

Professional associations call for policies to reduce firearm injuries, deaths in US

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Leaders from the American College of Physicians (ACP), seven other national health professional organizations, and the American Bar Association call for policies to help mitigate the rate of firearm injuries and deaths in the United States. Key principles and consensus-based recommendations are outlined in the paper, *Firearm-Related Injury and Death in the United States: A Call to Action from 8 Health Professional Organizations and the American Bar Association*, published today in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Approximately 300,000,000 guns are privately owned in the United States - more than in any other nation in the world - and research shows that access to firearms increases a person's likelihood of death by suicide or homicide. The organizations support a [public health](#) approach to reducing [firearm injuries](#) and fatalities, similar to approaches used to reduce tobacco use, motor vehicle fatalities (seat belts), and unintentional poisoning.

The physicians organizations (ACP, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Emergency Physicians, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Surgeons, and American Psychiatric Association) are joined in support by the American Public Health Association and the American Bar Association, which is committed to helping lawyers and the public understand that the Second Amendment does not stand as an impediment to reasonable measures to limit firearm violence.

"Along with our colleagues in law and public health, those of us who represent the nation's physicians realize that there are significant political and philosophical differences about firearm ownership and regulation in the United States," said ACP Executive Vice President and CEO Dr. Steven E. Weinberger. "However, we strongly support a multifaceted public health approach and will not be dissuaded from advocating for the improved health of our patients and families."

The paper offers the following recommendations for reducing firearm-related injuries and death. The recommendations reflect the organizations' policies and integrate the multidisciplinary perspectives of medical, public health, and legal professionals.

- Support criminal background checks for all firearm purchases, including sales by gun dealers, sales at gun shows, and private sales from one person to another.
- Oppose state and federal mandates that interfere with physician free speech and the patient-physician relationship, including physician "gag laws" that forbid physicians to discuss a patient's gun ownership.
- Oppose the sale or ownership of "assault weapons" and large capacity magazines for private citizens.
- Advocate research into the causes and consequences of firearm violence and unintentional injuries so that evidence-based policies may be developed.

The American Bar Association notes in the paper that these recommendations "are constitutionally sound."

The health professional societies made two additional recommendations:

- Support improved access to [mental health care](#), with caution against broadly including all persons with any mental or

substance use disorder in a category of persons prohibited from purchasing firearms.

- Oppose blanket reporting laws that require physicians to report patients with mental or substance use disorders, as these laws may stigmatize the patients and inhibit them from seeking treatment.

Provided by American College of Physicians

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