

Frequently Asked Questions: Shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School

On Friday, December 14, Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, experienced a violent shooting that resulted in nearly 30 deaths. National PTA[®] President Betsy Landers issued a statement that same day to express her sympathy for the students, families and communities affected by the horrendous tragedy. School and child safety, a crucial component of effective learning, is one of PTA's core tenets. National PTA believes that the protection of children in all school settings is a fundamental right and has made it the utmost priority for our work and advocacy.

Following is a sampling of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) National PTA has received since the shooting summary. If you have additional questions, please contact info@pta.org.

Q: Does National PTA have resources to assist parents, families and educators in dealing with the aftermath of this tragedy?

A: Yes, you can find PTA resources, including tips for talking to children and for improving school safety, online at PTA.org/schoolviolence. Like you, our attention and assistance is focused on helping schools, families, and children coping with this traumatic event. Your help in sharing PTA resources within your state is invaluable.

Q: How can my PTA and school community express support for the Sandy Hook PTA and Newtown community?

The Connecticut PTSA has created a special way for PTA leaders, school employees, and families to show their support for Sandy Hook Elementary School. We ask that you encourage local schools and communities to send paper snowflakes that will be used to decorate the new school, as well as donations to the "Connecticut PTSA Sandy Hook Fund" for ongoing community needs, via the Connecticut PTSA at the address listed below. These simple gestures will go a long way to lift the spirits of the children and show the community how much the nation cares.

The address for the Connecticut PTSA is:

Connecticut PTSA
60 Connolly Parkway
Building 12, Suite 103
Hamden, CT 06514

The submission deadline for snowflakes is January 12, 2013; the Connecticut PTSA will accept financial contributions indefinitely.

Q: Does National PTA support gun control? Where does National PTA stand on federal efforts that restrict access to firearms?

A: National PTA celebrates a long history of advocacy for the safety of our nation's children and youth and supports federal efforts to protect children and youth from gun violence. National PTA believes school safety is a critical priority and that every attempt must be made to reduce violence, especially incidents involving use of firearms. Parents, educators, community members, and government must prioritize this issue to ensure a safe learning environment for all students.

National PTA advocates for preventative measures to educate students, educators and community members on school and firearm safety, such as:

- Inclusion of safety education in public school curricula and community programs;
- Support and promotion of programs to educate parents, children, youth, and communities about the importance of firearm safety and awareness;
- Promotion of public education campaigns to alert parents and community members to the devastating effects of firearm-related violence; and
- Adoption of school-level and school district-level safety policies and guidelines, including the preparation of educators and pupil support personal in crisis response.

Additionally, National PTA advocates for specific provisions to restrict access to firearms. National PTA believes gun violence must decrease to make our schools and communities safer. National PTA encourages Congress to take action to enact federal laws to restrict access to firearms and improve school safety.

National PTA supports the following specific policy recommendations:

- Mandatory license to purchase a firearm
- Mandatory three day waiting period and background check to purchase a firearm, regardless of retail venue
- Prohibition on the sale of more than one handgun per month to any individual
- Prohibition of firearm purchase and possession by those convicted of spousal abuse and child abuse
- Mandatory increased annual license fee for any firearm retailer
- Reenactment and expansion of federal ban on the sale and possession of military-style assault weapons.

- Federal ban on non-sporting ammunition
- Establish federal tax on assault weapon ammunition
- Mandatory restrictions on Internet firearms sales, including restrictions on materials used to make/modify guns
- Federal minimum age requirement of 21 years of age for all firearm purchases
- Mandatory background check for any firearm retailer
- Increased penalties for the transfer of firearms, including handguns and assault weapons, to juveniles for use in a crime
- Licensure revocation for any retailer who knowingly sells to minors
- Prohibition of firearm sale to any adult convicted of committing a violent crime as a juvenile

National PTA advocacy on the subject of access to firearms has included continued support for the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act and a federal ban on military-style assault weapons and participation in the Million Mom March.

Q: Does National PTA support the Second Amendment?

A: National PTA supports the Second Amendment and recognizes the right to bear arms. Other rights guaranteed by the Constitution, such as free speech and private property, have certain reasonable restrictions to protect the freedom and safety of our fellow citizens and the same principle should apply to the Second Amendment. National PTA encourages Congress to adopt legislation that would help prevent future tragedies like the massacre of innocent children and adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School while preserving the lawful use of firearms for sport and personal protection.

Q: Does the National PTA support arming teachers and school administrators as a way to prevent school violence?

A: No. National PTA believes that in order to achieve an effective school climate, schools must be completely gun-free.

Q: Does National PTA support increased access to mental health services as one of many efforts to promote public safety?

A: National PTA has long been committed to providing improved mental health programs and services to children and youth and believes that all children and youth have the right to mental



health treatment. National PTA encourages each community to make available mental health programs and services, which will meet the needs of all children and youth.

National PTA strongly endorses efforts to:

- Establish comprehensive community mental health facilities to provide preventive and treatment services to children and adults.
- Improve teacher and administrator understanding of child growth and development to insure the provision of an emotional climate in the school conducive to good mental health.
- Promote educational programs for parents to improve the atmosphere of the home.
- Provide special preventive services in the school to detect impending difficulties early.
- Urge that teacher-training institutions incorporate in their programs courses designed to give greater emphasis to children's emotional health.
- Improve community conditions adversely affecting children's emotional health.

For more information, please contact Elizabeth Rorick, Deputy Executive Director of Government Affairs and Communications at erorick@pta.org, or visit our website at PTA.org.