

Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention
Statement by Maine Public Health Association
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Gun violence is a threat to public health. Data show that different types of violence tend to co-occur, such that in areas where there are higher rates of community-level gun violence there are also higher rates of domestic violence and child abuse. At the community level, gun violence tends to occur more often in areas already experiencing social and economic disparities, including geographic racial segregation and concentrated poverty.¹ Moreover, childhood trauma, including domestic violence and community violence, may be a risk factor for gun violence later in life.²

A public health approach to violence prevention fosters healthy gender norms and relationships, bolsters trauma-informed services, and works to mitigate racism by changing norms and behaviors; collectively, these efforts lead to reductions in violence.³ The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has developed technical packages to help states and communities take advantage of the best available evidence to prevent violence – including intimate partner violence, suicide, youth violence, sexual violence, and child abuse and neglect. The strategies and approaches represent different levels of social ecology with efforts intended to impact individual behaviors as well as the relationship, family, school, community, and societal factors that influence risk and protective factors for violence. They are intended to work together and to be used in combination in a multi-level, multi-sector effort to prevent violence. Access The Cardiff Violence Prevention Model toolkit [here](#).

Best practice public health policies include implementing “red flag” laws, strengthening penalties for illegal gun sales, protecting victims of domestic violence, and allocating resources to address mental health, which underlies many of the circumstances leading to gun violence. For example, [in Maine](#), in 2020, there were 154 deaths by firearms. Of those deaths, 132 – 86% – were suicides. Another 19 were homicides, and 3 were unintentional.

Action Steps – MPHA commits to supporting efforts to:

- Collect, analyze, and report data related to gun violence and violence prevention models at the local, state, and national levels, including disaggregating data by age, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sex, disability, geography, and other demographic factors – allowing for the identification of socially vulnerable populations, and accordingly, the strategic deployment of interventions.
- Pass legislation that:
 - Requires background checks on all gun sales, including purchases online and at gun shows
 - Implements extreme risk “Red Flag” laws that provide a legal process to temporarily remove guns from people who present a danger to themselves or others
 - Requires safe storage laws requiring firearms in homes and community spaces are stored unloaded and locked, with ammunition kept separately

- Restricts access to assault weapons and high-capacity magazines to reduce injuries and deaths in shooting incidents.
- Train health professionals to identify risk factors and trauma indicators, provide trauma-informed care, and possess comprehensive knowledge of appropriate referral services and treatment.
- Adopt, invest in, expand, study, and support evidence-based and promising public health approaches to violence prevention, including screening practices related to intimate partner violence, elder abuse, and abuse of vulnerable adults as detailed in the [U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendations](#).

¹ Santilli A, O'Connor Duffany K, Carroll-Scott A, Thomas J, Greene A, Arora A, Agnoli A, Gan G, and Ickovics J. 2017. [Bridging the response to mass shootings and urban violence: Exposure to violence in New Haven, Connecticut](#). *American Journal of Public Health*;107:374-379.

² Wamser-Nanney R, Nanney JT, Conrad E, Constans JJ. 2019. [Childhood trauma exposure and gun violence risk factors among victims of gun violence](#). *Psychol Trauma*;11(1):99-106.

³ American Public Health Association. 2018. [Violence is a public health issue: Public health is essential to understanding and treating violence in the U.S.](#)