

Gun Violence Statement

November 2018

The American Counseling Association (ACA) does not condone acts of gun violence and advocates for prevention of gun violence and early intervention in the treatment of the psychological harm that it causes individuals, communities, and society. ACA acknowledges that gun violence is a major threat to the physical, emotional, and mental health of individuals and that it is a human right to be safe and free from fear.

Therefore, it is moved that the ACA Executive Committee examine the following action strategies designed to promote gun violence advocacy, raise awareness to the detrimental effects of gun violence in society at-large and determine which ones are feasible to do within the next two years.

1. Advocate for a national call for increased availability of and access to professional counselors and other support services in urban and rural settings to assess the environment and make recommendations in terms of mental health needs and gun violence prevention.
2. Support the use of increased professional counseling services for individuals who present with mental health needs, with a particular emphasis on adequate staffing in mental health settings.
3. Promote research efforts focused on understanding and identifying factors related to perpetrating acts of gun violence, intervention and prevention strategies aimed at decreasing the frequency of these acts.
4. Endorse research efforts toward understanding the immediate and long-term consequences of acts of gun violence and determining evidence-based treatment interventions for individuals suffering from negative consequence related to gun violence.
5. Provide training to educate counselors and the public regarding risk and protective factors associated with gun violence, as well as evidence based interventions that address subsequent mental health symptoms.
6. Initiate prevention and early intervention efforts focused on mental health resources and raising awareness in the community related to gun violence. Support a preventative stance toward gun violence rather than a reactive one.
7. Develop advocacy efforts including marches, talks, speeches, conferences, and media and promotional campaigns with counselors, community leaders, social service providers, and other service leaders to promote increased the public's awareness of the mental health consequences and prevalence of gun violence.
8. Encourage research focused on the mental health consequences of gun violence, promoting resilience and wellness, reducing negative outcomes.

These action strategies can be supported through the development of taskforces and volunteer leadership initiatives, position statements, articles in Counseling Today, advocating for and supporting legislation and other strategies as appropriate.