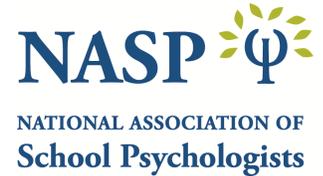


Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NASP Leader Addresses the Effect of Media Coverage on School Violence at Federal Safety Commission Meeting

Bethesda, MD—National Association of School Psychologists leader and school safety expert Ben Fernandez testified before the Federal Safety to Commission today regarding the impact of media coverage of school violence, particularly mass shootings. He urged the commission incorporate recommendations on best practices in their report on effective ways to prevent violence and keep our schools and children safe.

“The viral, interactive, and more intimate nature of modern media, particularly social media, can make traumatic events like mass shootings feel closer to home and more personal,” noted Fernandez. “This presents an opportunity to increase attention to school safety, but it also risks causing emotional harm to vulnerable people, triggering individuals at risk for turning to extreme violence, and perpetuating the misperception that schools are dangerous places, when in fact they are safe.”

“Mass shootings are horrible, unacceptable and must be stopped,” he said. “However, they are not the norm, and the media and our national leaders need to reassure children and families that they are safe.”

Fernandez emphasized that reporting of school safety incidents is important. The goal is not to censor or limit the media but rather to provide guidance on what is required to do no harm. Certain media coverage practices can, in fact, cause harm, perpetuate fear, and hamper crisis recovery. These include speculative reporting, overdramatizing how information is conveyed, asking students to relive the crisis by recounting their experience immediately after the event, and focusing intensively on the perpetrator.

Specific recommendations for responsible coverage include:

- Refrain from providing intensive and graphic details of the incident.
- Avoid focusing on details about the perpetrator.
- Focus on students, staff, and families who are positively coping, and avoid overdramatizing the crisis impact.
- Seek out experts and facts related to school safety and crisis intervention services.
- Emphasize that schools are safe, and report on the appropriate, evidence-based measures schools are taking to make schools even safer.

Fernandez also shared ways that leaders can play a role in fostering media coverage that contributes useful information and avoids confusion or harm. Such practices focus on providing factual information and limiting rumors and ensure that staff members and students are aware of the possible risks of speculating or sharing personal experiences with media in the immediate aftermath.

NASP is committed to working with the media, educators, the Administration, and Congress to ensure that schools and communities have the capacity to keep all children safe.

For more information, see [Responsible Media Coverage of Crisis Events Involving Children and Youth](#) or visit <http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis>.

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