



Statement on School Violence Prevention

Adopted by the MASP Executive Board on December 15, 2021

The mission of the Michigan Association of School Psychologists (MASP) is that all Michigan students achieve their fullest potential. In order to accomplish this mission, we must work to ensure that students learn and thrive in school environments that are safe and free from violence. In that spirit and in the wake of the senseless tragedy in Oxford, MASP joins the call for the passage of common sense and reasonable gun safety legislation in Michigan, as well as to increase the availability of school psychologists and access to comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services.

As part of the National Association of School Psychologists' (NASP) commitment to ensure all children's safety, well-being, and ability to thrive in school, at home, and throughout life, NASP adopted the "[Resolution to Support Efforts to Prevent Gun Violence](#)" in January, 2018. This resolution outlines key, evidence based, policy solutions to preventing gun violence (articulated below) which MASP supports. Access to firearms is highly associated with increased risk of injury and death among youth. And research is clear that exposure to gun violence is highly associated with diminished social, emotional, and academic well-being among youth. It is our responsibility to advocate for the policies and practices that will reduce gun violence.

Addressing mass gun violence must include preventing access to firearms by individuals at risk of hurting themselves or others. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics from 2019 (CDC), there were 39,707 firearm-related deaths in the United States with 23,941 of these deaths by firearm suicide. During that year, there were 1,220 gun deaths in Michigan which included 83 children and teens (ages 0 through 19).

MASP aspires to protect children from gun violence by encouraging and supporting solutions that create safer, healthier schools, homes, and communities. We support Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel's call to lawmakers to enact common sense gun safety measures. Nessel says the tragedy in Oxford should provoke a conversation about Michigan's gun laws and how we can keep children safe in our schools. "I think it's important that we sort of dissect what occurred, and think about what we can do better to potentially prevent a tragedy like this from occurring in the future in another school, in another town in another part of the state." Nessel says she would like to see changes to Michigan gun laws to prevent this sort of violence. "It's time for us to reevaluate the laws that we could be potentially putting in place that could have stopped this from happening."

In conjunction with common sense gun safety laws, we must also improve access to comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services which helps to promote student learning and safety. Providing ongoing access to mental health services promotes school safety by helping to create a positive learning environment in which students feel connected to their school community and a sense of belongingness. The continuum of school mental health includes promoting wellness, resiliency, skill building, and help-seeking behaviors. These are critical to student well-being and to identifying students who may need more intensive services or for those who require immediate intervention, including those at risk of harming themselves or others.

MASP endorses the following actions which represent best practice principles in preventing school violence:

- a comprehensive approach to school safety ([NASP Framework for Safe and Successful Schools](#));
- increased access to comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services;
- improved ratios for school psychologists and other school-based mental health professionals as well as more effective use of existing school psychologists; and
- limiting inappropriate access to firearms.

MASP supports approaches that protect children, as they are particularly vulnerable when it comes to gun violence both as direct victims and as being traumatized by the exposure to the deaths of family members, friends, neighbors, and community members. This includes:

- rigorous enforcement of existing gun laws;
- eliminating inappropriate youth access to guns;
- improving awareness of evidence based safe gun practices, including secure storage of firearms;
- restricting the presence of guns in schools to only commissioned and trained school resource officers;
- ensuring greater protection to keep guns out of the hands of individuals deemed at risk of hurting themselves and others;
- comprehensive background checks for all gun purchases;
- extreme risk protection orders that allow family members or police officers (when notified by school/family or when responding to an incident) to petition the court to remove someone's access to weapons when they are deemed a threat to self or others;
- bans on weapons that can do mass destruction in a short period of time (e.g., fully automatic assault weapons and high-capacity magazines); and
- evidence-based threat assessment policy and practice; mental health evaluations and re-entry plans, including ongoing mental and behavioral health support for students identified as being of imminent threat to themselves or others; and enhanced student access to mental health supports in schools and communities.

In conclusion, MASP believes that effective laws and policies can reduce gun violence as well as create safer, and welcoming learning environments, all while upholding the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Additionally, MASP advocates strongly for improving access to comprehensive school mental and behavioral health services. This work is critical to helping all children to learn and achieve their highest potential, now and throughout life. Collectively, we share this responsibility. MASP looks forward to working with other educational and mental health organizations, as well as engaging in advocacy and discussion with state and local policy makers, to create laws and policies based on best practices and research.

References:

- [NASP Research Summary: Gun Violence and Youth, 2019](#)
- [NASP Resolution: Supporting Efforts to Prevent Gun Violence, 2018](#)
- [NASP Framework for Safe and Successful Schools, 2013 \(Updated March 2015\)](#)