

# Preventing the Next Mass Shooting in America

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## Abstract

The issue of mass shootings in America could be traced to 1891. However, the incident of August 1966 at the University of Texas sniper shooting and the awareness that this could be the first mass shooting and perhaps an incident that would become a teachable moment for the country; was misplaced. The utter complacency and inability to stem this tide significantly demonstrates how our society acknowledges albeit her weakness and lack of political will in tackling the obnoxious human wastages in the hands of trigger-happy kids and some mentally ill individuals from unleashing terror on our respectable institutions, and social gatherings.

## Keywords

Mass Shootings, Mental Health, School Safety, Guns, Prevention

## 1. Introduction

Mass shootings were supposed to be extreme and rare events but today it has become somewhat a part of our weekly or monthly life events. Looking at this orgy of killings through the lens of what is wrong or right alone would not eradicate or reduce the mass shooting trend assault on our civilized society. The trend can easily be captured in the deadliest mass shooting in the United States in 2022 in which 19 children and two teachers were killed at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, on May 24. This deadliest incident happened and was followed by another deadly shooting where 10 people were also shot and killed in a supermarket in Buffalo (*New York Times*, 2023). The list seems endless with the ongoing trend. The focus of this study is to explore how to prevent the next mass shooting or at least reduce the impact and to provide the research community with an idea of who mass shooters are and what motivates their decision to discharge firearms at multiple people.

The perception that our society easily forgets the past mass shootings, only

with the overused mantra “our thoughts and prayers are with the families” has not either stopped the next mass shooting or assuaged the pains and endless brokenheartedness of the families whose loved ones have been heinously and permanently removed from the family statistics and dinner tables across the land. Nor is the society that has continued to be the indirect victims of this inhumanity spared of the emotional trauma of wondering if their kids would be the next victims. Unfortunately, and unexpectedly, one could still be saddled with this loathsome feeling that we may not have seen the last of mass shootings in America. Professors and students are weary of imagining if the guy sitting next to the other student could be the next mass shooter, given his often-erratic behavior. The direct and indirect victims of this somewhat avoidable violence have been permanently bedeviled with the psychological trauma caused by this perpetual mayhem for the rest of their uncertain lives. According to [Wintemute \(2018\)](#), gun violence has been noted as one of the primary causes of death and injury in America, and the repercussions of this violence are enormous in terms of the health and safety of our general population.

Every unfortunate mass shooting that took place in America raises calls for better policies, and sometimes the repetitive clamor from the Democrats and the Republican Party for a change of policy that would only reflect their political agenda. Yet the issue of making a realistic law that would prevent the next mass shooting is politically ignored. The possibility of stopping mass shootings in America may appear as a mirage, given the political hullabaloo attached to this mass destruction of human beings. Several articles and postulations have been advanced as a veritable measure for curtailing these health-related crises. However, the implementation seems to be more difficult than stopping the mass shooting.

Several scholars have advanced different positions on these crises, and even randomized trials of an intervention to no avail. No realistic measure has been adopted by the government to stem this ugly tide. The political muscle to adopt a measure for the general good has been neglected for the “more urgent need” for poll numbers and political advantages.

[Wintemute \(2018\)](#) stated that these tragedies are preventable. Wintemute has studied gun violence for over 30 years and has submitted that mass shootings should be treated as public health issue, rather than political. Wintemute further acknowledged that gun violence by mass shootings should be as would any other major health problem. Moreso, that few questions should be asked in the prevention efforts.

### **1.1. Preventing Mass Shootings**

In recent years, mass shootings have created some academic curiosity and inquiry as to what the main cause is; and what should be the appropriate definition of mass shooting. Mass shootings have been variously defined as the killing or harming of two or more people in the action of the shooting ([Duxbury et al., 2018](#)). [Gun Violence Archive \(2022\)](#) defined mass shootings as an incident

where four or more humans are shot are killed in a single incident. [Congressional Research Service \(2013\)](#) has defined a public mass shooting as a multiple homicide incident in which four or more fatalities are murdered with weapons, excluding the shooter, in one event, and where at least some of the murders happened in a public setting or locations in close environmental proximity like a workplace, school, restaurant, or other public locations, and the murders are not attributable to any other causal criminal activity or routine circumstances like armed robbery, criminal contention, insurance fraud, dispute, or romantic triangle.

[Gun Violence Archive \(2022\)](#) noted that mass shootings have been going on for decades and could continue if no realistic measures are put in place. It further affirmed that in 2021, over 691 people were confirmed to be victims of mass shootings in the United States alone. In 2022, over 571 have been confirmed killed through a similar process.

With the number increasing daily, it's nearly difficult to guarantee which school or kids will be the next victim of this recurring criminality. Therefore, society, and mostly the political class, has the moral burden to lay politics aside and provide a legal and cultural values framework that could help to nip this orgy of killings in the bud.

The sufferings of family members and fellow students of the victims can only be imagined whenever one of their own is unexpectedly cut down. This usually causes a lot of emotional damage to students. In the first few days of school, many students struggle to get back into the classroom. Some students may develop apathy for schooling and may not come back because they feel it's not going to be the same safe environment anymore. Such feelings could be related to the experience in the Columbine Library shooting; where some students didn't return to school because they felt it wasn't the same again ([USA Today, 2018](#)). This is a repetitive loss of lives, loss of human resources, loss of sanity, and a collective loss of our serenity and peace of mind; caused by people who may have other forms of identifiable biological or psychological traits—only if we had or could scrutinize a little bit more and increase the cost and risk of committing this crime. Such scrutiny perhaps could have exposed the individual's vulnerability and their differential susceptibility to criminality. A proactive approach is needed rather than reactive measures.

## **1.2. Major Personal Traits of Mass Shooters**

Mental health has been defined as the cause of mass shootings but there seem to be other underlying factors that must also be given precedence for good preventative results. Researchers have discovered that while some mass shootings are perpetrated by persons with diagnosed mental illnesses, a life crisis is a better predictor of violent behavior ([Dewan, 2022](#)).

[Barnhorst \(2018\)](#) perceived that the reason the mental health system fails to stop mass shootings is that mental illness is seldom the cause of such violent be-

havior. Even if all possible mass shooters did get psychiatric care, there is no reliable remedy for angry young men who harbor violent imaginations. The law's intentions to stop the mentally ill from buying guns are too narrow and easily bypassed; people like Nikolas Cruz and many others are not likely to qualify.

Barnhorst further declared that instead of wishing that requiring mental health treatment on every person who shows "red flags" would put a stop to mass shootings, we rather should concentrate on legitimate ways of putting some distance between these mass shooters and their guns.

Maybe what we should be talking about is not only "mental health" care, but a broader "crisis care". Several people do not meet the benchmarks for diagnosable mental illness but are in some form of noticeable crisis and at their breaking point due to strain and lack of support. Perhaps we should stop asking why psychologists can't foresee who will become aggressive when they snap and focus on keeping people from snapping in the first place. *The Guardian* (2012) reported that the suspect at a private Christian University in California who killed seven people and injured three was just angry about his school fees.

*Society for Neuroscience* (2007) found that reactively violent adolescents, most commonly boys, repeatedly misapprehend their surroundings, feel threatened, and act inappropriately aggressively. They tend to strike back when being taunted, blame others when getting into a fight, and overreact, excessively.

*Elbogen and Johnson* (2009) confirmed that there are other important complex considerations regarding mental health, both because it is the most prevalent stressor and because of the common but erroneous inclination to assume that anyone who commits an active shooting must de facto be mentally ill. First, the stressor "mental health" is not synonymous with a diagnosis of mental illness. The stressor "mental health" indicates that the active shooter appeared to be struggling with the most common depression, anxiety, paranoia, etc., in their daily life before the attack. See **Table 1** below.

*The Violence Project* (2021) observed that before they carried out the criminalities, more than 80 percent of mass shooters exhibited signs of crisis. Such behavior includes hyperbolic emotional reactions, heightened interest in violence, and signs of despair. The mass shooters are nearly always in a state of crisis at the time before the shooting incident, and in most cases, engaged in leaking their plans before opening fire. Most were insiders of a targeted institution, such as an employee or student.

### **1.3. How Mass Shooters Obtain Their Guns**

*Schmembri* (2018) indicated that many in society wonder how mass shooters obtain their guns. How do they get these guns? How do they obtain these military-like weapons? According to a *Voice of America Special Report* (2020), half of all mass shooters procured some of their guns lawfully through a licensed dealer, unregulated private sale, or other legal means. Schmembri further stated that fifty percent, which is about eighty-six shooters, obtain their guns legally. The *National Institute of Justice* (2022) declared that three percent of mass

shooters obtain their guns as a gift or a present. One percent of mass shooters assemble their guns themselves. Eighteen percent of mass shooters, which are about thirty-one mass shooters obtain their weapons legally. About twenty-one mass shooters, which is twelve percent either borrow or steal their guns; and about thirty-two percent of mass shooters, which is about fifty-five mass shooters are unknown on how they obtain their firearms; and without background check (**Table 2**).

**Table 1.** Mental health stressors.

Stressors	Number	Percent
Mental health	39	62
Financial strain	31	49
Job-related	22	35
Conflicts with friends/peers	18	29
Marital problems	17	27
Abuse of illicit drugs/alcohol	14	22
Other (e.g., caregiving responsibilities)	14	22
Conflict at school	14	22
Physical injury	13	21
Conflict with parents	11	18
Conflict with other family members	10	16
Sexual stress/frustration	8	13
Criminal problems	7	11
Civil problems	6	10
Death of friend/relative	4	6
None	1	1

FBI Source.

**Table 2.** Locations of public mass shootings, by percentage of all occurrences: 1966-2019.

LOCATION	PERCENT %
Workplace	30.8
Retail establishment	16.9
Bar or restaurant	13.4
Residential location	8.1
Outdoors	8.1
K-12 SCHOOL	7.6
Place of worship	6.4
College of worship	5.2
Government/place of civic importance	3.5

Source: National Institute of Justice

<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/public-mass-shootings-database-amasses-details-half-century-us-mass-shootings#:~:text=Mass%20Shooting%20Demographics,%2C%20and%201.8%25%20Native%20American.>

## 2. Demographics

Based on the National Institute of Justice database (2022), from 1966 to 2019, 97.7% of the 172 individuals who committed public mass shootings were males. The average age of those who were shooting was 34.1, with a range of 11 to 70. The racial diversity of those shootings was 52.3% White, 20.9% Black, 8.1% Latino, 6.4% Asian, 4.2% Middle Eastern, and 1.8% Native American.

**These identifiable theoretical issues could lead to criminality, albeit mass shootings or gun violence.** There are four things most mass shooters have in common, according to The Violence Project:

- Early childhood trauma and exposure to violence.
- An identifiable grievance or crisis point.
- Validation of beliefs—finding inspiration in past shootings by others.
- The means to carry out an attack.

<https://projects.voanews.com/mass-shootings/>

### 2.1. Life Course Theory

#### Early childhood trauma and exposure to violence

According to the [National Institute of Justice \(2022\)](#), about 31% of persons who committed mass shootings were found to have experienced severe childhood trauma, and about 80 percent were in crises before the incidents.

Life course theory is perhaps the preeminent theoretical direction in the scholarly inquisition of human lives and attendant existential behavior. This theory, though neglected by earlier theorists, has continued to pose as the elephant in the room of human studies, histories, and future trajectories of any human behavior. Life course as a theory denotes the construction between a pattern of life events and the very actions that humans perform. More so, the dynamics, or experiences, during human life aid in the life-course theory's attempt to expound why certain entities are more inclined to a life of criminality while others have a lesser probability. Consequently, these factors force steady collaboration between individuals and their surroundings that primarily create a particular lifestyle that could lead to a life of criminality if these factors are deleterious. In general, the accepted impression is that the factors occurring at an earlier stage in life are more influential on crime risks than future life experiences. An abused child who lived in a home for several years of his life would have nothing to offer society other than what he has learned over the years in the "school" of regular abuse.

[The Violence Project \(2021\)](#) perceived that most of these shootings occur due to unfortunate issues like domestic violence. The immediate and long-term cost of domestic violence can thus be high, affecting children's education as well as having long-term developmental consequences, which eventually could affect their perception of life, and consequently shape other events in their lives, negatively or positively. In the case of domestic violence, the seeming option is only negative and violent.

## 2.2. Strain Theory

### An identifiable grievance and crisis point

Merton's (1938) Social Structure emphasized that society is set up in a manner that deviant behavior is enormously encouraged. The theorist believed that when the norms in society or the socially accepted goals like the proverbial "American Dream" exert so much pressure on individuals for conformity, this could drive citizens to strain. Citizens could either strive and work within the societal structure or become instead the members of a deviant subculture to achieve those societal goals of "innovation". In other words, the structure of the society encourages criminal behavior. Strain increases the likelihood of deviant behavior. Strain can be a result of blocked opportunities and the failure to achieve one's goals.

However, the work of Agnew in general strain theory tends to provide much clarity to strain in this context. Agnew and Brezina (2019) made these postulations; that individuals who experience stress or stressors often become upset and sometimes cope with crime. Strains increase the possibility of crime, especially strains that are high in scale and are usually considered unjust. According to the General Strain Theory, strain increases crime because it leads to negative emotions such as frustration, fear, anger, and depression. Therefore, individuals would want to devise a means of coping there by doing something to correct these emotions, caused by negative stimuli, anger, depression, fear, and frustration. Their circumstances may make it appear that committing a crime is the citizen's most accessible option (Agnew & Brezina, 2019).

These negative emotions may lower the barriers to crime. For instance, frustrated individuals often have a strong desire for revenge (Agnew, 2006).

Agnew (1985) specified that criminal behavior is most prevalent among individuals experiencing negative life events, such as financial or marriage crises.

Agnew further argues that criminal behavior comes from failure to avoid painful environments such as school settings where there are communication problems between teachers and students. Criminal behavior thus would become a means of obtaining what the individual has been prevented from obtaining; escapism, retaliation, and rebellion (Hagan & Daigle, 2018).

Agnew and Brezina (2019) subsequently posited that three types of strain could be evident in society. Firstly, strain from people being unable to achieve their goals, being unable to obtain the respect or money they want. Secondly, strain from being treated adversely or negatively, such as being verbally or physically abused. Thirdly, strain from people losing something of value, like loved ones, romantic partners, and money.

This theory has some important characteristics that could be considered as a means of identifiable grievances and possible predictor of crisis points.

## 2.3. Social Learning Theory

### Finding inspiration in past shootings by others

Akers's (1996) social learning theory involves a reformation and extension of Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory. Edwin Sutherland posited that behavior is a function of learning through interaction with other people. However, Akers's perspective was quite congruent with Sutherland's approach. Akers maintained that the "basic assumption in social learning theory is that the same learning process, operational in a context of social structure, collaboration, and situation, yields both conforming and deviant behavior" (Akers & Sellers, 2013: p. 81). In other words, we learn to engage in crime through exposure to definitions favorable to crime. The theoretical assumption of this theory is that criminal behavior is learned. People learn to commit crimes by simply observing people they consider relevant and models, and such association with the attendant criminal behavior could only be replicated in the life of the follower. This lays credence to the popular mantra that says, show me your friend, and I will tell you who you are. Through association and keen observation, an individual could be inspired to follow suit in what he learned.

## 2.4. Broken Window Theory

### Disorder, and means to carry out the attack

Broken window theory was first theorized by Wilson and Kelling (1982). Their theory assumption was based on disorder within the neighborhoods. McKee (2018) observed that the theory linked disorder and vulgarity within society to the cause or preceding occurrence of other serious crimes. Before the manifestation of various theories of incivility, and other theories like broken window theories, scholars and researchers were more inclined to focus on more serious crime. Law enforcement and police believed that such serious crime was more serious and very consequential to the victim and society, at the expense of disorder and incivility. McKee also noted that the theorists took a different approach from what seems like what society is doing today. Focusing on the outcome without giving attention to the cause, Wilson and Kelling saw serious crimes like a mass shooting, murders, rape, and robbery as the macrocosm and a culmination of ignoring incivility and disorder in the community. The law enforcement should be proactive and not reactive.

Broken window theory further postulates that the pervasiveness of incivility creates fear in the minds of the people who are convinced that the area is unsafe for their habitation because of the presence of few that might have achieved unrestrained notoriety in the community. The unfortunate withdrawal from the community of the needed values has weakened the social controls that previously kept criminals and would-be criminals away and in check. McKee further posited that the broken window theory had a vast influence on police policy all through the 1990s and remained influential into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps the most notable application of the theory was in New York City under the direction of police Commissioner William Bratton. The chief's application of broken windows dramatically led to a decrease in crime rates within the city in



the 1990s.

## 2.5. Causes

The [National Institute of Justice \(2022\)](#) observed that suicidality was a strong motivator of perpetrators of mass shooters. NIJ indicated that of all mass shooters in the recorded Violence Project database, 30 percent were suicidal before the shooting. More so, an additional 39 percent were suicidal during the shooting. Those statistics were considerably higher for younger shooters, with K-12 students who were involved in mass shootings found to be suicidal in 92 percent of occurrences and college or university students who were involved in mass shootings suicidal 100 percent of the time.

In terms of past trauma, 31% of persons who perpetrated mass shootings were found to have experienced severe childhood trauma, and over 80% were in crisis.

According to the National Institute of Justice, trauma was a common element of the backgrounds of those committing mass shootings. Early intervention through school-based services may be a key component of early prevention.

## 2.6. The Role of Mental Illness

According to the National Institute of Justice, mass shootings are often blamed on mental illness; however, the research indicates the role of mental illness in mass shootings is complicated, and not clear-cut. Mental health issues were common among those who engaged in mass shootings, with psychosis playing a minor role in nearly one-third of the cases, but a primary role 10 percent of the time.

“Nearly half of individuals who engaged in mass shootings (48%) leaked their plans to others, including family members, friends, and colleagues, as well as strangers and law enforcement officers. Legacy tokens, such as manifestos, were left behind by 23.4% of those who committed mass shootings. About 70% of individuals who perpetrated mass shootings knew at least some of their victims. K-12 school and workplace shooters were ‘insiders’—current or former students and employees. That finding has implications for physical security measures and the use of active shooter drills” ([Peterson, 2021: p. 13](#)).

Leakages that usually occur in the case of mass shootings provide an opportunity for intervention and avoidance. Sensitizing the public in reporting anonymously may increase the likelihood of proactively nipping the ugly trend in the bud.

## 3. Crime Prevention Strategy and Recommendations

The proportion at which Americans are killed in mass shootings has intensified in recent years. For years, horrendous mass shootings have generated intense political debates about whether such occurrences can be prevented and what would be the most effective strategy responses. Previous research on the effects of firearm policies on deadly mass shootings has significant restrictions, leaving

questions about the efficiency of strengthened gun regulations such as wide-ranging background checks or policies that have been applied to encourage more civilian gun carrying in public places.

*“With the right to bear arms comes a great responsibility to use caution and common sense...and it’s just plain common sense that there be a waiting period to allow local law-enforcement officials to conduct background checks on those who wish to purchase handguns.”*

—President Ronald Reagan

### 3.1. Prevention Starts with

- Increase the effort needed to commit crime.
- Increase the risk of committing the crime.
- Reduce rewards of the crime
- Induce guilt: Increase shame.
- Reduce provocation (Cornish & Clarke, 2003: p. 61).

### 3.2. Extreme Risk Protection Orders

According to Frattaroli et al. (2020), many people who pose a high risk of hurting themselves or someone else with a weapon can legally acquire guns and pass a background check necessary to purchase a new gun. State laws often do not provide a clear legal system to restrict access to guns before a calamity occurs, even when it is obvious that an individual is at risk of causing harm to self or others.

The researchers further stated that an Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) is a civil order with due process protections declared by a court when an individual is at risk of violent behavior toward self or others. Contingent on the state’s ERPO law, family members, dating partners, household members, law enforcement, health professionals, co-workers, and school administrators may petition the court to temporarily restrict an individual’s access to guns when such individual is behaving dangerously and at the risk of unleashing violence. ERPOs grant law enforcement clear authority to temporarily remove firearms from ERPO respondents and prevent them from purchasing new guns for the duration of the order.

Wintemute et al. (2019) posited that post-event studies of mass shootings indicate that ERPOs and risk warrants can play a role in preventing them. Almost 80% of offenders of mass violence in society make overt threats or behave in a manner indicative of their intent to carry out an attack. For example, public mass shootings in Parkland, Florida; Aurora, Colorado; and Tucson, Arizona, among others, were committed by assailants known to law enforcement agencies, family members, acquaintances, and in some cases, health specialists to be at high risk for violent behavior. Public mass shootings in California, Texas, and Ohio in late July and early August 2019 have led to extensive discussion of the potential for ERPOs to prevent such events and reports that Congress may con-

sider legislation to create a federal ERPO policy.

Wintemute et al. (2019) further observed that there have been only two reported cases of ERPO use in efforts to prevent mass shootings. In Vermont, an 18-year-old man described the Parkland shooting as “fantastic” the day after it happened, made definite threats (even to the police), wrote plans to commit a mass shooting at his school “I’m aiming to kill as many as I can”, and owned firearms. Vermont’s first ERPO was issued against this man in April 2018, the day after the governor signed the authorizing legislation. In December 2018, an ERPO was obtained for a Washington man accused of threatening a mass shooting at a synagogue “I’m shooting for 30 Jews” and a school. Twelve firearms were retrieved neither of these convincingly threatened mass shootings ensued.

As explained by Schweit (2017), we see and know more about one another’s day-to-day lives than ever before. Yet research shows that 15 years ago an active-shooter occurrence occurred every two months. These days, we are seeing one every two weeks. The nation’s 800,000 law enforcement officers cannot stop this wave of destruction without the engagement of the country’s 300 million citizens. Mass shootings will persist unless public engagement replaces our collective apathy and national passivity.

Targeted violence falls into two major categories: impulsive and planned. The former comes with little or no warning and is often set off by a workplace or family trauma. This kind of attack may result in fewer casualties, but it is extremely difficult to do anything to prevent it. The same is not true of planned attacks, which provide opportunities for intervention and prevention.

Schweit (2017) further noted that if you run a business, a school, a church, or an organization, make sure everyone involved knows how and where to report information. If you don’t have a reporting and threat-assessment strategy, please get one.

Prevention is more about attitude than tactics. Changes in laws and policies are important, but without an urgent increase in citizen awareness and reporting, innocent people will continue to die. To prevent these shootings, Americans need to be as motivated as they were after the morning of Sept. 11, when no one knew who the next victim would be.

According to Kristof (2017), the information stated below are all reasonable steps that shouldn’t be contentious and would have significant preventative effects. Moreover, public health experts believe it’s plausible that well-constructed safety measures could over time cut down gun deaths by one-third or by more than 10,000 a year.

1) “Impose universal background checks before buying a gun. More than four out of five Americans support this measure, to prevent criminals or terrorists from obtaining guns. Harvard research suggests that because of loopholes, 22 percent of guns are acquired without a background check.”

2) “Ban bump stocks, which allow semiautomatic rifles to fire more like au-

tomatics. In Las Vegas, a single gunman was able to shoot hundreds of people because he had converted guns to bump-stock firing.”

3) “Impose an age limit of 21 on gun purchases. This is already the law for handgun purchases in many states, and it mirrors the law on buying alcohol.”

4) “Enforce a ban on possession of guns by anyone subject to a domestic violence protection order. This is a moment when people are upset and prone to violence.”

5) “Limit gun purchases by any one person to no more than, say, two a month, and tighten rules on straw purchasers who buy for criminals. Make serial numbers harder to remove.”

6) “Adopt microstamping of cartridges so that they can be traced to the gun that fired them, which is useful for solving gun crimes.”

7) “Invest in ‘smart gun’ purchases by police departments or the U.S. military, to promote their use. Such guns incorporate technology to restrict their operation, such as not firing without a PIN, a fingerprint, or a device in proximity, like a special bracelet so that children cannot misuse them, and they are less vulnerable to theft.”

8) Require safe storage, to reduce theft, suicide, and accidents by children.

9) Invest in research to see what interventions will be more effective in reducing gun deaths, so we can base our policies on robust evidence (Kristof, 2017: p. 1).

## Recommendations

One in five (21.6%) mass shooters studied other mass shooters before carrying out their crimes, and many of them were radicalized online before they committed their crimes. According to the *National Institute of Justice* (2022), researchers recommended media literacy education as a means of helping people to critically gather intelligence information and counter radical information that enables violence.

Gun owners and dealers must be engaged in solution processes and findings. Sufficient oversight over the marks and sales of guns and ammunition must be seriously emphasized.

Trauma services must be implemented to include expanded access to high quality, culturally competent, well-coordinated, social, emotional, and mental health supports and carefully address the impact of trauma.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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