

## **Firearm Injury Prevention Education**

### **Background**

As of 2015, 1/3 of US households with children had guns. Seeing as the firearm ownership rate has only grown since then, the percentage of children living with guns at home is likely higher today. Reasons for gun ownership in such households are varied, but the reality remains the same; a large swath of American children are living with guns in the home, and that is unlikely to change. However, seeing as firearm injuries are the leading cause of death for children and teens in the United States, with a large swath of such injuries resulting from the unintentional discharge by youth, it stands to reason that there is a gap in firearm injury and prevention education for children.

### **About the Policy**

Our policy aims to include firearm injury and prevention as one of the public health problems that public schools teach as part of their health curriculum, just as they would sex education, and the harms associated with drug and tobacco use. As of mid-2025, only three states (Tennessee, Arkansas, and Utah) have mandated firearm safety as part of the public and charter school curriculum. However, our policy differs in key manners. For starters, our policy calls for the curriculum to be created as part of a state task force that includes various experts and stakeholders, such as child psychologists, educators, parents, violence prevention, and firearm use experts, among others. The task force will decide on the target age groups for the curriculum, what will be included, and will create materials for the curriculum. However, our policy also calls for significant discretion given to individual school districts in the specifics of how the curriculum will be implemented, and how it can be molded to fit the needs of the specific community they are serving. This is due to our recognition that there is no space for an overly prescriptive one-size-fits-all approach to teaching this issue to youth within a state, as the relevance of certain materials, as well as the socio-emotional needs of youth differ drastically among different school districts.

### **Protection of Gun Rights**

Gun owners have long been calling for better education of responsible practices as opposed to more regulation. This proposal would go a long way in enculturating firearm injury prevention practices among the next generation, helping protect youth vulnerable to firearm harms without laws such as a safe storage mandate, seen by many gun owners as overly restrictive and ultimately unenforceable. Having a firearm injury and prevention

curriculum be mandated within school districts, as opposed to solely offering them as electives or through existing community partners, will ensure that this education reaches youth who it otherwise would not; those with guns in the home but whose parents do not bother to appropriately secure their firearms or to teach their kids safe practices, those who don't live with guns, but often visit the homes of friends who do, and many more. By ensuring that these youth are aware of the risks and dangers of firearms, strategies to prevent injuries, and the proper steps to take if they encounter unsecured firearms, hopefully unintentional firearm injuries and deaths can be significantly reduced.

### **Protection of Public Health**

The policy calls for the curriculum to be fully evidence-based, as well as developmentally appropriate, as is determined by the experts on the task force. The efficacy of the curriculum is to be evaluated annually by the state. Furthermore, no part of the policy calls for live firing, gun handling, or marksmanship by youth, and the policy would specifically prohibit advocacy for or against firearm ownership or any specific legislation as part of the curriculum.

### **Consent Tally**

This proposal received the consent of 21 of the 23 panelists.