

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) National PTA Gun Violence Prevention Efforts

On Wednesday, February 14, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida experienced a violent shooting that resulted in 17 deaths and multiple injuries. National PTA® President Jim Accomando issued a statement that same day to express his sympathy for the students, families and communities affected by the horrendous tragedy. However, enough is enough. We must use our collective voices to demand change to eliminate gun violence. School and child safety, a crucial component of effective learning, is one of PTA's core tenets. National PTA believes that the protection of children in all school settings is a fundamental right and has made it the utmost priority for our work and advocacy.

Following is a sampling of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) National PTA has received in the days after the tragic shooting. If you have additional questions, please contact info@pta.org.

Q: Does National PTA have resources to assist parents, families and educators in dealing with the aftermath of this tragedy?

A: Yes, you can find PTA resources, including tips for talking to children online at [PTA.org/SchoolSafety](https://pta.org/SchoolSafety). Like you, our attention and assistance is focused on helping schools, families, and children coping with this traumatic event. Your help in sharing PTA resources within your state is invaluable.

Q: Does National PTA support gun violence prevention? Where does National PTA stand on federal efforts that restrict access to firearms?

A: National PTA celebrates a long history of advocacy for the safety of our nation's children and youth and supports federal efforts to protect children and youth from gun violence. National PTA believes school safety is a critical priority and that every attempt must be made to reduce violence, especially incidents involving use of firearms. Parents, educators, community members, and government must prioritize this issue to ensure a safe learning environment for all students.

National PTA supports the following policy recommendations:

- Mandatory license to purchase a firearm;
- Mandatory three day waiting period and background check to purchase a firearm, regardless of retail venue;
- Prohibition on the sale of more than one handgun per month to any individual
- Prohibition of firearm purchase and possession by those convicted of spousal abuse and child abuse;

- Mandatory increased annual license fee for any firearm retailer;
- Reenactment and expansion of federal ban on the sale and possession of military-style assault weapons;
- Establish federal tax on assault weapon ammunition;
- Mandatory restrictions on Internet firearms sales, including restrictions on materials used to make/modify guns;
- Federal minimum age requirement of 21 years of age to buy a handgun from non-licensed dealers
- Mandatory background check for any firearm retailer;
- Increased penalties for the transfer of firearms, including handguns and assault weapons, to juveniles for use in a crime;
- Licensure revocation for any retailer who knowingly sells to minors;
- Prohibition of firearm sale to any adult convicted of committing a violent crime as a juvenile; and,
- Lifting any ban on research that studies the causes and effects of gun violence

National PTA also advocates for preventative measures to educate students, educators and community members on school and firearm safety, such as:

- Inclusion of safety education in public school curricula and community programs;
- Support and promotion of programs to educate parents, children, youth, and communities about the importance of firearm safety and awareness;
- Promotion of public education campaigns to alert parents and community members to the devastating effects of firearm-related violence; and
- Adoption of school-level and school district-level safety policies and guidelines, including the preparation of educators and pupil support personnel in crisis response.

Q: Does National PTA support the Second Amendment?

A: National PTA supports the Second Amendment and recognizes the right to bear arms. Other rights guaranteed by the Constitution, such as free speech and private property, have certain reasonable restrictions to protect the freedom and safety of our fellow citizens and the same principle should apply to the Second Amendment. National PTA encourages Congress to adopt legislation that would help prevent future tragedies like the massacre of innocent children and adults at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School while preserving the lawful use of firearms for sport and personal protection.

Q: Does the National PTA support arming teachers and school administrators as a way to prevent school violence?

A: National PTA believes the most effective day-to-day school climate to be gun-free, but

defers to local collaborative decision-making to allow for the presence of law enforcement deployed in community-oriented policing.

Q: Does National PTA support increased access to mental health services as one of many efforts to promote public safety?

A: National PTA has long been committed to providing improved mental health programs and services to children and youth and believes that all children and youth have the right to mental health treatment. National PTA encourages each community to make available mental health programs and services, which will meet the needs of all children and youth.

National PTA strongly recommends:

- Any mental health intervention, prevention programs or services must include a strong family engagement component—including collaborative relationships with the family, school and community partners (physicians, early learning providers and caregivers and other related health providers)—as well as transparent and open communication and coordination between provider, school, parents and families.
- States and school districts provide the necessary resources to ensure adequate ratios (grounded in researched-based best practices) of school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers and school nurses, who are the most qualified professionals to provide school-based mental health services.
- States and school districts provide the necessary resources and support to ensure students can receive a proactive continuum of behavioral and mental health services.
- Federal, state and local policies prioritize outreach and education—including professional development for all school-based employees—in schools and communities regarding early childhood mental health and the recognition of youth mental health as a critical health issue.
- Federal, state and local policies promoting a continuum of care through school and community-based professional providers and services, beginning with early childhood mental health systems that include screening, diagnosis, treatment, referral and follow-up services through the age of 21, which is recognized and accepted by federal, state and private insurance programs.
- States and local communities—in partnership with professional and advocacy organizations—should provide greater consumer awareness around federal legislation, rules and guidance related to children’s health insurance programs and general health care provisions that impact mental and behavioral health.