



South Carolina Association of School Psychologists
Supporting Learning and Mental Health of Youth In South Carolina
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Position Statement on Concurrent Resolution House Bill 3556: Gun Violence Awareness Month

On February 11th, the South Carolina House of Representatives introduced, adopted, and sent House Bill 3556 (henceforth known as H. 3556) to the Senate . On the same date, H. 3556 was also introduced in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Invitations. The bill is a concurrent resolution to raise awareness surrounding the issue of gun violence and declare June 2015 Gun Violence Awareness Month in South Carolina. Additionally, it recognizes the effectiveness of school-based counseling and violence-prevention programs, particularly at early ages.

As an organization, the South Carolina Association of School Psychologists (SCASP) applauds this resolution and urges its adoption by the Senate. In its 2015 Position Statement on School Violence Prevention, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) cites data from the Centers for Disease Control and NASP. While acknowledging that gun violence in schools is a rare occurrence, they note that most youth homicides and almost half of youth suicides involve a firearm. Clearly, gun violence is a pressing public health issue needing recognition and, more importantly, prevention efforts.

School psychologists across South Carolina recognize the importance of providing a safe, secure environment for the citizens of South Carolina, particularly for the children and youth of South Carolina. As an organization of school-based mental health professionals, SCASP stands ready to provide support within the school system. In its Position Statement on School Violence Prevention, NASP outlines a number of approaches which fit the public-health perspective advocated within the proposed resolution. They include the following:

- Creating school-community safety partnerships;
- Establishing comprehensive school crisis response plans;
- Enhancing classroom and school climate;
- Promoting positive school discipline and support;
- Using nonstigmatizing school violence prevention programs;
- Promoting antiviolence initiatives that include prevention programs for all students;
- Providing support for students exhibiting early warning signs of disruptive behavior; and
- Intervening with students who experience significant school behavioral adjustment problems.

School psychologists' training in consultation, counseling, crisis prevention, and crisis intervention provide us with the tools to be valuable team members in the collaborative effort to

reduce gun violence in South Carolina. We thank the legislature of South Carolina for their consideration of this vitally important issue and urge them to take action to address this serious public health concern.