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### AAP ADVOCATES TO IMPROVE CHILDREN'S SAFETY IN WAKE OF SCHOOL SHOOTING

CHICAGO – (Dec. 19, 2012) As the nation continues to mourn the children, teachers and school employees who lost their lives in Newtown, Conn., the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is advocating for changes to ensure children are safe in their schools and communities. The Academy's 60,000 members have a heartfelt desire to do everything possible to prevent a repeat of such tragedies.

In a [letter](#) to President Obama issued Wednesday, AAP President Thomas K. McInerney, MD, FAAP, called for new federal legislation that bans assault weapons sales and the sale of high-capacity magazines, strengthens mandatory waiting periods and background checks for all gun purchases, and promotes strict gun safety policies. These measures are reflected in the [AAP policy statement on firearm injuries](#) released in October. The AAP is also calling for federal action to improve children's access to mental health services and support for children exposed to violence.

"We are ready to work with you ... to honor the memory of the children and families in Connecticut and those exposed to gun violence every day through swift, bold action that keeps our children healthy and safe," McInerney wrote.

In the past few days, the AAP has heard from many of its members who are deeply saddened by the shooting and want to respond as strongly and actively as possible to the tragedy. The AAP has identified concrete steps its members can take to advocate for the improved safety and mental health of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.

"As pediatricians, we believe that children deserve a safe environment in which to grow and learn," McInerney said. "These incidents are always horrific, but the fact that young children were the victims in this case makes us even more passionate about trying to prevent such tragedies in the future."

The AAP urges parents who have concerns about how their children are responding to the shooting to speak with their child's pediatrician. The AAP offers [resources](#) for parents to talk to children about disasters, and advice on watching for signs of stress and trauma. The AAP advises parents to ensure young children are not exposed to extensive media coverage of the event.

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*The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org).*

