

Handgun Injury Reduction

Date: Jan 01 1998 | **Policy Number:** 9818

Key Words: Handguns

The American Public Health Association,

Recognizing that handgun deaths and injuries-including suicides, suicide attempts, homicides, assaults, and unintentional shootings-constitute a major public health problem in the United States;¹⁻²⁰and

Noting that the United States long history of weak federal gun laws and widely varying state and local laws has allowed a vast illicit gun market to flourish, greatly hindering gun violence prevention efforts;²¹ and

Understanding that the United States lacks a comprehensive licensing and registration system which would help to curtail the movement of handguns into the illegal market;²²⁻²³ and

Recognizing that the collection and analysis of detailed information about handgun injuries and the movement of handguns in the population is essential to the design and evaluation of injury prevention interventions;²⁴⁻²⁵ and

Acknowledging that handguns are the only consumer product made or sold in the United States, other than tobacco products,¹ the manufacture and design of which is not regulated by any federal agency;²⁶ and

Recognizing that handgun manufacturers, in the absence of any regulatory requirements, have failed to incorporate into the design of their products feasible, life-saving safety improvements which would prevent the discharge of handguns by any unauthorized user, thereby greatly reducing the number of deaths of and injuries to children in suicides and unintended shootings and the attractiveness of stolen and illegally acquired handguns;²⁷ and

Acknowledging the lack of public awareness of the danger of guns at home and that a gun in the home²⁸ is much more likely to be used to kill a family member or friend than to be used in self-defense;²⁹ and

Understanding that the prevention of handgun-related injury and death, like other major public health problems, requires action at all levels of government and by all sectors of society;³⁰ therefore,

1. Supports the enactment of federal, state, and local laws designed to limit access to handguns,³¹⁻³³ to limit handgun purchases,^{34,35} including those at gun shows,³⁶ to limit access to high-powered assault pistols with no legitimate sporting or hunting purpose,^{37,38} and to reduce access to permits-to-carry a concealed handgun;³⁹⁻⁴⁴
2. Recommends the creation and evaluation of comprehensive national, state, and local data collection systems to facilitate research on the prevention of handgun-related fatalities and injuries and the movement of handguns within the population;⁴⁵⁻⁴⁷
3. Recommends regulation of the gun industry in order to reduce handgun injury attributable to industry practices, including the design, marketing, and distribution of handguns;⁴⁸⁻⁵⁶
4. Encourages the creation and evaluation of community- and school-based programs (including coalitions) targeting the prevention of handgun injuries including suicides, homicides, and assaults;⁵⁷
5. Recommends education on the dangers of handguns, especially in the home for public health and mental health professionals; and
6. Recommends that health and mental health providers advise their clients about the hazards of handguns.⁵⁸⁻⁶¹

References

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