**FLORIDA PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION STATEMENT ON**

**FREEDOM FROM SCHOOL VIOLENCE**

June 2023

School violence is a tragedy of epic proportions affecting people throughout our country. No child should be afraid to go to school and receive an education (Yablon, 2020). No family should fear for their child’s safety attending school.

The Florida Psychological Association (FPA) supports the American Psychological Association’s recommendations for freedom from school violence through an evidence-based, public health approach. This includes improving and expanding school-based violence prevention efforts, enhancing access to mental health and substance use services, and supporting research on violence (Stein-Seroussi et al., 2021). FPA has made previous statements regarding this issue, including a 2018 statement following the Parkland shooting. Education on warning signs and the services of FPA members was offered.

The United States Secret Service has been studying violence in schools for over 20 years and has developed effective strategies that identify risk factors. The *See Something, Say Something* program addresses these risk factors in a manner that ensures the safety of our students (Aiello, 2019).

Data from the Secret Service indicates that the vast majority of school shooters have been in severe emotional distress for a long period of time, provide warning signs of impending violence, and have an intent or expectation to die. Individuals in their social network are aware of the potential perpetrator’s state of mind and intention; when they share this information with the appropriate support system, alongside an effective intervention, the violence can be prevented and lives saved. According to the Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center, targeted violence is preventable if people are aware of the warning signs and there are resources to recognize and intervene effectively (Crichlow-Ball & Cornell, 2021).

Given the history of school violence, it is likely there are individuals planning school shootings at this moment. To save as many innocent lives as possible, FPA endorses the *See Something, Say Something* program as an effective method to prevent school shootings.

The following resources can be helpful in addressing this issue. Many school districts have already implemented effective strategies, but if all school systems did so it could go a long way toward reducing this type of tragedy in our schools.

1. US Secret Service 16-minute [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TVdrr4Hu1Q) highlighting best practices to prevent school violence
2. American Psychological Association [podcast](https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/mass-shootings) by Dr. Jillian Peterson on research regarding mass shooters
3. [“The Violence Project: How to Stop a Mass Shooting Epidemic”](https://www.theviolenceproject.org/)
4. [Sandy Hook Project](https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/)- research-based resources to prevent school violence
5. [Safe 2 Tell Colorado](https://safe2tell.org/) offers 20 years of effective approaches from school districts around the country
6. [Resources](https://www.apa.org/topics/gun-violence-crime/mass-shooting-resources) from APA for coping with shootings
7. National Association of School Psychologists resources on [school violence prevention](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/school-violence-resources/school-violence-prevention)
8. Improving school safety through bystander reporting: A [toolkit](https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2023-05/cisa-usss-k-12-bystander-reporting-toolkit-508_final_0.pdf) for strengthening K–12 reporting programs

**References**

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Crichlow-Ball, C., & Cornell, D. (2021). Association of school climate with student willingness to report threats of violence. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management, 8* (3), 77-93.

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Yablon, Y. B. (2020). Combining teaching and counseling roles: Implications for students’ willingness to seek help for bullying. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling, 42*(4), 382-392.