Whereas, 1.7 million children live in homes with unlocked, loaded firearms and 1 in 3 homes with children have one or more firearms;¹ and

Whereas, A study found that 50.2% of children were often in homes that contained firearms, including their own and other homes;² and

Whereas, Studies on unintentional shootings have found that from 2005 to 2014, roughly 20,000 American minors were killed or seriously injured in accidental shootings; the majority of those killed in these tragic accidents were aged 12 or younger;³,⁴ and

Whereas, Studies have found that in firearm-owning households with children, there exists a significant reporting gap between those who actually own the firearm and those who do not regarding the type, number, and storage status of firearms in the home;⁵,⁶ and

Whereas, In some cases, the parent who does not own the firearm may be unaware that there is a firearm in the house at all;⁵,⁶ and

Whereas, The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that pediatricians include questions about the presence and availability of firearms in their patient history and urge parents owning firearms to take action to prevent children from gaining access to those firearms;⁷ and

Whereas, AMA Policy H-145.990 encourages physicians to educate patients on the dangers of firearms to children, but H-145.990 does not address the issue of disparities in reporting firearms between adults in households;⁸ and

Whereas, Various firearm product safety features exist that have proven to reduce youth firearm injuries, such as grip safeties, magazine disconnect devices, and personalization of firearms;⁹ and

Whereas, A magazine disconnect device physically prevents a firearm from being discharged if the magazine has been taken out, even if the chamber still has a round in it;¹⁰ and

Whereas, The U.S. General Accounting Office estimates 31% of accidental firearm deaths might be prevented by the addition of a child-proof safety lock (8%) and a loading indicator (23%), which indicates whether a firearm is loaded and if it still contains rounds in the chamber;⁹ and
Whereas, The AAP’s Council on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention recommends safe storage and firearm safety features (i.e. trigger locks, lock boxes, gun safes) and supports the funding of research related to the prevention of firearm injury; and

Whereas, The California Department of Justice declared any center-fire semi-automatic pistol to be an “unsafe handgun” if it does not have a chamber load indicator or a magazine disconnect mechanism; and

Whereas, Research spending on firearm injuries conducted by the CDC fell by 96% from 1996 to 2012; and

Whereas, A study concluded that between 2004 and 2015, research on national firearm violence was significantly underfunded and understudied relative to other leading causes of death, receiving less than 1.6% of the $1.4 billion researchers predicted should be allocated to study a public health issue with a similar number of deaths annually; and

Whereas, Existing AMA policy H-145.979 supports legislation that holds firearm owners legally responsible for injury or death caused by a child gaining access to a firearm; and

Whereas, Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws, which encourage firearm owners to be conscious of how they store their firearms, may be more preventive than AMA policy because they range from strict laws that hold gun owners criminally liable when a child could likely gain access to their gun to more lenient forms that only hold gun owners criminally liable if a child actually obtains or uses the gun; and

Whereas, CAP laws are currently active in twenty-seven states as well as Washington D.C.; and

Whereas, Most states that enacted CAP laws experienced greater declines in the rate of unintentional firearm deaths for children ages 0 to 14 compared with states not enacting the laws; and

Whereas, Only states with felony prosecution for violation of CAP laws had statistically significant declines in unintentional firearm deaths when adjusted for firearm prevalence; and

Whereas, when CAP laws were implemented, self-inflicted firearm injuries fell by 64% for youth ages 18 and under, but did not decrease for adults based on data from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s Nationwide Inpatient Sample (NIS); therefore be it

RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association advocate for enactment of Child Access Prevention laws in all 50 states or as federal law. (New HOD Policy)

Date Received: 09/24/18

REFERENCES:

RELEVANT AMA POLICY:

Prevention of Unintentional Shooting Deaths Among Children H-145.979
Our AMA supports legislation at the federal and state levels making gun owners legally responsible for injury or death caused by a child gaining unsupervised access to a gun, unless it can be shown that reasonable measures to prevent child access to the gun were taken by the gun owner, and that the specifics, including the nature of "reasonable measures," be determined by the individual constituencies affected by the law.
Citation: (Res. 204, I-98; Reaffirmed: BOT Rep. 23, A-09)

Prevention of Firearm Accidents in Children H-145.990
Our AMA (1) supports increasing efforts to reduce pediatric firearm morbidity and mortality by encouraging its members to (a) inquire as to the presence of household firearms as a part of childproofing the home; (b) educate patients to the dangers of firearms to children; (c) encourage patients to educate their children and neighbors as to the dangers of firearms; and (d) routinely remind patients to obtain firearm safety locks, to store firearms under lock and key, and to store ammunition separately from firearms;(2) encourages state medical societies to work with other organizations to increase public education about firearm safety; and (3) encourages organized medical staffs and other physician organizations, including state and local medical societies, to recommend programs for teaching firearm safety to children.
Citation: Res. 165, I-89; Reaffirmed: Sunset Report and Appended: Sub. Res. 401, A-00; Reaffirmed: CSAPH Rep. 1, A-10; Reaffirmation A-13; Reaffirmed: CSAPH Rep. 04, A-18