



Statement of the Connecticut Psychological Association on Gun Violence
May 25th, 2022

The Connecticut Psychological Association stands anguished with our country in the wake of continued gun violence in our country.

In the past month, we have seen multiple incidents of gun violence resulting in the senseless loss of life. On May 14th, a racially-motivated hate crime resulted in the death of 10 individuals, mostly black, in a supermarket in Buffalo, New York. On May 24th, a mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas left 21 people dead to date, 19 of them children. Mass shootings occur often ([Mass Shootings in 2022 | Gun Violence Archive](#)), are increasing at an alarming rate ([US School and Mass Shootings Reaching Highs: Data and Maps – NBC New York](#)), and are a uniquely American plague ([America's gun exceptionalism, by the numbers - The Washington Post](#)). In 2020, gun violence became the leading cause of death for children and adolescents in our country (<https://time.com/6170864/cause-of-death-children-guns/>).

The loss of any life is unacceptable and cannot continue to be tolerated. As psychologists and citizens of the world we must stand against the societal ills that underlie such traumatic events. We all bear a responsibility to eradicate extreme and harmful ideologies, whether they be white supremacy, racism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, or political polarization. We must name and understand the causes that support and fuel a culture of hatred, aggression, and violence. We must fight tirelessly until systemic changes occur.

While gun ownership is common in our country, around half of Americans see gun violence as major problem, with gun violence one of the Top 5 perceived problems in America today ([Key facts about Americans and guns | Pew Research Center](#)). Importantly, more than half of Americans favor stricter gun control laws ([Majority in new poll favors stricter gun control measures | The Hill](#)). Despite this, gun violence continues to be a politically divisive topic, with political agendas more important than protecting our most vulnerable citizens.

No child should be afraid to go to school and receive an education. No family should fear for their child's safety while they are attending school. No American citizen should worry about being targeted or attacked on account of any aspect of their physical presence or identity, whether that be ethnicity, race, immigration status, disability status, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or political views. Schools, houses of worship, and other community spaces are sacred, and no one should ever have to experience fear for simply living their lives in their communities.

There is no excuse for the appalling lack of gun control in our country, nor should the issue of physical and psychological safety be spun into a political matter. As Americans, we have a constitutional right to life and safety, and unfettered access to guns deprives us of these basic and presumably unalienable rights. No one who desires to threaten, harm, or kill others should ever have access to lethal firearms.



CPA stands with the American Psychological Association and others calling on our country to end the culture of enabling violence through our cultural affinity for access to firearms. In its recent statement on the Texas school shooting, APA proclaims that gun violence is an American public health crisis ([APA again calls for gun reform in wake of Texas mass shooting](#)).

CPA implores policymakers and legislators, both at home and nationally, to put people before politics and pursue legislation that will limit access to guns in our country, ensuring that common sense measures like background checks and the elimination of assault weapons are in place. We support APA's assertion that legislation should "stem the spread of firearms, promote their safe usage and storage and establish community-based teams that include police, mental health educators and community advocates who can de-escalate situations with individuals who are at risk of using guns to commit violence or harm themselves" ([APA again calls for gun reform in wake of Texas mass shooting](#)). How many more deaths will it take for meaningful change to occur?

As an organization dedicated to health and wellness, we are heartbroken at these senseless tragedies. Our thoughts are with all who collectively mourn and grieve these losses and their systemic causes. We also want to offer support to our members and those in our community who may be experiencing distress or retraumatization following our own tragic school shooting, occurring nearly 10 years ago in Sandy Hook, Connecticut. We are all too familiar with the pain and loss that follow in the aftermath of these tragic events.

How to Help

- Join the fight to reduce gun access and violence; advocate for policies that will result in meaningful change: [5 Things You Can Do Now to Stop Gun Violence | Violence Policy Center](#); [States United to Prevent Gun Violence \(supgv.org\)](#); [Everytown Research & Policy](#)
- Understand Psychological First Aid <https://www.apa.org/practice/programs/dmhi/psychological-first-aid>, and PFA for Schools [Psychological First Aid for Schools \(PFA-S\) Field Operations Guide](#) Free PFA training available here: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-pfa-online>
- Understand the role of psychology and psychological science in informing policies related to gun violence [Empowering communities to prevent mass shootings \(apa.org\)](#). See an article on the psychology of guns here: [The psychology of guns: risk, fear, and motivated reasoning | Humanities and Social Sciences Communications \(nature.com\)](#)
- Explore trauma-informed treatment options (read more about trauma-informed care here: <https://www.communitypsychology.com/what-is-trauma-informed-care-an-example/> and <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5126802/>) and the utilization of alternative modalities (e.g. arts, music, drama, play) to promote healing in children and adolescents (see one article here: <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/features/trm-h0099396.pdf>).

Talking to Children

- Talking to Children about Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers (National Association of School Psychologists; available in many languages) [Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers \(nasponline.org\)](#)
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) School Shooting Resources (available in multiple languages) [School Shooting Resources | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(nctsn.org\)](#)



- Parent Guidelines for Helping Youth after the Recent Shooting (NCTSN) [Parent Guidelines for Helping Youth After the Recent Shooting | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(nctsn.org\)](#)
- Tips for Parents and Teachers (APA): <https://www.apa.org/topics/schools-classrooms/middle-school-resilience>
- Helping Your Children Manage Distress in the Aftermath of a Shooting (APA) [Helping your children manage distress in the aftermath of a shooting \(apa.org\)](#)
- An Age-by-Age Guide to Talking to Children about Mass Shootings (New York Times) [How to Talk to Children About School Shootings - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)
- Center for Racial Justice in Education: Resources for Talking about Race, Racism, and Racialized Violence with Kids [Resources for Talking about Race, Racism and Racialized Violence with Kids](#)
- PBS for Parents: Talking to Young Children about Race and Racism [Talking to Young Children About Race and Racism | PBS KIDS for Parents](#)
- Sesame Street in Communities: Community and Gun Violence [Community & Gun Violence | Sesame Street in Communities - Sesame Street in Communities](#)
- How much news coverage is okay for children? (APA) [How much news coverage is OK for children? \(apa.org\)](#)

Helpful Information on Prevention

- Gun Violence: Prediction, Prevention and Policy (APA) [Gun violence: Prediction, prevention, and policy \(apa.org\)](#)
- School Violence Prevention: Tips for Parents and Educators [School Violence Prevention: Tips for Parents & Educators \(nasponline.org\)](#)
- School Violence Prevention: Brief Facts and Tips [School Violence Prevention \(nasponline.org\)](#)

As psychologists, we are advocates and catalysts for social change. We will continue to utilize our science and expertise to do good in the world and fight for the safety and well-being of our country and communities.

Respectfully,
The CPA Board of Directors

CPA works tirelessly on behalf of all psychologists and is committed to doing our part to promote democracy, reduce divisiveness, and foster socially conscious policy and political action. We are here to support and represent you and pledge to keep equity at the forefront of our work and agenda. Please reach out to us about concrete ways we can be supportive during this time. We welcome your expertise, energy and ideas for ways we can actively tackle these issues both within and beyond our CPA community.

Learn more about CPA, who we are, and what we do, here (<https://connpsych.org/join-us/>). Learn about our efforts specific to advancing diversity and inclusion here (<https://connpsych.org/action-against-racism/>). We invite you to join us and support us in our advocacy, socially conscious action, and desire to be a catalyst for positive change in our state and beyond.

CPA is a non-partisan and non-political organization