

A Call to Action from the Nation's Nurses in the Wake of Newtown

Like the rest of the nation, America's nurses are heartbroken as we grieve the unthinkable loss and profound tragedy that unfolded last week in Newtown, Connecticut. This horrific event is a tipping point and serves as a call to action. The nation's nurses demand that political and community leaders across this country address longstanding societal needs to help curb this endless cycle of senseless violence.

Our country has witnessed unspeakable acts of mass shootings. The common thread in each of these tragedies has been the lethal combination of easy access to guns and inadequate access to mental health services.

As the largest single group of clinical health care professionals, registered nurses witness firsthand the devastation from the injuries sustained from gun violence. We also witness the trauma of individuals, families, and communities impacted by violence.

The care and nurturing of children in their earliest years provides a strong foundation for healthy growth and development as they mature into adulthood. Children, parents, and society face growing challenges with respect to widespread bullying and mental illness, and nurses understand the value of early intervention. Over the past decade, ill-advised and shortsighted cutbacks within schools and community health care systems have seriously impeded critical and needed access to school nurses and mental health professionals trained to recognize and intervene early with those who are at risk for violent behavior.

The public mental health system has sustained a period of devastating cuts over time. These cuts have been exacerbated during the Great Recession despite an increase in the demand for services for all populations, including our nation's veterans. States have cut vital services, such as community and hospital-based psychiatric care, housing, and access to medications. Looming budget cuts could lead to further cuts in services.

It is time to take action. The nation's nurses call on President Obama, Congress, and policymakers at the state and local level to take swift action to address factors that together will help prevent more senseless acts of violence. We call on policymakers to:

- Restore access to mental health services for individuals and families
- Increase students' access to nurses and mental health professionals from the elementary school level through college
- Ban assault weapons and enact other meaningful gun control reforms to protect society

The nation's nurses raise our collective voice to advocate on behalf of all of those who need our care. As a nation, we must commit to ending this cycle of preventable violence, death, and trauma. We must turn our grief into action.

Alabama State Nurses Association

American Academy of Nursing

American Nurses Association

American Psychiatric Nurses Association

ANA-Illinois

ANA-New York

ANA-Michigan/RN-AIM

Arizona Nurses Association

Arkansas Nurses Association

Association of Nurses in AIDS Care

Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses

Colorado Nurses Association

Connecticut Nurses' Association

Delaware Nurses Association

Infusion Nurses Society

Louisiana State Nurses Association

Massachusetts Association of Registered Nurses

Minnesota Organization of Registered Nurses

Missouri Nurses Association

Montana Nurses Association

National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists

National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses

National Association of School Nurses

National League for Nursing

New Hampshire Nurses' Association

New Jersey State Nurses Association

Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs

Ohio Nurses Association

Oklahoma Nurses Association

Pennsylvania State Nurses Association

Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association

Rhode Island State Nurses Association

Virginia Nurses Association

Washington State Nurses Association

Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society

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