



PART 1 PREVENTION

NEA SCHOOL GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

GUIDE



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About the National Education Association and Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund

The [National Education Association \(NEA\)](#) is more than 3 million people—educators, students, activists, workers, parents, neighbors, and friends—who believe in the opportunity for all students and the power of public education to transform lives and create a more just and inclusive society. NEA has affiliate organizations in every state and more than 14,000 communities across the United States. The Association brings the expertise, drive, and dedication of our educators and allies to focus on providing the best public education to each and every student across race, place, background, and ability. Our members work at every level of education—from prekindergarten through graduate-level university programs—and in other types of public service.

The NEA Health and Safety Program, within the Association’s Education Policy and Implementation Center (EPIC), partnered with Everytown’s team to develop this guide. It draws on the expertise and work of several centers, departments, and initiatives across the organization, including EPIC, the Center for Advocacy and Political Action, the Center for Communications, the Center for Organizing and Affiliate Support, the Center for Professional Excellence and Student Learning, the Office of General Counsel, and the Center for Racial and Social Justice. Audrey Soglin—whose career in public education includes service as the executive director of the Illinois Education Association, a local association president, and a 25-year classroom teacher—worked with the Health and Safety Program staff as a consultant on this project.

The guidance and feedback of NEA state and local affiliate leaders, staff, and members have been crucial in conceptualizing, developing, and fine-tuning this guide, which incorporates, in part, material from the [NEA School Crisis Guide](#), published in 2018. You can contact the NEA Health and Safety Program at healthandsafetyprogram@nea.org and find [NEA Health and Safety Program content](#) on NEA’s website.

The staff of Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund—the education, research, and litigation arm of Everytown for Gun Safety (Everytown)—provided their expertise on gun violence prevention, research, and education to help create a comprehensive and data-driven resource. As the nation’s largest gun violence prevention organization, Everytown has more than 10 million supporters and more than 700,000 donors, including parents and guardians, students, survivors, veterans, mayors, and everyday people throughout the United States who are fighting for commonsense gun safety measures that can help save lives. The Everytown Support Fund seeks to improve our understanding of the causes of gun violence and help reduce it by conducting ground-breaking research, developing evidence-based policies, communicating this knowledge to the public, and advancing gun safety and gun violence prevention in communities and the courts.

The leadership and guidance from subject matter experts on gun violence prevention at Everytown were pivotal in the content creation and development of this guide. You can contact Everytown Support Fund’s team at info@everytown.org and find their Research and Policy content on [Everytown Support Fund’s website](#).

Letter from NEA President Becky Pringle

On April 20, 1999, I had been a middle-school science teacher in Pennsylvania for 23 years. None of my two decades of experience and training had prepared me to answer the questions my frightened students had about the shooting happening at Columbine High School that day. Along with my fellow educators, I shared the country's profound shock and grief that a school building—a place that should always be safe—had become the site of a massacre. The only thing that comforted us was the belief that this—then the deadliest mass shooting at a K-12 school in U.S. history—was a terrible anomaly. We believed our country would learn from the tragedy and take every measure to ensure it never happened again.

But the Columbine death toll was surpassed at Sandy Hook Elementary School...and Parkland High School...and Uvalde's Robb Elementary School. Each time, we thought, "They have to do something now." But close to 400 school shootings later, the biggest change seemed to be in 2020, when firearms finally surpassed car accidents and disease to become the No. 1 killer of children in America.

We must put a stop to the gun violence that continues to terrorize our students, our educators, families, and communities. As President Biden, who finally passed the most comprehensive gun safety legislation in 30 years, said, "We all want our kids to have the freedom to learn to read and to write instead of learning how to duck and cover in a classroom."

Gun violence in schools affects all students and educators, and its ripple effects spread out to the entire community. There is the constant fear that your school, your children, will be the next victims. According to the American Psychological Association's report, "Stress in America 2023: A Nation Recovering from Collective Trauma," 56 percent of U.S. adults report mass shootings as a significant source of stress. And we know that the long-term effects of toxic stress can change the brain and body's makeup, particularly for children, severely affecting both physical and mental health.

According to the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, with whom NEA partnered to create this guide, 107 incidents of gun violence on school grounds have already caused 29 deaths and injured 61 people—and this is just during the first five months of 2024.

This is unacceptable. No matter how many school shootings we have seen happen, they are just as unacceptable today as they were in 1999. We cannot, we must not, accept the lie that there's nothing we can do to stop them.

While we are grateful for the strides President Biden has made, it is clear that more still needs to be done, which is why NEA set out to issue a call to action to end gun violence in our schools and communities. The result is this guide—a collection of hundreds of calls to action for educators; for school district, college, and university boards and administrators; for politicians; and for students, parents, and families. We look to the day when this guide will be unnecessary and obsolete, but for now, we—the members of this nation's largest labor union—must focus our attention on how to end gun violence in our schools and our communities.

And we must take a hard look at what that violence really looks like. While the picture most people have in their minds about schools and guns involves young White male shooters and White victims, the truth is that our students of color are disproportionately affected by gun violence. According to Everytown, “2 in 3 incidents of gunfire on school grounds from 2013 to 2021 occurred in schools where one or more racial and/or ethnic minorities constituted a majority of the student population.”

The good news is that gun violence is preventable. Not by absurd and impossible measures like arming teachers or putting armed security officers in every school, but through commonsense gun laws and trauma-informed schools that create safe environments and that have the staffing and mental health resources necessary to do it right.

The guide focuses on the roles of state and local education association leaders, staff, building representatives, faculty liaisons, and more. But it is meant to serve as a bridge between what NEA affiliates can do to facilitate gun violence prevention, preparation, response, and recovery and the crucial work of so many others in the broader school community. We know that each community varies with respect to their approach to guns and their experiences with gun violence. This guide is designed to help educators of all types and all levels of experience join with others to end gun violence in our schools.

NEA, we must find a way forward together. We must stop our children—our hope for the future—from continuing to fall prey to this country’s epidemic of gun violence. And we must help the survivors recover and succeed despite their trauma.

Thank you for picking up this guide and committing to being part of the solution!



Rebecca S. Pringle
President, National Education Association

Letter from Moms Demand Action Executive Director Angela Ferrell-Zabala

Gun violence is the No. 1 killer of children in America.

This is a statistic I say often, but it never becomes less jarring. And while this fact encompasses more than just school shootings, it is undeniable that our classrooms are not the safe havens that they should be.

Students deserve the freedom to live, learn, and play without the constant threat of gun violence. But this is our current reality, caused by a reckless gun industry, a corrupt gun lobby, and extremist lawmakers who refuse to take decisive action.

I know that with an issue this large and complex, a safer future can often feel out of reach. The truth is, there's no one-size-fits-all answer to preventing gun violence—but we do have the solutions to this crisis. We need to create powerful, informed networks in our communities that know how to keep our children safe. It will take all of us—educators, administrators, parents, students, law enforcement, mental health professionals, advocates, and policymakers—working together to create change.

To address this urgent need, we are proud to partner with the National Education Association to introduce a comprehensive guide that equips Pre-K-12 schools and higher education institutions with resources, recommendations, and evidence-based solutions for gun violence prevention. This new tool is intentionally organized into four parts: Prevention of, Preparation for, Response to, and Recovery from gun-related incidents on school grounds—because we've seen how important it is not only to prevent gun violence but also to heal from the trauma when it does occur.

As a mother of four children myself, I've seen up close how our gun violence crisis shapes the educational experiences and well-being of our students. But we cannot—and will not—normalize the fact that our children live in fear of being shot in their classrooms. This guide serves not just as a collection of strategies, but as a call to action for protecting young people in America.

I am hopeful that with dedication, collaboration, and the right tools, we will save lives. This is a necessary step in that direction, and our movement is here to support you every step of the way.

Thank you for your commitment. Together, I know that a safer future is possible.

In solidarity,



Angela Ferrell-Zabala
Executive Director of Moms Demand Action

Introduction

WHY THIS GUIDE

The United States suffers from an epidemic of gun violence. Every day, more than 120 people are killed by guns, and more than 200 are shot and wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-j). Less than 1 percent of gun deaths per year occur on school grounds, but the impact extends far beyond these casualties: Gun violence shapes the lives of millions of people in this country who witness it, who know the victims, or who live in fear of the next shooting. Gun violence has a profoundly harmful impact on students, educators, families, and communities.

For most of this country's history, infectious diseases and car accidents constituted the greatest risks to childhood health, but today, gun violence is the No. 1 cause of death for children and teens. Each year, more than 4,000 children and teens are shot and killed, and more than 17,000 are shot and wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-k). Homicides account for roughly 6 in 10 gun deaths among children (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-k), and gun suicides are on the rise—a public health crisis (American Public Health Association, 2023) that communities and elected officials can prevent. In the United States, an estimated 3 million children per year are exposed to shootings (Finkelhor et al., 2015), and the trauma of witnessing shootings—whether in their schools, communities, or homes—can have a devastating impact on their lives. The Stress in America survey provides ample evidence of the collective trauma our country faces, including from mass shootings (American Psychological Association, 2023).

The Everytown Support Fund's [Gunfire on School Grounds](#) database details the myriad ways in which gun violence manifests in U.S. schools. Over the past 11 years, the Everytown Support Fund has identified at least 1,200 incidents of a firearm discharging a live round inside or into a school building or on or onto school grounds. Of these incidents, 841 occurred on the grounds of a prekindergarten, elementary, middle, or high school, resulting in 270 people killed and 580 people wounded. In the 326 incidents that occurred on university or college campuses during that time period, 120 people were killed and another 251 were wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-b).

Students exposed to the trauma of violence, crime, and abuse are more likely to suffer from substance use disorders, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); fail or have difficulties in school; and engage in criminal activity (Finkelhor et al., 2015); (Cronholm et al., 2015). Even for those who have not experienced gun violence at school, the trauma of lockdowns and active shooter drills—which are happening with notable frequency—leaves students, educators, and their families across the country experiencing firsthand the impact of fear from the anticipation of gun violence.

The National Education Association (NEA) remains committed to ending the scourge of gun violence. As NEA President Becky Pringle told the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform in testimony urging Congress to act to end gun violence, “Inaction means we are willing to accept what should be unacceptable to us all” (NEA, 2022-b).

With attention to the disproportionate impact of gun violence on communities of color, NEA advocates in Congress, develops resources and trainings, encourages media and academic coverage of the subject, mobilizes members and communities, and engages with partners across the country to end gun violence. However, more must be done. To further address gun violence in our schools at every level of education, in July 2022, the NEA Representative Assembly (RA)—the Association’s highest decision-making body—directed NEA to issue a national call to action to help ensure that all students, educators, schools, campuses, and communities are safe from the epidemic of gun violence.

Working with an NEA-wide team that meets regularly to assess, plan, and work toward the ambitious goal set by the RA, the Association has convened members, leaders, and staff across the country to help develop strategies and identify needed actions. As part of its call to action, NEA has partnered with the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund (Everytown Support Fund) to produce the NEA School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide. The guide helps NEA’s state and local leaders, staff, and worksite leaders—like building representatives and faculty liaisons—prevent, prepare for, respond to, and facilitate recovery from gun violence in all education settings.

Ideally, this guide will be used for planning and advocacy that should already be taking place in Pre-K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. By focusing on the roles of association leaders, staff, and worksite leaders, like building representatives and faculty liaisons, it is meant to complement—not supplant—planning, preparation, and action by school administrators.



www.nea.org

www.everytownsupportfund.org

ORGANIZATION AND FOCUS OF THIS GUIDE

We published the guide's four sections—on prevention, preparation, response, and recovery—separately to facilitate their use. Each part includes material for Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education and for all categories of employees.

This guide uses the term “educators” broadly to refer to NEA’s rich and diverse membership, including aspiring educators; classroom teachers; education support professionals (ESPs), such as paraeducators and clerical service, custodial and maintenance, food service, health and student service, security, skilled trades, technical service, and transportation workers; the faculty, staff, and graduate workers in colleges and universities; and specialized instructional support personnel (SISP), like school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, speech-language pathologists, and school librarians.

The guide presents resources, tools, recommended practices, and checklists for incorporating gun violence-related strategies into the school crisis prevention and response plans of associations, Pre-K–12 schools, and institutions of higher education.

The Guide’s Checklists and Resources

The guide includes separate checklists for state leaders and staff and for local leaders, staff, and building representatives, department liaisons, department representatives, and other educators taking on worksite leadership roles.

The prevention, preparation, and recovery checklists start with steps for people newer to this work and advance to action items for those who are expanding their ongoing work. People who are broadening and deepening their engagement are likely to have already taken many of the early steps identified in the checklists. The response-related checklists outline actions based on the time elapsed since the gun incident: the first few hours, the first 12 hours, and the first week and beyond.

The end of the guide includes detail on all URLs of the resources hyperlinked throughout the body of the document.

The Guide's Four Main Sections

- 1 PREVENTION:** Prevention aims to reduce the risk and prevent the occurrence of gun violence incidents on school grounds, on campuses, and in communities. It includes taking actions to foster a positive and safe school climate and limit access to firearms that could be used in acts of school violence. This section presents strategies to help schools plan for trauma-informed crisis intervention practices, promote secure storage of guns, increase mental health and suicide prevention supports, integrate community violence intervention programs into schools, advocate for legislation that limits the presence of guns in schools, and take other steps to address gun violence.

- 2 PREPARATION:** Preparation involves planning for gun violence-related scenarios and continually planning, practicing, and evaluating the efficacy of responses. The goals are to minimize emotional, psychological, and physical harm when incidents occur and to have a system in place for immediate, effective response and recovery, which includes establishing crucial relationships with school administrators and community groups. The preparation and prevention phases often occur simultaneously and are ongoing. This section includes strategies to install evidence-based security upgrades to prevent shooters' access to education settings, examine the efficacy and potential harm of active shooter drills and school policing, and establish the processes and relationships that will facilitate effective responses.

- 3 RESPONSE:** The response phase includes action steps to minimize the harm of gun violence to students, educators of all types, and their families. The focus is short-term and requires coordination and rapid response during and immediately after a gun violence incident. The checklist for this section includes strategies and action steps based on how long ago the gun incident took place—the first few hours, the first 12 hours, and the first week and beyond. It also includes recommendations on how to speak with students about gun violence.

- 4 RECOVERY:** Recovery focuses on coping with trauma after a gun violence incident and restoring a safe and healthy school environment. It is imperative to focus on supporting the emotional, physical, and psychological health of students, educators, and their families. This section includes approaches to supporting recovery efforts, providing care and support to those impacted by gun violence incidents, and evaluating the planning and incident response to identify areas that need improvement or adjustment.

The NEA Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide

FOUR PHASES OF WORK TO ADDRESS GUN VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

1

PREVENT

- Understand Guns in Schools
- Consider ACEs, Trauma, and Toxic Stress
- Apply Evidence-Based Prevention Strategies
- Foster Safe and Supportive Schools
- Implement Education and Advocacy Strategies
- Carry Out Plans to Prevent Gun Violence

2

PREPARE

- Adopt Evidence-Based Approaches to Security
- Examine School Policing and Active Shooter Drills
- Understand, Assess, Improve, and Work with Emergency Operations Plans
- Put the Pieces in Place to Facilitate Response and Recovery

3

RESPOND

- Know How to Talk with Students About Gun Violence
- Support College Students After Gun Violence
- Implement Successful Communications Strategies
- Respond in a Deliberate, Effective Manner

4

RECOVER

- Understand Gun Violence Trauma
- Communicate Supportively
- Provide Care and Support
- Foster and Rely on Community Partnerships
- Evaluate and Improve Your Incident Response



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CHECKLISTS

The prevention section of the NEA School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide highlights recommended strategies to reduce the risk and prevent the occurrence of gun violence incidents in education settings and communities. It includes taking actions to foster a positive and safe climate and limit access to firearms that could be used in acts of violence. For broader context and related recommendations, consult the other sections of this guide: Part Two—Preparation, Part Three—Response, and Part Four—Recovery.

Trauma-informed and restorative practices play a crucial role in maintaining strong connections between students, their peers, and educators within the school community. Across all education settings, prevention efforts are geared toward creating an environment that fosters trust-building and a sense of belonging for students.

Combating feelings of isolation and alienation among students relates directly to preventing gun violence because the majority of Pre-K-12 and higher education shooters maintained some level of affiliation with their educational institutions. Individuals who carried out a mass shooting in a Pre-K-12 school often exhibited behaviors of concern in advance, and 75 percent of the time at least one person, often a peer, was aware of the plan (National Threat Assessment Center, 2019); (Violence Prevention Project, n.d.).

Educators can play a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of trauma and fostering a positive school climate. Recognizing warning signs, having resources to address students' mental health and emotional needs, and ensuring that racial profiling does not take place in the process are crucial to preventing gun violence in education settings. To achieve these goals, adequate funding and sufficient staffing must be available. Recognizing the warning signs is only a part of the solution; reducing access to guns is also critical.

This section also includes recommendations for the broader community. Anonymous reporting systems have demonstrated effectiveness, providing students and other community members with a trusted avenue to raise concerns related to student wellness and safety. These systems also serve as alerts for mental health professionals regarding interpersonal violence and suicide risks.

Considering that 4.6 million children under the age of 18 live in homes with guns, secure storage interventions play a critical role in overall school safety (Miller & Azrael, 2022). Additionally, community-based intervention programs offer services to students off school grounds and while traveling to and from school.

The evidence indicates that arming educators does not enhance student safety. In fact, it compromises the safe and trusting environment necessary to thwart gun violence, introducing new liability risks and complicating law enforcement responses in the event of an active shooter incident (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-d). In contrast, commonsense gun laws are essential for saving lives. Effective measures include:

- 1 Require background checks on all gun sales**, an approach proven to reduce gun violence;
- 2 Pass Extreme Risk/Red Flag laws** to provide a way for family members and law enforcement to petition a court to remove firearms from a person at risk of causing harm without a criminal proceeding;
- 3 Secure firearm storage laws** to prevent unauthorized access by children by requiring gun owners to lock up their firearms, which has been shown to prevent unintentional shootings and firearm suicides;
- 4 Raise the age to purchase semi-automatic firearms to 21** to prevent potential younger shooters from easily obtaining such firearms;
- 5 Prohibit guns on college campuses where legally viable to do so**; and
- 6 Prohibit assault weapons and high-capacity magazines**, which allow shooters to fire more rounds over a short period of time and inflict more gunshot wounds during an attack.

Promoting the adoption of gun violence-related collective bargaining language and administrative policy, including the creation or enhancement of health and safety committees, is another effective way to combat gun violence. Bargaining language and administrative policy also offer important opportunities to enhance mental health supports and professional development on topics including trauma-informed crisis intervention and restorative practices.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: PREVENTION: STATE

STATE PRESIDENTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS					
Newer to the Work: For those beginning to work on gun violence issues					
	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Disseminate this guide to local presidents, staff, and worksite leaders.				
2	Review this guide's material on educational and advocacy approaches to preventing gun violence, and identify opportunities for state engagement.				
3	Advocate for funding for Pre-K-12 schools and institutions of higher education to invest in mental health resources, including the personnel and training needed for trauma-informed and de-escalation practices. See this guide's resources on mental health services grants, school-based health centers, community schools, and after-school programs.				
4	Develop a plan to advocate for a statewide policy that mandates anonymous reporting tools for students, family members, spouses or partners of higher education students, and community members.				
5	Promote effective restorative and trauma-informed practices.				
6	Review state requirements for Pre-K-12 schools and institutions of higher education related to gun violence prevention to ensure they are reflective of evidence-based practices related to community violence intervention, trauma-informed practices, and restorative practices.				
7	Develop model collective bargaining, health and safety committee, and school board or other administrative policy language for local associations to advocate for effective gun violence prevention measures.				

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: PREVENTION: STATE

STATE PRESIDENTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS					
Expanding the Work: For those deepening or broadening ongoing work on gun violence issues					
	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Identify state-mandated, gun-related professional development opportunities that can be enhanced to include evidence-based approaches.				
2	Develop a plan to advocate for gun safety improvements, including information related to state gun laws and active shooter drills.				
3	Review this guide's material on educational and advocacy approaches to preventing gun violence, and identify opportunities for state engagement.				
4	Review gun violence prevention plans from state government entities, nongovernmental organizations, and other unions active alongside association members; identify where the association fits, how plans reflect trauma-informed and restorative practices, and how the association can strengthen the plan; and engage with state and other entities to build relationships, identify mutual interests, and improve plans.				
5	Convene community groups to explore common interests, shared goals, opportunities for mutual support, and next steps.				

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: PREVENTION: LOCAL

LOCAL PRESIDENTS, LOCAL STAFF, AND WORKSITE LEADERS					
Newer to the Work: For those beginning to work on gun violence issues					
	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Disseminate this guide to local leaders, staff, and worksite leaders.				
2	Create an opportunity to discuss this guide with leaders, staff, worksite leaders, and other members who have an interest in and potential insight into gun violence prevention.				
3	If collective bargaining takes place, review existing bargaining language and NEA's model collective bargaining language related to gun violence for applicable provisions. If bargaining does not take place, review the language for potential adoption of administrative policy. Review or create health and safety committee language to include gun violence-related content.				
4	Develop partnership-oriented relationships with local organizations that are championing civil rights, countering gun violence, promoting student health, and supporting family members, spouses, or partners of higher education students.				

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: PREVENTION: LOCAL

LOCAL PRESIDENTS, LOCAL STAFF, AND WORKSITE LEADERS					
Expanding the Work: For those deepening or broadening ongoing work on gun violence issues					
To Do		Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Obtain and review gun violence prevention plans from Pre-K-12 schools and institutions of higher education.				
2	Seek and obtain documentation on gun-related incidents in education settings.				
3	Discuss approaches to and mutual opportunities for support on gun violence prevention with organizations that are championing civil rights, countering gun violence, promoting student health, and supporting family members and spouses or partners of higher education students.				
4	Deepen partnership-oriented relationships with local organizations championing civil rights, countering gun violence, promoting student health, or supporting family members, spouses, or partners of higher education students.				

BACKGROUND

According to the American Psychological Association, “A complex and variable constellation of risk and protective factors makes persons more or less likely to use a firearm against themselves or others. For this reason, there is no single profile that can reliably predict who will use a gun in a violent act. Instead, gun violence is associated with a confluence of individual, family, school, peer, community, and sociocultural risk factors that interact over time during childhood and adolescence” (American Psychological Association, 2013).

Given this complexity, taking meaningful actions to keep our students, educators, and surrounding communities safe must begin from an understanding of four key facts about gun violence in education settings.

Shooters Often Have a Connection to the Pre-K–12 School or Institution of Higher Education

In Everytown for Gun Safety’s [Gunfire on School Grounds](#) database, 60 percent of school-age shooters were current or former students of the Pre-K–12 school, including all shooters involved in mass shootings and nearly all in self-harm incidents (96 percent) and unintentional discharges of a gun (91 percent) (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2022). For example, Everytown analyzed the New York City Police Department’s review of active shooter incidents in K–12 schools over the five-decade period from 1966 to 2016, finding that in 3 out of 4 of these incidents, the shooter or shooters were school-age and were current or former students (New York City Police Department, 2016). Similarly, the Violence Prevention Project found 89 percent of shooters at colleges and universities had a connection to the institution (Violence Prevention Project, n.d.). These data suggest the need for comprehensive strategies that combine prevention, mental health support, and crisis response to effectively tackle school gun violence.

Guns Discharged in Pre-K–12 Schools Generally Come from the Home of a Parent or Close Relative

School-age shooters generally do not purchase the weapon or weapons used. In a study of targeted K–12 school violence from 2008 to 2017, the U.S. Secret Service noted that 3 out of 4 shooters acquired their firearm from the home of a parent or close relative (National Threat Assessment Center, 2019). This was the case, for example, with the Oxford High School shooting on November 30, 2021, in Michigan (Albeck-Ripka & Kasakove, 2021).

Debunking Myths and Misconceptions About Gun Violence

MYTH: The only way to stop a “bad guy” with a gun is a “good guy” with a gun.

FACT: If more guns everywhere made us safer, the United States would be the safest country in the world. Instead, we have a gun homicide rate 26 times that of other high-income countries (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-b).

MYTH: I don’t own a gun, so I don’t need to worry about my kids getting ahold of one.

FACT: More than 60 percent of unintentional gun deaths among children involve a gun belonging to a family member of the shooter (Wilson, 2023). In the United States, 4.6 million children under the age of 18 live in a household with at least one loaded, unsecured gun (Miller & Azrael, 2022), but research also suggests that school shooters under the age of 18 predominantly obtain their guns from family, relatives, or friends (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2022). As a result, children may be able to get ahold of a gun even if no one in their household owns one.

MYTH: Arming educators will keep our kids safer.

FACT: Research suggests that the presence of a gun may potentially increase the risks posed to children. Many school safety experts and law enforcement groups oppose arming teachers, as does the NEA (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-d). Law enforcement officers receive hundreds of hours of training in areas including firearm proficiency and active shooter response. Training requirements for educators are often a fraction of the training hours required by police officers.

MYTH: Criminals will always find a way to get their hands on a gun.

FACT: Laws like [background checks](#) stop gun sales to people legally prohibited from buying guns. This includes people with felony convictions, domestic abuse restraining orders, and others. Since 1994, these laws have blocked more than 4 million gun sales to people who could not legally own guns (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-h); (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2021-c).

There Are Nearly Always Warning Signs

Warning signs of school shootings, if appropriately identified, can offer an opportunity for intervention beforehand. However—as discussed in more detail in the sections that follow on trauma-informed intervention practices and restorative disciplinary practices—identifying and intervening based on advanced indicators is essential but must be done without perpetuating adverse racial stereotypes, targeting those that demonstrate behavioral concerns, or compromising the trust and emotional safety of a school environment.

The U.S. Secret Service study of targeted school violence from 2008 to 2017 found that 100 percent of the perpetrators showed behaviors of concern and 77 percent of the time at least one person—most often a peer—knew about their plan (National Threat Assessment Center, 2019). In the higher education context, about 44 percent of people who perpetrated mass shootings had communicated their intent in advance (Peterson et al., 2021).

These data suggest that fostering a trusting and emotionally safe climate where students are willing to ask adults for help and report any statements and behaviors of concern, such as gun threats on social media or weapons carrying, can be effective tools for prevention. Addressing warning signs and taking immediate action while also ensuring that racial profiling is never supported or permitted is essential.

The Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting on December 14, 2012, in Connecticut, underscores the importance of intervening when possible to stop violence before it happens. The official investigation revealed that there were several instances of the shooter’s prior behavior that were concerning. For example, when the shooter was in seventh grade, a teacher reported that “his writing assignments obsessed about battles, destruction and war, far more than others his age. The level of violence in the writing was disturbing” (Sedensky, 2013).

Gun Violence in U.S. Schools Disproportionately Affects Students of Color

In the shooting incidents where the Everytown Support Fund was able to identify the racial makeup of the student body, 2 out of 3 incidents occurred in majority-minority schools (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2022). Although Black students represent approximately 15 percent of the total K-12 school population in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2020), they make up 30 percent of the average population at schools that have been affected by a fatal shooting (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2022). While perpetrators of mass shootings in schools have tended to be White, and mass shootings are often portrayed in media coverage as occurring predominantly in schools with a majority of White students, gunfire on school grounds disproportionately affects students of color.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES, CHILDHOOD TRAUMA, GRIEF, AND TOXIC STRESS

Gun violence—in a community, a home environment, or an education setting—can be a factor that produces trauma and stress for children and adults. A 2021 analysis of mass shooting data showed that a majority of mass shooters experienced early childhood trauma and exposure to violence at a young age and had an identifiable grievance or crisis event (Shahid & Duzor, 2021).

Therefore, it is important to understand the potential impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and toxic stress when addressing an incident of gun violence. Educators can play a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of trauma through early detection and focused support. To achieve this goal, state legislatures must fully fund and staff schools so that educators have the time and attention to recognize early warning signs and take action to address students' needs. NEA's website provides additional information on [toxic stress and trauma](#).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 64 percent of adults in the United States reported having at least one type of adverse childhood experience (ACE) before the age of 18. The CDC also noted that ACE events are typically the result of violence, abuse, neglect, and environmental factors that expose children to substance use, mental health-related issues, and parental separation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.).

Trauma occurs when someone feels threatened by serious harm, whether it is physical, mental, or emotional. While not all ACEs lead to childhood trauma, people who suffer from one or more such adversities may experience a negative impact on their overall well-being, education, and career. Researchers have found that trauma can change the brain and the body's makeup, which can lead to diseases like obesity, heart disease, diabetes, asthma, and mental health disorders (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2014). Neuropsychologists have found that traumatic experiences can, in fact, alter a child's brain, activating its "fight, flight, or freeze" responses and reducing the areas where learning, especially in regard to language, occurs. When this shift happens repeatedly, it fundamentally changes the brain, particularly for children under the age of 5, to adapt and survive under the worst conditions (Flannery, Mary Ellen, 2016).

The ongoing presence of ACEs may also contribute to toxic stress. The American Academy of Pediatrics defines "toxic stress" as prolonged or significant adversity in the absence of mitigating social-emotional buffers, such as a supportive adult. This kind of persistent activation of the stress response systems can result in a wide array of biological changes that occur at the molecular, cellular, and behavioral levels; disrupt the development

of brain architecture; and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment well into adulthood (Garner & Yogman, 2021).

Experiencing adversity, including trauma and toxic stress, can significantly shape an individual's health and life outcomes. Childhood trauma can also negatively affect the mental health of and educational outcomes for higher education students (Lecy & Osteen, 2022); (Assari & Landarani, 2018).

Many other factors have been proven to cause toxic stress, including poverty, racism, bullying, community violence, and generational (historical) trauma (Cronholm et al., 2015); (Garner & Yogman, 2021). According to researchers at the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University, ACEs-generated trauma includes community and systemic threats from inside or outside the home environment because the brain recognizes a present threat and goes on high alert (Center on the Developing Child, 2020).

Childhood bereavement can also have a significant impact on children's health and well-being. "The death of someone close to a child has a profound and lifelong effect on the child and may result in a range of both short- and long-term reactions" (Schonfeld & Demaria, 2016). Schools can learn more about the impact of bereavement and becoming grief-sensitive schools to better support student learning and development. Organizations such as the [Coalition to Support Grieving Students](#) provide resources to assist schools in becoming grief-sensitive.



PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Education settings at all levels must establish safe, supportive, nurturing environments where students can thrive. Strategies including trauma-informed crisis intervention programs and active engagement with students and their families are essential to gun violence prevention. In addition, community violence intervention programs that integrate mental health and emotional supports help address the systemic and underlying factors that can lead to gun violence.

Foster Safe and Supportive School Climates

When schools are adaptable to the needs of their students, educators, families, and community, they can provide students with care and compassion and create conditions that prevent shootings and other violence. For example, a community school that has high levels of violence inside or outside the school building may fund programs that create safe walking and transportation routes to and from school, often referred to as safe passage; grant alternatives to out-of-school suspensions that offer meaningful educational opportunities for students; provide family counseling; increase access to mentoring, both inside and outside of school; and incorporate restorative justice into disciplinary policies. NEA's website includes additional information on [community schools](#).

Students are often the first to notice signs that a peer is in crisis, has brought a weapon to school, or has shared plans to commit a violent act; however, they are sometimes reluctant to share these observations—or their own personal struggles and needs—with adults they do not trust. Students may be reticent to relay information that might help avert a gun violence incident because of fear of getting in trouble, being labeled a “tattletale,” or not being believed or taken seriously. A pre-established relationship of trust with at least one educator increases students’ willingness to report potential incidents or identify bullying or violence they experience or witness (Volungis & Goodman, 2017).

Many education support professionals (ESPs) live in the same community as their students and are often trusted confidants; they play a key role in the

The Importance of Connections in Higher Education

Compelling evidence indicates that students at institutions of higher education who felt connected to individual staff and/or faculty experienced multiple positive outcomes, including those related to emotional well-being. Students are also less likely to experience substance and alcohol use and have better health outcomes. Connectedness is especially crucial for first-year students; perceived decreases (from high school) in social connectedness can lead to heightened feelings of loneliness and anxiety. These positive connections had little to do with an educator’s teaching style or pedagogy but with their ability to care about their students as people (Morgan et al., 2014).

NEA's Vision for Safe, Just, and Equitable Schools

[NEA's vision for safe, just, and equitable schools](#) consists of thriving spaces that are safe and welcoming for all students; are discriminatory toward none; integrate the social, emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual needs of the whole student; and equitably and fully fund the community school model with wraparound services and resources (NEA, 2022).

The resources in this guide can help make this vision a reality. NEA's website includes additional information on [cultural competency](#), [racial justice systems](#), and [addressing unconscious bias](#).

preventative and intervention actions. ESPs—including, but not limited to, custodial and maintenance, food service, clerical, security, and transportation professionals—are often the first to confront a shooter. Indeed, almost half of NEA ESP members—48 percent—spend a great deal of their time promoting school safety. The job responsibilities of another 28 percent are somewhat related to promoting such work.

To build trust, educators must have cultural competency to counteract unconscious bias and reduce the risk of biased decision-making that can impede a student's ability to trust them.

An all-staff activity called [Know Me, Know My Name](#) is an example of an effective way to identify students who may need support but go unseen (Illinois

Education Association, n.d.). Low-cost and relatively simple, the activity helps educators identify children who may need adult intervention via outreach and relationship-building, encompassing the ideals of safe, stable, and nurturing relationships (SSNR). SSNRs help interrupt cycles of violence and reduce the impact of students' exposure to abuse and neglect. The Harvard School of Education also developed [relationship mapping](#), which is another example of this type of activity (Harvard Graduate School of Education, n.d.).

Implement Trauma-Informed and Grief-Sensitive Crisis Intervention and Restorative Disciplinary Practices

Students who commit acts of gun-related violence in schools almost always have shown warning signs that concerned other people around them (National Threat Assessment Center, 2019, p. 58). Therefore, identifying students who may need support to prevent a crisis from becoming violent while ensuring that racial profiling and other biased actions are neither supported nor permitted is key to preventing gun violence in schools.

To respond to signs of distress in a manner that serves students and protects the community, schools can convene a multidisciplinary team that uses trauma-informed and grief-sensitive crisis intervention practices in collaboration with other community partners. A School Improvement Team, Resilience Team, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Team, or other such entities that may already exist could potentially serve this function. Whatever its name, such a team would receive information about a student who may be in crisis, evaluate the situation, design interventions to prevent violence, and provide appropriate in-school engagement, support, and resources. Every team that addresses crisis intervention should include ESPs; however, ESP membership must be voluntary. Every school community is different, so team structures and functions must be designed and implemented based on the unique needs of the student body and the broader school community.

Behavioral threat assessments are frequently used to identify students who are at risk of committing violence and get them the help they need. These programs generally consist of multidisciplinary teams that are specifically trained to intervene at the earliest warning signs of potential violence and divert those who would do harm to themselves or others to appropriate treatment. NEA opposes “behavioral threat assessment programs and approaches that disproportionately target Native students and students of color” (NEA,



2023). The Association urges all school community members to be prepared to ensure that if they use behavioral threat assessments, they achieve their desired outcomes without adverse racial impact. If such assessments are in use, they must be properly resourced, including with release time for the counselors, nurses, or other educators who serve on a team conducting behavioral threat assessments.

NEA does not believe that the criminalization and over-policing of students is the right approach to addressing gun violence in education settings. Research shows that exclusionary discipline programs, including zero-tolerance policies, disproportionately impact students of color and contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline, including through their subjective application toward students of color (Ford, 2021). Zero-tolerance policies and harsh disciplinary practices result in negative academic outcomes for students given that school suspensions are a stronger predictor of dropping out of school than grade-point average and socioeconomic status (Suh & Suh, 2007). Furthermore, a longitudinal study done with children ages 9 and 10 found that “enforcing these kinds of disciplinary actions can impair typical childhood development, leading to academic failure, student dropout, and

Investing in Restorative Practices

Restorative practices are based on values that holistically prevent and repair harm, build community and relationships, and result in a positive, supportive school climate. Schools that increased the use of restorative practices saw a decrease in schoolwide misbehavior, substance use, and student mental health challenges as well as improved school climate and student achievement. A key recommendation from the Learning Policy Institute is to invest in ongoing education and support for all educators to develop knowledge of and expand access to restorative practices among all students (Darling-Hammond, 2023).

emotional and psychological distress, disproportionately affecting Black children, multiracial Black children, and children from single-parent homes (Fadus et al., 2021).

By contrast, NEA emphasizes the use of behavioral practices centered in restorative justice and the elimination of inequitable policies, practices, and systems that disproportionately harm Native People and People of Color—including those who are LGBTQ+, have disabilities, and/or are multilingual learners—and deprive many students of future opportunities. Trauma-informed prevention strategies should include restorative-based practices.

Engage School Communities in Gun Violence Prevention Efforts

School safety requires all stakeholders—students, families, educators, educators’ unions, mental health professionals, law enforcement professionals, organizations promoting racial and social justice, and community members—to collaborate and work together.

Here are examples of how to engage students and families in gun violence prevention:

- **Create a safety reporting program.** These programs should ensure all students, families, educators, and community members are aware of the reporting system so that they have a trusted avenue to raise concerns when issues of student wellness or safety arise. In a four-year study of the Say Something Anonymous Reporting System (SS-ARS) in a school district in the southeastern United States, more than half of firearm-related tips were deemed “life safety” events, requiring an immediate response from the school team and emergency services. The SS-ARS also identified tips related to interpersonal violence and suicide concerns, which both have implications for firearm violence. Research suggests that adolescent firearm injuries often stem from interpersonal violence, and firearm use significantly escalates the risk for self-inflicted injury and suicide completion. It is imperative that awareness of such reporting systems is amplified to increase use by the community, particularly students; however, it likely requires additional investment in supports and services for adolescents to help mitigate the burden on those who respond to these tips (Thulin et al., 2024). State initiatives—like [Utah’s SafeUT crisis chat and tip line](#), which is used in almost all K–12 schools and some institutions of higher education in the state, by the Utah National Guard, and with first responders and their families—can also serve this function (SafeUT, n.d.).

In higher education contexts, there are greater restrictions on how schools can communicate with parents and families than in elementary, middle, and high schools.

- **Help families start conversations with their school community.** When families communicate openly, honestly, and directly with school officials, educators, and administrators, they can help prevent gun violence. Stand with Parkland developed the resource “[5 Questions Every Family Should Ask as the School Year Begins](#)” to assist families in ensuring their children’s safety and better understand how prepared a school is to address safety issues (Stand with Parkland, n.d.).
- **Use strategies that encourage effective communication on difficult topics.** The NEA Health and Safety Program partnered with the Right Question Institute and the Brown School of Public Health to provide a training module to help support families, educators, and students effectively communicate around health and safety issues. The Association also produced a training module—[Pathways for Effective School-Family Partnerships: A Strategy for Productive School Health and Safety Dialogue](#). This training is based on the Right Question Institute’s Question Formulation Technique (QFT), a structured method for generating and improving questions that can be used by individuals or groups.



Promote Secure Storage Practices to Keep School Communities Safe

Evidence strongly suggests that secure firearm storage—storing guns unloaded, locked, and separated from the ammunition—is essential to any effective strategy to keep students, educators, schools, and communities safe (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-d). One study showed that the majority of children are aware of where their parents store their guns. More than one-third of those children reported handling their parents' guns, many doing so without the knowledge of their parents (Baxley & Miller, 2006).

Secure storage not only decreases the likelihood of gun violence on school grounds, but it also reduces firearm suicide rates. A recent study of two decades of suicide prevention laws showed that the rate of gun suicide among young people ages 10 to 24 years old was lower in 2022 than in 1999 in states with the most protective secure gun storage laws, which hold gun owners accountable for failing to store their firearms securely. In states with no secure storage laws or only reckless access storage laws, the gun suicide rate among young people ages 10 to 24 years old increased by 36 percent from 1999 to 2022 (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-h).

In states where colleges and universities are required to allow firearms on campus, schools should encourage students to securely store their firearms.

Educators can encourage a culture of secure gun storage by increasing awareness of [secure storage practices](#). One example of an effective awareness campaign is the Everytown Support Fund's [Be SMART](#) program, which focuses on fostering conversations with other adults about secure gun storage. Although educators may be

The Value of Trauma-Informed Practices

Researchers have defined trauma-informed practices (TIP) as a set of approaches that address the impact of trauma by creating a safe and caring environment. TIP includes restorative practices and a focus on creating a safe school culture, building relationships, and supporting students' self-efficacy. When effectively implemented, these practices can reduce instances of bullying and aggression, improve achievement, increase self-esteem for students, improve connections between students and educators as well as among students, and strengthen social and emotional skills. By doing so, schools can create school climates where gun violence is less likely (Lodi et al., 2021).

The entire school community must receive training to successfully implement a restorative practices discipline model. Ineffective training and partial implementation can contribute to frustration and skepticism about such initiatives.

NEA's [guidance on trauma-informed practices](#) provides a list of common actions that educators can take to implement across education settings, which include the following:

- Support students from the bus stop to the classroom (and beyond!);**
- Be aware of what may upset a student;**
- Show compassion, not judgment;**
- Give students a safe space to share and express their feelings;**
- Help students develop a growth mindset;**
- Use restorative practices that minimize punitive discipline outcomes;**
- Build relationships;**
- Meet students where they are;**
- Don't ignore possible "warning signs";**
- Take care of yourself; and**
- Encourage all educators to be trained on trauma-informed practices.**

familiar with the SMART acronym for goal-setting purposes, in this context, the acronym stands for **Secure** guns in homes and vehicles, **Model** responsible behavior, **Ask** about unsecured guns in homes, **Recognize** the role of guns in suicide, and **Tell** your peers to be SMART. The program's purpose is to facilitate behavior change for adults and help parents and adults prevent child gun deaths and injuries (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-d).

Schools can partner with Be SMART and pass resolutions requiring that all student households receive Be SMART information, which is already happening in Los Angeles, San Diego, and Denver, among other locations (Sawchuk, 2021). School districts across the country have taken this vital action, impacting more than 10 million students (Everytown for Gun Safety, 2023-j), and some institutions of higher education have partnered with the program. [Be SMART's Secure Storage Toolkit](#) provides all the information and resources you need to encourage your school to pass a secure storage resolution.

Governors, federal and state departments of health and education, legislatures, nonprofit organizations, and local officials can also work together to develop and fund programs that increase awareness of the need to store firearms securely.¹

Increase Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Support

Firearms are the leading cause of death among youth in the United States, and firearm suicides account for more than 4 out of 10 of these deaths. The rate of firearm suicide among young people ages 10 to 24 years old increased by 30 percent from 1999 to 2022 (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-h). Experts are sounding the alarm about young people's mental health. A recent survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that, overall, 42 percent of teens experienced a persistent feeling of sadness or hopelessness, while 57 percent of female and 29 percent of male respondents felt that way. The same survey found that, overall, 22 percent of teens seriously considered attempting suicide, while 30 percent of female respondents and 14 percent of male respondents did (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021, p. 63). For many reasons—including the prevalence of guns in our society—the elevated risk for youth gun suicide continues to rise. Furthermore, a large proportion of perpetrators of mass shootings expressed suicidal intentions, suggesting suicide prevention through crisis intervention could be a meaningful mitigating factor for mass shooting incidents (Violence Prevention Project, 2021); (Remnick, 2022).

School-employed health professionals, who navigate the education system and the challenges of emotional and social development, serve as a critical resource for students. These professionals may be among the first to know when students are experiencing difficulties or when they are at risk of turning to violence. Unfortunately, the current national shortage of specialized school-based counselors, psychologists, sociologists, and nurses means that meeting the needs of students can be a challenge, and this challenge is often exacerbated in under-resourced communities. NEA determined in the report "[Elevating the Education Professions: Solving Educator Shortages by Making Public Education an Attractive and Competitive Career Path](#)" that solving educator shortages requires evidence-based, long-term strategies to address both recruitment and retention. The report noted that mental health positions were among the most understaffed in schools (NEA, 2022-a).

School-based health services, including behavioral health, provide crucial support to students. School-based Medicaid services, for example, play an essential role in the health of children and adolescents, including those related to behavioral health. With more than 41 million kids covered by Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the school setting offers a unique opportunity to meet children where they



are (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023). Schools, early childhood settings, and local education agencies help support children and their families, providing children and youth with access to important healthcare services on-site. For information on how to utilize the historic investment into school-based services by the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, see [NEA's Your Guide to the BSCA](#). NEA's website also includes [guidance on bargaining and advocacy tactics to support educators' mental health](#).

School-based health centers (SBHCs) can also help make quality primary care more accessible for children and adolescents (Kjolhede et al., 2021). "School-based health care advances health equity for children and adolescents who experience barriers to accessing care because of systemic inequities, their family income, or where they live," according to the School-Based Health Alliance. "School-based health centers, the most comprehensive type of school-based health care, do this by providing primary, behavioral, oral, and vision care where youth spend most of their time—at school" (School-Based Health Alliance, 2024). These organizations can collaborate with schools to support student well-being by contributing clinical expertise to supplement existing services at the school (National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 2023, p. 6).

The trauma that comes from the threat of gun violence is deeply affecting the mental health and well-being of not only students but also educators. The needs of educators are too often overlooked when resources are being offered in schools to address trauma from gun violence. There must be an increase in support and mental health resources for educators to sustain the workforce as they continue to face the threat of gun violence in schools.

Through NEA Member Benefits, NEA members receive access to the [NEA Mental Health Program](#), powered by AbleTo, which provides 24/7 access to "evidence-backed tools for stress, anxiety, depression, or whatever you're going through."

The federal government's [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\) Disaster Distress Helpline](#) offers free, 24/7 crisis counseling for people experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster, including shootings. Dial or text 1-800-985-5990 to connect with counselors in more than 100 languages via third-party interpretation services.

Programs that help educators recognize the warning signs of mental health issues include [Emotional CPR](#) and [Mental Health First Aid](#).

Help is also available for individuals who are struggling or in crisis by calling or texting [988](#) or chatting at [988lifeline.org](#). State initiatives, like SafeUT described earlier in this section, on anonymous reporting for school safety can also provide mental health support for Pre-K-12 and higher education students.

Integrate Community Violence Intervention Programs into Schools

Community violence occurring in and around schools significantly affects students and educators. An assessment of the [CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021) showed that witnessing community violence was linked to elevated odds of gun carrying, substance use, and suicide risk among Black, Hispanic, and White students, regardless of gender (Harper et al., 2023).

In neighborhoods that experience community violence, schools can support [Community Violence Intervention \(CVI\) strategies](#) to mitigate its impact on youth (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-i). Examples of these programs include the following:

- **Safe passage programs** provide safe routes to and from schools to reduce student exposure to gun violence. To achieve this goal, educators, law enforcement groups, and communities collaboratively implement protocols and procedures to ensure student safety (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-k). A longitudinal study analyzing data from 2005 to 2016 found that following the program's implementation, incidents of crime along these routes dropped an average of 28 percent for simple assault and battery; there was a 32 percent reduction in aggravated assault and battery. Furthermore, overall weekday criminal incidents on school grounds decreased by an average of 39 percent per year where safe passage programs were implemented (Sanfelice, 2019).
- **School-based violence prevention programs** provide students and educators with information about violence, change how youth think and feel about violence, and enhance interpersonal and emotional skills. Chicago's [Becoming a Man \(BAM\) program](#)—one example of a school-based violence prevention program—has reduced juvenile justice system readmission by 80 percent (Heller et al., 2016).
- **Youth engagement and employment programs** support students outside of schools (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-f). These programs often center on healing or personal development. For example, The [TraRon Center](#) helps youth gun violence survivors in Washington, D.C., heal through after-school art therapy (TraRon Center, 2024). Programs focusing on youth employment also show success. For example, a researcher found that participation in Boston's Summer Youth Engagement Program led to a decrease in participants' violent crime arraignments by 35 percent in the 17 months after program completion (Modestino, 2019).
- **Crime prevention through environmental design** involves deliberate efforts to change the built environment of neighborhoods, buildings, and grounds to reduce crime and increase community safety (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2021-a); (CityGRIP, n.d.). Programs encompass a wide variety of approaches and efforts to rehabilitate areas and discourage violence through visible signs that a community is cared for and watched over. Because gun violence is so costly and these simple fixes are not, communities save hundreds of dollars for every dollar that is invested (Branas et al., Urban Blight Remediation as a Cost-Beneficial Solution to Firearm Violence, 2016).

Together, these programs offer services to students going to and from school and students on and off school and building grounds.

Do Not Arm Teachers or Other Educators

Arming teachers and other educators does not make schools safer; to the contrary, it escalates the risk of shootings and introduces new liability risks (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-d). As noted earlier in this guide, many educators, parents, and school safety experts, including several law enforcement groups, are opposed to arming teachers.

Research strongly indicates that children will access guns when guns are present, including on school grounds. There have been numerous incidents of misplaced guns in schools that were left in bathrooms (Metrick, 2016), in locker rooms (Associated Press, 2018), and at sporting events (Laine, 2019).

For more on school resource officers and policing in school, see this guide's section on school policing. Everytown's [Students Demand Action](#) website includes additional information on strategies to oppose arming teachers.



ADVOCACY-BASED PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Advocate for Measures That Limit Access to Guns

Gun safety policies save lives. The Everytown Support Fund's [Gun Law Rankings](#), which compare the gun violence prevention policies of all 50 states, show a strong correlation between a state's gun laws and its rate of gun deaths. States with strong gun safety regulations, such as the policies outlined below, have lower rates of gun violence. States with weaker gun laws, such as no-permit carry and Shoot First laws (also known as Stand Your Ground laws), have higher rates of gun violence (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-a). The following gun violence prevention policies save lives and reduce the toll of gun violence on communities:

- **Requiring [Background Checks on All Gun Sales](#):** Background checks are proven to reduce gun violence. Twenty-two states and the District of Columbia already require a background check on all handgun sales (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-g). An Everytown Support Fund investigation showed that as many as 1-in-9 people looking to buy a firearm on this country's largest online gun marketplace cannot legally purchase firearms—including those under the age of 18 (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2021-b). As part of a comprehensive plan to prevent gun violence in education settings, states and the federal government must pass laws that require background checks on all gun sales so that adolescents and people prohibited from possessing firearms cannot easily purchase them from unlicensed sellers.
- **Enacting [Extreme Risk/Red Flag Laws](#):** Prior to the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, 2018, nearly 30 people knew about the shooter's previous violent behavior, and law enforcement groups had been called to incidents involving the shooter on dozens of occasions (Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission, 2019, p. 264). This is just one of many examples where a school shooter displayed warning signs of potential violence. States must enact [Extreme Risk laws](#) to create a legal process by which law enforcement, family members, and possibly educators can petition a court to temporarily prevent an individual from accessing firearms when there is evidence that they are at serious risk of harming themselves or others. These Extreme Risk protection orders, sometimes also called red flag orders or gun violence restraining orders, provide a way for concerned bystanders to intervene without a criminal proceeding against a potentially dangerous individual. Extreme Risk protection orders include robust due process protections. The court issues final orders after a hearing.
- **Enacting [Secure Firearm Storage](#):** Studies show that secure firearm storage laws save lives, particularly by preventing unintentional shootings and firearm suicides. For example, one study found that households that locked both firearms and ammunition had a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries and an 85 percent lower risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children and teenagers, compared to those households that left firearms and/or ammunition unlocked (Grossman et al., 2005). To protect kids in and out of schools, states must enact and enforce secure firearm storage laws. More than half of states

and the District of Columbia currently have some form of secure storage law (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-f). In addition, several cities, including New York City and San Francisco, have passed secure storage laws.

- **Raising the Age to Purchase Semi-Automatic Firearms:** Under federal law, a person must be 21 years old to purchase a handgun from a licensed gun dealer.² However, a person only needs to be 18 years old to purchase that same handgun through an unlicensed sale (such as unlicensed sellers offering guns for sale online or at gun shows) or purchase a rifle or shotgun from a licensed dealer.³ Research shows that 18- to 20-year-olds commit gun homicides at triple the rate of adults 21 and over.⁴ Despite evidence that most perpetrators of school shootings are school-age and have a connection to the school, many states have failed to step in to close these gaps that easily allow firearm access for 18- to 20-year-olds (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-c).⁵ At a minimum, states and the federal government must raise the minimum age to 21 years old to purchase or possess handguns and semi-automatic rifles and shotguns to prevent younger shooters from easily obtaining firearms.
- **Keeping Guns Off College Campuses:** The vast majority of colleges and universities prohibit guns from being carried on campus, either by state law or school policy. Institutions of higher education have unique risk factors, such as high rates of student mental health challenges and increased use of alcohol and drugs, which make the presence of guns potentially deadly. By contrast, some states require colleges and universities to permit guns to be carried on campus under some circumstances (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-e).

Supporting the enactment by federal, state, local, territorial, and tribal governments of statutes, rules, and regulations that would prohibit people other than law enforcement agents from possessing firearms on the property of institutions of higher education, the American Bar Association (ABA) noted evidence suggesting that “permissive concealed gun carrying generally will increase crime and place students at risk.” Despite state laws allowing firearms in institutions of higher education, those institutions may still have independent authority to prohibit guns⁶ (American Bar Association, 2023).

In states where colleges and universities are required to allow firearms on campus, schools should encourage students to securely store their firearms.

- **Prohibiting Assault Weapons and High-Capacity Magazines:** Assault weapons are generally high-powered semi-automatic rifles specifically designed to allow shooters to wound and kill many people quickly. When combined with high-capacity magazines—commonly defined as magazines capable of holding more than 10 rounds of ammunition—a shooter is able to fire more rounds over a short period without pausing to reload. The more rounds a shooter can fire consecutively, the more gunshot wounds they can inflict during an attack. From 2015 to 2022, incidents where individuals used an assault weapon to kill four or more people resulted in 23 times as many people wounded on average compared to those who did not use an assault weapon (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-a). Numerous mass shooters in schools, including those responsible for two of the deadliest shootings since 2016, have used assault weapons and high-capacity magazines (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-a). NEA and Everytown recommend that states prohibit the possession and sale of assault weapons and magazines capable of holding more than 10 rounds of ammunition.

For more on strategies to advocate for measures that limit access to guns, see NEA’s [Legislative Program](#) and Everytown’s [Moms Demand Action](#) and [Students Demand Action](#).

Promote Strong Bargaining Language and Administrative Policies

NEA provides [guidance on how to secure language regarding aspects of working conditions surrounding gun violence](#) in administrative policies, employee handbooks, and collective bargaining agreements. This bargaining support includes language on:

- Prohibition against arming educators;
- Violence/abuse and threats against educators;
- Support after an assault;
- Broad health and safety provisions for overall safe work environments; and
- Joint health and safety committees.

Promoting Strong Union-Backed Language on School Safety

The San Diego Education Association bargained language on school safety plans that ensures the association is involved in the process of keeping schools safe. The language includes “rules and procedures to be followed by site personnel for their protection, including a method of emergency communication and rules and regulations governing the entering and leaving of school sites.” The language requires that school safety plans explicitly address weapons (Board of Education of the San Diego Unified School District and the San Diego Education Association, 2022).

In another example, Racine Educators United (REU), in Wisconsin, has aggressively organized around safety concerns in the district, leading, in part, to the creation of the School Safety Committee, an advisory group including five

representatives selected by REU and five chosen by the Racine Unified School District (RUSD). Together, REU and RUSD will select parent, student, and community representatives to serve on the committee. The district superintendent also appoints a building services representative. The committee was a settlement of REU grievances and an REU lawsuit against the district.

According to [the agreement between REU and RUSD](#), the School Safety Committee’s review of district policies and procedures will be informed by trauma-sensitive and restorative justice practices and will cover topics including weapons policies, responding to weapons, and gun violence and active shooter response (Racine Unified School District and Racine Educators United, 2024).

Engage State Occupational Safety and Health Agencies

State and local associations in any of the 29 states that have created state occupational safety and health agencies can look to the state agency for advocacy and organizing opportunities related to gun violence in Pre-K-12 public schools and public institutions of higher education.⁷

In states with a safety and health agency covering public employees but without a workplace violence standard, the association or an individual member can file a complaint if workplace conditions are unsafe. Workplace violence standards allow for the association and members to be involved in the development and review of worksite violence plans. The state of New York has established a workplace violence prevention standard applicable to public schools (New York State, 2024), and California is developing one.

Promote Professional Development, Capacity-Building, and Staffing

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education have awarded \$1.5 billion in short-term grants for school safety, improved access to mental health services, and support for young people to address trauma and grief from gun violence. The U.S. Department of Justice has awarded an additional \$60 million in short-term grants. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) commits to expanding the pipeline by designating \$500 million for training to increase the pool of skilled professionals providing mental health services in schools.

In early 2024, Vice President Harris announced an additional \$285 million in funding for schools to hire and train mental health counselors (Psychiatrist.com, 2024). Grants are not meant to be the long-term solution, but they can assist school districts with infrastructure needs and the ability to hire and train counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other mental health professionals.

To identify funding opportunities for mental health support in education settings, see NEA's webpage on [school-based mental health services grants](#). In addition, explore whether state-mandated professional development for educators includes trainings on suicide prevention, trauma-informed crisis intervention, de-escalation techniques, restorative practices, and trauma-informed strategies.

Get Involved in Local Government

Educators play an essential role in the communities in which they work. The experience they've gained while working with students gives them a unique perspective when it comes to making public education policy, negotiating collective bargaining agreements, and setting budget priorities for their communities.

Building Strong Partnerships

Addressing gun violence in education settings requires strong, meaningful relationships with partners to deepen association understanding, build relationships, strengthen the processes and policies of Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education, and ensure that approaches developed to keep students, educators, and communities safe are culturally and racially appropriate.

From state to state and within states, potential partners may vary. An important place to start is with other unions representing workers in the Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education where association members work, gun violence-focused organizations, racial and social justice organizations, after-school programs, mental and physical health providers and organizations, associations representing principals or other administrators, and local colleges and universities with programs that identify or address violence in communities or, more specifically, in education settings.

The following list includes several national-level organizations—with links to their websites—that may have state or local counterparts. Identifying local groups working on similar topics may also serve the same purpose.

AAPI Victory Alliance

<https://aapivictoryalliance.com/gunviolenceprevention>

AASA—The School Superintendents Association

<https://www.aasa.org/resources/all-resources?Keywords=safety&RowsPerPage=20>

Alliance to Reclaim our Schools

<https://reclaimourschools.org>

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/gun-violence-prevention>

American Psychological Association

<https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/gun-violence-prevention>

American School Counselor Association

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Prevention-of-School-Rela>

Color of Change

<https://colorofchange.org>

Community Justice Action Fund

<https://www.cjactionfund.org>

Continued on next page.

Hope and Heal Fund

<https://hopeandhealfund.org/who-we-are>

League of United Latin American Citizens

https://lulac.org/advocacy/resolutions/2013/resolution_on_gun_violence_prevention/index.html

Life Camp

<https://www.peaceislifestyle.com>

Live Free

<https://livefreeusa.org>

March for Our Lives

<https://marchforourlives.org>

MomsRising

<https://www.momsrising.org/blog/topics/gun-safety>

NAACP

<https://naacp.org>

National Association of Elementary School Principals

<https://www.naesp.org>

National Association of School Nurses

<https://www.nasn.org/blogs/nasn-inc/2023/07/27/take-action-to-address-gun-violence>

National Association of School Psychologists

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis>

National Association of Secondary School Principals

<https://www.nassp.org/community/principal-recovery-network>

National Association of Social Workers

<https://www.socialworkers.org>

National PTA

<https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/federal-legislation/Public-Policy-Priorities/gun-safety-and-violence-prevention>

National School Boards Association

<https://www.nsba4safeschools.org/home>

Parents Together

<https://parents-together.org/the-heart-of-gun-safety-and-a-new-approach-to-advocacy>

Sandy Hook Promise

<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org>

The Trevor Project

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org>

UnidosUS

<https://unidosus.org/publications/latinos-and-gun-violence-prevention>

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION RESOURCES

National Education Association Resources

National Education Association

<https://www.nea.org>

The National Education Association is the nation's largest union, representing more than 3 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, specialized instructional support personnel, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become educators.

NEA Health and Safety Program

<https://www.nea.org/healthy-schools>

The NEA Health and Safety Program provides information and solutions related to student and educator mental health, violence prevention and response, infection control, and environmental and occupational safety and health, among other topics.

Bargaining and Advocacy Tactics to End Gun Violence

<https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/ending-gun-violence.pdf>

NEA provides advocates in bargaining and non-bargaining statute states with sample language to secure in board policies, employee handbooks, and collective bargaining agreements regarding aspects of working conditions surrounding gun violence.

Gun Violence Prevention Measures Using the Hierarchy of Controls

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/using-hierarchy-controls-prevent-gun-violence-education-settings>

To help address this worsening public health crisis, employers and educators can implement the hierarchy of controls—a proven approach to minimize or eliminate exposure to workplace hazards—to sensibly prevent gun violence in education contexts.

NEA School Crisis Guide

<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/neas-school-crisis-guide>

Produced in 2018, the guide provides detailed content on how to effectively prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from school crises.

Responding to Gun Violence

<https://www.nea.org/gunviolence>

This portion of the NEA website provides health and safety content on taking action, helping students and educators cope, resources for school leaders, fostering mental health, and preventing hate and bias.

We Can Change This: Educators Take on Gun Violence

<https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/we-can-change-educators-take-gun-violence>

Educators across the country are working to end the era of school shootings that has defined students' lives.

NEA Legislative Program

<https://www.nea.org/about-nea/governance-policies/nea-legislative-program>

The National Education Association's Legislative Program encapsulates NEA's priorities for advocating in Congress for federal laws that support public Pre-K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions, student learning, and educators.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

Bargaining and Advocacy Tactics to Support Educators' Mental Health

<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/bargaining-and-advocacy-tactics-support-educators-mental-health>

This resource compiles strategies to improve mental health support for educators using collective bargaining or advocacy.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act

<https://www.nea.org/bsca>

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act unlocks more than \$1 billion additional funding for mental health and other services.

NEA Member Benefits Mental Health Program

<https://www.neamb.com/products/nea-mental-health-program>

Through NEA Member Benefits, in partnership with AbleTo, NEA members receive no-cost access to evidence-backed tools for stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health needs.

School-Based Mental Health Services Grants

<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/school-based-mental-health-services-grants>

NEA provides a summary of federal grant programs that support efforts to increase school-based mental health services and programs.

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS

Addressing the Epidemic of Trauma in Schools

<https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Addressing%20the%20Epidemic%20of%20Trauma%20in%20Schools%20-%20NCSEA%20and%20NEA%20Report.pdf>

This report builds a framework to advance trauma awareness and trauma-informed approaches, including some currently being implemented by NEA state affiliates. It includes key recommendations for ways in which NEA may address the trauma crisis through policy, programs, and practices. It also includes a list of selected resources developed or suggested as references by affiliates to address student and educator trauma.

Cultural Competence Training

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/professional-learning/resources/cultural-competence>

Through NEA's Cultural Competence Training Program, NEA members learn how to become culturally competent educators.

How Restorative Practices Work for Students and Educators

<https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/how-restorative-practices-work-students-and-educators>

This *NEA Today* article explores what happens in public schools where educators care more about creating a community built upon kindness, not consequences.

How to Be an Advocate for Students Who Are Bullied

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/how-be-advocate-bullied-students>

These recommendations support educators in helping students who are bullied.

How to Identify Bullying

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/how-identify-bullying>

This article provides tips for addressing bullying.

NEA Micro-Credential Courses on Restorative Practices

<https://nea.certificationbank.com//NEA/CandidatePortal/CategoryDetail.aspx?Stack=RP>

Each of the five micro-credentials in this stack can stand alone or be completed sequentially: Exploring Restorative Practices; Building a Positive Classroom Community with Affective Language; Restorative Circles—Building Relationships in the Classroom; Restorative Conferencing; and Implementing Restorative Practices.

NEA Micro-Credential Course on Trauma-Informed Pedagogy

<https://nea-mc.certificationbank.com/open-doc-loader.aspx?pid=E4033E41-057D-422C-899D-2B6D32FD-55B8&i=1>

This course addresses child trauma, how trauma affects the brain, trauma-informed pedagogy, leveled intervention strategies, behavioral support plans, replacement behaviors, and teaching students to self-advocate.

Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships and Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools—A Guide for Educators

https://schottfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/restorative-practices-guide_0.pdf

This guide helps educators better understand what restorative practices are and how they can foster safe learning environments through community building and constructive conflict resolution.

Supporting the Advocacy, Communication, and Implementation of Life Skills in Public Schools: A Toolkit

<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/freedom-thrive-strengthening-and-supporting-students-life-skills>

Social-emotional learning (SEL)—also known as positive youth development or life skills—is widely

supported by families, students, and educators and provides valuable skills and lessons that contribute to students' success throughout their lives.

Tools and Tips for Trauma-Informed Practices

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/trauma-informed-practices>

Educators in every school community can use these practices to create safe and supportive learning environments for their students.

Trauma-Informed Schools

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/trauma-informed-schools>

Supporting students who suffer from childhood trauma requires whole-school involvement and transformation. The NEA and its affiliates are actively engaged in finding ways for schools and educators to address the issue of trauma and its implications for learning, behavior, and school safety.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DIALOGUE

Community Schools

<https://www.nea.org/student-success/great-public-schools/community-schools>

Community schools are public schools that provide services and support that fit each neighborhood's needs, created and run by the people who know our children best—all working together.

Strategies for Effective Health and Safety Dialogue

<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/strategies-effective-health-and-safety-dialogue>

This NEA training module will help support families, educators, and students effectively communicate around health and safety issues.

Everytown for Gun Safety Resources

Everytown for Gun Safety

<https://www.everytown.org>

Everytown for Gun Safety is the largest gun violence prevention organization in America. The organization is a movement of more than 10 million supporters working to end gun violence.

Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund

<https://everytownsupportfund.org>

The Everytown Support Fund is the education, research, and litigation arm of Everytown for Gun Safety. It seeks to improve our understanding of the causes of gun violence and help to reduce it by conducting ground-breaking original research, developing evidence-based policies, communicating this knowledge to the American public, and advancing gun safety and gun violence prevention in communities and the courts.

Be SMART

<https://besmartforkids.org>

The Be SMART program focuses on fostering conversations with other adults about secure gun storage. In this context, the acronym stands for **Secure** guns in homes and vehicles, **Model** responsible behavior, **Ask** about unsecured guns in homes, **Recognize** the role of guns in suicide, and **Tell** your peers to be SMART. The program's purpose is to facilitate behavior change for adults and help parents and adults prevent child gun deaths and injuries.

City Dashboard: Gun Homicide

<https://everytownresearch.org/report/city-data/#cities-with-real-time-gun-violence-data>

The FBI is the leading source of city gun violence data across the country, covering more than 94 percent of the U.S. population in 2022. Everytown's City Gun Homicide dashboard allows users to explore gun homicide trends across more than 500 cities with populations of 65,000+ that reported data to the FBI from 2018 to 2022.

EveryStat

<https://shorturl.at/fqsFL>

EveryStat is a one-stop source for gun violence in your state and county, including breakdowns by intent, race and ethnicity, gender, economic cost, and more.

Everytown Gun Law Rankings

<https://shorturl.at/rtKQ9>

Everytown compares gun policy across the country and scores every state on the strength of its gun law and compares it with its rate of gun violence.

Everytown Law Fund

<https://everytownlaw.org/fund>

Everytown Law Fund provides support for impact litigation to advance the right of every person to be free from gun violence and to speak, work, learn, pray, assemble, protest, and vote without fear or intimidation.

Everytown Survivor Network

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network>

The Everytown Survivor Network is a nationwide community of survivors working together to end gun violence. The network amplifies the power of survivor voices, offers trauma-informed programs, provides information on direct services, and supports survivors in their advocacy.

Extreme Risk/Red Flag Laws

<https://www.everytown.org/solutions/extreme-risk-laws>

Extreme Risk laws, sometimes referred to as "Red Flag" laws, allow loved ones or law enforcement to intervene by petitioning a court for an order to temporarily prevent someone in crisis from accessing guns.

Gunfire on School Grounds

<https://everytownresearch.org/maps/gunfire-on-school-grounds>

The database details myriad ways in which gun violence manifests in U.S. schools.

Mayors Against Illegal Guns

<https://mayors.everytown.org>

Mayors Against Illegal Guns is a coalition of mayors fighting to end gun violence by working to fight for gun safety laws and enact gun violence prevention strategies.

Moms Demand Action

<https://momsdemandaction.org>

Moms Demand Action, a part of Everytown for Gun Safety, is the nation's largest grassroots volunteer network that is working to end gun violence. The organization campaigns for new and stronger solutions to lax gun laws and loopholes that jeopardize the safety of families, educates policymakers and parents about the importance of secure firearm storage, and works to create a culture of gun safety

through partnerships with businesses, community organizations, and influencers. There is a Moms Demand Action chapter in every state and more than 700 local groups throughout the country.

One Thing You Can Do

<https://onethingyoucando.org>

This database includes information about extreme risk orders by state. An extreme risk order is a way to intervene when there is reason to believe a loved one is at serious risk of harming themselves or others.

Students Demand Action

www.studentsdemandaction.org

Students Demand Action is the largest grassroots, youth-led gun violence prevention group in the country, with more than 800 groups and active volunteers in every state and the District of Columbia. The movement, created by and for teens and young adults, aims to channel the energy and passion of high school and college-age students into the fight against gun violence.

Other Resources

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL CLIMATES

Bullying Prevention

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-resources/bullying-prevention>

From the National Association of School Psychologists, this site provides resources to prevent bullying.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

https://www.cdc.gov/youth-violence/media/pdfs/cdc_cptedschoolassessment.pdf

From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

(CPTED) focuses on principles to create safer schools by developing environments that promote positive behavior and reduce opportunities for violence to occur.

Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf>

From the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, this document recommends evidence-based practices that schools and school districts can take to implement fair student discipline approaches, which keep students safely in learning environments and help to address disproportionality in discipline and exclusion.

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov>

From the National Center on Safe and Supportive Schools, this site offers information and technical assistance to states, districts, schools, institutions of higher education, and communities focused on improving school climate and conditions for learning.

The National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

<https://www.pbis.org>

The center provides information, tools, and technical assistance for implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a tiered framework for supporting students' behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health. These resources include guides, lesson plans, assessment surveys, and examples of how to integrate trauma-informed practices into PBIS.

Resources for Educators

<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/teacher-resources>

From Sandy Hook Promise, this site provides resources on multiple topics.

Schoolsafety.gov

<https://www.schoolsafety.gov>

This interagency website created by the federal government provides a broad range of information, resources, and guidance to create safe and supportive learning environments for students and educators.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

<https://988lifeline.org>

The 988 Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States.

Emotional CPR

<https://www.emotional-cpr.org>

Emotional CPR (eCPR) is an educational program designed to teach people to assist others through an emotional crisis by implementing three simple steps: **C** = Connecting; **P** = emPowering; and **R** = Revitalizing.

Mental Health First Aid

<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org>

Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-based, early intervention course that teaches participants about mental health and substance use challenges.

The Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

<https://mhttcnetwork.org>

Funded by SAMHSA, the center develops resources, disseminates information, and provides training and technical assistance to mental health work, including a free online course for educators on mental health literacy.

Project Aware

<https://www.samhsa.gov/school-campus-health/project-aware>

Through SAMHSA, Project Aware (Advancing Wellness And Resiliency in Education) promotes a sustainable infrastructure for school-based mental health programs and services. AWARE grantees build collaborative partnerships with the state education agency, local education agency, tribal education agency, the state mental health agency, community-based providers of behavioral health care services, school personnel, community organizations, families, and school-age youth.

Screen4Success

<https://www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you/screen4success>

Screen4Success is a screening tool to identify areas where someone may benefit from more support on personal health, wellness, and well-being. It also provides local and national resources to help address those concerns. You can use the tool for self-screening, or you can send it to someone you

are concerned about. You can also help that person fill out the screener—this provides opportunities for discussion in the moment—or they can complete it on their own if that’s not possible.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline
<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

SAMHSA’s National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357) (also known as the Treatment Referral Routing

Service), or TTY: 1-800-487-4889 is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year information service, available in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations. The site also includes additional resources.



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ENDNOTES

- 1 For example, see the City Gun Violence Reduction Insight Portal (CityGRIP), available at <https://citygrip.org>.
- 2 18 U.S.C. § 922(b)(1).
- 3 18 U.S.C. § 922(b)(1); 18 U.S.C. § 922(x)(2).
- 4 Everytown Research analysis using FBI Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) and U.S. Census American Community Survey data 2016-2020.
- 5 Only six states and DC require a person to be 21 to possess a handgun: DC, DE (beginning in July 2025), IL, MA, MD, NJ, and NY. Only IL and DC require a person to be 21 to possess a rifle or shotgun, and eight states require a person to be 21 to purchase a rifle or shotgun: CA, CO, DE, DC, FL, HI, IL, VT, and WA.
- 6 The American Bar Association (ABA)—citing recent authority holding that new bans on guns on campus should be permitted—highlighted that “a unanimous Montana Supreme Court ruled that state legislators infringed on authority granted to higher education officials by the state constitution by passing a law that permitted open and concealed firearm carrying on university and college campuses. The court declared that ‘maintaining a safe and secure education environment’ fell within the Board of Regents’ purview (and implicitly, that the Board could determine it was necessary to maintain that environment by prohibiting firearms on campus), and recognized that ‘Montana is not immune from the catastrophic loss that follows the use of firearms on school campuses.’” The ABA also called for “states that do not make it unlawful for any person, other than law enforcement, to possess firearms on property owned, operated, or controlled by any public institute of higher education, authorize such institutions of higher education to restrict or regulate the concealed or open carry of firearms on their campuses.”
- 7 The federal government’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) serves to ensure safe and healthy working conditions for the private sector. Federal OSHA does not have jurisdiction over state and local public sector workers. Where established, state agencies are required by federal law to be at least as effective as OSHA in protecting workers and in preventing work-related injuries, illnesses, and deaths.

PART 1 | PREVENTION



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PART 2 PREPARATION

NEA SCHOOL GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

GUIDE



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About the National Education Association and Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund

The [National Education Association \(NEA\)](#) is more than 3 million people—educators, students, activists, workers, parents, neighbors, and friends—who believe in the opportunity for all students and the power of public education to transform lives and create a more just and inclusive society. NEA has affiliate organizations in every state and more than 14,000 communities across the United States. The Association brings the expertise, drive, and dedication of our educators and allies to focus on providing the best public education to each and every student across race, place, background, and ability. Our members work at every level of education—from prekindergarten through graduate-level university programs—and in other types of public service.

The NEA Health and Safety Program, within the Association’s Education Policy and Implementation Center (EPIC), partnered with Everytown’s team to develop this guide. It draws on the expertise and work of several centers, departments, and initiatives across the organization, including EPIC, the Center for Advocacy and Political Action, the Center for Communications, the Center for Organizing and Affiliate Support, the Center for Professional Excellence and Student Learning, the Office of General Counsel, and the Center for Racial and Social Justice. Audrey Soglin—whose career in public education includes service as the executive director of the Illinois Education Association, a local association president, and a 25-year classroom teacher—worked with the Health and Safety Program staff as a consultant on this project.

The guidance and feedback of NEA state and local affiliate leaders, staff, and members have been crucial in conceptualizing, developing, and fine-tuning this guide, which incorporates, in part, material from the [NEA School Crisis Guide](#), published in 2018. You can contact the NEA Health and Safety Program at healthandsafetyprogram@nea.org and find [NEA Health and Safety Program content](#) on NEA’s website.

The staff of Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund—the education, research, and litigation arm of Everytown for Gun Safety (Everytown)—provided their expertise on gun violence prevention, research, and education to help create a comprehensive and data-driven resource. As the nation’s largest gun violence prevention organization, Everytown has more than 10 million supporters and more than 700,000 donors, including parents and guardians, students, survivors, veterans, mayors, and everyday people throughout the United States who are fighting for commonsense gun safety measures that can help save lives. The Everytown Support Fund seeks to improve our understanding of the causes of gun violence and help reduce it by conducting ground-breaking research, developing evidence-based policies, communicating this knowledge to the public, and advancing gun safety and gun violence prevention in communities and the courts.

The leadership and guidance from subject matter experts on gun violence prevention at Everytown were pivotal in the content creation and development of this guide. You can contact Everytown Support Fund’s team at info@everytown.org and find their Research and Policy content on [Everytown Support Fund’s website](#).

Letter from NEA President Becky Pringle

On April 20, 1999, I had been a middle-school science teacher in Pennsylvania for 23 years. None of my two decades of experience and training had prepared me to answer the questions my frightened students had about the shooting happening at Columbine High School that day. Along with my fellow educators, I shared the country's profound shock and grief that a school building—a place that should always be safe—had become the site of a massacre. The only thing that comforted us was the belief that this—then the deadliest mass shooting at a K-12 school in U.S. history—was a terrible anomaly. We believed our country would learn from the tragedy and take every measure to ensure it never happened again.

But the Columbine death toll was surpassed at Sandy Hook Elementary School...and Parkland High School...and Uvalde's Robb Elementary School. Each time, we thought, "They have to do something now." But close to 400 school shootings later, the biggest change seemed to be in 2020, when firearms finally surpassed car accidents and disease to become the No. 1 killer of children in America.

We must put a stop to the gun violence that continues to terrorize our students, our educators, families, and communities. As President Biden, who finally passed the most comprehensive gun safety legislation in 30 years, said, "We all want our kids to have the freedom to learn to read and to write instead of learning how to duck and cover in a classroom."

Gun violence in schools affects all students and educators, and its ripple effects spread out to the entire community. There is the constant fear that your school, your children, will be the next victims. According to the American Psychological Association's report, "Stress in America 2023: A Nation Recovering from Collective Trauma," 56 percent of U.S. adults report mass shootings as a significant source of stress. And we know that the long-term effects of toxic stress can change the brain and body's makeup, particularly for children, severely affecting both physical and mental health.

According to the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, with whom NEA partnered to create this guide, 107 incidents of gun violence on school grounds have already caused 29 deaths and injured 61 people—and this is just during the first five months of 2024.

This is unacceptable. No matter how many school shootings we have seen happen, they are just as unacceptable today as they were in 1999. We cannot, we must not, accept the lie that there's nothing we can do to stop them.

While we are grateful for the strides President Biden has made, it is clear that more still needs to be done, which is why NEA set out to issue a call to action to end gun violence in our schools and communities. The result is this guide—a collection of hundreds of calls to action for educators; for school district, college, and university boards and administrators; for politicians; and for students, parents, and families. We look to the day when this guide will be unnecessary and obsolete, but for now, we—the members of this nation's largest labor union—must focus our attention on how to end gun violence in our schools and our communities.

And we must take a hard look at what that violence really looks like. While the picture most people have in their minds about schools and guns involves young White male shooters and White victims, the truth is that our students of color are disproportionately affected by gun violence. According to Everytown, “2 in 3 incidents of gunfire on school grounds from 2013 to 2021 occurred in schools where one or more racial and/or ethnic minorities constituted a majority of the student population.”

The good news is that gun violence is preventable. Not by absurd and impossible measures like arming teachers or putting armed security officers in every school, but through commonsense gun laws and trauma-informed schools that create safe environments and that have the staffing and mental health resources necessary to do it right.

The guide focuses on the roles of state and local education association leaders, staff, building representatives, faculty liaisons, and more. But it is meant to serve as a bridge between what NEA affiliates can do to facilitate gun violence prevention, preparation, response, and recovery and the crucial work of so many others in the broader school community. We know that each community varies with respect to their approach to guns and their experiences with gun violence. This guide is designed to help educators of all types and all levels of experience join with others to end gun violence in our schools.

NEA, we must find a way forward together. We must stop our children—our hope for the future—from continuing to fall prey to this country’s epidemic of gun violence. And we must help the survivors recover and succeed despite their trauma.

Thank you for picking up this guide and committing to being part of the solution!



Rebecca S. Pringle
President, National Education Association

Letter from Moms Demand Action Executive Director Angela Ferrell-Zabala

Gun violence is the No. 1 killer of children in America.

This is a statistic I say often, but it never becomes less jarring. And while this fact encompasses more than just school shootings, it is undeniable that our classrooms are not the safe havens that they should be.

Students deserve the freedom to live, learn, and play without the constant threat of gun violence. But this is our current reality, caused by a reckless gun industry, a corrupt gun lobby, and extremist lawmakers who refuse to take decisive action.

I know that with an issue this large and complex, a safer future can often feel out of reach. The truth is, there's no one-size-fits-all answer to preventing gun violence—but we do have the solutions to this crisis. We need to create powerful, informed networks in our communities that know how to keep our children safe. It will take all of us—educators, administrators, parents, students, law enforcement, mental health professionals, advocates, and policymakers—working together to create change.

To address this urgent need, we are proud to partner with the National Education Association to introduce a comprehensive guide that equips Pre-K-12 schools and higher education institutions with resources, recommendations, and evidence-based solutions for gun violence prevention. This new tool is intentionally organized into four parts: Prevention of, Preparation for, Response to, and Recovery from gun-related incidents on school grounds—because we've seen how important it is not only to prevent gun violence but also to heal from the trauma when it does occur.

As a mother of four children myself, I've seen up close how our gun violence crisis shapes the educational experiences and well-being of our students. But we cannot—and will not—normalize the fact that our children live in fear of being shot in their classrooms. This guide serves not just as a collection of strategies, but as a call to action for protecting young people in America.

I am hopeful that with dedication, collaboration, and the right tools, we will save lives. This is a necessary step in that direction, and our movement is here to support you every step of the way.

Thank you for your commitment. Together, I know that a safer future is possible.

In solidarity,



Angela Ferrell-Zabala
Executive Director of Moms Demand Action

Introduction

WHY THIS GUIDE

The United States suffers from an epidemic of gun violence. Every day, more than 120 people are killed by guns, and more than 200 are shot and wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-j). Less than 1 percent of gun deaths per year occur on school grounds, but the impact extends far beyond these casualties: Gun violence shapes the lives of millions of people in this country who witness it, who know the victims, or who live in fear of the next shooting. Gun violence has a profoundly harmful impact on students, educators, families, and communities.

For most of this country's history, infectious diseases and car accidents constituted the greatest risks to childhood health, but today, gun violence is the No. 1 cause of death for children and teens. Each year, more than 4,000 children and teens are shot and killed, and more than 17,000 are shot and wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-k). Homicides account for roughly 6 in 10 gun deaths among children (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-k), and gun suicides are on the rise—a public health crisis (American Public Health Association, 2023) that communities and elected officials can prevent. In the United States, an estimated 3 million children per year are exposed to shootings (Finkelhor et al., 2015), and the trauma of witnessing shootings—whether in their schools, communities, or homes—can have a devastating impact on their lives. The Stress in America survey provides ample evidence of the collective trauma our country faces, including from mass shootings (American Psychological Association, 2023).

The Everytown Support Fund's [Gunfire on School Grounds](#) database details the myriad ways in which gun violence manifests in U.S. schools. Over the past 11 years, the Everytown Support Fund has identified at least 1,200 incidents of a firearm discharging a live round inside or into a school building or on or onto school grounds. Of these incidents, 841 occurred on the grounds of a prekindergarten, elementary, middle, or high school, resulting in 270 people killed and 580 people wounded. In the 326 incidents that occurred on university or college campuses during that time period, 120 people were killed and another 251 were wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-b).

Students exposed to the trauma of violence, crime, and abuse are more likely to suffer from substance use disorders, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); fail or have difficulties in school; and engage in criminal activity (Finkelhor et al., 2015); (Cronholm et al., 2015). Even for those who have not experienced gun violence at school, the trauma of lockdowns and active shooter drills—which are happening with notable frequency—leaves students, educators, and their families across the country experiencing firsthand the impact of fear from the anticipation of gun violence.

The National Education Association (NEA) remains committed to ending the scourge of gun violence. As NEA President Becky Pringle told the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform in testimony urging Congress to act to end gun violence, “Inaction means we are willing to accept what should be unacceptable to us all” (NEA, 2022-b).

With attention to the disproportionate impact of gun violence on communities of color, NEA advocates in Congress, develops resources and trainings, encourages media and academic coverage of the subject, mobilizes members and communities, and engages with partners across the country to end gun violence. However, more must be done. To further address gun violence in our schools at every level of education, in July 2022, the NEA Representative Assembly (RA)—the Association’s highest decision-making body—directed NEA to issue a national call to action to help ensure that all students, educators, schools, campuses, and communities are safe from the epidemic of gun violence.

Working with an NEA-wide team that meets regularly to assess, plan, and work toward the ambitious goal set by the RA, the Association has convened members, leaders, and staff across the country to help develop strategies and identify needed actions. As part of its call to action, NEA has partnered with the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund (Everytown Support Fund) to produce the NEA School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide. The guide helps NEA’s state and local leaders, staff, and worksite leaders—like building representatives and faculty liaisons—prevent, prepare for, respond to, and facilitate recovery from gun violence in all education settings.

Ideally, this guide will be used for planning and advocacy that should already be taking place in Pre-K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. By focusing on the roles of association leaders, staff, and worksite leaders, like building representatives and faculty liaisons, it is meant to complement—not supplant—planning, preparation, and action by school administrators.



www.nea.org

www.everytownsupportfund.org

ORGANIZATION AND FOCUS OF THIS GUIDE

We published the guide's four sections—on prevention, preparation, response, and recovery—separately to facilitate their use. Each part includes material for Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education and for all categories of employees.

This guide uses the term “educators” broadly to refer to NEA’s rich and diverse membership, including aspiring educators; classroom teachers; education support professionals (ESPs), such as paraeducators and clerical service, custodial and maintenance, food service, health and student service, security, skilled trades, technical service, and transportation workers; the faculty, staff, and graduate workers in colleges and universities; and specialized instructional support personnel (SISP), like school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, speech-language pathologists, and school librarians.

The guide presents resources, tools, recommended practices, and checklists for incorporating gun violence-related strategies into the school crisis prevention and response plans of associations, Pre-K–12 schools, and institutions of higher education.

The Guide’s Checklists and Resources

The guide includes separate checklists for state leaders and staff and for local leaders, staff, and building representatives, department liaisons, department representatives, and other educators taking on worksite leadership roles.

The prevention, preparation, and recovery checklists start with steps for people newer to this work and advance to action items for those who are expanding their ongoing work. People who are broadening and deepening their engagement are likely to have already taken many of the early steps identified in the checklists. The response-related checklists outline actions based on the time elapsed since the gun incident: the first few hours, the first 12 hours, and the first week and beyond.

The end of the guide includes detail on all URLs of the resources hyperlinked throughout the body of the document.

The Guide's Four Main Sections

- 1 PREVENTION:** Prevention aims to reduce the risk and prevent the occurrence of gun violence incidents on school grounds, on campuses, and in communities. It includes taking actions to foster a positive and safe school climate and limit access to firearms that could be used in acts of school violence. This section presents strategies to help schools plan for trauma-informed crisis intervention practices, promote secure storage of guns, increase mental health and suicide prevention supports, integrate community violence intervention programs into schools, advocate for legislation that limits the presence of guns in schools, and take other steps to address gun violence.

- 2 PREPARATION:** Preparation involves planning for gun violence-related scenarios and continually planning, practicing, and evaluating the efficacy of responses. The goals are to minimize emotional, psychological, and physical harm when incidents occur and to have a system in place for immediate, effective response and recovery, which includes establishing crucial relationships with school administrators and community groups. The preparation and prevention phases often occur simultaneously and are ongoing. This section includes strategies to install evidence-based security upgrades to prevent shooters' access to education settings, examine the efficacy and potential harm of active shooter drills and school policing, and establish the processes and relationships that will facilitate effective responses.

- 3 RESPONSE:** The response phase includes action steps to minimize the harm of gun violence to students, educators of all types, and their families. The focus is short-term and requires coordination and rapid response during and immediately after a gun violence incident. The checklist for this section includes strategies and action steps based on how long ago the gun incident took place—the first few hours, the first 12 hours, and the first week and beyond. It also includes recommendations on how to speak with students about gun violence.

- 4 RECOVERY:** Recovery focuses on coping with trauma after a gun violence incident and restoring a safe and healthy school environment. It is imperative to focus on supporting the emotional, physical, and psychological health of students, educators, and their families. This section includes approaches to supporting recovery efforts, providing care and support to those impacted by gun violence incidents, and evaluating the planning and incident response to identify areas that need improvement or adjustment.

The NEA Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide

FOUR PHASES OF WORK TO ADDRESS GUN VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

1

PREVENT

- Understand Guns in Schools
- Consider ACEs, Trauma, and Toxic Stress
- Apply Evidence-Based Prevention Strategies
- Foster Safe and Supportive Schools
- Implement Education and Advocacy Strategies
- Carry Out Plans to Prevent Gun Violence

2

PREPARE

- Adopt Evidence-Based Approaches to Security
- Examine School Policing and Active Shooter Drills
- Understand, Assess, Improve, and Work with Emergency Operations Plans
- Put the Pieces in Place to Facilitate Response and Recovery

3

RESPOND

- Know How to Talk with Students About Gun Violence
- Support College Students After Gun Violence
- Implement Successful Communications Strategies
- Respond in a Deliberate, Effective Manner

4

RECOVER

- Understand Gun Violence Trauma
- Communicate Supportively
- Provide Care and Support
- Foster and Rely on Community Partnerships
- Evaluate and Improve Your Incident Response



PART 2:

Gun Violence Preparation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CHECKLISTS

The preparation section of the NEA School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide includes guidance on planning for gun-related scenarios and practicing, evaluating, and updating gun violence-related plans. It offers information on security upgrades to prevent shooters from accessing education settings like school buildings, classrooms, and campus facilities while also ensuring conditions remain welcoming and not prison-like. This section also examines the efficacy and potential harm of active shooter drills and policing. For broader context and related recommendations, consult the other sections of this guide: Part One—Prevention, Part Three—Response, and Part Four—Recovery.

For state affiliate leaders and staff and for local leaders, staff, and worksite leaders—like building representatives and faculty liaisons—the preparation section provides both association-focused and education- and community-related content, including advocacy opportunities and strategies. For example, an association should not be responsible for developing a school district, college, or university emergency operations plan, but association leaders, staff, and worksite leaders must know the details of those plans, where the association and its members fit in, how to improve plans, and ways to ensure appropriate association engagement when Pre-K-12 schools and institutions of higher education respond to incidents of gun violence. For state and local associations, this section also includes information on how to develop protocols and relationships to facilitate responses to gun-related incidents.

Evidence-Based Security Measures

The following evidence-supported strategies help protect the safety of students and educators in education settings.

- 1 Secure Entryways and Locks:** Controlling access is the most effective physical security measure to keep shooters out of buildings. Strategies for preventing unauthorized access to education settings include installing security fencing, establishing single access points, and ensuring all exit-point doors are self-closing and lock upon closing.

- 2 Examine School Policing:** Partnerships among law enforcement groups, security personnel, and Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education can play vital roles in safety. The keys to these partnerships are training, clear roles, and accountability. If education settings do choose to have security personnel intervene in violent and dangerous situations, those personnel must be carefully selected and trained in trauma-informed practices and de-escalation techniques.
- 3 Rethink Active Shooter Drills:** Training for educators on how to respond to active shooter incidents is important; however, there is no compelling evidence that including students in such drills has any value in preventing shootings or protecting the school community. If a workplace insists on including students, they must adopt strategies to mitigate the harm of such drills.
- 4 Understand and Engage with Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs):** Developed by Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education, EOPs provide clear and uniform guidance and procedures for emergency planning and response. EOPs are important to the association because they include information on lockdown procedures, active shooter drills, and other policies of concern. In addition, implementing and practicing the processes in the EOP can save lives. Understanding the EOP process helps leaders and staff communicate with members about what the district and/or the school is doing to prepare and get a clearer sense of where their influence can make a difference and what roles the association can play.

Components of an EOP include a planning team; concept of operations (an overall plan); assigned responsibilities; control and coordination efforts; training and exercises; development and maintenance; legal basis for operations; and functional annexes, including lockdowns; evacuation; accounting for all students, educators, and visitors; communications; family reunification; public, medical, and mental health; and recovery.

Long-Term Media and Communications Strategy

To prepare for a gun violence incident, it is crucial to develop emergency tools in advance for swift deployment. Responsible parties should be ready to issue media statements, press releases, and internal messages to members, families, and other members of the community. The association should also have contingency plans for alternate systems of communication in case of cell tower outages or power failures and for those students and families without regular access to computers.

It is important for local and state association leaders to understand how and with whom they will interact after a gun incident. Identifying the right association leaders and the correct administration officials before an incident saves valuable time and can impact the safety of students and educators. It is also an opportunity for leaders to build relationships with relevant community organizations, including crisis response and racial and social justice organizations. There are often parent groups and other organizations concerned about gun violence that would welcome partnerships with educators.

GUN VIOLENCE PREPARATION

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: PREPARATION: STATE

STATE PRESIDENTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS					
Newer to the Work: For those beginning to work on gun violence preparation issues					
	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Determine, as appropriate, who will carry out to-do list items for the association.				
2	Ensure local association leaders, staff, and worksite leaders have this guide.				
3	Establish an opportunity for association leaders and staff to review and discuss this guide.				
4	Develop a plan for association leaders that identifies roles and responsibilities in case of a gun incident.				
5	Prepare a short description of the state's process for addressing gun violence incidents, including contacts, for local associations.				
6	Identify and build a relationship with relevant crisis-response agencies at the state level.				
7	If collective bargaining takes place, review or develop state bargaining guidance to include gun violence-related content; review NEA's collective bargaining language related to gun violence for applicable provisions . If bargaining does not take place, review the language for potential adoption of school/campus policy.				
8	Develop or deepen relationships with organizations championing civil rights; addressing gun violence; supporting parents, family members, higher education partners, and spouses; and promoting student health. Discuss approaches to and mutual opportunities for support on issues related to gun violence.				

STATE PRESIDENTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Newer to the Work: For those beginning to work on gun violence preparation issues

	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
9	Develop talking points and statements that can be updated and revised, as necessary, for local associations.				
10	Engage with state organizations representing administrators, principals, and other school employees to build cooperative approaches to addressing gun violence.				

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: PREPARATION: STATE

STATE PRESIDENTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Expanding the Work: For those deepening or broadening ongoing work on gun violence preparation issues

	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Work with administration contacts to ensure creation of emergency operations plans with association participation or, if the plans already exist, association participation in their review and revision.				
2	Create opportunities to educate members about EOPs and how they can interact with them.				
3	Obtain school security planning documents and proposals, engaging members to understand and review them and advocate, where necessary, for evidence-based trauma-informed approaches.				
4	Develop partnerships with organizations championing civil rights; addressing gun violence; supporting parents, family members, higher education partners, and spouses; and promoting student health.				

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: PREPARATION: LOCAL

LOCAL PRESIDENTS, STAFF, AND WORKSITE LEADERS					
Newer to the Work: For those beginning to work on gun violence preparation issues					
	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Determine who will carry out to-do list items, as appropriate, for the association.				
2	Ensure that local association leaders, staff, and worksite leaders have this guide.				
3	Establish an opportunity for association leaders, staff, and worksite leaders to review and discuss this guide.				
4	Learn about gun violence-related protocols, staff assignments, points of contact, and resources from the state association; ensure that this information is kept up-to-date and distributed to the local association gun violence and/or school safety team.				
5	Develop an association plan that includes roles and responsibilities in case of a gun violence incident.				
6	Prepare a short summary of local association procedures in case of a gun violence incident.				
7	Identify and build relationships with relevant crisis response teams within school administrations; if no such teams exists, advocate for the creation of one.				
8	Ensure that the association has one established point of contact and a plan for communicating with school administration after a gun violence incident; establish or deepen the working relationship between contacts.				
9	Obtain and maintain up-to-date electronic and hard copies of members' class rosters and work assignments.				
10	Develop and distribute information to all members on how to communicate with the local association in case members are directly involved in gun violence incidents; include points of contact.				

LOCAL PRESIDENTS, STAFF, AND WORKSITE LEADERS

Newer to the Work: For those beginning to work on gun violence preparation issues

	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
11	Advocate for the installation of evidence-based security and access-control measures consistent with maintaining welcoming environments.				
12	If collective bargaining takes place, review NEA's collective bargaining language related to gun violence for applicable provisions . If bargaining does not take place, review the language for potential school/campus policy adoption.				
13	Develop or deepen relationships with organizations championing civil rights; countering gun violence; supporting parents, family members, higher education partners, and spouses; and promoting student health. Discuss approaches to and mutual opportunities for support on issues related to gun violence.				

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: PREPARATION: LOCAL

LOCAL PRESIDENTS, STAFF, AND WORKSITE LEADERS

Expanding the Work: For those deepening or broadening ongoing work on gun violence preparation issues

	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Work with administration contacts to ensure creation of emergency operations plans with association participation or, if the plans exist, association participation in their review and revision.				
2	Create opportunities to educate members about school administration EOPs and how they can interact with them.				
3	Develop partnerships with organizations championing civil rights; countering gun violence; supporting parents, family members, higher education partners, and spouses; and promoting student health.				

PREPARING FOR INCIDENTS OF GUN VIOLENCE

Preparing for incidents of gun violence requires consideration of physical security, emergency operations plans, association protocols, development of media-related and other communications strategies, and the relationships and partnerships that facilitate effective work on gun violence. This component of the guide’s material on preparing for incidents of gun violence addresses each of these factors.

Employ Evidence-Based Approaches to Physical Security

Physical security is a critical intervention to keep guns out of education settings. Technology-based safety measures have evolved over the last decade and are increasingly common (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021); (Zhang, Musu-Gillette, & Oudekerk, 2016). Such measures include bulletproof windows, metal detectors, artificial intelligence for weapons detection, security cameras, and facial recognition technology. Security equipment can have a negative impact on students, and the effectiveness of some of these approaches has yet to be well-researched (Hankin, Hertz, & Simon, 2011); (Mayer & Leone, 1999).

NEA recognizes that school and college facilities and grounds should reflect [welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environments for all students, parents, families, and communities](#) and opposes the “[c]onstruction of prison-like school environments that employ metal detectors, random searches, and other building and design elements that diminish a thriving and nurturing school climate” (NEA, 2022). According to the American Psychological Association, implementing prison-like security measures in places like education settings and hospitals fosters a sense of threat, not safety. Additionally, these hardening measures, which are designed to prevent violence, often fail to address the most prevalent form of school-based violence and bullying (Hulac et al., 2024). NEA recognizes the significance of physical school facilities as a reflection of what educators want our schools to be—welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environments for our students, parents/guardians, and communities.

For these and other reasons, NEA opposes prison-like school environments that employ metal detectors, random searches, and other building and design elements that diminish a thriving and nurturing school climate.

Here are examples of common school security measures:

- **Entryways and Locks:** Controlling access is a highly effective physical security measure to keep shooters out of buildings. Most experts, including members of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission and the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, agree that the ability to control access must be a component of every school security plan (Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public

Safety Commission, 2019); (Sandy Hook Advisory Commission, 2015). Strategies for preventing unauthorized access to school buildings and campuses include installing security fencing, establishing single access points, and ensuring that all exit-point doors are self-closing and lock upon closing. State legislatures should provide funding for these basic access control measures. Internal door locks can serve as a secondary measure, allowing educators to lock doors from inside classrooms, buildings, and facilities. This protects students and provides law enforcement groups time to address threats. During mass shooting incidents at Sandy Hook Elementary School and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, lack of dual-locking or inside-locking classroom doors exposed educators and students to danger.



- **Alarms/Alert Systems:** Alarm and alert systems warn students and educators when there is an active shooter on school grounds or on a college campus. Such systems must be checked and updated regularly and the alert should differ from everyday announcements. The mass school shooting at Robb Elementary School in Texas brought such issues to light: The system’s use for non-gun-violence-related announcements diluted its effectiveness, and poor internet connectivity hampered its reach (Texas House of Representatives Investigative Committee on the Robb Elementary Shooting, 2022).
- **Bulletproofing:** Bulletproof glass can be effective but is very costly. Strategically placed tempered glass or ballistic film, which is a thin layer of polyurethane that can be applied to existing windows, may be a more economical way to slow down an intruder. This could allow more time for educators to activate safety protocols and for response teams to arrive (3M, 2024).
- **Metal Detectors:** NEA opposes the use of metal detectors in education settings. A research review of metal detector efficacy found mixed results, showing metal detectors could potentially reduce weapon carrying in schools (though this assessment did not specifically report on firearm carrying) but could also create a less trusting school environment. Visible security measures, such as metal detectors, also raise the possibility of “attack location drift,” which means motivated student shooters who are aware of metal detectors may alter their locations of attack to places like school buses, parking lots, or athletic events (Hankin, Hertz, & Simon, 2011); (Price & Khubchandani, 2019).
- **Security Cameras and Facial Recognition:** The effects of security cameras on behavior in schools have yet to be extensively studied. While some research has found that conspicuous security cameras in other types of settings may reduce unruly public behavior and increase pro-social or helping behavior (Borum et al., 2010), it should be noted that perpetrators of school shootings may not care whether they are apprehended and thus may be undeterred by cameras (The Governor’s Columbine Review Commission, 2001). A major concern about facial recognition software, in particular, is that it can be inaccurate and may disproportionately affect students of color, a problem exacerbated by the overreliance on intense surveillance measures in education settings that serve primarily students of color (Nance, 2017). Because facial recognition technology can be inaccurate, it can lead to students being punished for offenses they did not commit (Coyle & Curr III, 2018).

Examine School Policing

School resource officers and school security personnel should be properly trained to work with mental health professionals and other educators to apply trauma-informed practices, de-escalation measures, and crisis intervention practices. They should also receive implicit bias training, with the broad goal of fostering a safe, welcoming, and inclusive school community.

Working with Security Personnel to Create Positive School Climates

Unarmed security personnel can play a crucial role in establishing positive school climates and effective, student-supported school policies. Security personnel trained in trauma-informed and de-escalation practices can resolve conflicts before they turn violent. These individuals often live in the same communities as students and can serve as community liaisons, role models, and mentors for students, building long-term trusting relationships with families and students.

“School security personnel are often the first adults [that] students see when they walk into the school building. Reinforcing the significant contribution of security professionals to positive school climates and integrating them into school security planning and response is one way we can move toward stopping the trend of school gun violence in this country—and make sure we never have to open the NEA School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide” (Frazier, 2024).

Policing in education settings must include continual reviews of discipline practices, data collection processes, and audits and transparency of budgetary allocation for school resource officers, private security, and other law enforcement in schools. Accountability measures for school resource officers and law enforcement engaging with children and students must be in place and reinforced.

NEA opposes the use of law enforcement personnel or private security in the discipline process and opposes hiring private security to perform the roles of school resource officers or sworn law enforcement officers. The Association believes that arming education employees as a preventative measure against armed intruders creates an unsafe environment, placing students and school personnel at greater risk. For additional information, see “Do Not Arm Teachers or Other Educators,” in Part 1 of this guide.

Relentless and frightening school gun violence and media coverage of the incidents have created an earnest desire from school communities for protection. However, the practice of policing in schools has not been shown to reduce school shooting deaths. One study examined 179 shootings on school grounds from 1999 to 2018 and found no evidence that school resource officers in schools reduced deaths or injuries from school shooting incidents (Livingston et al., 2019). Similarly, another study found that while school resource officers reduced some forms of violence in schools, they did not prevent gun violence-related incidents and concurrently intensified suspensions, expulsions, police referrals, and arrests (Sorensen et al., 2023). An analysis examining 133 school shootings from 1980 to 2019 found that having an armed officer at the school did not act as a deterrent for school shooters; instead, it suggested that an armed officer may serve as incentive, with their presence linked to increased casualties after a perpetrator’s use of assault rifles or submachine guns (Peterson et al., 2021).

A national report using U.S. Department of Education data (2015–2016) found that having police in schools was associated with 3.5 times as many arrests compared to those schools without police. The report, which identified a disproportionate impact on students of color, found that funding decisions prioritized policing over student mental health in schools; it also identified more severe consequences in student criminalization and lower academic outcomes for students of color. Black students were three times more likely than White students to be arrested, and Indigenous students were twice as likely as White students to be arrested. Latino/a/x

students were also more likely to be arrested than their White counterparts (Whitaker et al., 2019). Research has also found that LGBTQ+ and gender-nonconforming students have a higher likelihood of being stopped by police, suspended, expelled, or arrested, and they often report feeling hostility from law enforcement groups in schools (Lambda Legal, 2015); (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2011).

If created thoughtfully and carefully, partnerships among law enforcement groups, security personnel, and schools can play vital roles in school safety. Providing appropriate training, establishing clear roles, and strengthening accountability practices are key to the success of these partnerships.

In districts that choose or are required to have a security presence, the security professionals should have an exclusively protective role and be integrated within the school community, be answerable directly to school leaders, and receive training as peace officers, with an extensive focus on trauma-informed, de-escalation, and minimum-use-of-force techniques.

Rethink Active Shooter Drills

Plans, such as emergency operations plans (EOPs), that include active shooter drills must minimize harms from such drills. Although less than 1 percent of gun deaths per year occur on school grounds (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-b), drills to prepare students and educators have become commonplace. However, there is no strong conclusive evidence affirming the value of these drills for protecting the school community when shootings do occur. There is good reason to think they are ineffective, in part, because the preparedness procedures are being shared with the very individuals most likely to perpetrate a school shooting: former and current students.

NEA supports training for educators on how to respond to active shooter incidents; however, the Association does not recommend these drills for students. Educators should carefully consider the impacts before conducting live drills that involve students. Everytown partnered with [Georgia Institute of Technology's Social Dynamics and Wellbeing Lab](#) to study the immediate and long-term impacts of active shooter drills on the health and well-being of students, educators, and parents. The research showed that students and educators experienced distress and, sometimes, lasting trauma as a result of active shooter drills (EISherief, 2021). Putting a person in a scenario with the perceived threat of gun violence may activate a post-traumatic stress response, such as negative and distressing changes in thoughts, emotions, and behaviors for those who have a lived experience of gun violence.

If students must participate in active shooter drills, here are some helpful tips and resources to mitigate the harm that such drills can cause.

Before facilitating an active shooter drill:

- Brief educators on how to identify common signs of trauma before the drill; students who have experienced previous traumas, such as domestic violence or prior exposure to gun violence, may be particularly vulnerable to intense feelings and reactions.
- Provide advanced notice of planned drills to parents and educators and allow parents to opt their children out of the drill; plan alternative programming to accommodate students who choose not to participate.
- Lead an age-appropriate, trauma-informed conversation with students prior to the drill in which a school psychologist, counselor, or social worker facilitates the conversation, detailing what will happen during the drill and providing coping skills to use if they become dysregulated.

During an active shooter drill:

- Avoid simulating actual violence or injuries because research shows that [drills mimicking real events are especially traumatic](#) for students, parents, and educators (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-l).
- Remind students and educators through an announcement at the beginning of the drill that there is not an active shooter threat; surprise drills are distressing and may desensitize students to the threat of violence, which can prompt them to under-respond in the event of an actual active shooter situation.
- Supportively remove students who are showing symptoms of trauma during the drill and give them the opportunity to speak with on-site school mental health professionals or other trained educators to help manage traumatic memories or strong emotions.

After facilitating an active shooter drill:

- Allow all students and educators to connect with on-site school mental health professionals since it is common for students and educators to have heightened anxiety or other emotions after an active shooter drill.
- Evaluate results, successes, and learning opportunities to track data over time and create a plan to keep students safe.

For more information, see the National Child Traumatic Stress Network’s [comprehensive guide on how to create active shooter drills](#) (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.). The American Academy of Pediatrics also frames [concerns and considerations](#) related to such drills (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2020).

Review and Practice Emergency Operations Plans

Emergency operations plans (EOPs) provide clear and uniform guidance and procedures for emergency planning and response. In the 2021–2022 school year, 96 percent of public K–12 schools had an active shooter plan (Burr, Kemp, & Wang, 2024). Ideally, the school team developing and revising an EOP collaborates with school and community stakeholders, including association leadership and members, other unions, parents and guardians, and, when age-appropriate, students.

A variety of models can be used to create EOPs, and state departments of education or other agencies as well as local jurisdictions are likely to have requirements and guidance of their own. The purpose of this NEA guide is not to have state or local associations create EOPs but instead to help association leaders, staff, and worksite leaders understand, assess, improve, and engage with them. It is important to help all stakeholders understand how EOPs can fit into their own planning for gun violence incidents.

Given the variation in state and local EOP-related requirements and guidance, the NEA guide uses two models from the U.S. Department of Education: one for K–12 schools and one for institutions of higher education (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-a); (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-b).

A wide range of education stakeholders—and NEA members—have crucial insights, understanding, and perspective that will enhance the planning and assessment processes and outcomes. Districts and higher education institutions should provide language guidance and resources and communication-related support to integrate member input. For example, the U.S. Department of Education notes that continuity of services in the event of an emergency implicates essential functions like business services, communications, computer and systems support, facilities maintenance, safety and security, and continuity of teaching and learning (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-a); (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-b). These are positions

often held by NEA members, who are well-placed to draw on their daily work to identify and assess hazards and needed responses.

EOP language on gun violence must also explicitly address the needs of students and educators with disabilities. Sixty-seven percent of students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) spend more than 80 percent of their time in the general education classroom (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). As a result, general educators must be aware of necessary IEP supports for students with disabilities in case of emergencies, including incidents of gun violence. Educators who have worked with students with disabilities can assist with understanding the breadth of necessary EOP responses, including for people with post-traumatic stress; individuals with non-apparent disabilities; students and educators with autism; and students and educators who are hearing impaired, have low vision, or have developmental or mobility disabilities or other conditions that may warrant an individualized response.



The Importance of School Emergency Operations Plans to the Association

Implementing and practicing the processes detailed in an EOP can save lives. These plans provide guidance on:

- A range of possible hazards and emergencies;
- Lockdown procedures, active shooter drills, and other policies of concern; and
- The roles and responsibilities of school administrators during an emergency, which provides transparency and a clearer sense of how the association may fit in.

By understanding the content and processes included in EOPs, association leaders and staff can more effectively communicate with members about what the district and/or school is doing to prepare for a gun violence incident. Leaders and staff can also rely on that understanding to develop and implement plans for engaging with administrators on EOPs, including members in EOP processes and committees, and educating members about effective responses to gun violence incidents.

The EOP Process

In both K-12 and higher education contexts, the U.S. Department of Education approaches EOPs with a six-step process, recommending each step be carried out by the planning team. The department noted, “The common thread found in successful operations is that participating organizations have understood and accepted their roles” (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-a); (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-b).

In reviewing the key components of EOPs, consider how the following association-related questions may apply to each component:

- What association leadership and member expertise could be helpful on the team or committee?
- Who do you know on an existing team or committee who can help expand participation to include association leaders and members?
- What relationships and partnerships do you have that could bring community voices into the process?

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6
FORM A COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TEAM	UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION	DETERMINE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	DEVELOP PLAN	PLAN, PREPARE, REVIEW, AND APPROVE	PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINTENANCE
Identify Core Planning Team	Identify Threats and Hazards	Develop Goals	Identify Courses of Action	Format the Plan	Train Stakeholders
Form a Common Framework	Assess Risk	Develop Objectives		Write the Plan	Exercise the Plan
Define and Assign Roles and Responsibilities	Prioritize Threats and Hazards			Review the Plan	Review, Revise, and Maintain the Plan
Determine a Regular Schedule of Meetings				Approve and Share the Plan	

Figure 1. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students, Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans, Washington, DC, 2013, p. 5.

- How well do EOPs reflect the diverse and intersectional perspectives and experiences of Native People and People of Color, LGBTQ+, and from all economic backgrounds and abilities?
- How might association advocacy improve these EOP components?
- What formal role do association leaders and members play in this process?
- What other documents, including collective bargaining agreements and school board policies, exist with content relevant to EOPs?
- How might the association address EOP-related concerns through collective bargaining and administrative policy?
- What existing association and labor-management committees exist that do or can take on EOP-related issues that address gun violence, including health and safety committees, violence committees, and school health committees?

Components of an EOP

Planning Team: The team should consist of representatives from across the Pre-K-12 school or higher education institution.

Concept of Operations: This refers to the overall plan of how the school will protect students, faculty, and visitors in the event of a gun violence incident. Examples include who has the right to activate the plan. This section of an EOP may also address how association leaders are notified when the EOP is activated.

Assignments of Responsibility: Each plan should include an overview of broad roles and responsibilities of school administrators, association members, families and guardians, community organizations, and first responders. These responsibilities should be articulated clearly, and association leadership should ensure that members are notified and involved in defining their roles.

Control and Coordination Efforts: This is the relationship between the school or district EOP and the broader community's emergency management system, with consideration for who has control of the equipment, resources, and supplies needed to support the school.

Training and Exercises: The plan should include training objectives, frequency, and types of preparation drills related to a gun violence incident. The association should check relevant collective bargaining or policy language about when and how frequently such training and exercises will be held.

Development and Maintenance: The plan should include the process for developing and revising the plan.

Legal Basis for Operations: This refers to the legal basis for emergency operations and activities.

Functional Annexes: Functional annexes refer to several specific operational areas, including lockdowns; evacuations; shelter-in-place; accounting for all individuals; communications; family reunification; public, medical, and mental health; security; and recovery. The following components are essential to the emotional and physical well-being of members, students, and families:

- **Lockdown:** This refers to securing school buildings and grounds during incidents that pose an immediate threat of gun violence to ensure that all educators, students, and visitors are secured in rooms away from immediate danger.
- **Evacuation:** This refers to vacating school buildings and grounds following an incident of gun violence. This section of the EOP should include how to evacuate people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, such as language and medical needs. In addition, the planned location to reassemble students and educators should be addressed. In higher education institutions with multiple buildings, it is important to identify multiple areas of evacuation.
- **Sheltering in Place:** This takes place when students, employees, and visitors are required to remain indoors for an extended period due to a threat of gun violence.
- **Accounting for All Students, Educators, and Visitors:** This must take place to determine the whereabouts and well-being of students, staff, and visitors and to identify those who may be missing. This should include developing a plan to determine who is in attendance in the evacuation area and what to do when a student, educator, or visitor cannot be located.
- **Communications:** This guide includes recommendations for communicating with students, educators, families, and the broader community before, during, and after a gun violence incident.
- **Family Reunification:** It may be necessary for students, educators, and visitors to reconnect with families to ensure that every student is released to an authorized adult and that students in Pre-K-12 schools do not leave on their own. College-age students can be released on their own; however, emotional support for every individual who has experienced the trauma of a gun violence incident is important.
- **Public, Medical, and Mental Health:** This refers to the actions taken to address emergency medical and mental health issues in coordination with appropriate emergency medical health services and other relevant groups. An example of what is included in this section of the EOP is how the school will secure enough mental health counselors to support the needs of students and educators.
- **Security and Capacity:** This includes actions taken on a routine, ongoing basis to secure the school from threats originating both inside and outside the school, ensuring that the school is physically secure.
- **Recovery:** This refers to how to recover in the aftermath of a gun violence incident. The recovery section of this guide covers this topic in-depth.

Higher Education-Specific Emergency Procedures

In many cases, advice for higher education-related emergency response is similar to guidance for Pre-K–12 schools. However, here are key differences:

- ❑ **Evacuation:** This component of EOPs should include how to safely move students, educators, and visitors from unsafe areas to designated assembly areas, such as classrooms, student housing facilities, campus grounds, dining halls, and stadiums. Evacuating individuals from higher education institutions needs special attention because of the various locations across a greater area.
- ❑ **Lockdown:** Special consideration should be given to the variety of locations that could be affected at different points in the day. In higher education settings, there may be variations of a lockdown; for example, one variation may be when outside doors are locked, and visitors closely monitored, but other activities continue as normal.
- ❑ **Accounting for All Students, Educators, and Visitors:** This section of the EOP includes those individuals assigned to the various assembly areas. The association should ensure that all members are notified and trained if they are assigned to a gun violence incident assembly area. In addition, methods for determining the whereabouts of students, educators, and visitors need to be addressed in this section.
- ❑ **Communications:** This refers to the clear, step-by-step, written instructions for internal and external stakeholders. Special consideration should be given to ensure effective communications to the broader community, including student activities or events not sponsored by the higher education institution but occurring on campus grounds. Communications plans should include preparation for communication in the languages and formats appropriate for the student body and their families. Keep in mind that communicating with the family members of adult students is different from communicating with the families of students under the age of 18.
- ❑ **Continuity of Operations:** An important component for higher education institutions to address is how to ensure students receive related services (e.g., financial aid, food, housing, etc.) in the event of a prolonged closure.
- ❑ **Public, Medical, and Mental Health:** Special consideration should be given to identifying faculty who have relevant training or experience to address the needs of students and educators after a gun violence incident. The association should ensure that members are notified and trained if they have the qualifications to assist. In addition, there should be a plan for how to ensure that faculty’s mental health needs are being addressed.
- ❑ **Recovery:** Determining where counseling and psychological first aid will be provided should be incorporated into the plan. In addition, thinking about how to handle commemorations, memorial activities, or permanent markers, if allowed, should be included.

Develop Tools for Communicating Via Digital and Media Platforms

To prepare for a gun violence incident, it is helpful to develop emergency communication tools in advance to facilitate swift deployment. Actions include the following:

- ❑ Develop and be prepared to deploy an emergency association-related homepage, connecting it to the district homepage if possible or connecting the district page to the association's;
- ❑ Explore with administrators the potential to establish a joint information center that includes the association;
- ❑ Create templates for posts for X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and other social media platforms to provide regular updates, as appropriate;
- ❑ Prepare press release and statement templates;
- ❑ Maintain an email list of stakeholders, including educators, media, and elected officials;
- ❑ Establish alternate systems of communication in case cell towers are inoperable or electricity is out and for those students and families experiencing homelessness or without regular access to computers;
- ❑ Identify translation services, if appropriate;
- ❑ Develop electronic message templates to provide the latest information;
- ❑ Draft letters or emails to educators who work at the site of the incident, to those in neighboring institutions, and to parents;
- ❑ Develop frequently asked questions and answers that can be distributed to the media and posted on the crisis website;
- ❑ Ensure that communications contacts in the state affiliate and local associations are up-to-date and easily identifiable; and
- ❑ Identify state and local affiliates who can assist with communication and other resources and support.



Building Strong Partnerships

Addressing gun violence in education settings requires strong, meaningful relationships with partners to deepen association understanding, build relationships, strengthen the processes and policies of Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education, and ensure that approaches developed to keep students, educators, and communities safe are culturally and racially appropriate.

From state to state and within states, potential partners may vary. An important place to start is with other unions representing workers in the Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education where association members work, gun violence-focused organizations, racial and social justice organizations, after-school programs, mental and physical health providers and organizations, associations representing principals or other administrators, and local colleges and universities with programs that identify or address violence in communities or, more specifically, in education settings.

The following list includes several national-level organizations—with links to their websites—that may have state or local counterparts. Identifying local groups working on similar topics may also serve the same purpose.

AAPI Victory Alliance

<https://aapivictoryalliance.com/gunviolenceprevention>

AASA—The School Superintendents Association

<https://www.aasa.org/resources/all-resources?Keywords=safety&RowsPerPage=20>

Alliance to Reclaim our Schools

<https://reclaimourschools.org>

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/gun-violence-prevention>

American Psychological Association

<https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/gun-violence-prevention>

American School Counselor Association

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Prevention-of-School-Rela>

Color of Change

<https://colorofchange.org>

Community Justice Action Fund

<https://www.cjactionfund.org>

Hope and Heal Fund

<https://hopeandhealfund.org/who-we-are>

League of United Latin American Citizens

https://lulac.org/advocacy/resolutions/2013/resolution_on_gun_violence_prevention/index.html

Life Camp

<https://www.peaceislifestyle.com>

Live Free

<https://livefreeusa.org>

March for Our Lives

<https://marchforourlives.org>

MomsRising

<https://www.momsrising.org/blog/topics/gun-safety>

NAACP

<https://naacp.org>

National Association of Elementary School Principals

<https://www.naesp.org>

National Association of School Nurses

<https://www.nasn.org/blogs/nasn-inc/2023/07/27/take-action-to-address-gun-violence>

National Association of School Psychologists

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis>

National Association of Secondary School Principals

<https://www.nassp.org/community/principal-recovery-network>

National Association of Social Workers

<https://www.socialworkers.org>

National PTA

<https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/federal-legislation/Public-Policy-Priorities/gun-safety-and-violence-prevention>

National School Boards Association

<https://www.nsba4safeschools.org/home>

Parents Together

<https://parents-together.org/the-heart-of-gun-safety-and-a-new-approach-to-advocacy>

Sandy Hook Promise

<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org>

The Trevor Project

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org>

UnidosUS

<https://unidosus.org/publications/latinos-and-gun-violence-prevention>

GUN VIOLENCE PREPARATION RESOURCES

National Education Association Resources

National Education Association

<https://www.nea.org>

The National Education Association is the nation's largest union, representing more than 3 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, specialized instructional support personnel, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become educators.

NEA Health and Safety Program

<https://www.nea.org/healthy-schools>

The NEA Health and Safety Program provides information and solutions related to student and educator mental health, violence prevention and response, infection control, and environmental and occupational safety and health, among other topics.

NEA School Crisis Guide

<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/neas-school-crisis-guide>

Published in 2018, the crisis guide is a step-by-step outline of what to do before, during, and after any school or community crisis.

Responding to Gun Violence

<https://www.nea.org/gunviolence>

This portion of the NEA website provides health and safety content on taking action, helping students and educators cope, resources for school leaders, fostering mental health, and preventing hate and bias.

Helping Students Cope with Active Shooter Drills

<https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/helping-students-cope-active-shooter-drills>

NEA Today spoke to Janet Shapiro, dean of the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research, professor of social work, and director of the Center for Child and Family Wellbeing at Bryn Mawr College, about the impact on students.

We Can Change This: Educators Take On Gun Violence

<https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/we-can-change-educators-take-gun-violence>

Educators across the country are working to end the era of school shootings that has defined students' lives.

Everytown Resources

Everytown for Gun Safety

<https://www.everytown.org>

Everytown for Gun Safety is the largest gun violence prevention organization in America. The organization is a movement of more than 10 million supporters working to end gun violence.

Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund

<https://everytownsupportfund.org>

The Everytown Support Fund is the education, research, and litigation arm of Everytown for Gun Safety. It seeks to improve our understanding of the causes of gun violence and help to reduce it by conducting ground-breaking original research, developing evidence-based policies, communicating this knowledge to the American public, and advancing gun safety and gun violence prevention in communities and the courts.

The Impact of Active Shooter Drills in Schools

<https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-active-shooter-drills-in-schools>

Everytown provides current data on active shooter drills and their impact on students in K-12 education settings. Their research also focuses on the impact of active shooter drills on physical, mental, and community health outcomes.

Reconsider Active Shooter Drills

<https://www.everytown.org/solutions/active-shooter-drills>

Everytown argues that proactive school safety measures save lives and reduce the detriments associated with active shooter drills. They also provide data and recommendations for state legislation to provide funding and laws for schools to implement proactive safety programs.

Other Resources

SCHOOL SAFETY

Comprehensive School Safety Planning and Development

<https://safeandsoundschools.org/comprehensive-school-safety>

Safe and Sound Schools outlines a framework for comprehensive school safety planning and development, which includes input from representatives in each stakeholder group to consider all areas of safety relevant to their site and community.

National Center for School Safety

<https://www.nc2s.org>

The National Center for School Safety is focused on improving school safety and preventing school violence. The center provides expert-led training, technical assistance, and a database of additional resources to address school safety challenges.

Schoolsafety.gov

<https://www.schoolsafety.gov>

This interagency website created by the federal government provides a broad range of information, resources, and guidance to create safe and supportive learning environments for students and educators.

Security Planning Workbook

<https://www.cisa.gov/resources-tools/resources/security-planning-workbook>

Created by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, this comprehensive resource assists with the development of a foundational security plan.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANS

EOP Assist

<https://rems.ed.gov/EOPASSIST/EOPASSIST.aspx>

EOP Assist is a software application provided by the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center for K–12 schools, school districts, regional education agencies, and state agencies. It includes support for school emergency planning and management.

Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans

https://rems.ed.gov/docs/rems_k-12_guide_508.pdf

This guide—developed by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Federal Emergency Management Agency—provides schools with steps they can take to plan for potential emergencies through the creation, implementation, and maintenance of an emergency operations plan (EOP).

Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans for IHEs

https://rems.ed.gov/docs/IHE_Guide_508C.pdf

This guide—developed by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Federal Emergency Management Agency—provides higher education institutions with steps they can take to plan for potential emergencies through the creation, implementation, and maintenance of an emergency operations plan (EOP).

SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Especially Safe

<https://safeandsoundschools.org/programs/especially-safe>

Especially Safe, a program designed by Safe and Sound Schools, helps safety planning teams address the safety and security needs of members of the school community with disabilities—including developmental disabilities, communication challenges, medical needs, mobility challenges, and more.

Protecting Students with Disabilities in an Emergency: 5 Key Strategies

<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/protecting-students-with-disabilities-in-an-emergency-5-key-strategies/2022/07>

Published in *Education Week* in 2022, this article describes five recommendations for creating specific plans to protect the safety of students with disabilities in a school shooting from special educators and emergency management officials.

Safety Planning Guide for Individuals with Special Needs

https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/sites/dcjs.virginia.gov/files/virginia_safety_planning_guide_for_individuals_with_special_needs.pdf

This document, developed by the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, helps those tasked with school safety in Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education to develop strategies that meet the diverse safety needs of all stakeholders within the education community.

School Safety Drills and Exercises for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Tips and Resources for Educators

[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-resources/school-safety-drills-and-exercises-for-students-with-autism-spectrum-disorder-\(asd\)-tips-and-resources-for-educators](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-resources/school-safety-drills-and-exercises-for-students-with-autism-spectrum-disorder-(asd)-tips-and-resources-for-educators)

The National Association of School Psychologists provides advocacy pointers for the safety of students with ASD, along with recommendations for preparing, supporting, and debriefing students with ASD when safety drills and exercises are used.

ASSESSING PREPAREDNESS

Do You Know Your School Community Safety Plan?

<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/teacher-resources/know-your-school-community-safety-plan>

Sandy Hook Promise created this resource to encourage educators, administrators, parents, families, and other school community members to be aware of how their school receives and reacts to concerns of potential violence.

Is My District Prepared? 8 Questions for Superintendents and School Boards

<https://safeandsoundschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/CES-8questions-Supts-2.0.pdf>

This resource from the Missouri School Boards' Association helps assess emergency preparedness in schools.

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PART 2 | PREPARATION



www.nea.org
www.everytownsupportfund.org



PART 3 RESPONSE

NEA SCHOOL GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

GUIDE



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About the National Education Association and Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund

The [National Education Association \(NEA\)](#) is more than 3 million people—educators, students, activists, workers, parents, neighbors, and friends—who believe in the opportunity for all students and the power of public education to transform lives and create a more just and inclusive society. NEA has affiliate organizations in every state and more than 14,000 communities across the United States. The Association brings the expertise, drive, and dedication of our educators and allies to focus on providing the best public education to each and every student across race, place, background, and ability. Our members work at every level of education—from prekindergarten through graduate-level university programs—and in other types of public service.

The NEA Health and Safety Program, within the Association’s Education Policy and Implementation Center (EPIC), partnered with Everytown’s team to develop this guide. It draws on the expertise and work of several centers, departments, and initiatives across the organization, including EPIC, the Center for Advocacy and Political Action, the Center for Communications, the Center for Organizing and Affiliate Support, the Center for Professional Excellence and Student Learning, the Office of General Counsel, and the Center for Racial and Social Justice. Audrey Soglin—whose career in public education includes service as the executive director of the Illinois Education Association, a local association president, and a 25-year classroom teacher—worked with the Health and Safety Program staff as a consultant on this project.

The guidance and feedback of NEA state and local affiliate leaders, staff, and members have been crucial in conceptualizing, developing, and fine-tuning this guide, which incorporates, in part, material from the [NEA School Crisis Guide](#), published in 2018. You can contact the NEA Health and Safety Program at healthandsafetyprogram@nea.org and find [NEA Health and Safety Program content](#) on NEA’s website.

The staff of Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund—the education, research, and litigation arm of Everytown for Gun Safety (Everytown)—provided their expertise on gun violence prevention, research, and education to help create a comprehensive and data-driven resource. As the nation’s largest gun violence prevention organization, Everytown has more than 10 million supporters and more than 700,000 donors, including parents and guardians, students, survivors, veterans, mayors, and everyday people throughout the United States who are fighting for commonsense gun safety measures that can help save lives. The Everytown Support Fund seeks to improve our understanding of the causes of gun violence and help reduce it by conducting ground-breaking research, developing evidence-based policies, communicating this knowledge to the public, and advancing gun safety and gun violence prevention in communities and the courts.

The leadership and guidance from subject matter experts on gun violence prevention at Everytown were pivotal in the content creation and development of this guide. You can contact Everytown Support Fund’s team at info@everytown.org and find their Research and Policy content on [Everytown Support Fund’s website](#).

Letter from NEA President Becky Pringle

On April 20, 1999, I had been a middle-school science teacher in Pennsylvania for 23 years. None of my two decades of experience and training had prepared me to answer the questions my frightened students had about the shooting happening at Columbine High School that day. Along with my fellow educators, I shared the country's profound shock and grief that a school building—a place that should always be safe—had become the site of a massacre. The only thing that comforted us was the belief that this—then the deadliest mass shooting at a K-12 school in U.S. history—was a terrible anomaly. We believed our country would learn from the tragedy and take every measure to ensure it never happened again.

But the Columbine death toll was surpassed at Sandy Hook Elementary School...and Parkland High School...and Uvalde's Robb Elementary School. Each time, we thought, "They have to do something now." But close to 400 school shootings later, the biggest change seemed to be in 2020, when firearms finally surpassed car accidents and disease to become the No. 1 killer of children in America.

We must put a stop to the gun violence that continues to terrorize our students, our educators, families, and communities. As President Biden, who finally passed the most comprehensive gun safety legislation in 30 years, said, "We all want our kids to have the freedom to learn to read and to write instead of learning how to duck and cover in a classroom."

Gun violence in schools affects all students and educators, and its ripple effects spread out to the entire community. There is the constant fear that your school, your children, will be the next victims. According to the American Psychological Association's report, "Stress in America 2023: A Nation Recovering from Collective Trauma," 56 percent of U.S. adults report mass shootings as a significant source of stress. And we know that the long-term effects of toxic stress can change the brain and body's makeup, particularly for children, severely affecting both physical and mental health.

According to the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, with whom NEA partnered to create this guide, 107 incidents of gun violence on school grounds have already caused 29 deaths and injured 61 people—and this is just during the first five months of 2024.

This is unacceptable. No matter how many school shootings we have seen happen, they are just as unacceptable today as they were in 1999. We cannot, we must not, accept the lie that there's nothing we can do to stop them.

While we are grateful for the strides President Biden has made, it is clear that more still needs to be done, which is why NEA set out to issue a call to action to end gun violence in our schools and communities. The result is this guide—a collection of hundreds of calls to action for educators; for school district, college, and university boards and administrators; for politicians; and for students, parents, and families. We look to the day when this guide will be unnecessary and obsolete, but for now, we—the members of this nation's largest labor union—must focus our attention on how to end gun violence in our schools and our communities.

And we must take a hard look at what that violence really looks like. While the picture most people have in their minds about schools and guns involves young White male shooters and White victims, the truth is that our students of color are disproportionately affected by gun violence. According to Everytown, “2 in 3 incidents of gunfire on school grounds from 2013 to 2021 occurred in schools where one or more racial and/or ethnic minorities constituted a majority of the student population.”

The good news is that gun violence is preventable. Not by absurd and impossible measures like arming teachers or putting armed security officers in every school, but through commonsense gun laws and trauma-informed schools that create safe environments and that have the staffing and mental health resources necessary to do it right.

The guide focuses on the roles of state and local education association leaders, staff, building representatives, faculty liaisons, and more. But it is meant to serve as a bridge between what NEA affiliates can do to facilitate gun violence prevention, preparation, response, and recovery and the crucial work of so many others in the broader school community. We know that each community varies with respect to their approach to guns and their experiences with gun violence. This guide is designed to help educators of all types and all levels of experience join with others to end gun violence in our schools.

NEA, we must find a way forward together. We must stop our children—our hope for the future—from continuing to fall prey to this country’s epidemic of gun violence. And we must help the survivors recover and succeed despite their trauma.

Thank you for picking up this guide and committing to being part of the solution!



Rebecca S. Pringle
President, National Education Association

Letter from Moms Demand Action Executive Director Angela Ferrell-Zabala

Gun violence is the No. 1 killer of children in America.

This is a statistic I say often, but it never becomes less jarring. And while this fact encompasses more than just school shootings, it is undeniable that our classrooms are not the safe havens that they should be.

Students deserve the freedom to live, learn, and play without the constant threat of gun violence. But this is our current reality, caused by a reckless gun industry, a corrupt gun lobby, and extremist lawmakers who refuse to take decisive action.

I know that with an issue this large and complex, a safer future can often feel out of reach. The truth is, there's no one-size-fits-all answer to preventing gun violence—but we do have the solutions to this crisis. We need to create powerful, informed networks in our communities that know how to keep our children safe. It will take all of us—educators, administrators, parents, students, law enforcement, mental health professionals, advocates, and policymakers—working together to create change.

To address this urgent need, we are proud to partner with the National Education Association to introduce a comprehensive guide that equips Pre-K-12 schools and higher education institutions with resources, recommendations, and evidence-based solutions for gun violence prevention. This new tool is intentionally organized into four parts: Prevention of, Preparation for, Response to, and Recovery from gun-related incidents on school grounds—because we've seen how important it is not only to prevent gun violence but also to heal from the trauma when it does occur.

As a mother of four children myself, I've seen up close how our gun violence crisis shapes the educational experiences and well-being of our students. But we cannot—and will not—normalize the fact that our children live in fear of being shot in their classrooms. This guide serves not just as a collection of strategies, but as a call to action for protecting young people in America.

I am hopeful that with dedication, collaboration, and the right tools, we will save lives. This is a necessary step in that direction, and our movement is here to support you every step of the way.

Thank you for your commitment. Together, I know that a safer future is possible.

In solidarity,



Angela Ferrell-Zabala
Executive Director of Moms Demand Action

Introduction

WHY THIS GUIDE

The United States suffers from an epidemic of gun violence. Every day, more than 120 people are killed by guns, and more than 200 are shot and wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-j). Less than 1 percent of gun deaths per year occur on school grounds, but the impact extends far beyond these casualties: Gun violence shapes the lives of millions of people in this country who witness it, who know the victims, or who live in fear of the next shooting. Gun violence has a profoundly harmful impact on students, educators, families, and communities.

For most of this country's history, infectious diseases and car accidents constituted the greatest risks to childhood health, but today, gun violence is the No. 1 cause of death for children and teens. Each year, more than 4,000 children and teens are shot and killed, and more than 17,000 are shot and wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-k). Homicides account for roughly 6 in 10 gun deaths among children (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-k), and gun suicides are on the rise—a public health crisis (American Public Health Association, 2023) that communities and elected officials can prevent. In the United States, an estimated 3 million children per year are exposed to shootings (Finkelhor et al., 2015), and the trauma of witnessing shootings—whether in their schools, communities, or homes—can have a devastating impact on their lives. The Stress in America survey provides ample evidence of the collective trauma our country faces, including from mass shootings (American Psychological Association, 2023).

The Everytown Support Fund's [Gunfire on School Grounds](#) database details the myriad ways in which gun violence manifests in U.S. schools. Over the past 11 years, the Everytown Support Fund has identified at least 1,200 incidents of a firearm discharging a live round inside or into a school building or on or onto school grounds. Of these incidents, 841 occurred on the grounds of a prekindergarten, elementary, middle, or high school, resulting in 270 people killed and 580 people wounded. In the 326 incidents that occurred on university or college campuses during that time period, 120 people were killed and another 251 were wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-b).

Students exposed to the trauma of violence, crime, and abuse are more likely to suffer from substance use disorders, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); fail or have difficulties in school; and engage in criminal activity (Finkelhor et al., 2015); (Cronholm et al., 2015). Even for those who have not experienced gun violence at school, the trauma of lockdowns and active shooter drills—which are happening with notable frequency—leaves students, educators, and their families across the country experiencing firsthand the impact of fear from the anticipation of gun violence.

The National Education Association (NEA) remains committed to ending the scourge of gun violence. As NEA President Becky Pringle told the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform in testimony urging Congress to act to end gun violence, “Inaction means we are willing to accept what should be unacceptable to us all” (NEA, 2022-b).

With attention to the disproportionate impact of gun violence on communities of color, NEA advocates in Congress, develops resources and trainings, encourages media and academic coverage of the subject, mobilizes members and communities, and engages with partners across the country to end gun violence. However, more must be done. To further address gun violence in our schools at every level of education, in July 2022, the NEA Representative Assembly (RA)—the Association’s highest decision-making body—directed NEA to issue a national call to action to help ensure that all students, educators, schools, campuses, and communities are safe from the epidemic of gun violence.

Working with an NEA-wide team that meets regularly to assess, plan, and work toward the ambitious goal set by the RA, the Association has convened members, leaders, and staff across the country to help develop strategies and identify needed actions. As part of its call to action, NEA has partnered with the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund (Everytown Support Fund) to produce the NEA School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide. The guide helps NEA’s state and local leaders, staff, and worksite leaders—like building representatives and faculty liaisons—prevent, prepare for, respond to, and facilitate recovery from gun violence in all education settings.

Ideally, this guide will be used for planning and advocacy that should already be taking place in Pre-K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. By focusing on the roles of association leaders, staff, and worksite leaders, like building representatives and faculty liaisons, it is meant to complement—not supplant—planning, preparation, and action by school administrators.



www.nea.org

www.everytownsupportfund.org

ORGANIZATION AND FOCUS OF THIS GUIDE

We published the guide’s four sections—on prevention, preparation, response, and recovery—separately to facilitate their use. Each part includes material for Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education and for all categories of employees.

This guide uses the term “educators” broadly to refer to NEA’s rich and diverse membership, including aspiring educators; classroom teachers; education support professionals (ESPs), such as paraeducators and clerical service, custodial and maintenance, food service, health and student service, security, skilled trades, technical service, and transportation workers; the faculty, staff, and graduate workers in colleges and universities; and specialized instructional support personnel (SISP), like school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, speech-language pathologists, and school librarians.

The guide presents resources, tools, recommended practices, and checklists for incorporating gun violence-related strategies into the school crisis prevention and response plans of associations, Pre-K–12 schools, and institutions of higher education.

The Guide’s Checklists and Resources

The guide includes separate checklists for state leaders and staff and for local leaders, staff, and building representatives, department liaisons, department representatives, and other educators taking on worksite leadership roles.

The prevention, preparation, and recovery checklists start with steps for people newer to this work and advance to action items for those who are expanding their ongoing work. People who are broadening and deepening their engagement are likely to have already taken many of the early steps identified in the checklists. The response-related checklists outline actions based on the time elapsed since the gun incident: the first few hours, the first 12 hours, and the first week and beyond.

The end of the guide includes detail on all URLs of the resources hyperlinked throughout the body of the document.

The Guide's Four Main Sections

- 1 PREVENTION:** Prevention aims to reduce the risk and prevent the occurrence of gun violence incidents on school grounds, on campuses, and in communities. It includes taking actions to foster a positive and safe school climate and limit access to firearms that could be used in acts of school violence. This section presents strategies to help schools plan for trauma-informed crisis intervention practices, promote secure storage of guns, increase mental health and suicide prevention supports, integrate community violence intervention programs into schools, advocate for legislation that limits the presence of guns in schools, and take other steps to address gun violence.

- 2 PREPARATION:** Preparation involves planning for gun violence-related scenarios and continually planning, practicing, and evaluating the efficacy of responses. The goals are to minimize emotional, psychological, and physical harm when incidents occur and to have a system in place for immediate, effective response and recovery, which includes establishing crucial relationships with school administrators and community groups. The preparation and prevention phases often occur simultaneously and are ongoing. This section includes strategies to install evidence-based security upgrades to prevent shooters' access to education settings, examine the efficacy and potential harm of active shooter drills and school policing, and establish the processes and relationships that will facilitate effective responses.

- 3 RESPONSE:** The response phase includes action steps to minimize the harm of gun violence to students, educators of all types, and their families. The focus is short-term and requires coordination and rapid response during and immediately after a gun violence incident. The checklist for this section includes strategies and action steps based on how long ago the gun incident took place—the first few hours, the first 12 hours, and the first week and beyond. It also includes recommendations on how to speak with students about gun violence.

- 4 RECOVERY:** Recovery focuses on coping with trauma after a gun violence incident and restoring a safe and healthy school environment. It is imperative to focus on supporting the emotional, physical, and psychological health of students, educators, and their families. This section includes approaches to supporting recovery efforts, providing care and support to those impacted by gun violence incidents, and evaluating the planning and incident response to identify areas that need improvement or adjustment.

The NEA Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide

FOUR PHASES OF WORK TO ADDRESS GUN VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

1

PREVENT

- Understand Guns in Schools
- Consider ACEs, Trauma, and Toxic Stress
- Apply Evidence-Based Prevention Strategies
- Foster Safe and Supportive Schools
- Implement Education and Advocacy Strategies
- Carry Out Plans to Prevent Gun Violence

2

PREPARE

- Adopt Evidence-Based Approaches to Security
- Examine School Policing and Active Shooter Drills
- Understand, Assess, Improve, and Work with Emergency Operations Plans
- Put the Pieces in Place to Facilitate Response and Recovery

3

RESPOND

- Know How to Talk with Students About Gun Violence
- Support College Students After Gun Violence
- Implement Successful Communications Strategies
- Respond in a Deliberate, Effective Manner

4

RECOVER

- Understand Gun Violence Trauma
- Communicate Supportively
- Provide Care and Support
- Foster and Rely on Community Partnerships
- Evaluate and Improve Your Incident Response



PART 3:

Gun Violence Response

GUN VIOLENCE RESPONSE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CHECKLISTS

The response section of the NEA School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide includes short-term measures to ensure coordinated and effective responses during and immediately after a gun violence incident to minimize harm; provide support to students, educators, and families; and facilitate communication with the media and the broader community. The recommendations in this part of the guide require coordination and rapid response during and immediately after a gun violence incident. For broader context and related recommendations, consult the other sections of this guide: Part One—Prevention, Part Two—Preparation, and Part Four—Recovery.

The first hours immediately following a gun violence incident are likely to be fear-inducing, fast-moving, and chaotic. It is critical that safety and trauma-informed practices are at the center of an association's response. With many other moving pieces, it is important that the association coordinate with or, at a minimum, not undercut emergency response work.

The checklist for this section includes strategies and action steps based on how long ago the gun incident took place—the first few hours, the first 12 hours, and the first week and beyond. Those who have already done the preparation-related work identified in Part Two of the guide will be better equipped to implement the steps in the checklists, and they will be better prepared to identify how to adjust the steps as necessary given the particulars of the gun violence incident being addressed. In any case, effective responses will require coordination within and between components of the association and with administrators and law enforcement agencies, sensitivity to trauma, thoughtful communications, engagement with partners, and the provision of support for students and educators.

Talking with Students After an Incident

Key principles and suggestions to keep in mind when talking to students about a gun violence incident include:

- 1 Creating a space for them to discuss and explore their feelings, assuring them that their fears are valid, and reminding them that there are safety measures in place;

- 2 Letting students lead the conversation about safety and gun violence to find out what they know before sharing any information;
- 3 Remembering that this is a collective trauma experienced by children, teens, and adults, and every person will react differently; and
- 4 Supporting students after a gun violence incident, which involves understanding post-traumatic stress syndrome, grief, trauma, and loss.

Media Strategies

In the wake of a gun violence incident, it is important to have a plan and strategy for ongoing communication with educators, students, parents, the community, and the media. There are some key rules to ensure thoughtful communications and success in handling media inquiries and press, such as identifying a spokesperson who conveys two or three approved messages, with accuracy and empathy, to members and the public. When releasing information, it is essential that association leaders and members review and follow all district policies and state laws. The state affiliate and NEA are available to assist locals.

This section differs in structure from other sections in the guide because responding to a gun violence incident requires quick action under what may be extremely stressful circumstances, with incomplete information, potential life-and-death emergency responses, and fast-moving questions from members, families, and caregivers. It focuses on action steps for leaders and staff.

Identifying Resources to Support Students, Families, and Educators

Given the breadth of contexts in which incidents of gun violence take place, identifying a single set of resources to support students, educators, and families is not possible. The [Everytown Survivor Network](#) amplifies the power of survivor voices, offers trauma-informed programs, provides information on direct services, and supports survivors in their advocacy. NEA's [Gun Violence Response](#) website includes multiple general resources.

In addition to the NEA and Everytown resources, this guide's section on resources includes material from the American Psychological Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, the American School Counselor Association, Sandy Hook Promise, and the Coalition to Support Grieving Students, some geared toward Pre-K-12 contexts and some focused on institutions of higher education. When considering which resources to distribute, consider the specifics of the incident and the needs that the materials are designed to meet.

Building Strong Partnerships

Strong partnerships with local and statewide organizations provide the opportunity to enhance association work related to incidents of gun violence. This section of the guide includes links to national-level organizations that may have state- or local-level counterparts. Identifying local groups—including professional associations, non-governmental organizations, and academic centers—may also serve the same purpose. Identifying and building relationships with such groups that focus on racial and social justice, countering gun violence, promoting student health, or another relevant topic establishes mutual opportunities for support in response to the incident in the short-, medium-, and long-term.

GUN VIOLENCE RESPONSE

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: RESPONSE: STATE

STATE PRESIDENTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS					
The First Hours After an Incident					
To Do		Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Contact the local president to provide support and assistance. In general, state presidents or their designees will contact the local president.				
2	Contact NEA to discuss needed support and coordination on national and state public responses. In general, state executive directors or their designees will contact NEA.				
3	Maintain contact with the lead UniServ director for updates from the local to provide resources and coordinate support. Be careful to follow appropriate state processes for communicating with UniServ directors and ensure that lines of communication are clear.				
4	Assist local leaders in creating an initial communique to members. Include, as necessary, material on talking with students after incidents of gun violence and other material identified in this section of the guide.				
5	Clarify who at the state affiliate level will be the main ongoing contact for the local association leader.				

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: RESPONSE: STATE

STATE PRESIDENTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS					
The First 12 Hours After an Incident					
	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	In collaboration with the local, assist, as needed, in creating ongoing communications for members and work with and support the local's media spokesperson; NEA can assist.				
2	Create, as needed, written communiques for local leaders to send to victims' families.				
3	Contact NEA Member Benefits and determine what resources are available for the local members, their students, and their families.				
4	Develop and provide talking points, as needed, for local leaders who are communicating with concerned members. Include information on accessing mental health and community supports.				
5	In collaboration with local leaders, create ongoing communications for members and work with and support the local's media spokesperson; NEA can assist.				
6	Connect with organizations championing civil rights and racial and social justice; countering gun violence; supporting parents, family members, higher education partners, and spouses; and promoting student health. Discuss approaches to and mutual opportunities for support in response to the incident in the short-, medium-, and long-term. Communicate with the local association about potential initiatives and opportunities.				

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: RESPONSE: STATE

STATE PRESIDENTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS					
The First Week After an Incident and Beyond					
To Do		Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Assist the local association in developing protocols to address members' fear and grief.				
2	In collaboration with the local association, assist in organizing resources about talking to students about gun violence, including written guidance for members returning to work, virtual assistance, and frequently asked questions documents.				
3	Identify opportunities as appropriate to advocate for an end to gun violence, including through the adoption of steps suggested in Part One of the guide on preventing gun violence.				
4	Stay in touch with the local association and provide ongoing assistance with member communications.				

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: RESPONSE: LOCAL

LOCAL PRESIDENTS, STAFF, AND WORKSITE LEADERS					
The First Hours After an Incident					
To Do		Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	As appropriate for the association, make sure the correct people at the state association are aware of the situation and that all relevant state and local leaders are communicating with one another.				
2	Reiterate within the association protocols for responding to a gun violence incident using the prepared description of the protocol or, if not already done, indicating who is the lead contact for the state affiliate, etc.				
3	Prepare to communicate with members about the incident.				
4	Be prepared to review the member roster and class assignments, with a hard copy available, in case it is necessary to account for members.				
5	Review suggested language for initial inquiries, fine-tuning for the specifics, and coordinate with the state association.				

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: RESPONSE: LOCAL

LOCAL PRESIDENTS, STAFF, AND WORKSITE LEADERS					
The First 12 Hours After an Incident					
To Do		Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Coordinate with the administration and emergency response personnel.				
2	Work with administrators and NEA to identify needed mental health supports.				
3	Focus on member communications; coordinate, as appropriate, with the state association.				
4	If necessary, identify association members who are missing, wounded, or related to victims using the member roster and class assignments.				
5	Compile community support resources for members.				
6	Connect with organizations championing civil rights and racial and social justice; countering gun violence; supporting parents, family members, higher education partners, and spouses; and promoting student health. Discuss approaches to and mutual opportunities for support in response to the incident in the short-, medium-, and long-term. If working with state-level organizations, communicate as appropriate with the state affiliate about potential initiatives and opportunities.				

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: RESPONSE: LOCAL

LOCAL PRESIDENTS, STAFF, AND WORKSITE LEADERS					
First Week After an Incident and Beyond					
To Do		Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Promote the mental health services organized by the district, and check with the state affiliate about services offered by NEA Member Benefits.				
2	Communicate, as appropriate, with and support families of members who are directly impacted by the incident.				
3	Provide an opportunity for members to offer support, such as meals and child care, to affected members.				
4	Plan time for members to discuss how to talk about gun violence prior to going back to the site; ask the state affiliate for assistance. Expect that every educator in every building will be confronted with students' concerns.				
5	Check in with members regularly.				

OVERVIEW

Keep four points in mind when reading this section of the guide:

- 1** The first hours, in particular, are likely to be fear-inducing, fast-moving, and chaotic. The educators working in the building where the shooter is located will be focused on the very real threat to their lives and the lives of their students, colleagues, and visitors. Educators, students, and visitors in other buildings will also be concerned about their own safety.
- 2** At this time, the physical safety of those involved in the incident and the use of trauma-informed practices when communicating or comforting is critical.
- 3** Association work in response to gun incidents will take place within the context of many other moving pieces at the Pre-K-12 school or institution of higher education and in the broader community. It is important to coordinate or, at a minimum, be sensitive to not undercut emergency response efforts.
- 4** NEA state and local associations vary greatly, including their experience and infrastructure for responding to gun violence; however, identifying and reaching out to colleagues who have addressed incidents of gun violence can be helpful.



HOW TO TALK TO PRE-K–12 STUDENTS ABOUT GUN VIOLENCE

Parents and families of school-age children may feel uncertain about how to discuss an incident of gun violence in a way that does not cause further trauma. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network provides [guidance to help families understand how children may react](#) to such traumatic events (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.-a). The network also provides resources for adults, including [strategies for coping with collective traumas](#) (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2021).

Educators and families can foster healthy coping skills and mechanisms for children by:

- Promoting various emotional outlets for children, including art, music, sports, writing, games, and activities;
- Encouraging them to talk about their feelings routinely; and
- Initiating check-ins if they appear to be having a hard time.

Many educators also are concerned about discussing traumatic events and death; they may be afraid that raising the topic will upset students. However, the [Coalition to Support Grieving Students](#)—an organization of which NEA was a founding member—believes saying nothing can convey negative messages, including perceived insensitivity and disapproval (Coalition to Support Grieving Students, n.d.). By speaking up, educators can let grieving students know they recognize their situation and want to be supportive.

The American Psychological Association has produced [guidance to help educators respond to students](#) who may need support after a traumatic experience (American Psychological Association, 2021). Here are some tips for approaching those conversations:

- Make students feel physically and psychologically safe enough to share. Consistency and structure are important to create that feeling.
- Empathize and show sensitivity to students and remember that reactions to trauma may present as discipline problems.
- Validate the student's experiences and feelings.
- Check in with students one-on-one.
- Have patience. Students may take some time to recover. Remember that reactions to trauma can persist or suddenly appear long after the original event occurred.

Key Topics When Talking About an Incident

Following a gun violence incident, educators and families alike will be faced with questions and thoughts from students and children about what happened. It is important that, when discussing the following topics, educators and families consider employing these strategies.

1. Safety

- Keep children and students grounded in the moment.
- Point out locks on doors, alarms, and security features.
- Look into specific safety procedures and precautions, and discuss the specific policies, people, and efforts already in place to protect them.
- Allow children and students to think through and process their fear of danger.
- Don't be dismissive of their inquiries, and allow them to further explore their needs.

2. Gun Violence

- First, ask what they already know.
- Be straightforward and direct but gentle, leaving out graphic detail.
- Affirm this is an uncomfortable topic, and it is okay to be scared.
- Validate fears while reassuring their safety and reminding them of prevention efforts.
- Acknowledge the complexity of these emotions and encourage students and children to share any thoughts or questions that may later arise.

3. Trauma

- Observe children's and students' behavioral and emotional changes, and practice tolerance for those changes, when appropriate.
- Understand that children, teens, and adults will be struggling with collective trauma that was brought on by gun violence (Abrams, 2023).
- Pay attention to signs that someone is struggling more than they let on; for example, a student or child may experience trouble sleeping, difficulty concentrating on schoolwork or chores, or changes in appetite or mood. Consult mental health practitioners.
- Understand what may bring on strong emotions for students and children. Take measures to reduce the risk of exposure to traumatic content.

4. Grief and Loss

- Take a similar approach to the trauma-related steps outlined above.
- Use simple terms, and allow students and children to openly react, feel, and lead the conversation.
- Alert students and children of any alterations to their daily routine or schedule.
- Understand that persisting changes in behavior or concerning reactions may warrant professional attention.

SUPPORT FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS AFTER A GUN VIOLENCE INCIDENT

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) produced [College Students: Coping After the Recent Shooting](#), a resource that helps postsecondary students understand what to expect following a gun violence incident (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.-b). The document notes that “Understanding that the gun violence event has been an extremely frightening experience, and the days, weeks, and months following can be very stressful. How long it takes for an individual to cope depends on what they experienced during and after the shooting. If a student was injured during the event or lost friends or family, they may have a more difficult time coping. In the aftermath, it is difficult to figure out where to begin.” (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.-b)

Here is a summary of NCTSN's useful resource, including common terms and reactions to these traumatic events.

Post-traumatic stress reactions are common, understandable, and expected, and they can be serious. There are three types of post-traumatic stress reactions:

- ❑ **Intrusive reactions** are ways in which the traumatic experience comes back to mind, including in dreams, thoughts, and images at various times;
- ❑ **Avoidance and withdrawal reactions** include staying away from people, places, or things that are reminders of the shooting or feeling emotionally numb, detached, or estranged from others.
- ❑ **Physical reactions** include sleep difficulties, poor concentration, irritability, jumpiness, nervousness, and being “on the lookout for danger.”

Reactions to danger refer to the sense that events or activities have the potential to cause harm. In the wake of a shooting, people and communities have greater appreciation for the enormous danger of violence and the need for effective emergency operations plans.

Depression is associated with the experience of loss, unwanted changes, or prolonged grief and is strongly related to the accumulation of post-violence adversities and the frustrations that accompany them.

Physical symptoms can occur even in the absence of any underlying physical injury or illness.

Trauma and loss reminders are things, events, situations, places, sensations, and even people that remind a person about a traumatic event or loss.

MEDIA RELATIONS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS AFTER A GUN VIOLENCE INCIDENT

In the wake of a gun violence incident, it is important to have a plan and strategy for ongoing communications with educators, students, families, the surrounding community, and the media. Constant and consistent communication helps maintain transparency, provide the most up-to-date information, and address concerns. It also helps build trust, correct misinformation, and foster a sense of community.

Managing media coverage responsibly ensures the well-being of those affected by the crisis, minimizing the potential for re-traumatization. Overall, a well-structured and ongoing communications strategy plays a crucial role in facilitating recovery and rebuilding efforts after a gun violence incident.

Follow these key rules to maintain as much control over the situation as possible:

- 1. Accuracy:** Never guess, speculate, or predict the future. Don't release information until you have verified its accuracy. Never go off the record. Always assume you are on the record, unless otherwise specified.
- 2. Immediacy:** Issue a basic accurate, factual initial statement as quickly as possible. Find resources to include in your media release in the related section of this guide. Be sure to confirm and reconfirm information at all points, and determine who and how the administration will provide information during a crisis. Gather information by asking the following:
 - What happened?
 - Who is in charge?
 - Has the situation been contained?
 - What is the status of the victim(s)?
 - Did you have forewarning?
 - Where do parents reunite with children?
- 3. Key messages:** Develop two or three key messages that are honest, consistent, responsive, and responsible. Strive to be positive and proactive.
- 4. Location:** Secure the location's perimeter and determine where media will and will not be permitted. Designate a media area where all briefings will take place.
- 5. Purpose:** Use local media as a quick communications pipeline to key audiences but do not depend solely on the media.

6. **Policy:** Make sure you follow all district policies and state laws when releasing information. Follow your crisis communications plan.
7. **Spokesperson:** Designate a spokesperson and speak with one clear voice.
8. **Availability:** Hold regular media briefings and respect deadlines. Avoid saying “no comment.” Provide a brief statement and then take a few questions, but stop when they get redundant or head off course.
9. **Attitude:** Express sympathy, be calm, and remain respectful. Avoid getting defensive or placing blame.
10. **Care:** Respect student and educator health, safety, and privacy rights.
11. **Privacy:** Consider privacy issues and laws when thinking about releasing victim and perpetrator names—what are the roles of law enforcement, administrators, hospitals, and families in releasing names and conditions of victims? The administration should have a carefully considered and crafted policy regarding release of student and educator information, photos, and yearbooks that take into account applicable laws. Recognize that the media may use previously published photos of students participating in athletic or other events.

Manage Media Relations

The media will want ongoing information, so it is important that the designated spokesperson is available, open, and honest. Pre-K-12 schools and institutions of higher education should develop media response and outreach strategies to be prepared for how to best provide this information.

It is important that everyone in the broader community understands the cycles of media response because the needs and desires of the media change as the situation evolves:

- Emergency Response:** Initially, the media may be eager for information. Reporters will interview people willing to talk to them, often without verifying accuracy of information. The more factual information released, the less the media will have to rely on rumor and hearsay.
- What and Who:** The media will want to know exactly what happened and who was involved—victims and perpetrators.
- Why and How:** The media will ask why the crisis occurred and how it evolved. There will be a step-by-step dissection of the crisis.
- Analysis of Emergency Response:** The media will analyze the crisis response: Did first responders react appropriately? Did the emergency operations plan work? How could it happen? As the situation stabilizes, the media will begin to look for causes of the tragedy and whether it could have been avoided. For example, they’ll ask if proper security measures were in place.
- Second-Day Stories:** The media will begin to look for a different spin or angle, including emerging issues and people to interview. The media will also want to cover special events, such as memorials, the first day back, and athletic activities. Media protocols for special events are included in the related sections of this guide.

When communicating with the media, employ the following strategies:

- Determine when to talk to the media and identify an experienced spokesperson to field media questions and requests—if there is a public information officer, it is key that all educators and students should know how to refer media inquiries to this designated person.

- Identify tactics for answering media questions, sharing accurate and up-to-the-minute information, and developing positive working relationships with the media.
- Know who to contact and how to reach all local media, contacting them first because they will be in it for the long haul.
- Consider the feelings of victims and whether their talking to the media is healthy and appropriate.
- Develop templated news releases and advisories that can be quickly filled in and updated with information.
- Consider utilizing social media to amplify updates and statements, if appropriate.
- Coordinate, as appropriate, with district and/or municipal officials.
- Follow all district policies and state laws when releasing information to the media.
- Provide media training for educators as needed and identify a backup district spokesperson.
- Craft key messages about safety and talking points specific to the emergency or crisis, including talking points about transportation safety.
- Prepare a daily fact sheet.
- Identify the association expert who will provide guidance to educators on media interviews.
- Establish policies regarding media.
- Be prepared to manage media coverage of benchmark dates, anniversaries, etc.

Designate a Spokesperson to Serve Throughout the Crisis

If the administration has a communications office, the director of such an office is often the ideal spokesperson. The entity affected must determine carefully whether the principal, superintendent, school board or trustees, members, or state affiliate will make public statements and who is most appropriate to do so. Questions to consider when determining the appropriate spokesperson include:

- Is the official emotionally ready and able to give a statement?
- Does the community/media expect a high-level official to take an active, visible communications role?
- What are the legal considerations and long-term implications of any statement?
- Which official is appropriate? Who has the most information and represents the district best in the public arena?

Once the spokesperson is in place and/or other officials are assigned their roles, it is important that they are prepared to take on these roles. Here are some recommended action items:

- Provide talking points in writing.
- Prepare a list of frequently asked questions and answers.
- Practice and draft responses to questions, especially difficult ones.
- Determine a specific length of time for the interview or media conference, and ensure it begins and ends on time.
- Have the communications director in charge and/or designated spokesperson (introduced as such) manage the question-and-answer period and decide when the interview should end.

- Meet with media spokespeople from law enforcement and the fire/rescue agencies to determine how to coordinate release of information.
- Develop a call log and track media calls, news agency and reporter names, and questions asked.

The association's spokesperson should announce regularly scheduled press briefings. During the first few hours as the incident is unfolding, hourly press briefings or updates may be required, even if there is nothing new to report. That frequency can decrease as the situation stabilizes; however, the more information the association, district, or institution of higher education shares with the media, the more they can control the story and ensure it is reported with accuracy. Those holding press briefings in the hours after an incident should report the following:

- **How the identity of victims will be released:** Names should not be released until they are verified and the families have been notified. Law enforcement, fire and rescue, hospitals, and families should be involved in this decision.
- **Information about evacuation:** The media are very helpful in getting information out quickly so that families know where their children are and how they can be reunited.
- **Sympathy and acknowledgment of pain and grief:** Victims, their families, and the community have experienced a traumatic event. They need to connect on a human level and feel the range of emotions associated with a crisis.
- **Thanking individuals and agencies:** Acknowledge the good work of educators, first responders, and community groups that helped with response efforts.



Building Strong Partnerships

Addressing gun violence in education settings requires strong, meaningful relationships with partners to deepen association understanding, build relationships, strengthen the processes and policies of Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education, and ensure that approaches developed to keep students, educators, and communities safe are culturally and racially appropriate.

From state to state and within states, potential partners may vary. An important place to start is with other unions representing workers in the Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education where association members work, gun violence-focused organizations, racial and social justice organizations, after-school programs, mental and physical health providers and organizations, associations representing principals or other administrators, and local colleges and universities with programs that identify or address violence in communities or, more specifically, in education settings.

The following list includes several national-level organizations—with links to their websites—that may have state or local counterparts. Identifying local groups working on similar topics may also serve the same purpose.

AAPI Victory Alliance

<https://aapivictoryalliance.com/gunviolenceprevention>

AASA—The School Superintendents Association

<https://www.aasa.org/resources/all-resources?Keywords=safety&RowsPerPage=20>

Alliance to Reclaim our Schools

<https://reclaimourschools.org>

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/gun-violence-prevention>

American Psychological Association

<https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/gun-violence-prevention>

American School Counselor Association

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Prevention-of-School-Rela>

Color of Change

<https://colorofchange.org>

Community Justice Action Fund

<https://www.cjactionfund.org>

Hope and Heal Fund

<https://hopeandhealfund.org/who-we-are>

League of United Latin American Citizens

https://lulac.org/advocacy/resolutions/2013/resolution_on_gun_violence_prevention/index.html

Life Camp

<https://www.peaceisalifestyle.com>

Live Free

<https://livefreeusa.org>

March for Our Lives

<https://marchforourlives.org>

MomsRising

<https://www.momsrising.org/blog/topics/gun-safety>

NAACP

<https://naacp.org>

National Association of Elementary School Principals

<https://www.naesp.org>

National Association of School Nurses

<https://www.nasn.org/blogs/nasn-inc/2023/07/27/take-action-to-address-gun-violence>

National Association of School Psychologists

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis>

National Association of Secondary School Principals

<https://www.nassp.org/community/principal-recovery-network>

National Association of Social Workers

<https://www.socialworkers.org>

National PTA

<https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/federal-legislation/Public-Policy-Priorities/gun-safety-and-violence-prevention>

National School Boards Association

<https://www.nsba4safeschools.org/home>

Parents Together

<https://parents-together.org/the-heart-of-gun-safety-and-a-new-approach-to-advocacy>

Sandy Hook Promise

<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org>

The Trevor Project

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org>

UnidosUS

<https://unidosus.org/publications/latinos-and-gun-violence-prevention>

GUN VIOLENCE RESPONSE RESOURCES

National Education Association Resources

National Education Association

<https://www.nea.org>

The National Education Association is the nation's largest union, representing more than 3 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, specialized instructional support personnel, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become educators.

NEA Health and Safety Program

<https://www.nea.org/healthy-schools>

The NEA Health and Safety Program provides information and solutions related to student and educator mental health, violence prevention and response,

infection control, and environmental and occupational safety and health, among other topics.

NEA School Crisis Guide

<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/neas-school-crisis-guide>

Produced in 2018, the guide provides detailed content on how to effectively prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from school crises.

Responding to Gun Violence

<https://www.nea.org/gunviolence>

This portion of the NEA website provides health and safety content on taking action, helping students and educators cope, resources for school leaders, fostering mental health, and preventing hate and bias.

Everytown Resources

Everytown for Gun Safety

<https://www.everytown.org>

Everytown for Gun Safety is the largest gun violence prevention organization in America. The organization is a movement of more than 10 million supporters working to end gun violence.

Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund

<https://everytownsupportfund.org>

The Everytown Support Fund is the education, research, and litigation arm of Everytown for Gun Safety. It seeks to improve our understanding of the causes of gun violence and help to reduce it by conducting ground-breaking original research, developing evidence-based policies, communicating this knowledge to the American public, and advancing gun safety and gun violence prevention in communities and the courts.

Everytown Survivor Network

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network>

The Everytown Survivor Network is a nationwide community of survivors working together to end

gun violence. The network amplifies the power of survivor voices, offers trauma-informed programs, provides information on direct services, and supports survivors in their advocacy.

Other Resources

PLANNING RELATED TO GUN VIOLENCE

Resources on Planning for Family Reunification

<https://rems.ed.gov/K12FamilyRAnnex.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

The Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center provides guidance on how students and families can reunite post-crisis.

United on Guns Mass Shooting Resources for Local Officials

<https://www.unitedonguns.org>

United on Guns created resources to help local leaders prepare for, and respond to, a mass shooting, including the Mass Shooting Protocol, which provides leaders with a checklist for the first 24 hours after a gun violence incident, and the Mass Shooting Playbook, a comprehensive resource for leaders to prepare for, respond to, and help their community recover from a gun violence incident. Both resources can be downloaded at the link above.

GRIEF AND TRAUMA

American Psychological Association

<https://www.apa.org/topics/gun-violence-crime>

The American Psychological Association provides resources, news, podcasts, and more on the topic of gun violence and crime, including:

How Educators Can Talk to Students Exposed to a Trauma

<https://www.apa.org/ed/schools/primer/trauma>

How to Talk to Children About Difficult News

<https://www.apa.org/topics/journalism-facts/talking-children>

Helping Your Children Manage Distress in the Aftermath of a Shooting

<https://www.apa.org/topics/gun-violence-crime/shooting-aftermath>

American School Counselor Association

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Publications-Research/Publications/Free-ASCA-Resources/Crisis-Trauma-Resources>

The American School Counselor Association provides resources and other materials related to crisis and trauma in schools.

Coalition to Support Grieving Students

<http://www.grievingstudents.org>

The Coalition to Support Grieving Students is a collaborative of professional organizations that represent educators, school administrators, student support personnel, and school board members. It provides relevant and high-quality professional learning opportunities and resources to school staff, community members, and families who support grieving students in schools and communities.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network provides fact sheets and tip sheets for response efforts, including:

Age-Related Reactions to a Traumatic Event

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/age-related-reactions-traumatic-event>

College Students: Coping After the Recent Shooting

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/college-students-coping-after-the-recent-shooting>

Coping After Mass Violence

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/coping-after-mass-violence>

For Teens: Coping After Mass Violence

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/for-teens-coping-after-mass-violence>

Parent Guidelines for Helping Youth After the Recent Shooting

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-guidelines-helping-youth-after-recent-shooting>

Providing Psychological First Aid: Health-Related Professionals

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/providing-psychological-first-aid-health-related-professionals>

Psychological First Aid (PFA) Online E-Learning Course

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-pfa-online>

Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S) Field Operations Guide

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-schools-pfa-s-field-operations-guide>

Psychological First Aid for Schools Webinar

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-schools>

Talking to Children About the Shooting

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/talking-children-about-shooting>

Talking to Children When Scary Things Happens

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/talking-to-children-when-scary-things-happen>

Spanish-language version:

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/talking-to-children-when-scary-things-happen-sp>

Talking to Teens When Violence Happens

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/talking-to-teens-when-violence-happens>

Spanish-language version:

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/talking-to-teens-when-violence-happens-sp>

Tips for Parents and Caregivers on Media Coverage of Traumatic Events

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/tips-parents-and-caregivers-media-coverage-traumatic-events>

Tip Sheet for Youth Talking to Journalists About the Shooting

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/tip-sheet-youth-talking-journalists-about-shooting>

Sandy Hook Promise Resources

<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/teacher-resources>

Sandy Hook Promise includes resources for teachers to engage students, including:

How to Help After a Gun Violence Tragedy

<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/community-resources/how-to-help-after-a-gun-violence-tragedy>

How to Help Children Cope with a Gun Violence Tragedy

<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/community-resources/how-to-help-children-cope-with-a-gun-violence-tragedy>

Spanish-language version:

<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/community-resources/como-ayudar-a-los-ninos-a-enfrentar-una-tragedia-de-violencia-armada>

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PART 3 | RESPONSE



www.nea.org
www.everytownsupportfund.org



PART 4 RECOVERY

NEA SCHOOL GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

GUIDE



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About the National Education Association and Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund

The [National Education Association \(NEA\)](#) is more than 3 million people—educators, students, activists, workers, parents, neighbors, and friends—who believe in the opportunity for all students and the power of public education to transform lives and create a more just and inclusive society. NEA has affiliate organizations in every state and more than 14,000 communities across the United States. The Association brings the expertise, drive, and dedication of our educators and allies to focus on providing the best public education to each and every student across race, place, background, and ability. Our members work at every level of education—from prekindergarten through graduate-level university programs—and in other types of public service.

The NEA Health and Safety Program, within the Association’s Education Policy and Implementation Center (EPIC), partnered with Everytown’s team to develop this guide. It draws on the expertise and work of several centers, departments, and initiatives across the organization, including EPIC, the Center for Advocacy and Political Action, the Center for Communications, the Center for Organizing and Affiliate Support, the Center for Professional Excellence and Student Learning, the Office of General Counsel, and the Center for Racial and Social Justice. Audrey Soglin—whose career in public education includes service as the executive director of the Illinois Education Association, a local association president, and a 25-year classroom teacher—worked with the Health and Safety Program staff as a consultant on this project.

The guidance and feedback of NEA state and local affiliate leaders, staff, and members have been crucial in conceptualizing, developing, and fine-tuning this guide, which incorporates, in part, material from the [NEA School Crisis Guide](#), published in 2018. You can contact the NEA Health and Safety Program at healthandsafetyprogram@nea.org and find [NEA Health and Safety Program content](#) on NEA’s website.

The staff of Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund—the education, research, and litigation arm of Everytown for Gun Safety (Everytown)—provided their expertise on gun violence prevention, research, and education to help create a comprehensive and data-driven resource. As the nation’s largest gun violence prevention organization, Everytown has more than 10 million supporters and more than 700,000 donors, including parents and guardians, students, survivors, veterans, mayors, and everyday people throughout the United States who are fighting for commonsense gun safety measures that can help save lives. The Everytown Support Fund seeks to improve our understanding of the causes of gun violence and help reduce it by conducting ground-breaking research, developing evidence-based policies, communicating this knowledge to the public, and advancing gun safety and gun violence prevention in communities and the courts.

The leadership and guidance from subject matter experts on gun violence prevention at Everytown were pivotal in the content creation and development of this guide. You can contact Everytown Support Fund’s team at info@everytown.org and find their Research and Policy content on [Everytown Support Fund’s website](#).

Letter from NEA President Becky Pringle

On April 20, 1999, I had been a middle-school science teacher in Pennsylvania for 23 years. None of my two decades of experience and training had prepared me to answer the questions my frightened students had about the shooting happening at Columbine High School that day. Along with my fellow educators, I shared the country's profound shock and grief that a school building—a place that should always be safe—had become the site of a massacre. The only thing that comforted us was the belief that this—then the deadliest mass shooting at a K-12 school in U.S. history—was a terrible anomaly. We believed our country would learn from the tragedy and take every measure to ensure it never happened again.

But the Columbine death toll was surpassed at Sandy Hook Elementary School...and Parkland High School...and Uvalde's Robb Elementary School. Each time, we thought, "They have to do something now." But close to 400 school shootings later, the biggest change seemed to be in 2020, when firearms finally surpassed car accidents and disease to become the No. 1 killer of children in America.

We must put a stop to the gun violence that continues to terrorize our students, our educators, families, and communities. As President Biden, who finally passed the most comprehensive gun safety legislation in 30 years, said, "We all want our kids to have the freedom to learn to read and to write instead of learning how to duck and cover in a classroom."

Gun violence in schools affects all students and educators, and its ripple effects spread out to the entire community. There is the constant fear that your school, your children, will be the next victims. According to the American Psychological Association's report, "Stress in America 2023: A Nation Recovering from Collective Trauma," 56 percent of U.S. adults report mass shootings as a significant source of stress. And we know that the long-term effects of toxic stress can change the brain and body's makeup, particularly for children, severely affecting both physical and mental health.

According to the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, with whom NEA partnered to create this guide, 107 incidents of gun violence on school grounds have already caused 29 deaths and injured 61 people—and this is just during the first five months of 2024.

This is unacceptable. No matter how many school shootings we have seen happen, they are just as unacceptable today as they were in 1999. We cannot, we must not, accept the lie that there's nothing we can do to stop them.

While we are grateful for the strides President Biden has made, it is clear that more still needs to be done, which is why NEA set out to issue a call to action to end gun violence in our schools and communities. The result is this guide—a collection of hundreds of calls to action for educators; for school district, college, and university boards and administrators; for politicians; and for students, parents, and families. We look to the day when this guide will be unnecessary and obsolete, but for now, we—the members of this nation's largest labor union—must focus our attention on how to end gun violence in our schools and our communities.

And we must take a hard look at what that violence really looks like. While the picture most people have in their minds about schools and guns involves young White male shooters and White victims, the truth is that our students of color are disproportionately affected by gun violence. According to Everytown, “2 in 3 incidents of gunfire on school grounds from 2013 to 2021 occurred in schools where one or more racial and/or ethnic minorities constituted a majority of the student population.”

The good news is that gun violence is preventable. Not by absurd and impossible measures like arming teachers or putting armed security officers in every school, but through commonsense gun laws and trauma-informed schools that create safe environments and that have the staffing and mental health resources necessary to do it right.

The guide focuses on the roles of state and local education association leaders, staff, building representatives, faculty liaisons, and more. But it is meant to serve as a bridge between what NEA affiliates can do to facilitate gun violence prevention, preparation, response, and recovery and the crucial work of so many others in the broader school community. We know that each community varies with respect to their approach to guns and their experiences with gun violence. This guide is designed to help educators of all types and all levels of experience join with others to end gun violence in our schools.

NEA, we must find a way forward together. We must stop our children—our hope for the future—from continuing to fall prey to this country’s epidemic of gun violence. And we must help the survivors recover and succeed despite their trauma.

Thank you for picking up this guide and committing to being part of the solution!



Rebecca S. Pringle
President, National Education Association

Letter from Moms Demand Action Executive Director Angela Ferrell-Zabala

Gun violence is the No. 1 killer of children in America.

This is a statistic I say often, but it never becomes less jarring. And while this fact encompasses more than just school shootings, it is undeniable that our classrooms are not the safe havens that they should be.

Students deserve the freedom to live, learn, and play without the constant threat of gun violence. But this is our current reality, caused by a reckless gun industry, a corrupt gun lobby, and extremist lawmakers who refuse to take decisive action.

I know that with an issue this large and complex, a safer future can often feel out of reach. The truth is, there's no one-size-fits-all answer to preventing gun violence—but we do have the solutions to this crisis. We need to create powerful, informed networks in our communities that know how to keep our children safe. It will take all of us—educators, administrators, parents, students, law enforcement, mental health professionals, advocates, and policymakers—working together to create change.

To address this urgent need, we are proud to partner with the National Education Association to introduce a comprehensive guide that equips Pre-K-12 schools and higher education institutions with resources, recommendations, and evidence-based solutions for gun violence prevention. This new tool is intentionally organized into four parts: Prevention of, Preparation for, Response to, and Recovery from gun-related incidents on school grounds—because we've seen how important it is not only to prevent gun violence but also to heal from the trauma when it does occur.

As a mother of four children myself, I've seen up close how our gun violence crisis shapes the educational experiences and well-being of our students. But we cannot—and will not—normalize the fact that our children live in fear of being shot in their classrooms. This guide serves not just as a collection of strategies, but as a call to action for protecting young people in America.

I am hopeful that with dedication, collaboration, and the right tools, we will save lives. This is a necessary step in that direction, and our movement is here to support you every step of the way.

Thank you for your commitment. Together, I know that a safer future is possible.

In solidarity,



Angela Ferrell-Zabala
Executive Director of Moms Demand Action

Introduction

WHY THIS GUIDE

The United States suffers from an epidemic of gun violence. Every day, more than 120 people are killed by guns, and more than 200 are shot and wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-j). Less than 1 percent of gun deaths per year occur on school grounds, but the impact extends far beyond these casualties: Gun violence shapes the lives of millions of people in this country who witness it, who know the victims, or who live in fear of the next shooting. Gun violence has a profoundly harmful impact on students, educators, families, and communities.

For most of this country's history, infectious diseases and car accidents constituted the greatest risks to childhood health, but today, gun violence is the No. 1 cause of death for children and teens. Each year, more than 4,000 children and teens are shot and killed, and more than 17,000 are shot and wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-k). Homicides account for roughly 6 in 10 gun deaths among children (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-k), and gun suicides are on the rise—a public health crisis (American Public Health Association, 2023) that communities and elected officials can prevent. In the United States, an estimated 3 million children per year are exposed to shootings (Finkelhor et al., 2015), and the trauma of witnessing shootings—whether in their schools, communities, or homes—can have a devastating impact on their lives. The Stress in America survey provides ample evidence of the collective trauma our country faces, including from mass shootings (American Psychological Association, 2023).

The Everytown Support Fund's [Gunfire on School Grounds](#) database details the myriad ways in which gun violence manifests in U.S. schools. Over the past 11 years, the Everytown Support Fund has identified at least 1,200 incidents of a firearm discharging a live round inside or into a school building or on or onto school grounds. Of these incidents, 841 occurred on the grounds of a prekindergarten, elementary, middle, or high school, resulting in 270 people killed and 580 people wounded. In the 326 incidents that occurred on university or college campuses during that time period, 120 people were killed and another 251 were wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-b).

Students exposed to the trauma of violence, crime, and abuse are more likely to suffer from substance use disorders, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); fail or have difficulties in school; and engage in criminal activity (Finkelhor et al., 2015); (Cronholm et al., 2015). Even for those who have not experienced gun violence at school, the trauma of lockdowns and active shooter drills—which are happening with notable frequency—leaves students, educators, and their families across the country experiencing firsthand the impact of fear from the anticipation of gun violence.

The National Education Association (NEA) remains committed to ending the scourge of gun violence. As NEA President Becky Pringle told the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform in testimony urging Congress to act to end gun violence, “Inaction means we are willing to accept what should be unacceptable to us all” (NEA, 2022-b).

With attention to the disproportionate impact of gun violence on communities of color, NEA advocates in Congress, develops resources and trainings, encourages media and academic coverage of the subject, mobilizes members and communities, and engages with partners across the country to end gun violence. However, more must be done. To further address gun violence in our schools at every level of education, in July 2022, the NEA Representative Assembly (RA)—the Association’s highest decision-making body—directed NEA to issue a national call to action to help ensure that all students, educators, schools, campuses, and communities are safe from the epidemic of gun violence.

Working with an NEA-wide team that meets regularly to assess, plan, and work toward the ambitious goal set by the RA, the Association has convened members, leaders, and staff across the country to help develop strategies and identify needed actions. As part of its call to action, NEA has partnered with the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund (Everytown Support Fund) to produce the NEA School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide. The guide helps NEA’s state and local leaders, staff, and worksite leaders—like building representatives and faculty liaisons—prevent, prepare for, respond to, and facilitate recovery from gun violence in all education settings.

Ideally, this guide will be used for planning and advocacy that should already be taking place in Pre-K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. By focusing on the roles of association leaders, staff, and worksite leaders, like building representatives and faculty liaisons, it is meant to complement—not supplant—planning, preparation, and action by school administrators.



www.nea.org

www.everytownsupportfund.org

ORGANIZATION AND FOCUS OF THIS GUIDE

We published the guide's four sections—on prevention, preparation, response, and recovery—separately to facilitate their use. Each part includes material for Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education and for all categories of employees.

This guide uses the term “educators” broadly to refer to NEA’s rich and diverse membership, including aspiring educators; classroom teachers; education support professionals (ESPs), such as paraeducators and clerical service, custodial and maintenance, food service, health and student service, security, skilled trades, technical service, and transportation workers; the faculty, staff, and graduate workers in colleges and universities; and specialized instructional support personnel (SISP), like school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, speech-language pathologists, and school librarians.

The guide presents resources, tools, recommended practices, and checklists for incorporating gun violence-related strategies into the school crisis prevention and response plans of associations, Pre-K–12 schools, and institutions of higher education.

The Guide’s Checklists and Resources

The guide includes separate checklists for state leaders and staff and for local leaders, staff, and building representatives, department liaisons, department representatives, and other educators taking on worksite leadership roles.

The prevention, preparation, and recovery checklists start with steps for people newer to this work and advance to action items for those who are expanding their ongoing work. People who are broadening and deepening their engagement are likely to have already taken many of the early steps identified in the checklists. The response-related checklists outline actions based on the time elapsed since the gun incident: the first few hours, the first 12 hours, and the first week and beyond.

The end of the guide includes detail on all URLs of the resources hyperlinked throughout the body of the document.

The Guide's Four Main Sections

- 1 PREVENTION:** Prevention aims to reduce the risk and prevent the occurrence of gun violence incidents on school grounds, on campuses, and in communities. It includes taking actions to foster a positive and safe school climate and limit access to firearms that could be used in acts of school violence. This section presents strategies to help schools plan for trauma-informed crisis intervention practices, promote secure storage of guns, increase mental health and suicide prevention supports, integrate community violence intervention programs into schools, advocate for legislation that limits the presence of guns in schools, and take other steps to address gun violence.

- 2 PREPARATION:** Preparation involves planning for gun violence-related scenarios and continually planning, practicing, and evaluating the efficacy of responses. The goals are to minimize emotional, psychological, and physical harm when incidents occur and to have a system in place for immediate, effective response and recovery, which includes establishing crucial relationships with school administrators and community groups. The preparation and prevention phases often occur simultaneously and are ongoing. This section includes strategies to install evidence-based security upgrades to prevent shooters' access to education settings, examine the efficacy and potential harm of active shooter drills and school policing, and establish the processes and relationships that will facilitate effective responses.

- 3 RESPONSE:** The response phase includes action steps to minimize the harm of gun violence to students, educators of all types, and their families. The focus is short-term and requires coordination and rapid response during and immediately after a gun violence incident. The checklist for this section includes strategies and action steps based on how long ago the gun incident took place—the first few hours, the first 12 hours, and the first week and beyond. It also includes recommendations on how to speak with students about gun violence.

- 4 RECOVERY:** Recovery focuses on coping with trauma after a gun violence incident and restoring a safe and healthy school environment. It is imperative to focus on supporting the emotional, physical, and psychological health of students, educators, and their families. This section includes approaches to supporting recovery efforts, providing care and support to those impacted by gun violence incidents, and evaluating the planning and incident response to identify areas that need improvement or adjustment.

The NEA Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide

FOUR PHASES OF WORK TO ADDRESS GUN VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

1

PREVENT

- Understand Guns in Schools
- Consider ACEs, Trauma, and Toxic Stress
- Apply Evidence-Based Prevention Strategies
- Foster Safe and Supportive Schools
- Implement Education and Advocacy Strategies
- Carry Out Plans to Prevent Gun Violence

2

PREPARE

- Adopt Evidence-Based Approaches to Security
- Examine School Policing and Active Shooter Drills
- Understand, Assess, Improve, and Work with Emergency Operations Plans
- Put the Pieces in Place to Facilitate Response and Recovery

3

RESPOND

- Know How to Talk with Students About Gun Violence
- Support College Students After Gun Violence
- Implement Successful Communications Strategies
- Respond in a Deliberate, Effective Manner

4

RECOVER

- Understand Gun Violence Trauma
- Communicate Supportively
- Provide Care and Support
- Foster and Rely on Community Partnerships
- Evaluate and Improve Your Incident Response



Gun Violence Recovery

GUN VIOLENCE RECOVERY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CHECKLISTS

The recovery section of the NEA School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide focuses on coping with trauma and grief after a gun violence incident, restoring a safe and healthy learning environment, and providing support to students, educators, and those impacted by gun violence incidents as the initial response turns to longer-term needs. This section also addresses effective ways for association leaders, staff, and worksite leaders, like building representatives and faculty liaisons, to evaluate and improve the response to the incident. Just like following the recommendations in the preparation section will facilitate response-related work, effective preparation and response will enhance recovery efforts. For broader context, consult the other sections of this guide: Part 1—Prevention, Part 2—Preparation, and Part 3—Response.

Address Primary and Secondary Trauma

Extensive research on trauma caused by gun violence indicates that it extends far beyond those killed or wounded in the incident itself. The prevalence and threat of school shootings have created a generation of young people in the United States who are growing up with a constant fear of being shot and killed in a place where they should feel safe.

The collective trauma that gun incidents elicit is remembered and recollected by community members at various times and in multiple spaces, sometimes predictably—like on anniversaries of the incident—and sometimes unpredictably—for example, when a sound or smell elicits a reaction. Both post-traumatic stress and secondary traumatic stress can result from exposure to gun violence. Those impacted by such trauma can include direct victims, students in the school where the incident took place or in other communities, first responders, community members, and educators. It is important to note that educators, who are often the on-the-ground front line responders to crises, are also at risk of compassion fatigue.

Plan and Assess Responses

The U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies have produced guides for developing high-quality school emergency operations plans in K-12 schools and institutions of higher education (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-a); (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-b). Part Two of this guide, which focuses on preparing for incidents of gun violence, provides information on how the association can use these plans, noting that individual states and localities may employ different approaches to emergency planning. For purposes of the response section of the NEA guide, the federal government's approach to recovery bears attention, describing the four fundamental kinds of post-crisis recovery: academic recovery, physical recovery, fiscal recovery, and psychological and emotional recovery. The 2018 [NEA School Crisis Guide](#) also provides resources and strategies to help support crisis response teams in recovery efforts (NEA, 2018).

Other important elements of a recovery effort to assist victims include access to mental health services, peer support, legal help, and logistical and financial support, such as relocation costs and funeral arrangements. This section of the guide provides a variety of programs and resources available to victims, including financial and legal support and information on how to deal with post-traumatic stress and trauma.

Build Strong Partnerships

Strong partnerships with organizations working statewide or locally provide the opportunity to enhance association work related to incidents of gun violence. This section of the guide includes links to national-level organizations that may have state- or local-level counterparts. Identifying local groups whether professional associations, non-governmental organizations, or academic centers may also serve the same purpose. Whether they focus on racial and social justice, countering gun violence, promoting student health, or another relevant topic, identifying and building relationships with such groups establishes mutual opportunities for support in response to the incident in the short-, medium-, and long-term.

Develop Long-Term Media and Communications Strategies

In the days, weeks, months, and even years after the incident, it will be important to develop a longer-term media strategy, which should include when, where, and how to communicate with the media. Recognizing that the media needs a story, the designated spokesperson should provide accurate, timely information and understand the cycles of media response.

The needs of the media change as the situation evolves.

It is important for the association to develop media protocols that, for example, determine how the association will handle local versus national media; how to work with administrators on press releases, statements, and talking points; and how to handle interview requests. Throughout this process, association leaders should be assessing and reviewing the protocols, as necessary.

Assess for Improvement

The association and administrators should evaluate gun violence incident work to identify areas for improvement and evolving circumstances and/or emerging needs. Within the association, bringing together those who played a role in the work—and those who did not play a role but could have—and revising protocols, approaches, and resources will lead to more effective work in the future.

GUN VIOLENCE RECOVERY

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: RECOVERY: STATE

STATE PRESIDENTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS					
	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Arrange systematic check-ins with local leaders, as necessary.				
2	Assist the local association with communication needs, as necessary.				
3	Coordinate support from NEA and other state affiliates.				
4	Connect with organizations championing civil rights and racial and social justice; countering gun violence; supporting parents, family members, higher education partners, and spouses; and promoting student health. Discuss approaches to and mutual opportunities for recovery-related support in the short-, medium-, and long- term. Communicate with the local association about potential initiatives and opportunities.				
5	Assess state protocols and responses to the incident; revise protocols, as necessary; identify learnings and opportunities to enhance future responses.				
6	Review state and local policies related to gun violence in education settings to identify opportunities to strengthen policies and responses.				
7	Revise or develop, as needed, model gun- and safety-related collective bargaining language and/or administrative language.				
8	Communicate with local associations about potential initiatives and opportunities. In coordination with the local, invite key government officials to speak to the grieving school community.				

GUN VIOLENCE RECOVERY

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: RECOVERY: LOCAL

LOCAL PRESIDENTS, LOCAL STAFF, AND WORKSITE LEADERS					
	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Identify an individual or team to coordinate association recovery work.				
2	Distribute this section of the guide to the team or appropriate individuals.				
3	In coordination with appropriate administrators, provide information to members about mental health services available to them through their health insurance or plan, Employee Assistance Program, or other options.				
4	Identify appropriate content from the resources section of this guide to assist members in understanding primary and secondary trauma, talking with students about the incident, and other needs.				
5	Coordinate with appropriate administrators about school-sponsored initiatives designed to assist in recovery efforts.				
6	Connect with organizations championing civil rights and racial and social justice; countering gun violence; supporting parents, family members, higher education partners, and spouses; and promoting student health. Discuss approaches to and mutual opportunities for recovery-related support in the short-, medium-, and long-term.				

BACKGROUND

The trauma and grief caused by gun violence does not end when the shooting stops. People may identify as survivors if they have witnessed acts of gun violence, experienced intimate partner violence with a firearm, been threatened with a gun, or had a loved one who has been shot and wounded or killed by a gun—including by gun suicide.

Everytown has done extensive research on gun violence trauma and has found that the impact of gun violence extends far beyond those killed or wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-i). Gunshot wound survivors face a lifelong healing process and may experience a broad array of difficulties, including psychological trauma, loss of work, and steep medical costs. Aside from immediate hospital bills associated with the wound, these survivors can encounter lifetime medical care costs, including readmission(s) to the hospital and nursing care. Many survivors report that the psychological effects of the shooting remain long after their injuries have physically healed. (Raza, Thiruchelvam, & Redelmeier, July 2020); (Orlas et al., 2021)

The prevalence and threat of shootings have created a generation of young people who are growing up in the United States with constant fear of being shot and killed in a place where they should feel safe. For students who have experienced other incidents of gun violence in their communities, the trauma symptoms are compounded. A 2022 national survey found that 51 percent of youth under the age of 18 are concerned that there will be a shooting in their or a nearby school, and 58 percent had recently thought about what would happen

if someone with a gun entered their school or one nearby (Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab, et al., July 2023).



THE IMPACT OF GUN VIOLENCE TRAUMA

Gun violence trauma deeply alters lives, creating a collective experience that extends beyond geographic boundaries. “Collective trauma” refers to the psychological reactions to a traumatic event that affect an entire society. In this case, after an incident, a collective traumatic memory is produced that is remembered and recollected by community members through various times and spaces (Hirschberger, 2018).

After an incident of gun violence, 33 percent of survivors live in fear and feel unsafe. As exposure to gun violence erodes, survivors’ sense of safety—and ultimately, how they navigate their environments—heightened trauma responses, including hypervigilance, numbness, paranoia, anxiety, and depression. Nearly 50 percent of survivors said they needed support, services, or assistance to cope with the impact of gun violence within the first six months or more after the incident of gun violence (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-i). Many of those who have experienced trauma are at risk for being re-traumatized, which happens when someone suffers new traumatic stress reactions after another similar event.

The [trauma of gun violence is immeasurable](#) (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-i). It has lasting effects on individuals and communities that are directly and indirectly affected, with outcomes including post-traumatic stress disorder and secondary traumatic stress (STS). Those impacted by such trauma can include:

- 1 Direct victims:** Students and/or educators who directly experienced or witnessed gun violence may develop PTSD. This can include survivors of shootings, witnesses to shootings, or those who have had a loved one taken.
- 2 First responders:** First responders—such as police officers, paramedics, and health care professionals—are at risk of developing STS when they are exposed to gun violence.
- 3 Community members:** The broader community can also experience STS as a result of exposure to gun violence incidents. Community members may include friends, family members, neighbors, or even people who hear about an incident through media coverage.
- 4 Educators:** Educators may experience STS when working with students who have been directly or indirectly affected by gun violence. Educators who are also on the “front lines” can be at risk for “compassion fatigue” (Psychology Today, 2024).

EFFECTIVE RECOVERY STRATEGIES

Association leaders and members should be included in this work. The U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies recommend that emergency response planning teams for K-12 schools include “representatives from a wide range of school personnel, including, but not limited to, administrators, educators, school psychologists, nurses, facilities managers, transportation managers, food personnel, and family services representatives (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-a). In the context of higher education, they also suggest that the team include representatives from across the institution (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-b).

Part Two of this guide, focusing on preparation for incidents of gun violence, describes the role of teams in more detail, including the need to ensure that emergency planning teams include and represent the needs of people with disabilities.

The federal agencies’ guides describe the four fundamental kinds of post-crisis recovery—academic recovery, physical recovery, fiscal recovery, and psychological and emotional recovery—and describe the types of functions that must be addressed in those four areas. The emergency operations planning team should consider some of the following questions when developing its goals, objectives, and courses of action for recovery efforts:

- Who will serve as the team leader?
- When should the education setting be closed and reopened?
- What alternative educational programming will students receive in the event that they cannot physically convene, and how will programming be provided?
- How will educators and the affected community receive timely and factual information regarding return to worksites?
- What, where, and who will provide counseling and psychological first aid?
- How will the immediate, short-term, and long-term counseling needs of students, educators, and families be addressed?

Release Consistent and Well-Timed Communication to Support Recovery Efforts

To address gun violence incidents, the administration and the association need to have a plan and strategy for ongoing communication with educators, students, parents, families, the community, and media. Consistent and well-timed communication helps maintain transparency, provide updated information, and address concerns.

It also helps build trust, correct misinformation, and foster a sense of community. By managing media coverage responsibly, the association and the administration can ensure the well-being of those affected by the crisis and minimize the potential for re-traumatization. Overall, a well-structured and ongoing communications strategy plays a crucial role in facilitating recovery and rebuilding efforts after a gun violence incident.



The [2018 NEA School Crisis Guide](#) offers communications strategies to support crisis response teams and recovery efforts (NEA, 2018):

- Provide regular and updated communications, even after the gun violence incident has passed;
- Update various communication channels, such as websites, voicemails, phone scripts, and fact sheets, as necessary;
- Maintain a master list of frequently asked questions and answers; and
- Conduct meetings with key stakeholders to identify questions, address rumors, and provide accurate and timely information.

Develop Longer-Term Media and Communications Strategy

In the days, weeks, months, and even years after the incident, the association and the administration will need to rely on a longer-term media and communications strategy outlining when, where, and how to communicate on the gun violence incident. This will include how and when to allow coverage of memorials and special events, building refurbishment or replacement, and examples of successful or challenging student and educator recoveries. Rely on the same approaches to media relations discussed in Part Three of this guide, related to responding to incidents of gun violence, including the need to be sensitive to the lasting trauma caused by the incident and to coordinate with administrators.

Facilitate Care and Support to Initiate Recovery After the Gun Violence Incident

The road to recovery can be long and difficult.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network—which states that the development of STS is recognized as a common occupational hazard for professionals working with traumatized children—offers resources on secondary traumatic stress for educators and other professionals exposed to secondary trauma, including for child-serving professionals (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2012); (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2011); (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2022); (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2008). The resources section of this guide includes links to the resources.

PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Gun violence survivors—including students, educators, families, and community members—need trauma-informed counseling for both short- and long-term support. However, several barriers prevent survivors from accessing these services and care.

Findings from Everytown Support Fund show that survivors who identified as Black or Latin(o/a/x) were less likely to have access to mental health services or to providers culturally attuned to their communities, in the short- or long-term (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-i). When responding to a crisis in the community, all parties must ensure access to appropriate mental health services and support.

PROMOTE PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

Peers are uniquely positioned to support survivors by drawing on their lived experiences. Studies have shown that peer support programs positively impact survivors by providing psychological and emotional support through community building, the credibility of lived experiences, and positive changes in acceptance of self and quality of life (Haas, Price, & Freeman, 2013); (Davis et al., 2014); (Hibbard et al., 2002). Peers play an important role in trauma care and post-traumatic growth by enhancing collaboration, building trust, establishing safety and hope, and sharing stories of lived experiences to promote recovery and healing.

The association and the administration should consider working with mental health providers to establish peer support spaces for students and children to connect with one another in a healing environment. Educators may also benefit from peer support. The [Everytown Survivor Network](#) and other programs that support survivors of gun violence, such as the [Survivor Fellowship Program for Students](#) and the [National Alliance for Children's Grief](#), serve as important resources. For additional resources, see the list at the end of this section of this guide.

Partnering to Support Recovery Efforts

During and after a gun violence incident, partnerships are exceptionally important, both with the education community and broader community. Community partners—which can include racial and social justice organizations, mental health professionals, counselors, trauma specialists, and other support services—often provide diverse expertise, resources, and skills that can significantly enhance recovery efforts. Because they are already a part of the community, they also often are rooted in the local context and possess cultural competence because they already serve the community in crisis. Within the education community, organizations with expertise and experience likely already exist that can support effective recovery, like the [Principal Recovery Network](#) of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, a national network of current and former school leaders who have experienced gun violence tragedies in their buildings (National Association of Secondary School Principals, n.d.). The [National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement](#) also provides resources for educators and families.

From state to state and within states, potential partners may vary. An important place to start is with other unions representing workers in the Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education where association members work, gun violence-focused organizations, racial and social justice organizations, after-school programs, mental and physical health providers and organizations, associations representing principals or other administrators, and local colleges and universities with programs that identify or address violence in communities or, more specifically, in education settings.

The following list includes several national-level organizations—with links to their websites—that may have state or local counterparts. Identifying local groups working on similar topics may also serve the same purpose.

AAPI Victory Alliance

<https://aapivictoryalliance.com/gunviolenceprevention>

AASA—The School Superintendents Association

<https://www.aasa.org/resources/all-resources?Keywords=safety&RowsPerPage=20>

Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools

<https://reclaimourschools.org>

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/gun-violence-prevention>

American Psychological Association

<https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/gun-violence-prevention>

American School Counselor Association

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Prevention-of-School-Rel>

Color of Change

<https://colorofchange.org>

Community Justice Action Fund

<https://www.cjactionfund.org>

Hope and Heal Fund

<https://hopeandhealfund.org/who-we-are>

League of United Latin American Citizens

https://lulac.org/advocacy/resolutions/2013/resolution_on_gun_violence_prevention/index.html

Life Camp

<https://www.peaceisalifestyle.com>

Live Free

<https://livefreeusa.org>

March for Our Lives

<https://marchforourlives.org>

MomsRising

<https://www.momsrising.org/blog/topics/gun-safety>

NAACP

<https://naacp.org>

National Association of Elementary School Principals

<https://www.naesp.org>

National Association of School Nurses

<https://www.nasn.org/blogs/nasn-inc/2023/07/27/take-action-to-address-gun-violence>

National Association of School Psychologists

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis>

National Association of Secondary School Principals

<https://www.nassp.org/community/principal-recovery-network>

National Association of Social Workers

<https://www.socialworkers.org>

National PTA

<https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/federal-legislation/Public-Policy-Priorities/gun-safety-and-violence-prevention>

National School Boards Association

<https://www.nsba4safeschools.org/home>

Parents Together

<https://parents-together.org/the-heart-of-gun-safety-and-a-new-approach-to-advocacy>

Sandy Hook Promise

<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org>

The Trevor Project

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org>

UnidosUS

<https://unidosus.org/publications/latinos-and-gun-violence-prevention>



Assess Responses for Improvement or Adjustment

The gun violence recovery process is dynamic, and the needs of individuals and communities may change over time. Regular and continuous evaluation allows for adjustments to be made based on evolving circumstances and/or emerging needs. Evaluation can also help resource allocation and optimization based on assessing the impact of existing resources. The following are key principles for evaluating and adjusting a recovery plan, whether carried out by administrators or the association, or both:

- Implement a regular monitoring system to assess the recovery plan's implementation, including milestones and key performance indicators;
- Solicit feedback from various stakeholders, including community members, educators, and mental health professionals, involved in the recovery process;
- Collect relevant data and information to assess the impact of implemented strategies;
- Maintain transparent communication about any adjustments made; and
- Keep thorough documentation of evaluation or assessment, adjustments made, and why the changes were made.

By following the above principles, administrators and the association can ensure that the recovery plan remains responsive and supportive of the ongoing well-being of individuals and communities while also keeping in mind the importance of accommodating any unexpected changes. Educators should be ready to modify lesson plans, curriculum goals, classroom expectations, and organizational structure according to need. As the effects of trauma can be transformative, it is also important to be mindful of behavioral changes in students, notice any alarming patterns, lead with kindness and tolerance, and create room for discussion with students and their families.

GUN VIOLENCE RECOVERY RESOURCES

National Education Association Resources

National Education Association

<https://www.nea.org>

The National Education Association is the nation's largest union, representing more than 3 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, specialized instructional support personnel, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become educators.

NEA Health and Safety Program

<https://www.nea.org/healthy-schools>

The NEA Health and Safety Program provides information and solutions related to student and educator mental health, violence prevention and response, infection control, and environmental and occupational safety and health, among other topics.

NEA School Crisis Guide

<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/neas-school-crisis-guide>

Produced in 2018, the guide provides detailed content on how to effectively prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from school crises.

Responding to Gun Violence

<https://www.nea.org/gunviolence>

This portion of the NEA website provides health and safety content on taking action, helping students and educators cope, resources for school leaders, fostering mental health, and preventing hate and bias.

Addressing the Epidemic of Trauma in Schools

<https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Addressing%20the%20Epidemic%20of%20Trauma%20in%20Schools%20-%20NCSEA%20and%20NEA%20Report.pdf>

This report builds a framework to advance trauma awareness and trauma-informed approaches, including some currently being implemented by NEA state affiliates. It includes key recommendations for ways in which NEA may address the trauma crisis through policy, programs, and practices. It also includes a list of selected resources developed, or suggested as references, by affiliates to address student and educator trauma.

How Restorative Practices Work for Students and Educators

<https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/how-restorative-practices-work-students-and-educators>

This *NEA Today* article explores what happens in public schools where educators care more about creating a community built upon kindness, not consequences.

NEA Micro-Credential Courses on Restorative Practices

<https://nea.certificationbank.com//NEA/CandidatePortal/CategoryDetail.aspx?Stack=RP>

Each of the five micro-credentials in this stack can stand alone or be completed sequentially: Exploring Restorative Practices; Building a Positive Classroom Community with Affective Language; Restorative

Circles—Building Relationships in the Classroom; Restorative Conferencing; and Implementing Restorative Practices.

NEA Micro-Credential Course on Trauma-Informed Pedagogy

<https://nea-mc.certificationbank.com/open-doc-loader.aspx?pid=E4033E41-057D-422C-899D-2B6D32FD-55B8&il=1>

This course addresses child trauma, how trauma affects the brain, trauma-informed pedagogy, leveled intervention strategies, behavioral support plans, replacement behaviors, and teaching students to self-advocate.

Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships and Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools—A Guide for Educators

https://schottfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/restorative-practices-guide_0.pdf

This guide helps educators better understand what restorative practices are and how they can foster

safe learning environments through community building and constructive conflict resolution.

Tools and Tips for Trauma-Informed Practices

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/trauma-informed-practices>

Educators in every school community can use these practices to create safe and supportive learning environments for their students.

Trauma-Informed Schools

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/trauma-informed-schools>

Supporting students who suffer from childhood trauma requires whole school involvement and transformation. The NEA and its affiliates are actively engaged in finding ways for schools and educators to address the issue of trauma and its implications for learning, behavior, and school safety.

Everytown Resources

Everytown for Gun Safety

<https://www.everytown.org>

Everytown for Gun Safety is the largest gun violence prevention organization in America. The organization is a movement of more than 10 million supporters working to end gun violence.

Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund

<https://everytownsupportfund.org>

The Everytown Support Fund is the education, research, and litigation arm of Everytown for Gun Safety. It seeks to improve our understanding of the causes of gun violence and help to reduce it by conducting ground-breaking original research, developing evidence-based policies, communicating this knowledge to the American public, and advancing gun safety and gun violence prevention in communities and the courts.

Everytown Survivor Network

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network>

The Everytown Survivor Network is a nationwide community of survivors working together to end gun violence. The network amplifies the power of survivor voices, offers trauma-informed programs, provides information on direct services, and supports survivors in their advocacy. Included below are resources from the Everytown Survivor Network.

Acute Stress and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/acute-stress-disorder-and-post-traumatic-stress-disorder>

This resource provides general information about post-traumatic stress disorder and secondary trauma stress, including tips for recognizing the signs and symptoms and effective coping strategies.

Children's Responses to Trauma

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/childrens-responses-to-trauma>

This resource provides information for parents and adults about how to support children and teens who have experienced a shooting or are upset by images of gun violence.

Crime Victim Compensation: Financial Assistance After a Crime

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/crime-victim-compensation-financial-assistance-after-a-crime>

This material offers general information on Crime Victim Compensation (CVC)—a government program that helps crime victims and their families with the financial costs of crimes—as well as eligibility and links to each state crime victim's compensation program.

Finding Help

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/finding-help>

This information provides helpful checklists and organizations that may be able to help in a crisis or connect individuals to area community resources. Everytown for Gun Safety and NEA do not endorse any particular organization.

Navigating the Criminal Justice System

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/navigating-the-criminal-justice-system>

This content provides general information and tips about the criminal justice process. Many survivors have never experienced the criminal justice system prior to an incident of gun violence and learn quickly that legal case processing is complicated. Understanding how different legal system agencies work and interact with one

another may help survivors navigate what lies ahead of them.

SurvivorsConnect

<https://forms.everytown.org/a/welcome-survivorsconnect>

SurvivorsConnect is a program that matches gun violence survivors with trained SurvivorsConnect Leaders who, themselves, are also survivors of gun violence, who want to share what they have learned with survivors seeking support. SurvivorsConnect Leaders will listen and offer emotional support, mentorship, and referrals to external services, as appropriate. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in the SurvivorsConnect program at this time.

Taking Care of Yourself

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/taking-care-of-yourself>

This content includes information about the importance of self-care for gun violence survivors and guidance on how to develop a self-care plan.

Trauma and Gun Violence

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/trauma-and-gun-violence>

This resource provides basic information about the signs and symptoms of emotional and physical trauma. It also shares ways to cope with the consequences of trauma and avoid re-traumatization.

Traumatic Grief

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/traumatic-grief>

This information helps survivors understand how grief after a trauma is different than grief that is anticipated, how to cope with complicated grief, and how to approach the recovery process.

Other Resources

SUPPORT FOR TRAUMA- AND GRIEF-INFORMED RECOVERY

Anniversaries of Traumatic Events: Guidance for Educators

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/anniversaries-of-traumatic-events-guidance-for-educators>

The National Association of School Psychologists provides suggestions to help educators meet the needs of their students and communities on the anniversary of a violent incident, which can often result in considerable media attention. This resource provides tips on how to prepare and respond during an anniversary as well as proactive strategies for school administrators.

Coalition to Support Grieving Students

<http://www.grievingstudents.org>

The Coalition to Support Grieving Students is a collaborative of professional organizations that represent educators, school administrators, student support personnel, and school board members. It provides relevant and high-quality professional learning opportunities and resources to school staff, community members, and families who support grieving students in schools and communities.

National Alliance for Children's Grief

<https://nacg.org>

The National Alliance for Children's Grief (NACG) is a nonprofit organization that raises awareness about the needs of children and teens who are grieving a death and provides education and resources for anyone who supports them. Through the collective voice of its members and partners, NACG educates, advocates, and raises awareness about childhood bereavement.

National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement

<https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org>

The National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement (NCSCB) at Children's Hospital Los Angeles is dedicated to helping schools support their students through crisis and loss.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<https://www.nctsn.org>

This network of frontline providers, family members, researchers, and national partners shares the following helpful resources on recovering from the trauma of a gun violence incident.

Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/child-trauma-toolkit-educators>

This toolkit provides school administrators, educators, and concerned parents with basic information about working with traumatized children in the school system.

"I Don't Know How to Address Worries About My Child's Safety at School"

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/i-dont-know-how-to-address-worries-about-my-childs-safety-at-school>

This video features discussions with parents, educators, and providers of crisis response and their personal experiences of struggling to deal with and address their child's or student's safety at school. Fact sheets and tip sheets to support trauma-informed recovery include:

Assisting Parents/Caregivers in Coping with Collective Traumas

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/assisting-parents-caregivers-in-coping-with-collective-traumas>

Helping School-Age Children with Traumatic Grief: Tips for Caregivers

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-school-age-children-traumatic-grief-tips-caregivers>

Helping Teens with Traumatic Grief: Tips for Caregivers

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-teens-traumatic-grief-tips-caregivers>

Helping Young Children with Traumatic Grief: Tips for Caregivers

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-young-children-traumatic-grief-tips-caregivers>

Helping Youth to Cope with 4th of July Celebrations After a Shooting

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-youth-cope-with-4th-of-july-celebrations-after-a-shooting>; <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-youth-after-community-trauma-tips-educators>

Restoring a Sense of Safety in the Aftermath of a Shooting: Tips for Parents and Professionals

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/restoring-sense-safety-aftermath-shooting-tips-parents-and-professionals>

Skills for Psychological Recovery

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/skills-psychological-recovery-spr-online>

This online course is designed to help survivors gain skills to manage distress and cope with post-disaster stress and adversity. This course utilizes skills-building components from mental health treatment that have been found helpful in a variety of post-trauma situations.

Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Families and Educators

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

The National Association of School Psychologists offers caregivers and school personnel tips on how to help children feel safe, reinforcing their natural resilience and talking with them about their fears.

Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Toolkit

<https://www.nc2s.org/resource/trauma-informed-resilience-oriented-schools-toolkit>

The National Center for School Safety provides tools, videos, professional development slide decks, and concise instruction to explain the concepts of trauma and toxic stress. This guide offers individual and school-wide strategies for addressing trauma and fostering resilience for students, educators, and families in addition to strategies to assess the impact of these adaptations throughout the community.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANS

Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans

https://rems.ed.gov/docs/rems_k-12_guide_508.pdf

This guide—developed by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Federal Emergency Management Agency—provides schools with steps they can take to plan for potential emergencies through the creation, implementation, and maintenance of an emergency operations plan (EOP).

Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans for IHEs

https://rems.ed.gov/docs/IHE_Guide_508C.pdf

This guide—developed by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Federal Emergency Management Agency—provides higher education institutions with steps they can take to plan for potential emergencies through the creation, implementation, and maintenance of an emergency operations plan (EOP).

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PART 4 | RECOVERY



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