

## **PTSF POSITION STATEMENT ON PREVENTION OF FIREARM INJURY**

*Approved July 10, 2023, by PTSF Board of Directors*

Since 1985 the Pennsylvania Trauma Systems Foundation has been the accrediting body for Trauma Centers in Pennsylvania with a commitment to the vision of “zero preventable deaths” from injury. As such we recognize the critical importance of advocating for firearm safety in preventing injuries and fatalities. The issue of gun violence is a public health issue affecting both urban and rural counties with firearm death by suicide exceeding firearm death by homicide nationally.<sup>i</sup> As of May 2023, 202 mass shootings, defined as 4 or more people shot or killed in a single event, have occurred since January 1, 2023.<sup>ii</sup> In Pennsylvania, the rate of gun deaths per 100,00 people from 2010 to 2019 rose from 10 to 12.<sup>iii</sup> As of 2021 the rate in Pennsylvania is 14.8 per 100,000 people.<sup>iv</sup>

To achieve our vision of Zero Preventable Deaths from injury, we support policies and programs that include the following:

- Proper training in the safe handling and use of firearms including education on legal and ethical responsibilities of owning a firearm.
- Safe storage of firearms to reduce both intentional and unintentional injuries.
- Mandatory background checks, waiting periods, and licensing requirements.
- Mental health support and resources for those experiencing a mental health crisis to minimize the risk of suicide and homicide.
- Extreme Risk Protection Orders (aka “red flag laws”) that serve to prohibit persons who are dangerous to themselves or others from purchasing or possessing guns.
- Injury prevention research aimed at exploring the underlying causes of gun violence and programs that serve to reduce it.
- Banning the sale, transfer, manufacturing, and importation of Assault Weapons
- Encouraging and training trauma program staff to counsel their patients about firearm safety and the health risks associated with firearm ownership.
- Reporting of lost and stolen firearms.
- Advocating for unarmed teachers in schools.

In conclusion, our organization is committed to reducing firearm injury through policies, programs, and legislation that prioritizes and promotes firearm safety through responsible ownership and use, proper training, and mental health support.

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<sup>i</sup> Reeping, P, Mak, A, Branas, C, Gobaud, A., Nance, M. Firearm Death Rates in Rural vs Urban Counties. Journal of the American Medical Association, Letter to the Editors. Published on-line April 26, 2023.

<sup>ii</sup> Gun Violence Archives - <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>

<sup>iii</sup> Gun Violence in Pennsylvania. EveryStat.org. January 2021.

<sup>iv</sup> [Pennsylvania \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/pennsylvania/)