



North Carolina **PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION**

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO RECENT SHOOTING IN PITTSBURGH AND LOUISVILLE

The members and staff of the North Carolina Psychological Association express our deepest condolences to those affected by the recent shootings in Pittsburgh, PA and Louisville, KY. We resolutely reject the discrimination, bigotry, and hate embodied by this kind of violence. Bias or stigma directed toward any individual or group is psychologically damaging to the targets of the behavior and contribute to the stress and distress level of society in general. Prejudice and violence contribute to various forms of psychological difficulties including anxiety, depression, acute and post-traumatic stress, and feelings of insecurity and helplessness.

We are in agreement with Jessica Henderson Daniel, Ph.D., president of the American Psychological Association who observed: "Hate crimes are the most extreme expression of prejudice. Compared to other crimes, hate crimes have a more destructive impact on victims and communities because they target core aspects of our identity as human beings. Hate crimes also send the message to members of the victim's group that they are unwelcome in the community, decreasing feelings of safety and security."

While the tragic incidents in Louisville, KY and Pittsburgh, PA are some of the more recent and salient examples of firearm violence, we are equally saddened by the acts of firearm violence that occur in our communities each day. In recent memory, other well-publicized acts of firearm violence have occurred in our places of worship (e.g., Sutherland Springs, TX and Charleston, SC), in our schools (e.g., Newtown, CT, Parkland, FL, and this past week in Matthews, NC), and in places of recreation (e.g., Aurora, CO, Las Vegas, NV, Alexandria, VA, and this past week in Orange County, NC). Beyond these recent and well-publicized incidents, individuals die from firearm injuries in domestic violence incidents, gang-related shootings, altercations, suicide, and accidental incidents each day. As a society, we are charged with finding solutions to address firearm-related deaths in our communities.

We believe psychologists are well positioned to answer this call to action by using our broad professional skills and responsibilities in our communities. Psychologists are stewards of public health who are invested in the welfare and safety of our fellow citizens. We work with individuals who are victims of firearm violence, as well as perpetrators. Psychologists counsel individuals grieving or experiencing trauma.

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Psychologists are also invested in accurate representations of mental illness and minimizing stigma as it relates to mental illness and violence, particularly gun violence. We strive to be informed by scientific evidence and sensitive to cultural variables in our professional work. We support the efforts of researchers, law enforcement, clinicians, teachers and policymakers to reduce the prevalence of violence and to mitigate the effects on victims.

Specifically, the North Carolina Psychological Association has formed a task force to study firearm violence. This task force is working to synthesize existing literature to produce practical informational resources to educate psychologists about steps we can take to reduce firearm violence.

Finally, we urge those who are experiencing trauma in the aftermath of this tragedy to take care of yourselves and one another. Connect with family and friends and talk about your feelings. Remember that professional help is available and is extended to you.

Further information and assistance are available from the American Psychological Association:

<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/10/mass-shootings.aspx>

APA Division 17 Webinar: "Taking action against anti-Semitism: An intergenerational dialogue"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZ9fMUh9Vrs> (cut and paste into your browser)