

Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the United States of America

Interdisciplinary Group on Preventing School and Community Violence

February 28, 2018

School shootings and widespread community gun violence are far greater in the United States than other nations. America cannot be great and realize its promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness if our children are not safe from gun violence.

Although security measures are important, a focus on simply preparing for shootings is insufficient. We need a change in mindset and policy from reaction to prevention. Prevention entails more than security measures and begins long before a gunman comes to school. We need a comprehensive public health approach to gun violence that is informed by scientific evidence and free from partisan politics.

A public health approach to protecting children as well as adults from gun violence involves three levels of prevention: (1) universal approaches promoting safety and well-being for everyone; (2) practices for reducing risk and promoting protective factors for persons experiencing difficulties; and (3) interventions for individuals where violence is present or appears imminent.

On the first level we need:

1. A national requirement for all schools to assess school climate and maintain physically and emotionally safe conditions and positive school environments that protect all students and adults from bullying, discrimination, harassment, and assault;
2. A ban on assault-style weapons, high-capacity ammunition clips, and products that modify semi-automatic firearms to enable them to function like automatic firearms.

On the second level we need:

3. Adequate staffing (such as counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers) of coordinated school- and community-based mental health services for individuals with risk factors for violence, recognizing that violence is not intrinsically a product of mental illness;
4. Reform of school discipline to reduce exclusionary practices and foster positive social, behavioral, emotional, and academic success for students;
5. Universal background checks to screen out violent offenders, persons who have been hospitalized for violence towards self or others, and persons on no-fly, terrorist watch lists.

On the third level we need:

6. A national program to train and maintain school- and community-based threat assessment teams that include mental health and law enforcement partners. Threat assessment programs should include practical channels of communication for persons to report potential threats as well as interventions to resolve conflicts and assist troubled individuals;
7. Removal of legal barriers to sharing safety-related information among educational, mental health, and law enforcement agencies in cases where a person has threatened violence;
8. Laws establishing Gun Violence Protection Orders that allow courts to issue time-limited restraining orders requiring that firearms be recovered by law enforcement when there is evidence that an individual is planning to carry out acts against others or against themselves.

Congress and the executive branch must remove barriers to gun violence research and institute a program of scientific research on gun violence that encompasses all levels of prevention. We contend that well-executed laws can reduce gun violence while protecting all Constitutional rights.

It's time for federal and state authorities to take immediate action to enact these proposals and provide adequate resources for effective implementation. We call on law enforcement, mental health, and educational agencies to begin actions supporting these prevention efforts. We ask all parents and youth to join efforts advocating for these changes, and we urge voters to elect representatives who will take effective action to prevent gun violence in our nation.

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National Organizations Endorsing This Statement

Alliance for Excellent Education
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Dance Therapy Association
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association (APA)
American Psychological Association Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Positive Behavior Support
Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs)
Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania
Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports
Children's Mental Health Network
Clinical Social Work Association
Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Coalition for the Advancement and Application of Psychological Science
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Committee for Children
Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD)
Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE)
Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs
Council of University Directors of Clinical Psychology
Divisions for Social Justice, American Psychological Association
GLSEN
International Bullying Prevention Association
Justice and Serious Mental Illness
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)

National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS)
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Center for School Mental Health
National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology (NCSPP)
National Education Association (NEA)
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Juvenile Justice Network
National Latina/o Psychological Association
National PTA
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
National School Climate Center (NCSS)
Sandy Hook Promise
School Psychology, Division 16 of the American Psychological Association
School Social Work Association of America
School-Based Health Alliance
Society for Community Research and Action
Society for Prevention Research (SPR)
Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology
Society of Counseling Psychology, Division 17, American Psychological Association
The Child and Family Evidence Based Practice Consortium
The Mental Health-Education Integration Consortium
The National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA)
Trainers of School Psychologists

Additional Organizations Endorsing This Statement

Adler University
Alberti Center for the Prevention of Bullying Abuse and School Violence, University at Buffalo
Arizona Association of School Psychologists
Asociación de Psicología Escolar de Puerto Rico (APEP)
Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors
Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania
Atlanta Behavioral Health Advocates, Emory University School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
Baltimore City Association of School Psychologists
Baltimore County School Psychologists' Association
Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education (Case Western Reserve University)
Bullying Research Network
California Association of School Psychologists
Center for Behavioral Education and Research
Central Michigan University School Psychology Program
Clover Educational Consulting Group
Cognitive Health Solutions, LLC
College of Education and Human Development, University of Maine
Colorado Society of School Psychologists
Connecticut Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
Connecticut Association of School Psychologists
Connecticut Psychological Association
Danville Area School District
Delaware Association of School Psychologist
Department of Educational Psychology, Baylor University
Department of Teaching and Learning, School of Education and Human Development, University of Southern Maine
Family Services Network
Family Therapy Center of Boulder

Florida Association of School Psychologists
Full Circle Community and Wellness
Futures Without Violence
Illinois Chapter of American Dance Therapy Association
Illinois School Counselor Association
Illinois School Counselor Association
Indivisible CD 19
Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma
Instructional Research Group
Iowa School Psychologists Association
Journal of Applied School Psychology
Judge Baker Children's Center
Literacy, Language, and Culture Department, University of Southern Maine
Louisiana School Psychological Association
Loyola Marymount University
Maryland School Psychologists Association
Massachusetts School Psychologists Association
Metamorphosis Life Revitalizing Center, LLC
Michigan Association of School Psychologists
Michigan Psychological Association
Midwest PBIS Network
Midwest Symposium for Leadership in Behavior Disorders (MSLBD)
Minnesota School Psychologists Association
Minnesota School Psychology Association
Missouri Association of School Psychologists
Missouri Prevention Center; University of Missouri
Montana Association of School Psychologists
Montgomery County School Psychologists' Association (MCSPA)
Move Forward New York - Gun Control Task Force
National Shattering Silence Coalition
Nebraska School Psychologists Association
Nevada Association of School Psychologists
New Directions Counseling Services
New Hampshire Association of School Psychologists
New Jersey Association of School Psychologists
New Leaders
New York Association of School Psychologists
Office of Psychological Services, Baltimore County Public Schools
Ohio Psychological Association
Ohio School Psychologists Association
Oregon School Psychologists Association
Paris Union School District No. 95
Philadelphia Society of Clinical Psychologists (PSCP): The Psychology Network
Pine Forge Farms Therapy Center
Prevention Section of the Society of Counseling Psychology, American Psychological Association.
Program on Problem Behavior and Positive Youth Development, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado Boulder
Public Advocacy for Kids
Rainstorms to Rainbows
Rhode Island School Psychologists Association
Safe & Humane Schools within the Institute on Family & Neighborhood Life, Clemson University
School Psychologists Association of Anne Arundel County
South Carolina Association of School Psychologists
Strategies for Youth, Inc.
Team Up for Families
Texas Association of School Psychologists

The Connecticut Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment
The South Carolina Education Association
Tufts University
University of Kentucky School Psychology Program
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Utah Association of School Psychologists
Violence Prevention Initiative, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Washington State Association of School Psychologists (WSASP)
Wayne State University--School & Community Psychology program
Wheelock College
Wisconsin School Psychologists Association

Excerpts from List of Individuals Endorsing This Statement

(A [complete list of over 1,400 individuals endorsing this document](#) is available)

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