

Position Regarding: *Gun Violence*

The North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors strongly supports efforts to address gun violence as a public health issue in this country. An average of 91 Americans die, and over 100 are injured every day as a result of preventable gun violence. There were 1,202 firearm related deaths in North Carolina in 2013 and almost two-thirds of the violent deaths in North Carolina that same year were caused by firearms.¹ These numbers are not declining as seen in current data trends.

Our mission as Public Health professionals is to intervene in population health concerns that impact our communities, and provide a multidisciplinary approach to investigate issues through evidence-based research that provides the basis for policy change. This approach has been successfully utilized in car safety, tobacco use, and most recently, unintentional harm from opiates. Gun violence, which includes homicide, suicide, and unintentional injury from a firearm, surpasses all other causes together for violent deaths in North Carolina. ²

Public Health research is needed to better address the issue of gun violence in this country. We support Congressional funding of the Center for Disease Control and National Institute of Health to undertake scientific study of gun violence in order to collect the data to shape future legislative action on this issue. The NCALHD advocates for enhanced gun control measures while also supporting Second Amendment rights of all Americans. We believe that physicians should be allowed to talk with their patients about gun ownership and safety within the confidential physician-patient relationship. Firearms should be kept out of the hands of the mentally ill while, at the same time, avoiding stigmatization of mental illness and promoting treatment for those with psychiatric needs.

^{1,2}, North Carolina Injury and Violence Prevention Branch; December, 2015