

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
POLICY

Subject: Firearm Injury and Death

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POLICY STATEMENT

Death and injury from firearms has reached a point in the United States where it is a public health crisis, particularly among the young. Based on available evidence and ongoing research, the crisis has many causes and solutions will require a multi-pronged response from professional organizations. In South Dakota the crisis primarily involves suicides, which account for 89% of all firearm deaths in the state. While no mass shootings have occurred in South Dakota unrelated to murder-suicide or domestic violence, the prevention of mass shootings in our state as a public health goal also engages the attention of the South Dakota State Medical Association (SDSMA).

Based on evidence, actions which address both mental health and firearms themselves are most likely to begin to mitigate the crisis. Actions must be supported by evidence which indicates a reasonable likelihood that the proposed action will have its intended effect. Each recommended action below is supported by such evidence.

1. The SDSMA acknowledges that death and injury from firearms has reached a point in the United States where it is a public health crisis, a crisis which, in particular, involves firearms-related suicide in South Dakota.
2. The SDSMA adopts a public health approach to firearms-related violence and the prevention of firearm injuries and deaths.
3. To address this crisis the SDSMA will:
 - a. Encourage physicians in South Dakota to discuss home firearm safety with their patients and resist any legislative actions that limit physician-patient communication;
 - b. Provide physicians with resources that enable such discussions;
 - c. Support legislation to enact extreme risk protection orders;
 - d. Support legislation to add a waiting period for firearms purchase;
 - e. Support legislation that provides comprehensive mental health services to the citizens of South Dakota.

In proposing the above, the SDSMA acknowledges the fact that there is limited scientific data concerning the effects of many of the commonly discussed gun policies, due to previous strict interpretation of the 1996 Dickey Amendment. However, this restriction was alleviated by Congress in 2018, opening the door for further research on the gun violence by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and the National Institutes of Health. Limited data, however, is not the same as no data. Each action specified in this policy has data supporting it. Science has a great deal to contribute to public policy debates and the formulation of this policy reflects those contributions. Now that research is not only permitted but open to public funding, further objective evidence is anticipated, which will inform future revisions of this policy statement.

AUTHORITY

South Dakota State Medical Association Policy Council, 11/4/2022; South Dakota State Medical Association Board of Directors, 11/7/2022.