



The voice and vision of special education

The Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders

A Division of the Council for Exceptional Children

CCBD'S Response

TO

A Call for Firearms in School

The school shootings in Newtown, Connecticut have resulted in reactionary responses. As the leader in teaching and advocacy for children with emotional and behavioral disorders, the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) recognizes the need to provide guidance and support in framing our nation's response related to issues of school safety and mental health. As such, CCBD with the Council for Exceptional Children urges the following policy recommendations:

1. School safety policy proposals should use an interdisciplinary approach that reinforces a partnership between education, juvenile justice, mental health, social welfare, and community engagement systems;
2. School safety policy proposals should require implementation of evidence based practices that address prevention;
3. School safety policy proposals should focus on the impact of mental health needs on students' social, educational, and employment outcomes; and

4. School safety policy proposals should address the national shortage of special educators and specialized instructional support personnel who are trained to address the complexity of students' mental health needs.

Actualization of these recommendations will require consistency across stakeholders (schools, mental health, law enforcement), capacity building through open dialogue, and sustainability assured by the provision of resources to support risk reduction efforts. To these ends, CCBD recommends:

- a. A humanistic and ecological approach to universal screening of mental health and school safety vulnerabilities,
- b. Explicit instruction in academic and social/emotional learning in our nation's schools,
- c. Timely referral and ready access to mental health services for individuals identified as needing these resources, and
- d. A continued effort at heightening public awareness of mental wellness, including reducing the stigma associated with mental illness.

School safety is an outgrowth of a larger systemic crisis resulting from the failure of our citizenry to address mental health concerns from infancy through adulthood. National policy must focus on strengthening the emotional health and well-being of our youth and children by providing educators, families, and community agents with tools not of violence but of effective prevention and intervention.

See also:

CCBD Position Paper on Response to School Shootings

CEC/CCBD *Protecting Students and Teachers: A Discussion on School Safety*