than 60% of the funds being provided by Montgomery County. Underlying the services provided by MCPS is the responsibility to ensure the safety and protection of students, staff, and visitors to MCPS property and school-sponsored activities. This responsibility extends to implementing various safety protocols.

The Maryland Annotated Code (MD Code), Education Article, § 6-113, states that schools may not knowingly hire or retain any individual who has been convicted of certain criminal offenses, to include specific crimes of a sexual nature, including child sex abuse, and any crime defined in the MD Code, Criminal Law Article, § 14-101. The MD Code, Family Law Articles § 5-551 and 5-552, require that school systems conduct criminal history checks of prospective employees and certain contractors<sup>1</sup> to help identify individuals that may be prohibited from having unsupervised access to children. MCPS also conducts Child Protective Services (CPS) checks for applicants, contractors, and certain volunteers to screen for other concerning behaviors that may also make the individual ineligible for positions with access to students. Additionally, MCPS regulation IRB-RA, *Volunteers in Schools*, requires certain volunteers to undergo criminal history checks and complete the online training course, *Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN)*. It is also MCPS' practice to complete CPS checks for volunteers who were identified as needing a background check.

The MCPS Background Screening Office (BSO) is charged with overseeing the background check process for MCPS and therefore responsible for ensuring that every applicable person undergoes all appropriate steps required by law and MCPS policy. Their oversight extends to prospective staff, active employees, contractors, and volunteers who coach, participate in outdoor environmental education programs, overnight field trips, and certain trips that require extended hours or distances with students.<sup>2</sup>

As part of the background check process, BSO staff (with the assistance of a contractor) process fingerprints, conduct online database queries, and coordinate with other entities to complete required steps.

In January of 2019, BSO began participating in the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI), Record of Arrest and Prosecutions Back (Rap Back) program. Once BSO staff enroll an individual in Rap Back, the system continuously monitors their criminal history and automatically alerts MCPS to changes in the individual's criminal history as reflected in the system. FBI policy requires MCPS to remove individuals from Rap Back once they have separated from service or no longer

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to contractors with direct, unsupervised access to children.

<sup>2</sup> Distances are measured from MCPS Central Office in Rockville, Maryland.

need to have their criminal history monitored by MCPS.

### **Objectives, Scope, and Methodology**

Through this review we sought to determine whether MCPS' process for conducting background checks for individuals that have access to students complies with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

During this engagement we reviewed pertinent laws, regulations, policies, and procedures. The scope of our review included MCPS applicants, employees, contractors, volunteer/chaperones, and coaching staff. We interviewed MCPS staff, visited multiple schools, and analyzed relevant documentation related to the receipt, processing, and adjudication of background checks.

This review was conducted from October 2024 through May 2025, in accordance with the Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General, Quality Standards for Inspections, Evaluations, and Reviews* (July 2024).

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Maryland law requires that public schools conduct criminal history checks for all employees at the time of hire. Additionally, MCPS requires applicants to undergo a CPS check as part of the hiring process. Accordingly, MCPS conducts an initial criminal history check with fingerprints for employees and certain contractors and volunteers, continuously monitors these individuals through the Rap Back program, and submits a CPS query request at the time of hire for anyone having unsupervised access to students. We found that the criminal histories of more than 12,000 MCPS employees are not being monitored and that 4,900 individuals who potentially have access to MCPS students have not received initial CPS queries. We also found instances where some contractors began work before their criminal history checks were completed. Similarly, we noted that some volunteers who may have had unsupervised access to students did not always undergo a criminal history check as required by MCPS regulations.

Additionally, we found that BSO has no formal written procedures governing how to make suitability determinations when negative information is discovered through a criminal history check for new applicants.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, MCPS does not consistently remove people from Rap Back when they are separated from MCPS service.

Lastly, we noted that MCPS regulations require volunteers who regularly support MCPS activities must take the online training, *Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect* (CAN). We found that MCPS is not ensuring compliance with this requirement.

**Finding 1: MCPS is not monitoring criminal histories for all employees and is not ensuring initial criminal background checks are conducted for contractors and volunteers prior to them beginning work.**

### *Employees*

Recognizing the system's responsibility to ensure student and staff safety, in 2018, MCPS' chief operating officer announced to MCPS employees that "as another level of security, this year we will take the critical step of initiating an employee re-fingerprinting program for MCPS." The announcement discussed taking a phased-in approach based on hire date to implement the new procedure, which would ensure all employees were routinely re-fingerprinted and their criminal histories checked every three years. In memoranda to the Board of Education beginning in 2019 and thereafter, MCPS conveyed that they would use the FBI's Rap Back Service in lieu of re-fingerprinting.

In January 2019, MCPS began using the FBI's Rap Back Service to check and monitor the criminal histories of new employees, and applicable contractors and volunteers. The service provides real-time notifications of criminal history information reported to the FBI. In November 2024, MCPS

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<sup>3</sup> BSO rejects applicants with disqualifying offenses as defined in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, § 6-113 but makes a suitability determination based on the underlying facts for those with other negative information.

reported that there were 12,655 employees who had still not been enrolled in Rap Back and thus have not been subjected to a criminal history check since at least 2019.

We were told that MCPS management had been aware of the extensive backlog for over a year prior to our review but determined it would be cost prohibitive to acquire the resources necessary to immediately take action to enroll all employees into Rap Back. Given the seriousness of this issue, on December 2, 2024, the Inspector General wrote to the Superintendent to ensure he was aware of the issue and encourage him to take whatever immediate steps were warranted to safeguard students and staff.

### *MCPS Contractors*

When hiring an outside entity to provide a service, MCPS requires that staff submit a completed “*Authorization for Consultant/Independent Contractor Services*” form to the Division of Procurement (Procurement). Instructions on the form state that the authorization process should begin at least 15 days prior to the anticipated start of work to allow sufficient time for processing. The form requires the MCPS sponsor to answer the question “Will the vendor have direct, unsupervised, or uncontrolled access to children while performing this work?” For any positive response, Procurement provides the information to BSO for a background check.

We were told that even though all school staff should be aware of the clearance process for contractors, some still submit the authorization form late. As a result, contractors have started, and in some cases completed, their work prior to Procurement receiving the authorization form and requesting a background check. We reviewed several instances in which the date of service by a contractor preceded the date the form was received by Procurement. For example, one MCPS sponsor indicated that the contractor would have unsupervised access to children but did not submit the form until two weeks after the contractor was supposed to begin work. Procurement staff also shared that they believe some schools hire contractors and never submit the required authorization form.

### *Volunteers*

MCPS regulations and guidance require that certain volunteers with unsupervised access to students undergo a criminal background check. We noted that MCPS does not have controls in place to ensure applicable volunteers completed the required check prior to volunteering. As was the case with contractors, we found confusion and inconsistent practices with respect to who is required to undergo these checks and the process to initiate them.

In discussions with administrators at one of the four schools that we visited, we were told that they did not know there was a requirement to ensure volunteers with unsupervised access to students undergo a criminal history check prior to volunteering. They also told us that they did not know how to initiate an investigation if they determined one was warranted. As a result, the school never submitted required forms to BSO to initiate criminal history checks. One of the schools we visited claimed to be aware of the requirement and to have submitted notifications to

BSO. The remaining two schools claimed to be aware of the requirement but did not use volunteers who had unsupervised access to students.

As we observed through our site visits, BSO may not always be notified when applicable volunteers require a criminal history check. As such, staff and students may be exposed to volunteers that have a criminal history or other concerning issues.

There are currently thousands of MCPS employees whose criminal histories have not been updated since at least 2019. Relatedly, MCPS is not ensuring that contractors and applicable volunteers are undergoing initial background checks prior to taking on roles that give them unsupervised access to students. Background checks are critical to MCPS' efforts to identifying potential risks associated with those unfit to have access to children.

### **Recommendation 1**

#### **We recommend MCPS:**

- a) Take immediate steps towards eliminating the backlog of existing employees that have not been entered into Rap Back.**
- b) Ensure all applicable contractors and volunteers that may have unsupervised access to students have the required criminal history check completed prior to beginning work.**
- c) Provide periodic training for all relevant administrators and staff on the requirement to obtain a criminal history check for individuals with unsupervised access to students, and the process for initiating those checks.**

#### **Finding 2: Not all individuals with access to MCPS students have undergone a Child Protective Services check.**

Since 2013, MCPS has required a CPS check for new employees. In a 2020 memorandum to the Board of Education, the then-superintendent of schools also committed to completing CPS checks for all existing employees hired prior to September of 2013. Current MCPS practice also includes conducting these checks for contractors and volunteers when BSO receives notification that they require a background check. We learned that as of March 31, 2025, MCPS had a backlog of approximately 4,900 individuals who may have access to students and never undergone a CPS check.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Services (CWS) is responsible for investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect within the County (i.e. CPS investigations). CWS has processed MCPS' checks since 2013, but due to the volume of checks required, MCPS has had to assign staff to augment CWS.

We were told that in 2024 CPS checks identified 30 individuals at MCPS (applicants, employees, contractors, or volunteers) that had an "indicated" finding of child abuse or neglect. Code of Maryland Regulations 07.02.07.02 defines "indicated" as "a finding that there is credible evidence,



which has not been satisfactorily refuted, that child abuse or neglect occurred.” While concerning, it is important to note that a CPS indicated finding is not the equivalent of being convicted of a crime and does not necessarily mean a person poses a danger to students but rather is something that should be subject to further review. The large number of outstanding CPS checks is a vulnerability and presents a liability to MCPS.

### **Recommendation 2**

**We recommend MCPS take immediate action towards eliminating the backlog of CPS checks.**

**Finding 3: MCPS has no formal written procedures governing suitability determinations for applicants with criminal histories.**

The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, § 6-113, *Hiring Prohibition for Individuals Convicted of Sexual Crimes or Crimes of Violence*, states that a county board may not knowingly hire or retain any individual who has been convicted of certain criminal offenses, to include certain crimes of a sexual nature, child sexual abuse, and any violent crime as defined in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Criminal Law Article, § 14-101.

BSO confirmed that any applicant with a disqualifying offense would not be offered a position. However, they stated that if an applicant had other criminal convictions, but no disqualifying offenses, BSO staff would use their own discretion to determine if the individual is suitable for employment. Factors such as the length of time since last arrest or conviction, non-felony convictions, mitigating circumstances, and overall criminal history are reportedly considered by BSO staff to determine suitability. BSO staff shared that they do not have a formal process or procedure for making a recommendation whether a person is suitable for employment.<sup>4</sup>

The discretionary authority and lack of formal policy regarding suitability determinations could create inequities and disparate treatment when evaluating applicants being considered for a position at MCPS.

### **Recommendation 3**

**We recommend MCPS implement comprehensive regulations and associated procedures for investigating and making suitability determinations for applicants with a criminal history but no disqualifying offenses.**

**Finding 4: MCPS does not consistently remove individuals from Rap Back who have separated from MCPS or otherwise no longer need to have their criminal history monitored.**

FBI policy requires subscribers such as MCPS to remove an individual from Rap Back within five days of the person separating from employment or no longer needing to have their criminal history monitored. We found that MCPS employees, volunteers, and contractors enrolled in Rap Back are not always removed when they have separated or are no longer providing services to

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<sup>4</sup> While BSO can make a recommendation, the Office of Human Resources is ultimately responsible for determining if an offer of employment will be rescinded.

MCPS. This was especially notable for volunteers and contractors, as BSO is rarely informed when a contractor or volunteer is no longer providing services.

We found that BSO has no formal procedure for the removal of people enrolled in Rap Back. In fact, BSO staff did not begin routinely removing individuals from Rap Back until approximately mid-2023. Even then, BSO staff admitted that their process is limited to MCPS employees and does not typically include volunteers or contractors.

As noted above, due to confusion at the school level about the requirement to obtain criminal checks for volunteers, some may have never received the required checks. The lack of awareness also resulted in schools not notifying BSO to remove volunteers from Rap Back when they are no longer providing services at the school. As a result, these individuals remained in Rap Back and continued to have their criminal history monitored. Similarly, Procurement was not routinely notifying BSO when a contractor was terminated or completed their work. We were told that staff from Procurement and BSO recently began discussions about implementing a formal process to identify and remove contractors from Rap Back when appropriate.

There is no official need for MCPS to continue monitoring the criminal histories of individuals that no longer have unsupervised access to MCPS students. Additionally, by not removing individuals from Rap Back within five days of their separation date, MCPS is in violation of FBI policy and potentially violating the privacy rights of individuals.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**We recommend MCPS implement a formal process to identify and remove any individual they enrolled in Rap Back that is no longer employed or no longer has unsupervised access to students.**

**Finding 5: MCPS does not ensure volunteers have taken the required training, *Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*.**

MCPS Regulation IRB-RA, *Volunteers in Schools*, requires all volunteers who regularly support schools and school-sponsored activities, including chaperones and those attending field trips, take the online training, *Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect* (CAN). The training is required to be taken every three school years. Volunteers for large events, such as college or job fairs and parents staffing concession stands or ticket booths, as well as volunteers for one-time events under school staff supervision are not required to take the training.

During our visits to four schools, we conducted interviews with school administrators to learn how they manage volunteers at their locations. We found inconsistencies related to their understanding of the CAN training requirements and no formal process to ensure volunteers who are required to take the training have done so. Of the four schools we visited, two were aware of the CAN training requirement and said it was reflected in their current practice. Another school we visited was aware of the training requirement but said that they do not have any volunteers and therefore do not have a need for the training.

The final school we visited was familiar with the CAN training requirement; however, they mistakenly believed the requirement only applied to volunteers with unsupervised access to children when, in fact, all those who regularly volunteer are required to complete the training. Staff at this same school also shared that they were not proactively ensuring that volunteers were indeed taking the training. They explained that the responsibility to refer a volunteer for CAN training was assigned to the sponsor of the volunteer activity, which changes frequently. Staff admitted they had no controls in place to ensure that all potential sponsors were aware of the requirement and instructing volunteers to complete the online CAN training.

While MCPS regulation requires that the CAN training must be taken by applicable volunteers every three years, there are no mechanisms in place to identify individuals that are overdue. Additionally, the regulation does not mention that contractors are also required to take the CAN training even though this requirement is highlighted on MCPS' website.

All MCPS employees, contractors, and volunteers are required to report any suspected instance of abuse or neglect of a child. By not having appropriate protocols in place to ensure that those required to take CAN training have done so, individuals providing services to MCPS may not be aware of the primary indicators of abuse and neglect or the appropriate actions to take if they witness something of concern.

### **Recommendation 5**

#### **We recommend MCPS:**

- a) Take appropriate steps to ensure the completion and continual tracking of CAN training for all applicable persons.**
- b) Clarify CAN training requirements for contractors.**

## OIG COMMENTS TO THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RESPONSE

The Superintendent's response to this report is included in its entirety in Appendix A. Of note, MCPS does not disagree with any of the findings contained in the report and indicates general concurrence with the recommendations while highlighting the challenges of relying upon partner agencies to address issues associated with CPS checks. Although the Superintendent asserts that MCPS takes "full responsibility" for the deficiencies identified in the report, we find the response perplexing and are disappointed by the apparent attempts to transfer blame to this office for his administration's "inability to act more swiftly" to address these serious issues that have been well known at MCPS for years and yet have gone unaddressed.

As noted in the report, the Inspector General sent a memorandum to the Superintendent over seven months ago to ensure he was aware of the significant backlog of criminal history checks for existing staff. Since that time, we have worked closely with numerous individuals at MCPS to assess the background check process which includes CPS checks

Contrary to assertions made by the Superintendent, OIG staff enjoyed an excellent working relationship with numerous MCPS staff involved in the background check process. We found these staff members and their counterparts to be open and forthcoming about the challenges in their work, including their attempts to alert previous leadership about the criminal history and CPS check backlogs. We had numerous conversations with staff from multiple MCPS offices regarding the background check process and held collaborative discussions about best practices and possible changes to process. We also note that near the end of our review, the former HR Director met with CWS management, which we observed as a positive step for moving forward. With that context, the allegations that the OIG failed to keep MCPS informed and failed to act with transparency are unsupported and inaccurate.

In addition to our frequent discussions with MCPS staff during our review, in May we spoke with management about our findings, and on June 6<sup>th</sup> we shared an initial draft of our report with the Superintendent's office. At that time, per our standard protocol, we requested MCPS to provide technical comments or corrections. In the spirit of collaboration and transparency, we repeatedly offered to answer questions and engage in dialogue regarding the draft; shared contact information with senior leadership to facilitate informal conversations; and even agreed to an extension for MCPS to provide a draft action plan.

OIG staff met with members of the Superintendent's leadership team on June 25<sup>th</sup> and in response to that meeting made corrections to address the concerns raised and provided a revised draft report on July 7<sup>th</sup>. On July 16<sup>th</sup> we held another meeting to discuss MCPS's proposed corrective actions and address any other questions or issues. At no time during or after that meeting did MCPS leadership request additional changes to the report, raise wording discrepancies, or identify any inaccuracies. The Superintendent did not attend either of these

meetings, and despite his claims, MCPS leaders did not exhibit or invite an authentic collaboration. In fact, during our last meeting with MCPS leadership, they repeatedly refused to discuss specifics of certain planned actions which would assist the OIG in determining if the proposed steps would address observed deficiencies or offer alternative considerations. It was only in the Superintendent's July 25<sup>th</sup> formal response that we learned of the nature and extent of discussions with the State regarding CPS checks.

Furthermore, although OIG draft reports are routinely kept confidential until public issuance in order to protect the integrity of our work and ensure all parties have the opportunity to be fully prepared to address the recommendations, a limited exception was provided in this case. In an email dated June 20<sup>th</sup> OIG staff specifically told MCPS leadership that though the report itself could not be shared, we recognized they may need to reference certain information contained in the report while meeting with CWS to prepare their corrective action plan. There should have been no ambiguity as we explicitly stated they were "welcome to discuss" the facts shared by our office.

At no time did the OIG withhold the results of our work or stymie the actions of MCPS to begin addressing the fact that there are thousands of individuals (employees, contractors, staff, and volunteers) with access to schools and children who have not had an updated criminal history check in over five years. Notably missing from the Superintendent's response is mention of any actions that MCPS may have taken since our December 2024 memorandum to reduce this backlog or their efforts during the last budget season to identify the resources they believe necessary to address this known failing. To insinuate MCPS had only three weeks to address these issues is deceptive. The current administration has been aware of these issues for months, and MCPS as an institution has been aware for years.

The accuracy of the OIG's work is critically important and the processes and procedures we adhere to strive for such an outcome in every project. Our standard protocols include multiple quality assurance checkpoints, including independent referencing and engaging with stakeholders to gain feedback, clarifications, and corrections. That is why we met with MCPS staff repeatedly, made ourselves available to them, and made revisions following our discussions. After thoroughly reviewing the Superintendent's response and evaluating each assertion, the OIG is confident that, as written, the report is factually correct and supported by evidence.

Lastly, in contrast to their statements, the actions by MCPS senior leaders do not demonstrate either accountability or transparency. The fact remains that thousands of individuals with unsupervised access to MCPS schools and students have not had a criminal history check in more than five years and thousands more have not completed a CPS check. In the end, only one entity is tasked with and has accepted the responsibility for obtaining these background checks to safeguard employees and students, and that is MCPS.

# APPENDIX A: SUPERINTENDENT'S RESPONSE

The MCPS Superintendent provided the following response to our report:



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

July 25, 2025

Megan Davey Limarzi, Esquire  
Inspector General  
51 Monroe Street, Suite 600  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Ms. Limarzi,

The Inspector General's *Review of MCPS Background Screening Office* highlights urgent and unacceptable gaps in the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and County Government pre-hire clearance processes. As MCPS' new superintendent, I was astonished to learn that such a gap was even possible; this has been the deepest disappointment of my early tenure. You have my most sincere gratitude for illuminating such a glaringly significant irregularity.

On behalf of the school system, nothing is more important to me than our duty of care for the students we serve and for the families who entrust their children to Montgomery County Public Schools. Since becoming aware of this issue, it has become our top priority for correction. Consequently, MCPS is taking immediate and decisive action to strengthen background screening processes for all new hires as well as for the employees, contractors, and volunteers currently serving in our system.

**That said, given the seriousness of this report, I also am deeply disappointed by the lack of rigor in your office's review.** We would have preferred to work with you to arrive at a fully accurate report that both agencies could support. Instead, our efforts to authentically collaborate with your team to resolve glaring inaccuracies and to take the time to address action steps of this magnitude were not reciprocated. As a result, we find ourselves at odds over your team's process and work product, while we are moving quickly to ensure a safe environment for our students, staff, and families.

Since receiving your initial draft report, my leadership team and their staff have been working around the clock to accomplish the due diligence that, regrettably, your office failed to do.

- Clarify the nuances of the law regarding background screening (even identifying incorrect sections of COMAR in previous versions of your report that needed to be corrected by MCPS);
- Determine the actual roles and authority of the multiple agencies involved. We have pointed out numerous times that not all of the roles and authority fall under MCPS' jurisdiction, yet your office's report seems intent on passing sole responsibility for all aspects of this process to MCPS;
- Recognize existing processes, and identify specific areas within those processes that require attention. For example, Recommendation 1c states that MCPS should provide training related to volunteer and contractor screening requirements. While our existing training would benefit from improvement, your report failed to acknowledge that we already provide it. This reflects an incomplete review on your part, which we needed to reconstruct.

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Megan Davey Limarzi, Esquire

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July 25, 2025

These concerns have been amplified by a tone from your office of allegations instead of collaboration or problem-solving. Meetings between your team and my team working on corrections have been time unproductively spent in addressing inaccuracies introduced by your team. To your team's credit, some of those inaccuracies have been corrected in the final report; however, many hours were spent correcting your office's work, costing all of us substantial time that could have been dedicated to addressing the core concerns.

While we appreciate that some of the factual errors we raised were corrected in the final version, substantial inaccuracies and misrepresentations remain. Some examples include:

- The stated purpose of this review was to assess legal compliance, but no specific law, regulation, or policy was set forth in the section regarding Child Protective Services (CPS) clearances. Instead, the report vaguely references "vulnerabilities" and potential liability for MCPS. A straightforward articulation of the statutory and legal requirements here seems to be an essential part of your objective. Despite numerous requests for this clarity, we still are unclear on this critical point.
- The report claims that *"CWS has processed MCPS' {CPS} checks since 2013, but due to the volume of checks required, MCPS has had to assign staff to augment CWS."* **This is inaccurate.** Child Welfare Services (CWS) leadership confirmed that CWS staff do not conduct the clearance checks; instead, all CPS clearance processing is handled by MCPS-funded personnel (one employee and one contractor) with CWS involvement limited to reviewing indicated findings for accuracy and signing off on all clearances once completed. The contractor manages pre-2024 cases; the employee handles 2024–2025 cases. This is not "augmentation," it is the sole dedicated effort.
- The report recommends that MCPS take immediate action to clear the CPS backlog. **It is not possible for MCPS to take direct action as you recommend.** The state does not permit MCPS access to the data, records, and systems needed to conduct the CPS screenings. One MCPS employee has been granted access to the system; however, recent communications from the state have indicated that only CWS employees are permitted to conduct screenings and access the information. Following multiple communications and in-person meetings between MCPS and Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) staff and leadership, MCPS requested authorization to establish a satellite office and add capacity on-site to our Background Screening Office. **Staff in the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) formally denied that request on July 8**, offering instead only one hour per day of additional staff time ([July 8 letter](#)).
- Your report fails to acknowledge the structural barriers imposed by the state – a key omission given that this recommendation cannot be implemented without state and local cooperation. Your office did not share with us until later in the internal discussions that your team had been in contact with CWS during the review process; however, the report does not reference any interviews or findings from those conversations. As you shared with us verbally, these interviews included an estimate from CWS staff that it would take years to eliminate the backlog.

Megan Davey Limarzi, Esquire

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July 25, 2025

MCPS has engaged directly with the state in an effort to find solutions; fortunately, we have made the following progress:

- On July 11, I elevated this matter to the Maryland Secretary of the Department of Human Services, emphasizing the seriousness of the matter and urging swift action ([July 11 letter](#)).
- My team and I have also spoken directly with Secretary Lopez and met with leaders at various levels of our local DHHS.
- As a result, we understand that the state plans to provide additional state and local CWS resources to help screen MCPS employees more effectively.

We are supremely grateful for the state's understanding of the urgency of this issue and their timely partnership and response.

I also question your stated intent to support institutional improvements when, at multiple points in this process, **your office has impeded our ability to act swiftly and transparently.**

- While you raised concerns about the need to enter previously fingerprinted employees into RapBack in December 2024, you did not find it important to escalate a much more extensive breakdown in CPS screenings or to flag your understanding that contractors may have started work prior to fingerprinting clearance—issues that warranted immediate attention.
- Indeed, as I have outlined above, we have taken immediate steps to address and make positive movement on CPS screenings. This work could have taken place earlier and been further along in advance of the upcoming school year had you raised it with me or my leadership team.
- My office meets regularly with your staff, yet the severity of these findings was never expressed until the months-long review was completed.
- When the initial draft report was shared with my leadership team, you expressly directed them not to share the existence of the report with anyone, including those responsible for CPS clearances. Your office prioritized internal confidentiality pending your report announcement over student safety. Your restriction delayed our ability to fully convey the level of urgency and extent of the problem to those on whom we rely to complete this work. This would have been, in my view, an opportunity to grant a narrow exception in favor of what is best for the community.
- Our swift and decisive actions taken in the last three weeks make all the more frustrating your office's lack of sharing concerning findings with us sooner, and the insistence that we hold on sharing the true urgency with critical partners.

At no point in the report do you recognize the obvious fiscal impact outside of the budget process on the school system and, ultimately, county taxpayers. Your findings and recommendations require “immediate action” without consideration of the financial feasibility to find resources to support that action. At this time, we estimate a minimum of \$2 million will be needed for our immediate response, but we do not fully know the cost of our short- or long-term investments. We will prioritize funding



Megan Davey Limarzi, Esquire

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July 25, 2025

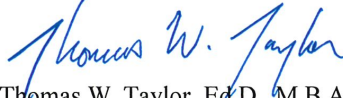
for this effort from among our already budgeted items, given the critical importance. At the same time, we would appreciate an acknowledgement and your support with our funding partners on the county council for adequate resources to assuage this issue and future recommendations in other areas.

**Let me be clear: On behalf of the school system, we take full responsibility for the gaps in our portion of this process.** My administration already is moving quickly to implement stronger, more consistent screening and monitoring systems for employees, contractors, and volunteers. Our commitment to our students and their families is non-negotiable, and we are taking the steps necessary to ensure full compliance and safe staffing across all schools and central offices.

**Let me also be clear:** We embrace transparency and accountability. However, when your office issues a report of this magnitude, it must be accurate, thorough, and grounded in fact. Anything less does a disservice to the community we are all entrusted to serve. Our shared obligation—to be transparent, accountable, timely, and effective—must be upheld in both action and review. The public deserves nothing less, and they certainly deserve better than the process that generated this report.

It is my expectation that this response will be published along with your findings and our corrective action plan so that our community and constituents understand the full scope and context of these issues.

Sincerely,



Thomas W. Taylor, Ed.D., M.B.A.  
Superintendent of Schools

TWT:sln

Enclosure

### OIG Review of Background Screening Office MCPS Action Plan

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has illuminated critical and concerning gaps in several areas of the MCPS Background Screening processes that require immediate attention. MCPS is moving swiftly to thoroughly examine this critical area of responsibility and to implement robust systems and processes to ensure that the requirements are met for all employees and for those volunteers and contractors who work most closely with our students. Full compliance with the legal requirements for background screening will require equal commitment and urgency from our sister agency, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), that has responsibility for Child Protective Services.

**Finding 1: MCPS is not monitoring criminal histories for all employees and is not ensuring initial criminal background checks are conducted for contractors and volunteers prior to them beginning work.**

**Recommendation 1a:** We recommend MCPS take immediate steps towards eliminating the backlog of existing employees that have not been entered into RapBack.

**Response:** MCPS concurs with this recommendation.

**Corrective Actions:**

Sort data of employees who need to be fingerprinted and entered into RapBack.	July–August 2025
Develop a prioritized re-fingerprinting plan for employees who are not in RapBack, according to job type and hire date.	September 2025
Complete re-fingerprinting and RapBack enrollment of all MCPS employees.	No later than end of School Year 2025–2026

**Recommendation 1b:** Ensure all applicable contractors and volunteers that may have unsupervised access to students have the required criminal history check completed prior to beginning work.

**Response:** MCPS concurs with this recommendation.

**Corrective Actions:**

Working through the Division of School Leadership and Improvement, set and communicate clear expectations for schools to ensure all applicable contractors and volunteers are fingerprinted and cleared prior to beginning work.	August 2025
Working through the Division of School Leadership and Improvement, increase monitoring and accountability for completing requirements.	August 2025 (and ongoing)
Implement a real-time clearance tracker for contractors and volunteers for confirmation before a contractor or volunteer can begin work.	July 2025
Formalize procedures by updating existing volunteer regulations and developing new regulations for contractors.	October 2025

**Recommendation 1c:** We recommend MCPS provide periodic training for all relevant administrators and staff on the requirement to obtain background checks for individuals with unsupervised access to students, and the process for initiating those checks.

**Response:** MCPS provides periodic training as described. MCPS will increase monitoring of and accountability for completion.

**Clarification:** The Office of Student Leadership and Extracurricular Activities currently takes the following steps to provide training and information:

- Develops training presentations for school-based volunteer liaisons and principals;
- Provides virtual trainings at the start of the school year and is available for direct support throughout the school year through multiple modalities (in person, virtual meeting, phone, email);
- Sends information and reminders three times per school year to principals regarding the need to provide training and conduct appropriate background screenings;
- Maintains a hub of resource information for schools and volunteers to access;
- Provides guidance documents, FAQs, and other materials in multiple languages;
- Maintains approved volunteer list of individuals who have completed the required training and screening requirements, and supports schools in confirming approved individuals.

**Corrective Action:**

While the measures described above are in place, the report indicates that school-based staff are not fully aware of the requirements and how to implement them consistently. MCPS will work through the Division of School Leadership and Improvement to set clear expectations; increase monitoring and accountability for completing these requirements; and ensure regular, annual training.

**Finding 2: Not all individuals with access to MCPS students have undergone a Child Protective Services check.**

**Recommendation 2:** We recommend MCPS take action towards eliminating the backlog of Child Protective Services (CPS) checks.

**Response:** MCPS concurs that eliminating the backlog of Child Protective Services checks is a high priority concern. However, MCPS has not, to date, been authorized to conduct or supervise CPS checks, nor to have CPS checks conducted on MCPS properties.

**Corrective Actions:**

While MCPS is committed to swift action to address this critical gap in background screening, the recommendation does not acknowledge the reality that a separate agency has full authority and responsibility for this process.

Work with Montgomery County Child Welfare Services to transition away from a paper-based system transported between agencies to a single online submission and tracking system. This will reduce processing time and improve cross-agency coordination.	July 2025
Advocate with local Child Welfare Services and state Department of Human Services leadership to determine what resources and processes can be brought to address this gap.	Immediate and ongoing

**Finding 3: MCPS has no formal procedures governing suitability determinations.**

**Recommendation 3:** We recommend MCPS implement comprehensive regulations and associated procedures for investigating and making suitability determinations for applicants with a criminal history but no disqualifying offenses.

**Response:** MCPS concurs with the need for formal procedures.

**Corrective Actions:**

Establish procedures for reviewing applicants with criminal history but no disqualifying offenses.	August 2025
Review organizational structure and office with responsibility for review and determination.	August 2025
Review existing regulations for background screening, and update to include suitability review procedures.	Fall 2025

**Finding 4: MCPS does not consistently remove individuals from RapBack who have been separated from MCPS or otherwise no longer need to have their criminal history monitored.**

**Recommendation 4:** We recommend MCPS implement a formal process to identify and remove any individual they enrolled in RapBack that is no longer employed or no longer has unsupervised access to students.

**Response:** MCPS concurs with this recommendation.

**Corrective Action:** MCPS will develop procedures to clear RapBack enrollment for employees, contractors, and volunteers as part of the termination, separation, or other off-boarding processes. MCPS will initiate these processes no later than December 15, 2025.

**Finding 5: MCPS does not ensure volunteers have taken the required training, *Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*.**

**Recommendation 5a:** We recommend MCPS take appropriate steps to ensure the completion and continual tracking of CAN {child abuse and neglect} training for all applicable persons.

**Response:** MCPS does have a tracking mechanism for training of volunteers and contractors; however, MCPS concurs that the monitoring process needs to be strengthened.

**Corrective Action:** Consistent with the response to recommendation 1c, MCPS will work through the Division of School Leadership and Improvement to set clear expectations and increase monitoring and accountability for completing these requirements.

**Recommendation 5b:** We recommend that MCPS clarify CAN {child abuse and neglect} training requirements for contractors.

**Response:** MCPS concurs with this recommendation.

**Corrective Action:**

Formalize procedures by updating existing volunteer regulations and developing new regulations for contractors.	October 2025
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## APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDATION STATUS AND FOLLOW UP

This Appendix provides a summary of the findings and recommendations presented in this report along with the OIG's assessment of the county's progress towards addressing the recommendations. The OIG categorizes progress towards implementation into the following 4 status groups:

- Open Unresolved: No management response, inadequate response, or no agreement on corrective action plan.
- Open In Progress: Agreed on planned action, auditee is in the process of implementing stated actions, but no evidence of implementation has yet been provided to the OIG.
- Open Resolved: Auditee provided support to OIG indicating implementation was complete, OIG testing to ensure implementation.
- Closed: Recommendation has been implemented.

Finding #	Finding	Recommendation	Superintendent's Response	Status
1	MCPS is not monitoring criminal histories for all employees and is not ensuring initial criminal background checks are conducted for contractors and volunteers prior to them beginning work.	1a) We recommend MCPS take immediate steps towards eliminating the backlog of existing employees that have not been entered into Rap Back.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sort data of employees who need to be fingerprinted and entered into RapBack (July-August 2025).</li><li>• Develop a prioritized re-fingerprinting plan for employees who are not in RapBack, according to job type and hire date (September 2025).</li><li>• Complete re-fingerprinting and RapBack enrollment of all MCPS employees (No later than end of school year 2025-2026).</li></ul>	Open – In Progress
		1b) We recommend MCPS ensure all applicable contractors and volunteers that may have unsupervised access to students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working through the Division of School Leadership and Improvement, set and communicate clear expectations</li></ul>	Open – In Progress

	have the required criminal history check completed prior to beginning work.	<p>for schools to ensure all applicable contractors and volunteers are fingerprinted and cleared prior to beginning work (August 2025).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working through the Division of School Leadership and Improvement, increase monitoring and accountability for completing requirements (August 2025).</li> <li>• Implement a real-time clearance tracker for contractors and volunteers for confirmation before a contractor or volunteer can begin work (July 2025).</li> <li>• Formalize procedures by updating existing volunteer regulations and developing new regulations for contractors (October 2025).</li> </ul>	
	1c) We recommend MCPS provide periodic training for all relevant administrators and staff on the requirement to obtain a criminal history check for individuals with unsupervised access to students,	The report indicates that school-based staff are not fully aware of the requirements and how to implement them consistently. MCPS will work through the Division of School Leadership and Improvement to set clear expectations; increase	Open – In Progress

		and the process for initiating those checks.	monitoring and accountability for completing these requirements; and ensure regular, annual training.	
2	Not all individuals with access to MCPS students have undergone a Child Protective Services check.	We recommend MCPS take immediate action towards eliminating the backlog of CPS checks.	<p>While MCPS is committed to swift action to address this critical gap in background screening, the recommendation does not acknowledge the reality that a separate agency has full authority and responsibility for this process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MCPS will work with Montgomery County Child Welfare Services to transition away from a paper-based system transported between agencies to a single online submission and tracking system. This will reduce processing time and improve cross-agency coordination (July 2025).</li> <li>• MCPS will advocate with local Child Welfare Services and state Department of Human Services leadership to determine what resources and processes can be</li> </ul>	Open – In Progress

			brought to address this gap (immediate and ongoing).	
3	MCPS has no formal written procedures governing suitability determinations for applicants with criminal histories.	We recommend MCPS implement comprehensive regulations and associated procedures for investigating and making suitability determinations for applicants with a criminal history but no disqualifying offenses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish procedures for reviewing applicants with criminal history but no disqualifying offenses (August 2025).</li> <li>Review organizational structure and office with responsibility for review and determination (August 2025).</li> <li>Review existing regulations for background screening, and update to include suitability review procedures (Fall 2025).</li> </ul>	Open – In Progress
4	MCPS does not consistently remove individuals from Rap Back who have separated from MCPS or otherwise no longer need to have their criminal history monitored.	We recommend MCPS implement a formal process to identify and remove any individual they enrolled in Rap Back that is no longer employed or no longer has unsupervised access to students.	MCPS will develop procedures to clear RapBack enrollment for employees, contractors, and volunteers as part of the termination, separation, or other off-boarding processes. MCPS will initiate these processes no later than December 15, 2025.	Open – In Progress
5	MCPS does not ensure all applicable volunteers have taken the required	5a) We recommend MCPS take appropriate steps to ensure the completion and continual tracking	Consistent with the response to 1c, MCPS will work through the Division of School Leadership and	Open – In Progress



## APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDATION STATUS AND FOLLOW UP

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	training, Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.	of CAN training for all applicable persons.	Improvement to set clear expectations and increase monitoring and accountability for completing these requirements.	
		5b) We recommend MCPS clarify CAN training requirements for contractors.	Formalize procedures by updating existing volunteer regulations and developing new regulations for contractors (October 2025).	Open – In Progress