



PART 4 RECOVERY

NEA SCHOOL GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

GUIDE



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About the National Education Association and Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund

The [National Education Association \(NEA\)](#) is more than 3 million people—educators, students, activists, workers, parents, neighbors, and friends—who believe in the opportunity for all students and the power of public education to transform lives and create a more just and inclusive society. NEA has affiliate organizations in every state and more than 14,000 communities across the United States. The Association brings the expertise, drive, and dedication of our educators and allies to focus on providing the best public education to each and every student across race, place, background, and ability. Our members work at every level of education—from prekindergarten through graduate-level university programs—and in other types of public service.

The NEA Health and Safety Program, within the Association’s Education Policy and Implementation Center (EPIC), partnered with Everytown’s team to develop this guide. It draws on the expertise and work of several centers, departments, and initiatives across the organization, including EPIC, the Center for Advocacy and Political Action, the Center for Communications, the Center for Organizing and Affiliate Support, the Center for Professional Excellence and Student Learning, the Office of General Counsel, and the Center for Racial and Social Justice. Audrey Soglin—whose career in public education includes service as the executive director of the Illinois Education Association, a local association president, and a 25-year classroom teacher—worked with the Health and Safety Program staff as a consultant on this project.

The guidance and feedback of NEA state and local affiliate leaders, staff, and members have been crucial in conceptualizing, developing, and fine-tuning this guide, which incorporates, in part, material from the [NEA School Crisis Guide](#), published in 2018. You can contact the NEA Health and Safety Program at healthandsafetyprogram@nea.org and find [NEA Health and Safety Program content](#) on NEA’s website.

The staff of Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund—the education, research, and litigation arm of Everytown for Gun Safety (Everytown)—provided their expertise on gun violence prevention, research, and education to help create a comprehensive and data-driven resource. As the nation’s largest gun violence prevention organization, Everytown has more than 10 million supporters and more than 700,000 donors, including parents and guardians, students, survivors, veterans, mayors, and everyday people throughout the United States who are fighting for commonsense gun safety measures that can help save lives. The Everytown Support Fund seeks to improve our understanding of the causes of gun violence and help reduce it by conducting ground-breaking research, developing evidence-based policies, communicating this knowledge to the public, and advancing gun safety and gun violence prevention in communities and the courts.

The leadership and guidance from subject matter experts on gun violence prevention at Everytown were pivotal in the content creation and development of this guide. You can contact Everytown Support Fund’s team at info@everytown.org and find their Research and Policy content on [Everytown Support Fund’s website](#).

Letter from NEA President Becky Pringle

On April 20, 1999, I had been a middle-school science teacher in Pennsylvania for 23 years. None of my two decades of experience and training had prepared me to answer the questions my frightened students had about the shooting happening at Columbine High School that day. Along with my fellow educators, I shared the country's profound shock and grief that a school building—a place that should always be safe—had become the site of a massacre. The only thing that comforted us was the belief that this—then the deadliest mass shooting at a K-12 school in U.S. history—was a terrible anomaly. We believed our country would learn from the tragedy and take every measure to ensure it never happened again.

But the Columbine death toll was surpassed at Sandy Hook Elementary School...and Parkland High School...and Uvalde's Robb Elementary School. Each time, we thought, "They have to do something now." But close to 400 school shootings later, the biggest change seemed to be in 2020, when firearms finally surpassed car accidents and disease to become the No. 1 killer of children in America.

We must put a stop to the gun violence that continues to terrorize our students, our educators, families, and communities. As President Biden, who finally passed the most comprehensive gun safety legislation in 30 years, said, "We all want our kids to have the freedom to learn to read and to write instead of learning how to duck and cover in a classroom."

Gun violence in schools affects all students and educators, and its ripple effects spread out to the entire community. There is the constant fear that your school, your children, will be the next victims. According to the American Psychological Association's report, "Stress in America 2023: A Nation Recovering from Collective Trauma," 56 percent of U.S. adults report mass shootings as a significant source of stress. And we know that the long-term effects of toxic stress can change the brain and body's makeup, particularly for children, severely affecting both physical and mental health.

According to the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, with whom NEA partnered to create this guide, 107 incidents of gun violence on school grounds have already caused 29 deaths and injured 61 people—and this is just during the first five months of 2024.

This is unacceptable. No matter how many school shootings we have seen happen, they are just as unacceptable today as they were in 1999. We cannot, we must not, accept the lie that there's nothing we can do to stop them.

While we are grateful for the strides President Biden has made, it is clear that more still needs to be done, which is why NEA set out to issue a call to action to end gun violence in our schools and communities. The result is this guide—a collection of hundreds of calls to action for educators; for school district, college, and university boards and administrators; for politicians; and for students, parents, and families. We look to the day when this guide will be unnecessary and obsolete, but for now, we—the members of this nation's largest labor union—must focus our attention on how to end gun violence in our schools and our communities.

And we must take a hard look at what that violence really looks like. While the picture most people have in their minds about schools and guns involves young White male shooters and White victims, the truth is that our students of color are disproportionately affected by gun violence. According to Everytown, “2 in 3 incidents of gunfire on school grounds from 2013 to 2021 occurred in schools where one or more racial and/or ethnic minorities constituted a majority of the student population.”

The good news is that gun violence is preventable. Not by absurd and impossible measures like arming teachers or putting armed security officers in every school, but through commonsense gun laws and trauma-informed schools that create safe environments and that have the staffing and mental health resources necessary to do it right.

The guide focuses on the roles of state and local education association leaders, staff, building representatives, faculty liaisons, and more. But it is meant to serve as a bridge between what NEA affiliates can do to facilitate gun violence prevention, preparation, response, and recovery and the crucial work of so many others in the broader school community. We know that each community varies with respect to their approach to guns and their experiences with gun violence. This guide is designed to help educators of all types and all levels of experience join with others to end gun violence in our schools.

NEA, we must find a way forward together. We must stop our children—our hope for the future—from continuing to fall prey to this country’s epidemic of gun violence. And we must help the survivors recover and succeed despite their trauma.

Thank you for picking up this guide and committing to being part of the solution!



Rebecca S. Pringle
President, National Education Association

Letter from Moms Demand Action Executive Director Angela Ferrell-Zabala

Gun violence is the No. 1 killer of children in America.

This is a statistic I say often, but it never becomes less jarring. And while this fact encompasses more than just school shootings, it is undeniable that our classrooms are not the safe havens that they should be.

Students deserve the freedom to live, learn, and play without the constant threat of gun violence. But this is our current reality, caused by a reckless gun industry, a corrupt gun lobby, and extremist lawmakers who refuse to take decisive action.

I know that with an issue this large and complex, a safer future can often feel out of reach. The truth is, there's no one-size-fits-all answer to preventing gun violence—but we do have the solutions to this crisis. We need to create powerful, informed networks in our communities that know how to keep our children safe. It will take all of us—educators, administrators, parents, students, law enforcement, mental health professionals, advocates, and policymakers—working together to create change.

To address this urgent need, we are proud to partner with the National Education Association to introduce a comprehensive guide that equips Pre-K-12 schools and higher education institutions with resources, recommendations, and evidence-based solutions for gun violence prevention. This new tool is intentionally organized into four parts: Prevention of, Preparation for, Response to, and Recovery from gun-related incidents on school grounds—because we've seen how important it is not only to prevent gun violence but also to heal from the trauma when it does occur.

As a mother of four children myself, I've seen up close how our gun violence crisis shapes the educational experiences and well-being of our students. But we cannot—and will not—normalize the fact that our children live in fear of being shot in their classrooms. This guide serves not just as a collection of strategies, but as a call to action for protecting young people in America.

I am hopeful that with dedication, collaboration, and the right tools, we will save lives. This is a necessary step in that direction, and our movement is here to support you every step of the way.

Thank you for your commitment. Together, I know that a safer future is possible.

In solidarity,



Angela Ferrell-Zabala
Executive Director of Moms Demand Action

Introduction

WHY THIS GUIDE

The United States suffers from an epidemic of gun violence. Every day, more than 120 people are killed by guns, and more than 200 are shot and wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-j). Less than 1 percent of gun deaths per year occur on school grounds, but the impact extends far beyond these casualties: Gun violence shapes the lives of millions of people in this country who witness it, who know the victims, or who live in fear of the next shooting. Gun violence has a profoundly harmful impact on students, educators, families, and communities.

For most of this country's history, infectious diseases and car accidents constituted the greatest risks to childhood health, but today, gun violence is the No. 1 cause of death for children and teens. Each year, more than 4,000 children and teens are shot and killed, and more than 17,000 are shot and wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-k). Homicides account for roughly 6 in 10 gun deaths among children (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-k), and gun suicides are on the rise—a public health crisis (American Public Health Association, 2023) that communities and elected officials can prevent. In the United States, an estimated 3 million children per year are exposed to shootings (Finkelhor et al., 2015), and the trauma of witnessing shootings—whether in their schools, communities, or homes—can have a devastating impact on their lives. The Stress in America survey provides ample evidence of the collective trauma our country faces, including from mass shootings (American Psychological Association, 2023).

The Everytown Support Fund's [Gunfire on School Grounds](#) database details the myriad ways in which gun violence manifests in U.S. schools. Over the past 11 years, the Everytown Support Fund has identified at least 1,200 incidents of a firearm discharging a live round inside or into a school building or on or onto school grounds. Of these incidents, 841 occurred on the grounds of a prekindergarten, elementary, middle, or high school, resulting in 270 people killed and 580 people wounded. In the 326 incidents that occurred on university or college campuses during that time period, 120 people were killed and another 251 were wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2024-b).

Students exposed to the trauma of violence, crime, and abuse are more likely to suffer from substance use disorders, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); fail or have difficulties in school; and engage in criminal activity (Finkelhor et al., 2015); (Cronholm et al., 2015). Even for those who have not experienced gun violence at school, the trauma of lockdowns and active shooter drills—which are happening with notable frequency—leaves students, educators, and their families across the country experiencing firsthand the impact of fear from the anticipation of gun violence.

The National Education Association (NEA) remains committed to ending the scourge of gun violence. As NEA President Becky Pringle told the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform in testimony urging Congress to act to end gun violence, “Inaction means we are willing to accept what should be unacceptable to us all” (NEA, 2022-b).

With attention to the disproportionate impact of gun violence on communities of color, NEA advocates in Congress, develops resources and trainings, encourages media and academic coverage of the subject, mobilizes members and communities, and engages with partners across the country to end gun violence. However, more must be done. To further address gun violence in our schools at every level of education, in July 2022, the NEA Representative Assembly (RA)—the Association’s highest decision-making body—directed NEA to issue a national call to action to help ensure that all students, educators, schools, campuses, and communities are safe from the epidemic of gun violence.

Working with an NEA-wide team that meets regularly to assess, plan, and work toward the ambitious goal set by the RA, the Association has convened members, leaders, and staff across the country to help develop strategies and identify needed actions. As part of its call to action, NEA has partnered with the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund (Everytown Support Fund) to produce the NEA School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide. The guide helps NEA’s state and local leaders, staff, and worksite leaders—like building representatives and faculty liaisons—prevent, prepare for, respond to, and facilitate recovery from gun violence in all education settings.

Ideally, this guide will be used for planning and advocacy that should already be taking place in Pre-K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. By focusing on the roles of association leaders, staff, and worksite leaders, like building representatives and faculty liaisons, it is meant to complement—not supplant—planning, preparation, and action by school administrators.



www.nea.org

www.everytownsupportfund.org

ORGANIZATION AND FOCUS OF THIS GUIDE

We published the guide's four sections—on prevention, preparation, response, and recovery—separately to facilitate their use. Each part includes material for Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education and for all categories of employees.

This guide uses the term “educators” broadly to refer to NEA’s rich and diverse membership, including aspiring educators; classroom teachers; education support professionals (ESPs), such as paraeducators and clerical service, custodial and maintenance, food service, health and student service, security, skilled trades, technical service, and transportation workers; the faculty, staff, and graduate workers in colleges and universities; and specialized instructional support personnel (SISP), like school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, speech-language pathologists, and school librarians.

The guide presents resources, tools, recommended practices, and checklists for incorporating gun violence-related strategies into the school crisis prevention and response plans of associations, Pre-K–12 schools, and institutions of higher education.

The Guide’s Checklists and Resources

The guide includes separate checklists for state leaders and staff and for local leaders, staff, and building representatives, department liaisons, department representatives, and other educators taking on worksite leadership roles.

The prevention, preparation, and recovery checklists start with steps for people newer to this work and advance to action items for those who are expanding their ongoing work. People who are broadening and deepening their engagement are likely to have already taken many of the early steps identified in the checklists. The response-related checklists outline actions based on the time elapsed since the gun incident: the first few hours, the first 12 hours, and the first week and beyond.

The end of the guide includes detail on all URLs of the resources hyperlinked throughout the body of the document.

The Guide's Four Main Sections

- 1 PREVENTION:** Prevention aims to reduce the risk and prevent the occurrence of gun violence incidents on school grounds, on campuses, and in communities. It includes taking actions to foster a positive and safe school climate and limit access to firearms that could be used in acts of school violence. This section presents strategies to help schools plan for trauma-informed crisis intervention practices, promote secure storage of guns, increase mental health and suicide prevention supports, integrate community violence intervention programs into schools, advocate for legislation that limits the presence of guns in schools, and take other steps to address gun violence.

- 2 PREPARATION:** Preparation involves planning for gun violence-related scenarios and continually planning, practicing, and evaluating the efficacy of responses. The goals are to minimize emotional, psychological, and physical harm when incidents occur and to have a system in place for immediate, effective response and recovery, which includes establishing crucial relationships with school administrators and community groups. The preparation and prevention phases often occur simultaneously and are ongoing. This section includes strategies to install evidence-based security upgrades to prevent shooters' access to education settings, examine the efficacy and potential harm of active shooter drills and school policing, and establish the processes and relationships that will facilitate effective responses.

- 3 RESPONSE:** The response phase includes action steps to minimize the harm of gun violence to students, educators of all types, and their families. The focus is short-term and requires coordination and rapid response during and immediately after a gun violence incident. The checklist for this section includes strategies and action steps based on how long ago the gun incident took place—the first few hours, the first 12 hours, and the first week and beyond. It also includes recommendations on how to speak with students about gun violence.

- 4 RECOVERY:** Recovery focuses on coping with trauma after a gun violence incident and restoring a safe and healthy school environment. It is imperative to focus on supporting the emotional, physical, and psychological health of students, educators, and their families. This section includes approaches to supporting recovery efforts, providing care and support to those impacted by gun violence incidents, and evaluating the planning and incident response to identify areas that need improvement or adjustment.

The NEA Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide

FOUR PHASES OF WORK TO ADDRESS GUN VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

1

PREVENT

- Understand Guns in Schools
- Consider ACEs, Trauma, and Toxic Stress
- Apply Evidence-Based Prevention Strategies
- Foster Safe and Supportive Schools
- Implement Education and Advocacy Strategies
- Carry Out Plans to Prevent Gun Violence

2

PREPARE

- Adopt Evidence-Based Approaches to Security
- Examine School Policing and Active Shooter Drills
- Understand, Assess, Improve, and Work with Emergency Operations Plans
- Put the Pieces in Place to Facilitate Response and Recovery

3

RESPOND

- Know How to Talk with Students About Gun Violence
- Support College Students After Gun Violence
- Implement Successful Communications Strategies
- Respond in a Deliberate, Effective Manner

4

RECOVER

- Understand Gun Violence Trauma
- Communicate Supportively
- Provide Care and Support
- Foster and Rely on Community Partnerships
- Evaluate and Improve Your Incident Response



Gun Violence Recovery

GUN VIOLENCE RECOVERY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CHECKLISTS

The recovery section of the NEA School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide focuses on coping with trauma and grief after a gun violence incident, restoring a safe and healthy learning environment, and providing support to students, educators, and those impacted by gun violence incidents as the initial response turns to longer-term needs. This section also addresses effective ways for association leaders, staff, and worksite leaders, like building representatives and faculty liaisons, to evaluate and improve the response to the incident. Just like following the recommendations in the preparation section will facilitate response-related work, effective preparation and response will enhance recovery efforts. For broader context, consult the other sections of this guide: Part 1—Prevention, Part 2—Preparation, and Part 3—Response.

Address Primary and Secondary Trauma

Extensive research on trauma caused by gun violence indicates that it extends far beyond those killed or wounded in the incident itself. The prevalence and threat of school shootings have created a generation of young people in the United States who are growing up with a constant fear of being shot and killed in a place where they should feel safe.

The collective trauma that gun incidents elicit is remembered and recollected by community members at various times and in multiple spaces, sometimes predictably—like on anniversaries of the incident—and sometimes unpredictably—for example, when a sound or smell elicits a reaction. Both post-traumatic stress and secondary traumatic stress can result from exposure to gun violence. Those impacted by such trauma can include direct victims, students in the school where the incident took place or in other communities, first responders, community members, and educators. It is important to note that educators, who are often the on-the-ground front line responders to crises, are also at risk of compassion fatigue.

Plan and Assess Responses

The U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies have produced guides for developing high-quality school emergency operations plans in K-12 schools and institutions of higher education (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-a); (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-b). Part Two of this guide, which focuses on preparing for incidents of gun violence, provides information on how the association can use these plans, noting that individual states and localities may employ different approaches to emergency planning. For purposes of the response section of the NEA guide, the federal government's approach to recovery bears attention, describing the four fundamental kinds of post-crisis recovery: academic recovery, physical recovery, fiscal recovery, and psychological and emotional recovery. The 2018 [NEA School Crisis Guide](#) also provides resources and strategies to help support crisis response teams in recovery efforts (NEA, 2018).

Other important elements of a recovery effort to assist victims include access to mental health services, peer support, legal help, and logistical and financial support, such as relocation costs and funeral arrangements. This section of the guide provides a variety of programs and resources available to victims, including financial and legal support and information on how to deal with post-traumatic stress and trauma.

Build Strong Partnerships

Strong partnerships with organizations working statewide or locally provide the opportunity to enhance association work related to incidents of gun violence. This section of the guide includes links to national-level organizations that may have state- or local-level counterparts. Identifying local groups whether professional associations, non-governmental organizations, or academic centers may also serve the same purpose. Whether they focus on racial and social justice, countering gun violence, promoting student health, or another relevant topic, identifying and building relationships with such groups establishes mutual opportunities for support in response to the incident in the short-, medium-, and long-term.

Develop Long-Term Media and Communications Strategies

In the days, weeks, months, and even years after the incident, it will be important to develop a longer-term media strategy, which should include when, where, and how to communicate with the media. Recognizing that the media needs a story, the designated spokesperson should provide accurate, timely information and understand the cycles of media response.

The needs of the media change as the situation evolves.

It is important for the association to develop media protocols that, for example, determine how the association will handle local versus national media; how to work with administrators on press releases, statements, and talking points; and how to handle interview requests. Throughout this process, association leaders should be assessing and reviewing the protocols, as necessary.

Assess for Improvement

The association and administrators should evaluate gun violence incident work to identify areas for improvement and evolving circumstances and/or emerging needs. Within the association, bringing together those who played a role in the work—and those who did not play a role but could have—and revising protocols, approaches, and resources will lead to more effective work in the future.

GUN VIOLENCE RECOVERY

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: RECOVERY: STATE

STATE PRESIDENTS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS					
	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Arrange systematic check-ins with local leaders, as necessary.				
2	Assist the local association with communication needs, as necessary.				
3	Coordinate support from NEA and other state affiliates.				
4	Connect with organizations championing civil rights and racial and social justice; countering gun violence; supporting parents, family members, higher education partners, and spouses; and promoting student health. Discuss approaches to and mutual opportunities for recovery-related support in the short-, medium-, and long- term. Communicate with the local association about potential initiatives and opportunities.				
5	Assess state protocols and responses to the incident; revise protocols, as necessary; identify learnings and opportunities to enhance future responses.				
6	Review state and local policies related to gun violence in education settings to identify opportunities to strengthen policies and responses.				
7	Revise or develop, as needed, model gun- and safety-related collective bargaining language and/or administrative language.				
8	Communicate with local associations about potential initiatives and opportunities. In coordination with the local, invite key government officials to speak to the grieving school community.				

GUN VIOLENCE RECOVERY

SUMMARY ACTION CHECKLIST: RECOVERY: LOCAL

LOCAL PRESIDENTS, LOCAL STAFF, AND WORKSITE LEADERS					
	To Do	Where to find it, contacts, etc.	Complete	Assigned to	Next steps, follow up, dates, not applicable, etc.
1	Identify an individual or team to coordinate association recovery work.				
2	Distribute this section of the guide to the team or appropriate individuals.				
3	In coordination with appropriate administrators, provide information to members about mental health services available to them through their health insurance or plan, Employee Assistance Program, or other options.				
4	Identify appropriate content from the resources section of this guide to assist members in understanding primary and secondary trauma, talking with students about the incident, and other needs.				
5	Coordinate with appropriate administrators about school-sponsored initiatives designed to assist in recovery efforts.				
6	Connect with organizations championing civil rights and racial and social justice; countering gun violence; supporting parents, family members, higher education partners, and spouses; and promoting student health. Discuss approaches to and mutual opportunities for recovery-related support in the short-, medium-, and long-term.				

BACKGROUND

The trauma and grief caused by gun violence does not end when the shooting stops. People may identify as survivors if they have witnessed acts of gun violence, experienced intimate partner violence with a firearm, been threatened with a gun, or had a loved one who has been shot and wounded or killed by a gun—including by gun suicide.

Everytown has done extensive research on gun violence trauma and has found that the impact of gun violence extends far beyond those killed or wounded (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-i). Gunshot wound survivors face a lifelong healing process and may experience a broad array of difficulties, including psychological trauma, loss of work, and steep medical costs. Aside from immediate hospital bills associated with the wound, these survivors can encounter lifetime medical care costs, including readmission(s) to the hospital and nursing care. Many survivors report that the psychological effects of the shooting remain long after their injuries have physically healed. (Raza, Thiruchelvam, & Redelmeier, July 2020); (Orlas et al., 2021)

The prevalence and threat of shootings have created a generation of young people who are growing up in the United States with constant fear of being shot and killed in a place where they should feel safe. For students who have experienced other incidents of gun violence in their communities, the trauma symptoms are compounded. A 2022 national survey found that 51 percent of youth under the age of 18 are concerned that there will be a shooting in their or a nearby school, and 58 percent had recently thought about what would happen

if someone with a gun entered their school or one nearby (Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab, et al., July 2023).



THE IMPACT OF GUN VIOLENCE TRAUMA

Gun violence trauma deeply alters lives, creating a collective experience that extends beyond geographic boundaries. “Collective trauma” refers to the psychological reactions to a traumatic event that affect an entire society. In this case, after an incident, a collective traumatic memory is produced that is remembered and recollected by community members through various times and spaces (Hirschberger, 2018).

After an incident of gun violence, 33 percent of survivors live in fear and feel unsafe. As exposure to gun violence erodes, survivors’ sense of safety—and ultimately, how they navigate their environments—heightened trauma responses, including hypervigilance, numbness, paranoia, anxiety, and depression. Nearly 50 percent of survivors said they needed support, services, or assistance to cope with the impact of gun violence within the first six months or more after the incident of gun violence (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-i). Many of those who have experienced trauma are at risk for being re-traumatized, which happens when someone suffers new traumatic stress reactions after another similar event.

The [trauma of gun violence is immeasurable](#) (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-i). It has lasting effects on individuals and communities that are directly and indirectly affected, with outcomes including post-traumatic stress disorder and secondary traumatic stress (STS). Those impacted by such trauma can include:

- 1 Direct victims:** Students and/or educators who directly experienced or witnessed gun violence may develop PTSD. This can include survivors of shootings, witnesses to shootings, or those who have had a loved one taken.
- 2 First responders:** First responders—such as police officers, paramedics, and health care professionals—are at risk of developing STS when they are exposed to gun violence.
- 3 Community members:** The broader community can also experience STS as a result of exposure to gun violence incidents. Community members may include friends, family members, neighbors, or even people who hear about an incident through media coverage.
- 4 Educators:** Educators may experience STS when working with students who have been directly or indirectly affected by gun violence. Educators who are also on the “front lines” can be at risk for “compassion fatigue” (Psychology Today, 2024).

EFFECTIVE RECOVERY STRATEGIES

Association leaders and members should be included in this work. The U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies recommend that emergency response planning teams for K-12 schools include “representatives from a wide range of school personnel, including, but not limited to, administrators, educators, school psychologists, nurses, facilities managers, transportation managers, food personnel, and family services representatives (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-a). In the context of higher education, they also suggest that the team include representatives from across the institution (U.S. Department of Education, et al., 2013-b).

Part Two of this guide, focusing on preparation for incidents of gun violence, describes the role of teams in more detail, including the need to ensure that emergency planning teams include and represent the needs of people with disabilities.

The federal agencies’ guides describe the four fundamental kinds of post-crisis recovery—academic recovery, physical recovery, fiscal recovery, and psychological and emotional recovery—and describe the types of functions that must be addressed in those four areas. The emergency operations planning team should consider some of the following questions when developing its goals, objectives, and courses of action for recovery efforts:

- Who will serve as the team leader?
- When should the education setting be closed and reopened?
- What alternative educational programming will students receive in the event that they cannot physically convene, and how will programming be provided?
- How will educators and the affected community receive timely and factual information regarding return to worksites?
- What, where, and who will provide counseling and psychological first aid?
- How will the immediate, short-term, and long-term counseling needs of students, educators, and families be addressed?

Release Consistent and Well-Timed Communication to Support Recovery Efforts

To address gun violence incidents, the administration and the association need to have a plan and strategy for ongoing communication with educators, students, parents, families, the community, and media. Consistent and well-timed communication helps maintain transparency, provide updated information, and address concerns.

It also helps build trust, correct misinformation, and foster a sense of community. By managing media coverage responsibly, the association and the administration can ensure the well-being of those affected by the crisis and minimize the potential for re-traumatization. Overall, a well-structured and ongoing communications strategy plays a crucial role in facilitating recovery and rebuilding efforts after a gun violence incident.



The [2018 NEA School Crisis Guide](#) offers communications strategies to support crisis response teams and recovery efforts (NEA, 2018):

- Provide regular and updated communications, even after the gun violence incident has passed;
- Update various communication channels, such as websites, voicemails, phone scripts, and fact sheets, as necessary;
- Maintain a master list of frequently asked questions and answers; and
- Conduct meetings with key stakeholders to identify questions, address rumors, and provide accurate and timely information.

Develop Longer-Term Media and Communications Strategy

In the days, weeks, months, and even years after the incident, the association and the administration will need to rely on a longer-term media and communications strategy outlining when, where, and how to communicate on the gun violence incident. This will include how and when to allow coverage of memorials and special events, building refurbishment or replacement, and examples of successful or challenging student and educator recoveries. Rely on the same approaches to media relations discussed in Part Three of this guide, related to responding to incidents of gun violence, including the need to be sensitive to the lasting trauma caused by the incident and to coordinate with administrators.

Facilitate Care and Support to Initiate Recovery After the Gun Violence Incident

The road to recovery can be long and difficult.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network—which states that the development of STS is recognized as a common occupational hazard for professionals working with traumatized children—offers resources on secondary traumatic stress for educators and other professionals exposed to secondary trauma, including for child-serving professionals (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2012); (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2011); (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2022); (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2008). The resources section of this guide includes links to the resources.

PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Gun violence survivors—including students, educators, families, and community members—need trauma-informed counseling for both short- and long-term support. However, several barriers prevent survivors from accessing these services and care.

Findings from Everytown Support Fund show that survivors who identified as Black or Latin(o/a/x) were less likely to have access to mental health services or to providers culturally attuned to their communities, in the short- or long-term (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023-i). When responding to a crisis in the community, all parties must ensure access to appropriate mental health services and support.

PROMOTE PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

Peers are uniquely positioned to support survivors by drawing on their lived experiences. Studies have shown that peer support programs positively impact survivors by providing psychological and emotional support through community building, the credibility of lived experiences, and positive changes in acceptance of self and quality of life (Haas, Price, & Freeman, 2013); (Davis et al., 2014); (Hibbard et al., 2002). Peers play an important role in trauma care and post-traumatic growth by enhancing collaboration, building trust, establishing safety and hope, and sharing stories of lived experiences to promote recovery and healing.

The association and the administration should consider working with mental health providers to establish peer support spaces for students and children to connect with one another in a healing environment. Educators may also benefit from peer support. The [Everytown Survivor Network](#) and other programs that support survivors of gun violence, such as the [Survivor Fellowship Program for Students](#) and the [National Alliance for Children's Grief](#), serve as important resources. For additional resources, see the list at the end of this section of this guide.

Partnering to Support Recovery Efforts

During and after a gun violence incident, partnerships are exceptionally important, both with the education community and broader community. Community partners—which can include racial and social justice organizations, mental health professionals, counselors, trauma specialists, and other support services—often provide diverse expertise, resources, and skills that can significantly enhance recovery efforts. Because they are already a part of the community, they also often are rooted in the local context and possess cultural competence because they already serve the community in crisis. Within the education community, organizations with expertise and experience likely already exist that can support effective recovery, like the [Principal Recovery Network](#) of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, a national network of current and former school leaders who have experienced gun violence tragedies in their buildings (National Association of Secondary School Principals, n.d.). The [National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement](#) also provides resources for educators and families.

From state to state and within states, potential partners may vary. An important place to start is with other unions representing workers in the Pre-K–12 schools and institutions of higher education where association members work, gun violence-focused organizations, racial and social justice organizations, after-school programs, mental and physical health providers and organizations, associations representing principals or other administrators, and local colleges and universities with programs that identify or address violence in communities or, more specifically, in education settings.

The following list includes several national-level organizations—with links to their websites—that may have state or local counterparts. Identifying local groups working on similar topics may also serve the same purpose.

AAPI Victory Alliance

<https://aapivictoryalliance.com/gunviolenceprevention>

AASA—The School Superintendents Association

<https://www.aasa.org/resources/all-resources?Keywords=safety&RowsPerPage=20>

Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools

<https://reclaimourschools.org>

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/gun-violence-prevention>

American Psychological Association

<https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/gun-violence-prevention>

American School Counselor Association

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Prevention-of-School-Rel>

Color of Change

<https://colorofchange.org>

Community Justice Action Fund

<https://www.cjactionfund.org>

Hope and Heal Fund

<https://hopeandhealfund.org/who-we-are>

League of United Latin American Citizens

https://lulac.org/advocacy/resolutions/2013/resolution_on_gun_violence_prevention/index.html

Life Camp

<https://www.peaceisalifestyle.com>

Live Free

<https://livefreeusa.org>

March for Our Lives

<https://marchforourlives.org>

MomsRising

<https://www.momsrising.org/blog/topics/gun-safety>

NAACP

<https://naacp.org>

National Association of Elementary School Principals

<https://www.naesp.org>

National Association of School Nurses

<https://www.nasn.org/blogs/nasn-inc/2023/07/27/take-action-to-address-gun-violence>

National Association of School Psychologists

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis>

National Association of Secondary School Principals

<https://www.nassp.org/community/principal-recovery-network>

National Association of Social Workers

<https://www.socialworkers.org>

National PTA

<https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/federal-legislation/Public-Policy-Priorities/gun-safety-and-violence-prevention>

National School Boards Association

<https://www.nsba4safeschools.org/home>

Parents Together

<https://parents-together.org/the-heart-of-gun-safety-and-a-new-approach-to-advocacy>

Sandy Hook Promise

<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org>

The Trevor Project

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org>

UnidosUS

<https://unidosus.org/publications/latinos-and-gun-violence-prevention>



Assess Responses for Improvement or Adjustment

The gun violence recovery process is dynamic, and the needs of individuals and communities may change over time. Regular and continuous evaluation allows for adjustments to be made based on evolving circumstances and/or emerging needs. Evaluation can also help resource allocation and optimization based on assessing the impact of existing resources. The following are key principles for evaluating and adjusting a recovery plan, whether carried out by administrators or the association, or both:

- Implement a regular monitoring system to assess the recovery plan's implementation, including milestones and key performance indicators;
- Solicit feedback from various stakeholders, including community members, educators, and mental health professionals, involved in the recovery process;
- Collect relevant data and information to assess the impact of implemented strategies;
- Maintain transparent communication about any adjustments made; and
- Keep thorough documentation of evaluation or assessment, adjustments made, and why the changes were made.

By following the above principles, administrators and the association can ensure that the recovery plan remains responsive and supportive of the ongoing well-being of individuals and communities while also keeping in mind the importance of accommodating any unexpected changes. Educators should be ready to modify lesson plans, curriculum goals, classroom expectations, and organizational structure according to need. As the effects of trauma can be transformative, it is also important to be mindful of behavioral changes in students, notice any alarming patterns, lead with kindness and tolerance, and create room for discussion with students and their families.

GUN VIOLENCE RECOVERY RESOURCES

National Education Association Resources

National Education Association

<https://www.nea.org>

The National Education Association is the nation's largest union, representing more than 3 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, specialized instructional support personnel, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become educators.

NEA Health and Safety Program

<https://www.nea.org/healthy-schools>

The NEA Health and Safety Program provides information and solutions related to student and educator mental health, violence prevention and response, infection control, and environmental and occupational safety and health, among other topics.

NEA School Crisis Guide

<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/neas-school-crisis-guide>

Produced in 2018, the guide provides detailed content on how to effectively prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from school crises.

Responding to Gun Violence

<https://www.nea.org/gunviolence>

This portion of the NEA website provides health and safety content on taking action, helping students and educators cope, resources for school leaders, fostering mental health, and preventing hate and bias.

Addressing the Epidemic of Trauma in Schools

<https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Addressing%20the%20Epidemic%20of%20Trauma%20in%20Schools%20-%20NCSEA%20and%20NEA%20Report.pdf>

This report builds a framework to advance trauma awareness and trauma-informed approaches, including some currently being implemented by NEA state affiliates. It includes key recommendations for ways in which NEA may address the trauma crisis through policy, programs, and practices. It also includes a list of selected resources developed, or suggested as references, by affiliates to address student and educator trauma.

How Restorative Practices Work for Students and Educators

<https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/how-restorative-practices-work-students-and-educators>

This *NEA Today* article explores what happens in public schools where educators care more about creating a community built upon kindness, not consequences.

NEA Micro-Credential Courses on Restorative Practices

<https://nea.certificationbank.com//NEA/CandidatePortal/CategoryDetail.aspx?Stack=RP>

Each of the five micro-credentials in this stack can stand alone or be completed sequentially: Exploring Restorative Practices; Building a Positive Classroom Community with Affective Language; Restorative

Circles—Building Relationships in the Classroom; Restorative Conferencing; and Implementing Restorative Practices.

NEA Micro-Credential Course on Trauma-Informed Pedagogy

<https://nea-mc.certificationbank.com/open-doc-loader.aspx?pid=E4033E41-057D-422C-899D-2B6D32FD-55B8&il=1>

This course addresses child trauma, how trauma affects the brain, trauma-informed pedagogy, leveled intervention strategies, behavioral support plans, replacement behaviors, and teaching students to self-advocate.

Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships and Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools—A Guide for Educators

https://schottfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/restorative-practices-guide_0.pdf

This guide helps educators better understand what restorative practices are and how they can foster

safe learning environments through community building and constructive conflict resolution.

Tools and Tips for Trauma-Informed Practices

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/trauma-informed-practices>

Educators in every school community can use these practices to create safe and supportive learning environments for their students.

Trauma-Informed Schools

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/trauma-informed-schools>

Supporting students who suffer from childhood trauma requires whole school involvement and transformation. The NEA and its affiliates are actively engaged in finding ways for schools and educators to address the issue of trauma and its implications for learning, behavior, and school safety.

Everytown Resources

Everytown for Gun Safety

<https://www.everytown.org>

Everytown for Gun Safety is the largest gun violence prevention organization in America. The organization is a movement of more than 10 million supporters working to end gun violence.

Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund

<https://everytownsupportfund.org>

The Everytown Support Fund is the education, research, and litigation arm of Everytown for Gun Safety. It seeks to improve our understanding of the causes of gun violence and help to reduce it by conducting ground-breaking original research, developing evidence-based policies, communicating this knowledge to the American public, and advancing gun safety and gun violence prevention in communities and the courts.

Everytown Survivor Network

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network>

The Everytown Survivor Network is a nationwide community of survivors working together to end gun violence. The network amplifies the power of survivor voices, offers trauma-informed programs, provides information on direct services, and supports survivors in their advocacy. Included below are resources from the Everytown Survivor Network.

Acute Stress and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/acute-stress-disorder-and-post-traumatic-stress-disorder>

This resource provides general information about post-traumatic stress disorder and secondary trauma stress, including tips for recognizing the signs and symptoms and effective coping strategies.

Children's Responses to Trauma

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/childrens-responses-to-trauma>

This resource provides information for parents and adults about how to support children and teens who have experienced a shooting or are upset by images of gun violence.

Crime Victim Compensation: Financial Assistance After a Crime

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/crime-victim-compensation-financial-assistance-after-a-crime>

This material offers general information on Crime Victim Compensation (CVC)—a government program that helps crime victims and their families with the financial costs of crimes—as well as eligibility and links to each state crime victim's compensation program.

Finding Help

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/finding-help>

This information provides helpful checklists and organizations that may be able to help in a crisis or connect individuals to area community resources. Everytown for Gun Safety and NEA do not endorse any particular organization.

Navigating the Criminal Justice System

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/navigating-the-criminal-justice-system>

This content provides general information and tips about the criminal justice process. Many survivors have never experienced the criminal justice system prior to an incident of gun violence and learn quickly that legal case processing is complicated. Understanding how different legal system agencies work and interact with one

another may help survivors navigate what lies ahead of them.

SurvivorsConnect

<https://forms.everytown.org/a/welcome-survivorsconnect>

SurvivorsConnect is a program that matches gun violence survivors with trained SurvivorsConnect Leaders who, themselves, are also survivors of gun violence, who want to share what they have learned with survivors seeking support. SurvivorsConnect Leaders will listen and offer emotional support, mentorship, and referrals to external services, as appropriate. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in the SurvivorsConnect program at this time.

Taking Care of Yourself

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/taking-care-of-yourself>

This content includes information about the importance of self-care for gun violence survivors and guidance on how to develop a self-care plan.

Trauma and Gun Violence

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/trauma-and-gun-violence>

This resource provides basic information about the signs and symptoms of emotional and physical trauma. It also shares ways to cope with the consequences of trauma and avoid re-traumatization.

Traumatic Grief

<https://everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survivor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survivors-of-gun-violence/traumatic-grief>

This information helps survivors understand how grief after a trauma is different than grief that is anticipated, how to cope with complicated grief, and how to approach the recovery process.

Other Resources

SUPPORT FOR TRAUMA- AND GRIEF-INFORMED RECOVERY

Anniversaries of Traumatic Events: Guidance for Educators

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/anniversaries-of-traumatic-events-guidance-for-educators>

The National Association of School Psychologists provides suggestions to help educators meet the needs of their students and communities on the anniversary of a violent incident, which can often result in considerable media attention. This resource provides tips on how to prepare and respond during an anniversary as well as proactive strategies for school administrators.

Coalition to Support Grieving Students

<http://www.grievingstudents.org>

The Coalition to Support Grieving Students is a collaborative of professional organizations that represent educators, school administrators, student support personnel, and school board members. It provides relevant and high-quality professional learning opportunities and resources to school staff, community members, and families who support grieving students in schools and communities.

National Alliance for Children's Grief

<https://nacg.org>

The National Alliance for Children's Grief (NACG) is a nonprofit organization that raises awareness about the needs of children and teens who are grieving a death and provides education and resources for anyone who supports them. Through the collective voice of its members and partners, NACG educates, advocates, and raises awareness about childhood bereavement.

National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement

<https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org>

The National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement (NCSCB) at Children's Hospital Los Angeles is dedicated to helping schools support their students through crisis and loss.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<https://www.nctsn.org>

This network of frontline providers, family members, researchers, and national partners shares the following helpful resources on recovering from the trauma of a gun violence incident.

Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/child-trauma-toolkit-educators>

This toolkit provides school administrators, educators, and concerned parents with basic information about working with traumatized children in the school system.

"I Don't Know How to Address Worries About My Child's Safety at School"

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/i-dont-know-how-to-address-worries-about-my-childs-safety-at-school>

This video features discussions with parents, educators, and providers of crisis response and their personal experiences of struggling to deal with and address their child's or student's safety at school. Fact sheets and tip sheets to support trauma-informed recovery include:

Assisting Parents/Caregivers in Coping with Collective Traumas

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/assisting-parents-caregivers-in-coping-with-collective-traumas>

Helping School-Age Children with Traumatic Grief: Tips for Caregivers

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-school-age-children-traumatic-grief-tips-caregivers>

Helping Teens with Traumatic Grief: Tips for Caregivers

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-teens-traumatic-grief-tips-caregivers>

Helping Young Children with Traumatic Grief: Tips for Caregivers

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-young-children-traumatic-grief-tips-caregivers>

Helping Youth to Cope with 4th of July Celebrations After a Shooting

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-youth-cope-with-4th-of-july-celebrations-after-a-shooting>; <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-youth-after-community-trauma-tips-educators>

Restoring a Sense of Safety in the Aftermath of a Shooting: Tips for Parents and Professionals

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/restoring-sense-safety-aftermath-shooting-tips-parents-and-professionals>

Skills for Psychological Recovery

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/skills-psychological-recovery-spr-online>

This online course is designed to help survivors gain skills to manage distress and cope with post-disaster stress and adversity. This course utilizes skills-building components from mental health treatment that have been found helpful in a variety of post-trauma situations.

Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Families and Educators

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-resources/talking-to-children-about-violence-tips-for-families-and-educators>

The National Association of School Psychologists offers caregivers and school personnel tips on how to help children feel safe, reinforcing their natural resilience and talking with them about their fears.

Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Toolkit

<https://www.nc2s.org/resource/trauma-informed-resilience-oriented-schools-toolkit>

The National Center for School Safety provides tools, videos, professional development slide decks, and concise instruction to explain the concepts of trauma and toxic stress. This guide offers individual and school-wide strategies for addressing trauma and fostering resilience for students, educators, and families in addition to strategies to assess the impact of these adaptations throughout the community.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANS

Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans

https://rems.ed.gov/docs/rems_k-12_guide_508.pdf

This guide—developed by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Federal Emergency Management Agency—provides schools with steps they can take to plan for potential emergencies through the creation, implementation, and maintenance of an emergency operations plan (EOP).

Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans for IHEs

https://rems.ed.gov/docs/IHE_Guide_508C.pdf

This guide—developed by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Federal Emergency Management Agency—provides higher education institutions with steps they can take to plan for potential emergencies through the creation, implementation, and maintenance of an emergency operations plan (EOP).

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PART 4 | RECOVERY



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