

Call to action: New AAP research initiative aims to protect children from firearm injuries

March 16, 2018

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Article type: [News](#)

Topics: [Firearms](#), [Injury](#), [Violence & Poison Prevention](#)

The Academy is launching a bold new research initiative to protect children from firearm injuries.

Approaching these injuries as a public health epidemic, the Gun Safety and Injury Prevention Research Initiative will bring together experts from around the country to study and implement evidence-based interventions.

The initiative is a call to action spurred by members who have been vocal about needing to do more to protect children.

"On a daily basis, our members see firsthand the pain caused by firearms, whether by homicide, suicide or unintentional injuries," said AAP President Colleen A. Kraft, M.D., M.B.A., FAAP. "However, just like any other risk to children, a focus on prevention and education by pediatricians in clinical settings, coupled with strong public policy which reduces access to firearms, can have a measurable and lasting positive impact."

Gunfire kills about 1,300 U.S. children and teenagers each year and injures nearly 5,800 more, according to a 2017 [study from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) researchers](#). While the CDC collects these data, an amendment to a 1996 bill prohibited the CDC from using public health money to advocate for or promote gun control. The amendment was not intended to end research into gun violence, but it effectively impeded it.

Unencumbered by those restrictions, the Academy has been advocating for gun control measures for more than three decades.

"Recent national tragedies like the school shootings in Newtown, Conn., and Parkland, Fla., magnify attention on the gun violence children experience every day in communities everywhere. It is time for new tools pediatricians can use to counsel families based on their culture, knowledge, beliefs and experience," said AAP CEO/Executive Vice President Karen Remley, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H., FAAP.

The initiative will consist of three overlapping phases:

1. Expert summit — The Academy will convene a summit of experts to look at existing data on incidence and prevention of firearm injuries, identify gaps in evidence and knowledge, and produce a research agenda.
2. Research — AAP research staff and clinical investigators will conduct efficient, rigorous studies.
3. Dissemination, implementation and evaluation — The Academy will implement the resulting interventions in clinical and community settings and continuously evaluate their effectiveness.

The AAP Board of Directors has approved initial funding of \$500,000 from the Friends of Children and Tomorrow's Children Endowment funds. The Academy also will be fundraising and forming partnerships to support its efforts.

"This initiative leverages what we as pediatricians do best: research, education, advocacy and ultimately having evidence-based conversations with families around gun safety and violence prevention in order to protect children," Dr. Remley said.

Resources

- [AAP policy statement "Firearm-Related Injuries Affecting the Pediatric Population"](#)
- [AAP resource page "How Pediatricians Can Advocate for Children's Safety in Their Communities"](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on reducing gun injuries](#)

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