



Chapter 6

Interprofessional and Community Collaboration in Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention


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ABSTRACT

Addressing the complex challenges associated with gun violence in schools requires a team approach. The literature supports an interprofessional, collaborative orientation toward addressing the many aspects of people, places, and processes connected to the problem of gun violence in K-12 education. The foundational principles and values of interprofessional collaboration and how they can be used in K-12 settings are illustrated in this chapter, and an ecological view of school systems and their interface with communities is explored as a way of conceptualizing the complex issues around gun violence in schools. Finally, a multi-tiered system of support is presented as a framework for tactically approaching the systems connected to gun violence in schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Interprofessional and community collaboration is critical to the prevention and intervention efforts surrounding gun violence in schools. The prevalence of gun violence in U.S. schools is well documented (Gebeloff, et al., 2022), revealing hundreds of incidents, ranging from a single student intentionally or unintentionally shooting another student to the targeted mass shootings and fatalities that were witnessed in the 1999 Columbine shootings. The negative impacts of this violence are significant not only for witnesses and survivors, but for school students and personnel in general. Students' awareness that violence is unpredictable, appears unpreventable, and that schools are therefore potentially unsafe can exacerbate anxiety, interfere with learning, and elevate mistrust and isolation among students (National Institute of Justice, 2016).

Further, millions of children are exposed to some form of gun violence in the U.S. each year, including violence that occurs in the home or surrounding community (Gebeloff, et al., 2022). Students who have been minoritized or who lack sufficient basic resources experience disproportionately higher rates of gun violence in their communities. These trends and statistics clearly indicate the need for comprehensive, multi-dimensional initiatives to prevent and effectively respond to gun violence. Based on their understanding of students, school and community assets, as well as their training in the principles of primary prevention and intervention, school-based professionals are ideally suited to develop and lead those initiatives. School professionals also possess the dispositions and relationship-building skills that can enable them to build productive, mission-driven teams.

Grounded in an interprofessional collaboration context, this chapter presents an approach to prevention and intervention that provides school personnel with an ecological orientation toward examining and addressing factors associated with gun violence in their school and community. Using a strength-based lens and relying on participatory community-based involvement, this perspective relies on principles of respectful consultation. Strategic ideas for multi-level advocacy are explored, with recommendations for documenting and evaluating these efforts.

INTERPROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION

Interprofessional collaboration, in which two or more professions join forces to work toward common goals and solutions, can be particularly effective in addressing complex, systems-level issues such as gun violence (Green & Johnson, 2015). The process of engaging in this type of collaboration requires intentional preparation and shared goals. Specifically, working effectively as a member of an interprofessional

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