

FIREARM SAFETY AND AWARENESS

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 1995

Reviewed January 2006

- WHEREAS, The California State PTA, at its 1973 state convention, adopted a resolution, “Weapons on Campus,” requiring support of legislation to control illegal possession of handguns and other lethal weapons on school campuses; and
- WHEREAS, Plank #10 of the California State PTA Legislation Platform requires support of legislation to, “Prevent, control or eliminate hazards to the health, safety and well-being of all children and youth;” and
- WHEREAS, The number of motor vehicle-related deaths in the United States has decreased while the number of firearm-related deaths has increased, and gunshot wounds are now the leading cause of deaths among teen-age boys in America; and
- WHEREAS, Gun education programs are widely available and heavily promoted, the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Injury and Poison Prevention cautions educators to choose educational programs and approaches carefully, avoiding those that might inadvertently encourage or promote children’s access to firearms; and
- WHEREAS, President Clinton has stated, “Getting weapons out of the hands of juveniles is important, yet reducing their motivation to arm themselves in the first place should be the higher priority;” and
- WHEREAS, One in five students (22%) claim they have carried a weapon to school in 1993 and it is estimated that 120 U.S. children under the age of 18 are slain by gunfire each month; and
- WHEREAS, One of the objectives of Goal #6 of the National PTA’s “PTA National Education Goals” states, “By the year 2000, parents, businesses and community organizations will work together to ensure that schools are a safe haven for all children;” now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to participate in firearm safety and awareness programs carefully chosen to avoid those that might inadvertently encourage or promote children’s access to firearms; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA encourage its units, councils and districts to educate parents, children, youth and communities about the importance of firearm safety and awareness; and be it further

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RESOLVED, That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to promote public education campaigns to alert parents and community members about the harm and injury handgun violence is inflicting on children and youth; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA encourage its units, councils and districts to collaborate with other community organizations having similar interests in countering the epidemic of firearm injuries and deaths occurring among children and youth; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA submit this resolution to the National PTA for consideration at its convention.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

In 1994, 61% of school districts nationwide reported incidents of finding weapons on school grounds. It is estimated that more than 53% of American teenagers believe that threats of violence in their schools are indicated because students carry guns. According to the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, handguns are an overwhelming choice of firearms for those who commit gun violence in schools.

In February 1994, a nine year-old neighbor boy pulled a high-powered military-style rifle from under a mattress and fired one round into the chest of his playmate, 7 year-old Kimberly Bracey of Los Angeles. What will happen to the boy is undetermined, but the adult owners of the gun must face the results of the Children's Firearm Accident Protection Act of 1992, which provides that an adult can be sentenced to up to three years in state prison and fined \$10,000 for keeping a loaded weapon that is accessible to a minor.

Security experts and child advocates advise schools to incorporate programs to prevent gun violence into their curricula, and to start educating children at an early age. Such programs must deal with attitudes and actions that endanger children and youth, not simply gun safety.

Dr. Mark Rosenberg, Dr. Patrick W. O'Carroll and Dr. Kenneth E. Powell from the division of Injury Control, National Center for Environmental Health, assembled seven panels who concluded:

- a. There is a need to develop guidelines for those who would engage programs to prevent youth violence in general, in their own communities.

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- b. There is a need to support the design, implementation and evaluation of multi-faceted community-based youth violence prevention programs.
- c. There is a need to develop a national system or infrastructure for preventing violence.

Gun violence is NOT just a problem of urban minorities. Guns and violence permeate everyone's life, including the lives of school children. It is important for PTAs to support efforts to educate children starting at the earliest and most impressionable ages about the necessity for the utmost caution in the presence of firearms. This effort is as critical as PTA's support for teaching children the importance of not speaking to strangers and of wearing safety belts when riding in a car.