



AAP calls on Congress to budget more than \$60M for gun safety research

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The AAP partnered with more than 400 organizations in co-signing a [letter](#) to Congress to request millions of dollars in federal funds to be used for gun violence prevention research in the 2024 fiscal year budget.

Initiated by the AAP, the letter calls for \$35 million for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), \$25 million for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and \$1 million for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to conduct public health research into firearm morbidity and mortality prevention. The 409 signatories include national, state and local medical, public health, research and advocacy organizations.

If approved, the requests would be a substantial increase in the \$12.5 million the CDC and NIH each received last fiscal year. The NIJ request would be for the same amount as last year. A 2021 [report](#) estimated the federal government will need to spend approximately \$100 million per year to fully fund a comprehensive research agenda on reducing gun violence.

“We have the tools we need to prevent the leading cause of death in children, we just need the will to use them,” AAP President Sandy L. Chung, M.D., FAAP, said in a [statement](#). “The AAP has longstanding policy outlining evidence-based steps our lawmakers can take today to reduce the terrible toll of gun violence and save lives. Fund research. Ban assault weapons. Limit high-capacity magazines. Require background checks, and more.”

In recent weeks several high-profile mass shootings have occurred in the United States, including a school shooting that left three children and three adults dead in Nashville and a shooting at a 16th birthday party in

Dadeville, Ala., where four people younger than 24 were killed and dozens were injured.

“Within the last month, children and teens have lost their lives to gun violence while simply participating in routine childhood experiences,” Dr. Chung said. “Attending school. Picking up their siblings. Going to a friend’s birthday party. This is in the wake of school shootings, suicides, unintentional shootings and daily, deadly violence that involves firearms. As the headlines start to fade faster after each incident, and as the political will to act fails to meet the urgency of the moment, pediatricians are compelled to speak out.”

In November 2022, the AAP issued its [policy statement](#) *Firearm-Related Injuries and Deaths in Children and Youth: Injury Prevention and Harm Reduction*, which gives guidance on why a harm-reduction approach is optimal for gun violence prevention. This strategy includes sensible policies, improved surveillance and new research to identify best practices.

Across the country, communities are suffering from preventable firearm-related injuries and deaths. In 2020, [use of firearms](#) resulted in 10,197 deaths among those from birth to age 24 years, and gun-related fatalities are the leading cause of pediatric deaths, including for homicides and suicides. There are also disparities when considering race, ethnicity, sex and socioeconomic status of victims.

In 2021, the most recent year for which [data](#) are available, firearm-related injuries led to 47,286 total fatalities,

With its 2023 fiscal year funds, the CDC made 22 awards for two- and three-year projects to improve scientific understanding of firearm-related violence and to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of prevention strategies. The NIH is funding research on the determinants of firearm injury, the identification of those at risk and the evaluation of innovative interventions.

While those investments are crucial, signees of the letter say increased funding is needed to overcome the decades-long lack of federal funding that set back the response to the public health issue of firearm-related morbidity and mortality.

Signers include an array of medical societies, public health organizations, research universities, and child advocacy organizations including the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, AANS/CNS Section on Pediatric Neurological Surgery, American Medical Association, American Pediatric Society, Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs, Child Injury Prevention Alliance, Doctors for America, Futures Without Violence, MomsRising, National Organizations for Youth Safety, Pediatric Policy Council, Save the Children and Sandy Hook Promise.

Resources

- [AAP Gun Safety Campaign Toolkit](#)
- [AAP News story "Firearm injury prevention: AAP updates guidance with multiple ways to reduce harm"](#)
- [Information for parents from Healthychildren.org on gun safety](#)
- [AAP course: Safer: Storing Firearms Prevents Harm](#)