



ALPHA Resolution 2020-03 Gun Violence and Firearm Injury Prevention in Alaska¹

WHEREAS, gun violence is a public health crisis in the United States and in Alaska.

WHEREAS, Alaska's firearm death rate is the highest in the nation and is double the national average (21.90 vs. 11.07 in U.S.).

WHEREAS, Alaska's firearm death rate increased by over 50% between 1999 and 2017 (15.9 vs. 24.5).²

WHEREAS, Alaska's firearm death rate has a disproportionate impact on young adults, males and Alaska Native/American Indians.

WHEREAS, Alaska's firearm death rate is highest among the 20-24-year-old age group (45.4), Four times higher for males than females (34.1 vs. 8.4), and Alaska Native/American Indians have the highest firearm death rate by race (34.6).

WHEREAS, the number of firearm deaths (823 deaths) is almost double the number of motor vehicle death (425 deaths) in Alaska, (2013-2017).

WHEREAS, Alaska's death rate from suicide is one of the highest in the nation, and was nearly double the national rate (24.90 vs. 13.24).

WHEREAS, firearms are the most lethal means among suicide methods and access to firearms is a risk factor for suicide.³

WHEREAS, nearly three quarters (72%) of firearm deaths are by suicide and nearly 60% of suicides in Alaska are by firearms.

WHEREAS, Alaska's firearm suicide rate is the second highest in the nation and is more than double the national rate (15.8 vs. 6.5).

WHEREAS, the firearm suicide death rate for males is five times higher than females (25.9 vs. 4.7), is highest among the 20-24-year-old age group (32.1), and Alaska Native/American Indians have the highest firearm suicide death rate by race (23.8).

WHEREAS, nearly 1/3 of those who died by firearm suicide between 2009-2015 had a known mental health issue.⁴

WHEREAS, homicide accounts for 21% of all firearm deaths in Alaska.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, data are from [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Wisqars](#) , Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System, (age-adjusted death rates per 100,000, for years 2013-2017)

² CDC Wisqars, 1999-2017.

³ Harvard University, Harvard School of Public Health, Means Matter, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/>

⁴ State of Alaska Epidemiology Bulletin, No. 19, August 2, 2017



WHEREAS, the rate of non-fatal firearm injury hospitalizations grew every year between 2011 to 2015 and most were from assaults and suicide attempts.⁵

WHEREAS, there were 31,137 years of potential life lost (YPLL) due to firearm deaths in Alaska from 2013-2017, averaging 6,227 per year.

WHEREAS, of the 54 firearm deaths among children (0-17) between 2013-2017, 54% were suicide, 26% were homicide and 15% were unintentional.

WHEREAS, in 2007, over half (59%) of Alaskan adults had firearms in the home and 1 in 10 Alaskan adults lived in a home with an unlocked and loaded firearm.⁶

WHEREAS, in 2013, 7% of high school students reported carrying a firearm on school grounds in the last month (11% of males and 2% of females).⁷

WHEREAS, for a five-year period (2013-2017), medical costs attributed to gun violence (suicide and homicide) in Alaska are estimated at \$3.2 million, and combined with cost of work lost are estimated at \$1.2 billion.⁸

WHEREAS, the state of Alaska can benefit from a public health approach to gun violence and firearm injury prevention.

WHEREAS, Alaska Public Health Association respects the cultural values of a subsistence lifestyle to food security and the importance of firearms to hunting and shooting sports in Alaska.

WHEREAS, this Resolution is consistent with the Second Amendment and relevant case law.⁹

THEREFORE, be it resolved that Alaska Public Health Association supports:

- Data collection related to firearm morbidity and mortality, through adequate funding and maintenance of state and federal surveillance systems, including but not limited to:
 - Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)
 - Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
 - Alaska Trauma Registry
 - Alaska Violent Death Reporting System
- Increased and unrestricted funding for additional research on causes and evidence-based solutions to firearm morbidity and mortality.
- Common-sense firearm policies, including but not limited to:

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Alaska Division of Public Health, [2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey](#)

⁷ Alaska Division of Public Health, [2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#)

⁸ CDC Wisqars, Cost of Injury Report <https://wisqars.cdc.gov:8443/costT/> estimated with Alaska case counts derived from CDC Wisqars for suicide and homicide 2013-2017

⁹ District of Columbia v. Heller, at <https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/07pdf/07-290.pdf>



- Requiring universal background checks for all firearm purchases
- Allowing the temporary removal of firearms from individuals who pose an extreme risk to themselves or others (referred to as extreme protective orders or Red Flag laws)
- Reinstating the federal ban on assault weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines which expired in 2004
- Resources for school and community-based prevention and intervention initiatives including:
 - Positive school climate
 - Community and school-based mental health services
 - School emergency management and preparedness
 - Community and school-based suicide prevention programs
 - Public education on the adult responsibility of safe storage for firearms, securing all firearms in the home and in vehicles unloaded and separately from ammunition

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association encourages health care providers to educate patients and families on the safe storage of firearms and discuss the risks of unsecured firearms.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Alaska Public Health Association will send this resolution to Alaska's federal, state and tribal policy makers and related partners.

FISCAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT STATEMENT: There will be no fiscal impact to Alaska Public Health Association. The short-term public health impact will be to raise public awareness about the epidemic of gun violence and firearm injury in Alaska, the mid-term impact will be to develop public policy to prevent gun violence and firearm injury in Alaska, and the long-term impact will be reduced firearm death and injury in Alaska.