AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: 907
(I-22)

Introduced by: American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

Subject: A National Strategy for Collaborative Engagement, Study, and Solutions to Reduce the Role of Illegal Firearms in Firearm Related Injury

Referred to: Reference Committee K

Whereas, The AMA declared gun violence in the United States a national public health crisis (PHC) in 2016; and

Whereas, From January 1, 2022, through September 27, 2022, there were 32,944 gun violence deaths in the United States1, including 15,124 homicides, murders, and unintentional deaths; and

Whereas, At least 13% of mass shootings involve the use of illegally purchased weapons2; and

Whereas, Over 80% of individuals who engage in K-12 school shootings stole firearms from family members2, and

Whereas, From January 1, 2022, through September 27, 2022, there were 29,518 gun violence survivors1 that were injured; and

Whereas, The economic cost of firearm injury in the United States is estimated to be $557 billion per year3, including immediate costs such as hospital treatment, ambulances, and the police response; subsequent costs such as long-term physical and mental health care, rehabilitation care, institutional care, forgone earnings from disability or death, and criminal justice costs; and quality-of-life costs for pain and suffering over a victim’s life span4; and

Whereas, The AMA has extensive policy calling for expansion of national research and mitigation strategies from entities such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and the United States Surgeon General to address our national firearm injury PHC; and

Whereas, These entities have failed to produce timely research, recommendations, and mitigation strategies to address the national firearm injury PHC; and

Whereas, The US Congress has struggled to develop non-partisan conversations around firearm safety strategies, but has recently taken the first step by passing the S.2938: Bipartisan Safer Communities Act5; and

Whereas, The majority of community gun violence6 and firearm related crime in the United States occurs through the use of and access to illegal firearms7-18; and

Whereas, The AMA can help reorient the public and the national conversation about the national firearm injury PHC around public health in a solutions-oriented, unbiased, and non-partisan manner; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association support research looking at the major sources of illegal gun supply, as well as possible methods of decreasing the proliferation of illegal firearms in the United States (New HOD Policy); and be it further
RESOLVED, That our AMA work with key stakeholders including, but not limited to, firearm manufacturers, firearm advocacy groups, law enforcement agencies, public health agencies, firearm injury victims advocacy groups¹⁹, healthcare providers, and state and federal government agencies to study and develop evidence-informed public health recommendations to mitigate the effects of violence committed with illegal firearms (Directive to Take Action); and be it further

RESOLVED, That our AMA convene national public forums including, but not limited to, online venues, national radio, and televised/streamed in-person town halls, that bring together key stakeholders and members of the general public to focus on finding common ground, non-partisan measures to mitigate the effects of illegal firearms in our firearm injury public health crisis (Directive to Take Action); and be it further

RESOLVED, That our AMA reaffirm House policies H-145.975, H-145.984, H-145.997, D-145.994, and D-145.999 calling for increased funding for national firearm violence research. (Reaffirm HOD Policy)

Fiscal Note: Not yet determined

Received: 09/28/22

REFERENCES:


RELEVANT AMA POLICY

Firearm Safety and Research, Reduction in Firearm Violence, and Enhancing Access to Mental Health Care H-145.975
1. Our AMA supports: a) federal and state research on firearm-related injuries and deaths; b) increased funding for and the use of state and national firearms injury databases, including the expansion of the National Violent Death Reporting System to all 50 states and U.S. territories, to inform state and federal health policy; c) encouraging physicians to access evidence-based data regarding firearm safety to educate and counsel patients about firearm safety; d) the rights of physicians to have free and open communication with their patients regarding firearm safety and the use of gun locks in their homes; e) encouraging local projects to facilitate the low-cost distribution of gun locks in homes; f) encouraging physicians to become involved in local firearm safety classes as a means of promoting injury prevention and the public health; and g) encouraging CME providers to consider, as appropriate, inclusion of presentations about the prevention of gun violence in national, state, and local continuing medical education programs.
2. Our AMA supports initiatives to enhance access to mental and cognitive health care, with greater focus on the diagnosis and management of mental illness and concurrent substance use disorders, and work with state and specialty medical societies and other interested stakeholders to identify and develop standardized approaches to mental health assessment for potential violent behavior.
3. Our AMA (a) recognizes the role of firearms in suicides, (b) encourages the development of curricula and training for physicians with a focus on suicide risk assessment and prevention as well as lethal means safety counseling, and (c) encourages physicians, as a part of their suicide prevention strategy, to discuss lethal means safety and work with families to reduce access to lethal means of suicide.

Firearms as a Public Health Problem in the United States - Injuries and Death H-145.997
1. Our AMA recognizes that uncontrolled ownership and use of firearms, especially handguns, is a serious threat to the public's health inasmuch as the weapons are one of the main causes of intentional and unintentional injuries and deaths. Therefore, the AMA:
   (A) encourages and endorses the development and presentation of safety education programs that will engender more responsible use and storage of firearms;
   (B) urges that government agencies, the CDC in particular, enlarge their efforts in the study of firearm-related injuries and in the development of ways and means of reducing such injuries and deaths;
   (C) urges Congress to enact needed legislation to regulate more effectively the importation and interstate traffic of all handguns;
   (D) urges the Congress to support recent legislative efforts to ban the manufacture and importation of nonmetallic, not readily detectable weapons, which also resemble toy guns; (E) encourages the improvement or modification of firearms so as to make them as safe as humanly possible;
   (F) encourages nongovernmental organizations to develop and test new, less hazardous designs for firearms;
   (G) urges that a significant portion of any funds recovered from firearms manufacturers and dealers through legal proceedings be used for gun safety education and gun-violence prevention; and
   (H) strongly urges US legislators to fund further research into the epidemiology of risks related to gun violence on a national level.
2. Our AMA will advocate for firearm safety features, including but not limited to mechanical or smart technology, to reduce accidental discharge of a firearm or misappropriation of the weapon by a non-registered user; and support legislation and regulation to standardize the use of these firearm safety features on weapons sold for non-military and non-peace officer use within the U.S.; with the aim of establishing manufacturer liability for the absence of safety features on newly manufactured firearms.


Data on Firearm Deaths and Injuries H-145.984
The AMA supports legislation or regulatory action that: (1) requires questions in the National Health Interview Survey about firearm related injury as was done prior to 1972; (2) mandates that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention develop a national firearm fatality reporting system; and (3) expands activities to begin tracking by the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System.
Citation: (Res. 811, I-94; Reaffirmed: CSA Rep. 6, A-04; Reaffirmation A-13)

Epidemiology of Firearm Injuries D-145.999
Our AMA will: (1) strongly urge the Administration and Congress to encourage the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to conduct an epidemiological analysis of the data of firearm-related injuries and deaths; and (2) urge Congress to provide sufficient resources to enable the CDC to collect and analyze firearm-related injury data and report to Congress and the nation via a broadly disseminated document, so that physicians and other health care providers, law enforcement and society at large may be able to prevent injury, death and the other costs to society resulting from firearms.
Citation: Res. 424, A-03; Reaffirmation A-13; Modified: CSAPH Rep. 1, A-13; Reaffirmation: A-18

Firearm Related Injury and Death: Adopt a Call to Action H-145.973
Our AMA endorses the specific recommendations made by an interdisciplinary, inter-professional group of leaders from the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Emergency Physicians, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Physicians, American College of Surgeons, American Psychiatric Association, American Public Health Association, and the American Bar Association in the publication "Firearm-Related Injury and Death in the United States: A Call to Action From 8 Health Professional Organizations and the American Bar Association," which is aimed at reducing the health and public health consequences of firearms and lobby for their adoption.
Citation: Res. 214, I-16

Removing Restrictions on Federal Funding for Firearm Violence Research D-145.994
Our AMA will provide an informational report on recent and current organizational actions taken on our existing AMA policies (e.g. H-145.997) regarding removing the restrictions on federal funding for firearms violence research, with additional recommendations on any ongoing or proposed upcoming actions.
Citation: Res. 201, I-16

Physicians and the Public Health Issues of Gun Safety D-145.997
Our AMA will request that the US Surgeon General develop a report and campaign aimed at reducing gun-related injuries and deaths.
Citation: (Res. 410, A-13)