

It is recognized that the use of public school facilities and grounds, including school offices, in St. Mary's County, shall be devoted primarily to instructional programs and other school-approved activities. The use of public school facilities and grounds in St. Mary's County for community purposes shall be encouraged in accordance with the Public School Law of Maryland (Article 77, Section 97 and 98).

The Board of Education of St. Mary's County encourages the use of public school facilities and grounds for community activities and events provided that these activities and events:

- Are of a public nature
- Do not interfere with the regular school session and/or bona fide school activities
- Are appropriate for a public school building.

Student-related activities will be given priority over community usage. Similarly, community activities benefiting school-aged participants shall be given priority over other community usage. Private events and occasions such as weddings, funerals, family reunions, etc., are not deemed to be activities for which use of a public school building is appropriate; such uses are prohibited.

The Board of Education recognizes the need for school buildings to be available to school groups, parent/teacher organizations, and other outside groups. It is also critical that users, and the community as a whole, recognize that their use of school facilities adds additional expense to the school system. These groups may be assessed appropriate fees to use a facility, as determined by regulation. The use of these facilities and/or grounds shall be available by application in the prescribed manner. Further, the use and users are restricted to those identified on the application. Applicants shall not "sublease" facilities. The Board directs the superintendent to develop appropriate regulations and procedures for the use of school facilities for other than school purposes.

The Board requires the renting organization to assume all liability for injury or damage to individuals or property and to indemnify and hold harmless the Board and employees of the Board from such loss or damage. The applicant, by signing the building use application, shall indemnify the district and any person whose property may be within the said building for loss or damage to such property caused by any persons attending said meeting or any damage or injury arising by reason of the holding of said meeting. The system reserves the right to require a performance bond or a deposit for protection of the building facility and equipment, and/or to guarantee the rental or expenses.

The renting organization shall observe all fire and safety regulations. In addition, the use of tobacco will be restricted as required by law and to conform to Board policy, and no alcoholic beverages will be used on school grounds or in the buildings. The renting organization shall agree that no immoral or illegal activity will take place on the premises. The renting organization must agree to accept any eligible participant regardless of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, or disability.

Permission for use of school facilities does not constitute a school system endorsement of any organization, the beliefs of an organization or group, nor the expression of any opinion regarding the nomination, retention, election, or defeat of any candidate, nor the expression of any opinion as to the passage or defeat of any issue.

The Board of Education expects site administrators to work closely with applicants to facilitate the appropriate use of school facilities by the community. However, applicants are advised to submit applications to the site administrator in sufficient time to allow up to four weeks for response/approval from the site administrator. Such lead time may be necessary to avoid disruption in the day-to-day duties of school staff, as well as to allow scheduling of facilities and appropriate support staff, and any necessary communication with the applicants.

The Board reserves the right to refuse approval or to cancel any and all permits issued for the use of a school building or its facilities when it is deemed that such action is necessary for the best interests of the school system.

Board of Education policies and regulations which govern school use of facilities will, when applicable, also govern community use of school facilities.

Maryland Law: <u>7-108</u>	Federal Law: _____
COMAR: _____	Federal Regs.: _____
Auditor Recomm.: _____	
State's Attn'y Ref.: _____	
Contr./Agreement: _____	
Other Citations: _____	