MEDIA BRIEFING:
SCHOOL SHOOTINGS IN THE US

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(VIA SCILINE)

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• Each year, approximately 100,000 American are injured with a firearm, with over 17,000 of these individuals being children (ages 0-18 years).

• More than 40,000 of these individuals die as a result of their firearm injuries.

• 2021 was the deadliest year on record for gun violence.

• Gun violence is now the leading cause of death among children in the U.S. And yet, these statistics don’t reflect the broader spectrum of gun violence experiences and exposure.

• Black children disproportionately experience firearm violence in comparison to their White peers. These disparities have only increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

References: Goldstick, Cunningham, Carter, 2022; CDC, 2022; Martin, Rajan, et al, 2022; Rajan, Branas, Myers, & Agrawal, 2019
Gun violence specifically persists in K-12 schools around the nation.

Since 1999, data from the Washington Post estimate that more than 357,000 students have experienced gun violence at school.

There are many different kinds of gun violence (mass shootings, unintentional shootings, suicide) and also different forms of exposure (witnessing gunshots, hearing gunfire, being directly shot).

• The true scope of this crisis is difficult to quantify and, by extension, both prevent and intervene upon.

There has been a noticeable uptick in school gun violence since 2015 and again in 2021 following initial school building closures during COVID-19.

Nearly 100,000 K-12 public schools nationally serving an estimated 51 million children.
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

• Most of the scientific literature conceptualizes ACEs as “stressful or traumatic events that impact the healthy development of children through adolescence and into adulthood”.

• ACEs persist as a public health challenge in the United States. (Nearly two-thirds of adults in the U.S. (62%) report at least one ACE).

• Research on ACEs has typically focused on child maltreatment, sexual abuse, household mental illness, and family members who have been incarcerated.

• ACEs now are understood to include a wider range of events, including youth experiences with bullying, experience with the juvenile justice system, and parental absence.

• Many people report experiencing multiple ACEs.

Our recent work has highlighted the ways in which exposure to gun violence during childhood is also an ACE.

References: SAMHSA, 2018; Forster, et al., 2017; Wade, et al., 2014; Merrick et al., 2018; Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018; Garrido, et al., 2018
My colleagues and I have also quantified racial disparities on some of these ACEs (specifically childhood exposure to neighborhood firearm violence).

Drawing on data from the Gun Violence Archive and the US Census, we recently looked at children ages 5-17 years between 2015 – 2021.

Black children disproportionately experience 4.44 times more neighborhood firearm violence exposure than White children.

And we found that this exposure to gun violence also disproportionately impacts Native American, Asian Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and multiracial children in comparison to their White peers.

These disparities only increased post- the onset of COVID-19.

Reference: Martin, Rajan, et al. 2022
• How does this all of this connect with schools?
  • What happens in the community and via these ACE experiences impacts a child’s experiences at school and during the school day.

Reference: CDC, 2023
REACTION VS. PREVENTION

- Our current approach almost exclusively centers reactive strategies that are in place to respond to acts of gun violence in the moment of.

- **Reliance on these reactive strategies alone, however, is clearly not sufficient.**

- Responses to the ongoing school gun violence crisis need to be far more strategic, multifaceted in nature, and address its upstream causes well before a possible shooting is a credible threat to a school community.

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Gun violence in K-12 schools in the United States: Moving towards a preventive (versus reactive) framework

Sonali Rajan a, b, *, Paul M. Reeping b, Zahra Ladhani a, Lalitha M. Vasudevan c, Charles C. Branas b
Our recent work evaluated the association of permissiveness of state firearm laws and state gun ownership with K-12 school shootings and active school shootings.

More permissive firearm laws and higher rates of gun ownership were associated with higher rates of both types of shootings.
SCHOOL SAFETY/SECURITY

St. Vincent Healthcare offers 'Stop the Bleed' training to high school students

Simran Kumari NonStop Local Multimedia Journalist · May 4, 2023 Updated 19 hrs ago

Broward schools to implement clear bag policy for upcoming school year

BY PATRICK CHARLIE, NICOLE LINSALATA · MAY 5, 2023

School districts across America consider arming teachers in aftermath of Nashville school shooting

HIGH SCHOOL · Published May 2, 2023 1:46pm EDT
SCHOOL SAFETY/SECURITY

• Significant evidence gaps! (Limited effectiveness on many existing school security strategies)
  • Current NICHD-funded study (MPI: Branas/Rajan; R01HD108027-01)

A Nationwide Case-Control Study of Firearm Violence Prevention Tactics and Policies in K-12 Schools
HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

• We must shift the emphasis away from a primary reliance on strategies intended to react to school shootings in the moment of a violent act.

• This broadens the spectrum of what currently constitutes “school gun violence prevention.”

• And in doing so, reimagines the prevention of school gun violence as an opportunity to meaningfully invest in schools, its surrounding communities, and by extension its children.
THANK YOU

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