



THE HOSPITAL & HEALTHSYSTEM ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA

Statement on Preventing Injuries and Deaths from Firearms

Background: Pennsylvania's general acute care hospital emergency departments and trauma centers serve as a safety net, treating patients who suffer injuries and fatalities from firearms in communities across the state. According to data from the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation, Pennsylvania's number of deaths due to injury by guns per 100,000 population in 2009 was 10.4, slightly higher than the national rate of 10.1.¹ In addition, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nationally deaths from homicides and suicides from guns are an important public health concern for youths aged 10 through 19 years, where gun-related deaths rank among the top 10 causes of injury deaths for this age group.²

The Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) and its 240 hospital and health system members believe that health care in Pennsylvania must focus on patients and the communities in which they live. In that regard, hospitals and health systems:

- Work with government entities, other health care providers, and community organizations to improve the health status of the community, including addressing issues of preventing injuries and deaths from firearms as an important public health issue.
- Seek to provide their employees, patients, and visitors with a safe environment.

Position Statement: Therefore, HAP and its member hospitals and health systems believe there should be:

- **Assurance of an adequate supply of, and funding for, mental health services for individuals with behavioral needs—those that may present a danger to themselves and others, including through the use of firearms.** This would include appropriate implementation of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 and assuring access to mental health services.
- **Public health approaches to prevent injuries and deaths from firearms.** This includes research and data analysis on injuries and deaths from firearms; public health research regarding strategies to prevent injuries and deaths from violence, including firearms violence; and public education on conflict prevention and mental health awareness by the state departments of health and education.





Position on Preventing Injuries and Deaths from Firearms

March 2013

Page 2

In addition, Pennsylvania hospitals and health systems recognize:

- The important role that hospitals serve in their communities in offering healing, health, and hope 24 hours a day, seven days a week in times of crisis, which affect a community's overall health and access to care.
- That hospitals and health systems, as large organizations, need to have workplace safety plans that recognize the potential for violence, including by firearms, and incorporate necessary staff training and safety precautions across all care settings, including home care.
- That hospitals work with others in their communities in responding to, and coordinating with, "first responders" to mass casualty incidents, whether as a result of a natural disaster or other means, such as accidents and violence, as part of their emergency preparedness plans.

¹ "Number of Death Due to Injury by Firearms per 100,000 Population, 2009," State Health Facts, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, www.statehealthfacts.org.

² "Violence-Related Firearm Deaths Among Residents of Metropolitan Areas and Cities-US-2006-2007," Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov.