



Resolution on a Comprehensive Approach to Preventing Mass Violence
adopted by JCPA 2013 Plenum

The Jewish community has a deep and abiding concern for public safety, firmly rooted in Jewish tradition which compels us to uphold the sanctity of life.

In recent years, we have witnessed a profoundly distressing series of mass shootings in schools, shopping malls, theaters, houses of worship, and elsewhere, including the atrocity committed in Newtown, Connecticut in which 20 elementary school children and six educators were murdered. The Jewish community itself has experienced this violence at community centers, Jewish federations, and elsewhere. These violent and horrific acts shock our conscience and country. The pandemic of mass gun violence in America far exceeds that in other Western nations.

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs believes:

- The current spate of mass shootings and the overwhelming carnage is utterly unacceptable. In the context of support for a reasonable balance of interests under the Second Amendment, we recognize and respect the right of Americans to own guns, and we are not seeking to undermine in any respect the right of law abiding Americans to own handguns and rifles for legitimate purposes such as hunting, self-defense, and sport, but we do not accept the current state of affairs. While we recognize the need to increase security at certain places of public and private gathering, we refuse to accept a dystopian environment where schools, houses of worship, community centers, shopping malls, theaters, and other venues are either in lockdown mode or where more guns are considered the preferred solution for public safety.
- Comprehensive action is needed to restore the safety of our schools, communities and public spaces. While no single solution will prevent all future tragedies, we are committed to supporting reasonable efforts to save lives such as:
 - meaningful legislation to limit access to the most dangerous weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines that have no other purpose than to inflict maximum carnage,
 - registration and tracking for all firearms at the time of sale or subsequent transfer; and periodic licensing of anyone that purchases, owns, carries, and or uses firearms
 - appropriate waiting periods, volume sales restrictions, and background checks, including criminal and mental health histories, for all firearm sales, including private sales and gun show sales
 - legislation and regulations requiring the safe storage of firearms
 - government firearm buy-back programs
 - diligent enforcement of firearm regulations
 - robust efforts to ensure that every person in need has access to quality mental health care,
 - encouraging a serious national conversation about violence in media and video games

- The proliferation of open and concealed carry options are not appropriate solutions to gun violence in our society and should be curtailed.
- Laws and regulations alone will not stop the spate of violence. Communities and families must examine the culture of violence that permeates movies, television, and video games which some feel may desensitize troubled individuals to the implications of pulling a trigger.
- A fully funded mental health system and true parity between physical and mental health are vital to ensure the wellbeing of all those in need. Programs at schools and community based organizations are needed to help destigmatize mental health issues and provide vehicles for early recognition, prevention, and intervention. The discussion about mental health issues related to mass violence should be done with the utmost sensitivity so as not to characterize those with mental illness as violent, but rather to address all possible causative factors including the underfunding of mental health services. (See also Resolution on Mental Health, 2002).
- These commitments add to and do not subtract from our ongoing concern about the use of guns in criminal activity and the appalling casualties that result from it, particularly in our cities with a disproportionate impact upon minorities and youth.

The community relations field should:

- Actively participate in broad-based coalitions in a way that seeks to transcend partisan politics including, where possible, working with local, state, and national leaders, first responders, survivors and their families, gun violence prevention advocates, gun owners, and others to find meaningful solutions to stop the outrageous and unacceptable violence that tears at the fabric of our society and endangers the lives and safety of all Americans. This work should be done in the context of support for a reasonable balance of interests under the Second Amendment
- Call on the Administration and Congress, as well as state and local authorities to take direct, swift and unequivocal action to adopt laws and regulations consistent with this policy and regulate the manufacture, distribution, sale, registration, and possession of firearms and ammunition in a way that comports with Constitutional requirements; and pass budget line items to fund enforcement of these laws and regulations.
- Advocate and work for better access to affordable mental health care for all who are in need
- Engage in a serious conversation about how to reduce the level of violence in society, including the media and video games, by encouraging responsible exercise of First Amendment rights by all citizens.
- Support allowing and funding the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to perform research on the effects of gun violence.