

## **Reducing Firearm Injuries and Deaths: Summary of a Position Paper from the American College of Physicians**

For more than 20 years, the American College of Physicians (ACP) has advocated for the need to address firearm-related injuries and deaths in the United States. Yet, firearm violence continues to be a public health crisis that requires the nation's immediate attention and demands bipartisan intervention from the U.S. Congress. ACP is concerned about not only the alarming number of mass shootings in the United States but also the daily toll of firearm violence in neighborhoods, homes, workplaces, and public and private places across the country.

On October 30, 2018, the *Annals of Internal Medicine* published ACP's updated [position paper](#) on reducing firearms injuries and deaths. The policy recommendations in the paper build on current ACP policies and are based on analyses of approaches that the evidence suggests will be effective in reducing deaths and injuries from firearm-related violence.

ACP's paper presents reasonable and evidence-based proposals to stem firearm-related violence, consistent with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, which could help move and guide the discussion in Congress on ways to address this growing epidemic. It also reaffirms the reality that physicians are indeed on the front lines of encountering patients who have been subjected to firearm-related violence and that this issue is very much a threat to the public health. This prompted a strong negative reaction from the National Rifle Association (NRA) through social media where physicians were told to "stay in their lane." Physicians and other supporters from across the nation quickly took to Twitter in a sharp rebuke to share personal stories of treating and caring for victims of firearm violence through a campaign known as #ThisIsOurLane. This social media maelstrom caught the attention of major media outlets and garnered substantial coverage, including from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, the *Associated Press*, and *National Public Radio*.

The American College of Physicians is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 154,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. ACP is also the number one physician group advocating for gun safety and reform. Below is a summary of positions from the recent paper.

### **Key Recommendations from the Paper**

#### ***Background Checks***

- There must be universal background checks, including for private sales and sales at gun shows.

#### ***Physician Counseling on Gun Safety***

- Physicians should discuss with their patients the risks that may be associated with having a firearm in the home and recommend ways to mitigate such risks, just like they would with anything that could pose a risk to their patients' health, including not using

seatbelts, not getting vaccinated, or using tobacco.

- In December 2017, Annals of Internal Medicine published a [pledge](#) about doctors discussing firearm safety with patients. Over 2,400 doctors have committed to date.

### ***Assault Weapons and Large Capacity Magazines***

- Sales of semiautomatic firearms that are designed to increase their rapid killing capacity (often called “assault weapons”) should be banned to reduce lethality in mass shootings. Large capacity magazines and bump stocks that allow shooters to continue firing without reloading should also be banned.

### ***Mental Health***

- Access to mental health needs to be expanded. While few people with mental health issues will use guns to harm others, they are more likely to be victims of gun violence.

### ***Firearm Research***

- There must be dedicated and increased federal funding for research on gun violence; current restrictions should be lifted.

### ***Domestic Violence***

- Loopholes in the background check system that allow domestic violence offenders to buy and own guns should be closed. Domestic violence offenders include dating partners, cohabitants, stalkers, those who victimize a family member other than a partner or child, and those with temporary restraining orders.

### ***Child Access Prevention***

- States should pass laws to require adults who have guns in their homes to store them safely and securely so they don't end up in the hands of children or others who might use them to harm themselves or others.

### ***Concealed Carry***

- States should not be required to accept concealed carry permits from other states with weaker standards to obtain such permits. For instance, a state that requires gun safety training should not have to accept permits from ones that don't.

### ***Extreme Risk Protection Orders***

- States should pass extreme risk protection laws, which allow families and law enforcement to get a ruling from an impartial judge within 72 hours to temporarily remove guns from individuals at imminent risk of using them to harm themselves or others, with due process.

ACP will continue to speak out on the need to address firearm-related violence as a public health threat and is committed to advancing reasonable, evidence-based policy reforms to curb such violence.

**#ThisIsOurLane**