

WCPSS Board Resolution - Safer Gun Storage

Whereas, evidence strongly suggests that secure firearm storage is an essential component to any effective strategy to keep schools and students safe;

Whereas, an estimated 13 million American children live in households possessing at least one firearm, and 4.6 million of those live in a household with at least one loaded and unlocked firearm;¹

Whereas, every year, an average of 350 children under the age of 18 unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else. That's nearly one unintentional shooting per day, and more than 70 percent of these incidents take place inside a home;²

Whereas, another 1200 children and teens die by gun suicide each year, most often using guns belonging to a family member;³

Whereas, in incidents of gun violence on school grounds, the large majority of active shooters were current students or recent graduates;⁴ and up to 76 percent of shooters aged 12-18 obtained their guns from their own home, a relative's home, or from friends.⁴

Whereas in incidents of gun violence on school grounds, more than 90% of active shooters displayed prior mental health symptoms, including depression, suicidal ideation, and anxiety.⁴

Whereas, research shows that secure firearm storage practices are associated with up to a 32 percent reduction in the risk of self-inflicted and unintentional firearm deaths and an 85 percent reduction in the risk of unintentional injuries among children and teens.⁵

Whereas, the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center recommends the importance of appropriate storage of firearms, supported by a finding that 76 percent of school shooters used firearms acquired from the homes of parents or close relatives;⁴

Whereas, across the country, lawmakers, community members, and local leaders are working together to implement public awareness campaigns, such as the North Carolina Secure All Firearms Effectively (NC S.A.F.E.) program, which is endorsed by the North Carolina Department of Public Safety and the Be SMART program, which is endorsed by the National Parent Teacher Association and the North Carolina Pediatric Society

and which encourages secure gun storage practices and highlights the public safety risks of unsecured guns;^{6,7}

Whereas, school districts across the country have begun to proactively send materials home to parents and guardians informing them of applicable firearm storage laws and firearm secure storage best practices;

Whereas, keeping students, teachers, staff and families safe from the threat of gun violence should be the responsibility of all adult stakeholders;

Whereas, state law imposes penalties on adults when a child gains unauthorized access to an improperly stored firearm;⁸

Be it therefore resolved that the Board directs the Superintendent and staff to regularly and consistently provide families with information and resources on the importance of secure gun storage, the legal consequences to parents and guardians when a child gains unauthorized access to an improperly stored firearm, and best practices for secure gun storage as reviewed by local law enforcement partners.

Citations:

1. Azrael, D., Cohen, J., Salhi, C. et al. Firearm Storage in Gun-Ownning Households with Children: Results of a 2015 National Survey. *J Urban Health* 95, 295–304 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-018-0261-7>
2. Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, “#NotAnAccident Index,” <https://everytownresearch.org/maps/notanaccident/>
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. A yearly average was developed using the recent available data: 2016 to 2020. Children defined as aged 0 to 17.
4. National Threat Assessment Center et al., “Protecting America’s Schools: A US Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence” (US Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security, 2019), <https://bit.ly/2U7vnwa>
5. David C. Grossman et al., “Gun Storage Practices and Risk of Youth Suicide and Unintentional Firearm Injuries,” *JAMA* 293, no. 6 (2005): 707–14, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.293.6.707>

6. <https://besmartforkids.org/>

7. <https://www.ncped.org/>

8. N.C.G.S. § 14-315.1. Storage of firearms to protect minors,
https://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter_14/gs_14-315.1.html