

TITLE: Advocating for the Prevention of Mass Shootings

WHEREAS:

1. Mass shootings have increased significantly according to a Department of Justice study spanning 1966 to 2019. During that time, more than half mass shootings occurred after 2000, and 20% occurred during the last five years of the study period. The death toll from mass shootings in the last decade has also grown dramatically. In the 1970s, mass shootings resulted in an average of 8 lives per year. From 2010 to 2019, the average was 51 deaths per year. (1)
2. Mass shootings were the most prevalent source of stress cited by U.S. adults in a study done in 2019, with 71% of adults saying mass shootings were a significant source of stress in their life. This stress was most felt in communities of color, with a breakdown of 84% Hispanic, 79% Black, 77% Asian, and 71% Native American compared to 66% White. (2)
3. Due to an increase in school shootings, states across the country are participating in active shooter drills some of which are high intensity lockdown drills which can cause significant anxiety and re-activate pre-existing trauma. (3)
4. A majority of teens (57%) and 63% of parents now say they worry about a shooting happening at their school. (4)
5. Although the presence of mental illness is a risk factor in mass shootings, the single most important factor in school shootings is the availability of AR15-style rifles . (5)
6. A 2019 study examined mass shootings from 1981 through 2017. The study found that during the 10-year period that the federal ban on AR15-style rifles was in effect, mass shooting fatalities were 70 % less likely to occur. (6)(7)
7. A 2019 study analyzing mass shootings that were committed between 1990 and 2017 found that 77 % of mass shootings perpetrated with a high-capacity magazine occurred in states that did not have state-level bans on these specific weapons. High-capacity magazines provide a distinct advantage to shooters intent on killing numerous people since they increase the number of rounds that can be fired before having to pause to reload. Evidence shows that victims struck by multiple rounds are more likely to die, and the fatality rates of those victims hit by more than 1 bullet were more than 60% higher. (8)
8. An analysis of mass shootings committed from 2009 through 2018 found that when AR15-style rifles were used, people were likely to be shot six times more when compared to incidents in which other firearms were used. (9)
9. The American Medical Association now “calls for banning the sale and ownership of all assault-type weapons, bump stocks and related devices, high capacity magazines, and armor piercing bullets.” (10)
10. The American Academy of Pediatrics’s position also “supports firearm regulation, including a ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazine sales, as an effective strategy to reduce firearm-related injuries.” (11)

11. The APA along with many other national medical associations have already signed on to a letter to the White House advocating that “(r)enewing and strengthening the assault weapons ban, including banning high-capacity magazines, would be a step in the right direction.” (12)
12. The APA’s 2022 Statement on Firearm Violence Calls only for "meaningful, common sense measures" and “sensible legislation that increases research into firearm violence, requires background checks, waiting periods, safe storage of firearms.” (13)
13. The APA’s Position Statement, Firearm Access, Acts of Violence and the Relationship to Mental Illness and Mental Health Services of 2018 is up for review and currently calls for “Restricting the manufacture and sale for civilian use of large-capacity magazines and firearms with features designed to increase their rapid and extended killing capacity.” (14)
14. The APA’s Position Statement, Homicide Prevention and Gun Control from 1993, retained in 2017, states only that “The American Psychiatric Association recommends that strong controls be placed on the availability of all types of firearms to private citizens” and is severely lacking compared to the above more recent subsequent Position Statements . (15)
15. The APA has already made proactive efforts in mass school shooting prevention with the “Notice. Talk. Act.® at School” program for K-12 aged students (16) but still availability of AR15-style rifles remains the single most important factor in school shootings (5) though this is not the primary factor in mass shootings.

BE IT RESOLVED:

1. Given the devastating loss of life and mental health consequences from mass shootings, it is imperative that the APA make every effort to support a ban on AR15-style rifles at the local and federal level.
2. The APA will make a new statement supporting a federal ban on AR15-style rifles given that access to such weapons is a leading factor in mass shootings.
3. The APA’s 2023 Position Statement revision will include a ban on civilian use of AK15-style rifles with features designed to increase their rapid and extended killing capacity.
4. The APA will retire the Position Statement, Homicide Prevention and Gun Control as its content is covered in subsequent statements

REFERENCES

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3. <https://www.npr.org/2021/12/08/1062400408/some-lockdown-drills-can-harm-students-mental-health-heres-what-one-expert-advis>
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5. [14.1 The Sandy Hook School Shooting: Mentalization Deficits and Mass Murder - Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry \(jaacap.org\)](#)

6. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30188421>
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10. <https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/press-releases/ama-recommends-new-common-sense-policies-prevent-gun-violence>
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12. <https://searchlf.ama-assn.org/letter/documentDownload?uri=/unstructured/binary/letter/LETTER/gun-violence-letter-08jan2013.pdf>
13. [Psychiatry.org](https://www.psychiatry.org) - Statement from the American Psychiatric Association on Firearm Violence
14. <https://www.psychiatry.org/getattachment/8b32e119-1995-4ac6-bc66-5c3972cb221f/Position-Firearm-Access-Acts-of-Violence-and-the-Relationship-to-Mental-Health.pdf>
15. <https://www.psychiatry.org/getattachment/32d4b328-f9ec-4249-898c-f150b59d9165/Position-1993-Homicide-Prevention-Gun-Control.pdf>
16. <https://apafdn.org/Impact/Schools/Notice-Talk-Act-at-School>

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ESTIMATED COST: APA:

ENDORSED BY:

Groups are limited to District Branches, Area Councils, Committees of the Assembly (M/UR, ECP, RFM, ACROSS, Public & Community Psychiatry, Access to Care, Maintenance of Certification, Psychiatric Diagnosis & the DSM) and the Assembly M/UR caucuses (American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian; Asian-American; Black; Hispanic; International Medical Graduates; Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual; Women) can endorse an action paper.]

KEY WORDS:

Mass Shooting, Assault Weapon, AK15-style rifle, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Stigmatization

APA STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Advancing Psychiatry, Supporting Research, Education, Diversity

REVIEWED BY RELEVANT APA COMPONENT:

[List the APA components that reviewed the draft action paper and, if appropriate, include the feedback given.]

Council on Psychiatry and Law (chair Richard Martinez to be emailed)

Alison Crane, Deputy General Counsel

The Position Statement on Firearms Access, Acts of Violence, and the Relationship to Mental Illness and Mental Health Services is currently being reviewed by the Council on Psychiatry and Law as part of the 5-year review process of all position statements. This position statement has allowed APA to join advocacy on the issues outlined in the action paper. The existing position statement includes support for some of the following relevant controls (in addition to others):

- Restricting the manufacture and sale for civilian use of large-capacity magazines and firearms with features designed to increase their rapid and extended killing capacity.
- Early identification and treatment of mental disorders, including school-based screening, should be prioritized in national and local agendas, along with other efforts to augment prevention strategies, reduce the stigma of seeking or obtaining mental health treatment, and diminish the consequences of untreated mental disorders.
- Research and training on the causes of firearm violence and its effective control, including risk assessment and management, should be a national priority.

In addition to revising the Position Statement, the Council on Psychiatry and Law is also planning to update existing resource documents on firearms, including resource documents on [Mental Health Issues Pertaining to Restoring Access to Firearms](#) and [Risk-Based Gun Removal Laws](#).

Please remember to submit the action paper in Word format only, and, if possible, in Calibri 11pt font.

Final action papers and cost estimates are due to actionpaper@psych.org by the stated action paper deadline 3/7/24