

## 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  
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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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