

Since the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, a national dialogue has emerged about gun violence and school safety. Many of ASHA's members work in schools and have shared their opinions with ASHA on these issues by providing Board of Directors feedback, sending emails, and posting on social media. In response, ASHA's Government Relations and Public Policy Board developed a position statement on gun safety in schools that was reviewed by members of Special Interest Group 16 (School-Based Issues), the SLP School Issues Advisory Board, the School Finance Committee, and both Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Advisory Councils. ASHA's Board of Directors considered the feedback from the members and groups that weighed in and approved the following position statement on Gun Violence and School Safety:

ASHA is committed to ensuring a safe and secure learning environment for all students and educators, and will work with allied stakeholders towards achieving that critical goal.

ASHA is particularly affected by the tragedy of gun violence in schools. Half of our 198,000 members work as audiologists and speech-language pathologists in a school setting, providing critical services to millions of students with communication disorders. Our members and the students they serve have witnessed gun violence in elementary schools, secondary schools, and universities. They have experienced the devastation this violence inflicts on school communities and young minds.

ASHA maintains that changes can and should be made to ensure a safe and secure learning environment for all students and educators. Recently, a policy proposal has surfaced in the national dialogue that calls for arming educators as a deterrent to gun violence. ASHA rejects this proposal. School safety and security should be entrusted to highly-trained school resource officers (NASRO, 2018). Furthermore, schools as gun-free zones should be universally promoted, as research has shown this to be effective in making schools safer (CDC, 2008).

ASHA supports a collaborative and allied stakeholder-driven process to identify initiatives designed to manage access to guns and promote public safety. ASHA also supports ensuring that schools are appropriately resourced, so that every student has access to the social, emotional, and communicative supports he or she needs in order to succeed.

References

- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report, School-Associated Student Homicides—United States, 1992-2006 (2008, January 18). Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5702a1.htm>.
- National Association of School Resource Officers (2018, February 22). NASRO Opposes Arming Teachers: Organization advocates instead for carefully selected, specially-trained school resource officers [Press release]. Retrieved from <https://nasro.org/news/press-releases/nasro-opposes-arming-teachers/>.