

Call to Action to Prevent Gun Violence

By Lori Van Orden, Moms Demand Action/San Diegans for Gun Violence Prevention

For the last year, we have been focused on keeping our children and families safe from the coronavirus. But did you know there is another epidemic that has been with us for far too long and continues to harm those we love? **I'm talking about the epidemic of gun violence.**

This February marks the third anniversary of the massacre in Parkland, Florida that ended the lives of 17 students and staff. Since then, mass shootings and urban gun violence continue to take a deadly toll on victims young and old. In addition, suicide by gun, unintentional shootings and domestic violence are rising, especially under the stressful conditions we are experiencing today.

4.6 million American children live in households with at least one loaded, unlocked gun. Responsible gun owners who keep their firearms locked and unloaded, with ammunition stored separately, can prevent access to guns and save lives.

In November 2019, State Superintendent of Education Tony Thurmond sent [a letter to all California district superintendents](#), asking them to communicate to their parents about their responsibilities to keep guns locked and ammunition stored separately.

We expect Superintendent Thurmond to renew this urgent request soon, especially with the explosion of gun sales in the months of the Covid Crisis. Firearm sales have doubled this past year, and 40% of purchases are by first-time owners who may not have the experience and training to store their guns safely. In the US, every day, one child dies from unintentional shootings and 2 die by suicide. Research also shows that in the case of shootings on school grounds, almost 80% of the shooters easily obtained their weapons because guns were unsecured in the homes of their families or friends.

What can you do? All parents of students can reach out to their district superintendents and school board members asking that families be notified yearly about the responsibility of safe storage. *California State law requires you to safely store all firearms in your home, ideally unloaded and in a locked container, separate from ammunition.* In San Diego County, San Diego Unified and Poway Unified School Districts have led the way in this initiative. Our goal is to get **all** districts in our county and state to share this vital safety information every year. You, as a PTA leader or member, have an important voice --we urge you and your organization to use this power by asking your district leaders to notify families about how storing firearms securely keeps our children safe.

You can read about the National PTA recommendations for ending gun violence [here](#), including the importance of safe storage of firearms. For more information and data about secure storage practices, please visit [Everytown's website page](#).

If you have questions or need additional resources, please contact us at SD4GVP@gmail.com. Thank you for your commitment to your families and their safety!

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