



For Immediate Release

The American Pediatric Surgical Association Supports Physicians' Rights to Counsel on Firearm Safety

Deerfield, IL (4 August 2014) – The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals' decision to uphold the "physician gag law" in Florida violates the First Amendment rights of pediatricians and pediatric surgeons and threatens our ability to counsel parents about how to protect children from unintentional injury and death. Both the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Pediatric Surgical Association (APSA) have previously put forth policy statements in strong support of the importance of a physician's role in discussing the presence of firearms in a home or place where a child spends time. In addition, both organizations oppose in the strongest terms legislation infringing on the physician-patient relationship.

When children or adolescents are injured by firearms, it is our job (and the job of many of our adult trauma colleagues) to care for these victims. We have all seen children die, and we have seen firsthand the devastation of losing a child. We see the lives of the victims and families touched and then unalterably changed by both "accidental" firearm injuries and gun violence. Counseling and educating parents on the use of gun locks and other safe storage techniques to reduce injury and death of our children is our duty as health care providers. This is no different than educating parents about car safety seats, helmets, home safety or the myriad of other methods to help prevent injury and illness among the children we care for.

Laws limiting our ability to reduce injuries and save the lives of children are the epitome of irresponsibility. In a time when the local and national news is riddled with stories of both mass shootings and tragic accidental shootings, no longer can we sit back and wait for the next child to be injured. This is the time to act, the time to educate, the time to use every evidenced-based tool at our disposal to save the lives of children and prevent the more than 4,000 children killed each year by guns.

We can wait no longer to act – C. Everett Koop, MD (former Surgeon General and APSA President, 1971-1972)

Read the [APSA Statement on Firearm Injuries and Children](#).

Contact

Meagan Comerford, Communications and Marketing Manager
mcomerford@eapsa.org
+1-847-480-9576 x246

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About the American Pediatric Surgical Association

The American Pediatric Surgical Association (APSA) (www.eapsa.org) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to ensure optimal pediatric surgical care of patients and their families, to promote excellence in the field, and to foster a vibrant and viable community of pediatric surgeons.