

PRESS RELEASE

Coalition of National Researchers Release Violence Prevention Plan

May 27, 2022:

The recent mass shootings across the country are another painful reminder of failed efforts to stop the kind of gun violence that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School nearly ten years ago. As an interdisciplinary group of scholars who have studied school safety and violence prevention for decades, we call for immediate government action to initiate scientifically-informed actions to reduce gun violence.

After the 2018 shootings at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School, The Interdisciplinary Group on Preventing School and Community Violence developed a “Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the United States of America” that was endorsed by numerous professional organizations in education, psychology, and allied fields, representing 5 million professionals working in and with schools. The evidence base for that call was published in 2019 (Flannery et al.). There is now even more research evidence in support of the 8 points in this plan. According to one of our experts, Professor Pedro Noguera, Dean of the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California, “Scientifically, we know what to do to reduce gun violence. The question is whether our leaders will do it.”

New research shows that comprehensive background checks are foundational to keeping guns from dangerous individuals, especially when coupled with [licenses to purchase handguns](#). Licensing and bans on large capacity ammunition feeding devices prevent fatal mass shootings. Laws requiring gun owners to lock away their firearms so that they are inaccessible to underage youth prevent deaths to teens from suicides and homicides. Extreme risk protection laws are a promising and practical policy for removing firearms when there are clear threats of potential lethal violence and have been used to thwart plans to commit mass shootings.

In addition to our updated 8-point plan, we highlight some resources for educators, school leaders, and parents in supporting the families and staff they serve:

Responding to a Mass Casualty Event at a School: General Guidance for the First Stage of Recovery

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-resources/responding-to-a-mass-casualty-event-at-a-school-general-guidance-for-the-first-stage-of-recovery>

Responding to School Violence: Tips for Administrators

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-resources/school-violence-prevention/responding-to-school-violence-tips-for-administrators>

Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-resources/talking-to-children-about-violence-tips-for-parents-and-teachers>

Flannery, D. J., Bear, G., Benbenishty, R. Astor, R. A., Bradshaw, C. P., Sugai, G., Cornell, D. G., Gottfredson, D. C., Nation, M., Jimerson, S. R., Nickerson, A. B., Mayer, M. J., Skiba, R. J., Weist, M. D., Espelage, D. L., Furlong, M. J., Guerra, N. G., Jagers, R. J., Noguera, P. A., Webster, D. W., & Osher, D. (2019). The scientific evidence supporting an eight point public health oriented action plan to prevent gun violence. In Osher, D., Mayer, M. J., Jagers, R. J., Kendziora, K., & Wood, L. (Eds.), *Keeping Students Safe and Helping Them Thrive: A Collaborative Handbook on School Safety, Mental Health, and Wellness* (II, 227-255). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger/ABC-CLIO.

Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the United States of America
Interdisciplinary Group on Preventing School and Community Violence
Updated May 27, 2022

School shootings and widespread community gun violence are far greater in the United States than other nations. 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.

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, and background checks on all gun purchases.

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 a focus on prevention that fosters positive social, behavioral, emotional, and academic success for all students;
5. Comprehensive background checks as part of licensing for firearm purchasers, bans on large capacity magazines, laws requiring gun owners to lock up their guns so that they are not accessible to underage youth, and extreme risk protection laws that allow removal of firearms when there is a clear threat of lethal violence.

On the third level we need:

6. A national program to train and maintain culturally proficient school- and community-based crisis intervention and threat assessment teams that include mental health and law enforcement partners. These programs should include practical channels of communication for persons to report concerns as well as interventions to resolve conflicts and assist troubled individuals in a fair and equitable manner that protects individual rights;
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 is 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.

Media Contacts

Dewey G. Cornell, Ph.D., University of Virginia <dcornell@virginia.edu>

Pedro Noguera, Ph.D., University of Southern California <pednoguera@gmail.com>

Ron Avi Astor, MSW., Ph.D. University of California, Los Angeles <rastoravi@ucla.edu>

Interdisciplinary Group on Preventing School and Community Violence

(Statement author names in alphabetical order)

Ron Avi Astor, MSW., Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles

George G. Bear, Ph.D., University of Delaware

Catherine P. Bradshaw, Ph.D., University of Virginia

Dewey G. Cornell, Ph.D., University of Virginia

Dorothy L. Espelage, Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Daniel Flannery, Ph.D., Case Western Reserve University

Michael J. Furlong, Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara

Nancy Guerra, Ed.D., University of California, Irvine

Robert Jagers, Ph.D., Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning

Shane R. Jimerson, Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara

Matthew J. Mayer, Ph.D., Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick

Maury Nation, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University

Amanda B. Nickerson, Ph.D., University at Buffalo, State University of New York

Pedro Noguera, Ph.D., University of Southern California

David Osher, Ph.D., American Institutes for Research

George Sugai, Ph.D., University of Connecticut

Daniel W. Webster, Sc.D., Johns Hopkins University

Mark D. Weist, Ph.D., University of South Carolina