



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
School Psychologists

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**Contacts: See below**

## **NASP Applauds Efforts to Reduce Violence and Improve Gun Safety**

Bethesda, MD—The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) applauds President Obama’s efforts to reduce violence and improve gun safety in America by implementing commonsense improvements in existing relevant laws and regulations. NASP supports measures that will reduce access to firearms by individuals who intend to harm themselves or others and are in line with existing public safety measures designed to protect American citizens across a range of products and activities in this country every day.

In the 3 years since the horrific attack at Sandy Hook Elementary School, the nation has suffered more than 1,000 mass shootings. This number does not include the 30,000 other gun deaths in this country each year. Understandably, the majority of the public, and responsible gun owners, want to see policies that reduce gun violence and fatalities.

“Our particular emphasis is on safeguarding the well-being of children and youth and on ensuring safe school environments and communities,” states NASP President Todd A. Savage. “The President’s proposed enhancements to the national background check system and improvements in gun safety lock technology hold real promise for reducing the number of children and youth who may be harmed by inappropriate access to guns and/or exposure to gun violence.”

Importantly, the President highlighted that, while tragic high profile mass shootings capture the most news coverage, nearly two-thirds of gun deaths are the result of suicide. “The ratio of completed suicide deaths goes up substantially when guns are involved,” notes Savage. In 2014, more than half of all suicides were completed with a firearm. “Suicide prevention must be a top priority, and we can make a real difference by keeping guns out of the hands of at-risk individuals and by increasing access to mental health support in our communities and schools.”

NASP strongly supports the President’s proposal to increase funding by \$500 million to improve access to mental health care, and it joins the President in calling on Congress to fully fund this effort. In addition to funding for community mental health services and care for our military, existing law includes authorizations to hire more school-employed mental health professionals to implement comprehensive mental and behavioral health services in schools and to improve collaboration with community agencies and providers. Furthermore, existing laws authorize funds that help schools and communities improve their capacity to promote mental wellness, prevent crises, and provide high-quality early intervention services for at-risk children and youth. These programs can only help our citizens, if they are funded as intended.

School psychologists support students' mental and behavioral health, serve on school safety and crisis response teams, and create positive school environments that promote learning. While gun violence in schools is rare, it is undeniable that the ongoing prevalence of gun violence in our communities, neighborhoods, houses of worship, retail spaces, and workplaces risks a serious deleterious effect on our children and youth.

NASP joins the majority of Americans in urging our federal leaders to take reasonable, responsible measures to end the threat to the American people posed by this unnecessary public health crisis. Commonsense measures can preserve our most precious rights and lives.

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*NASP empowers school psychologists by advancing effective practices to improve students' learning, behavior, and mental health. Further information is available at [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org).*

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