

In aftermath of Newtown shootings, a call for 'meaningful action'

December 21 2012, by Charles Anzalone

The director of the University at Buffalo's Alberti Center for Bullying Abuse Prevention is among nine school violence prevention researchers and practitioners in the country who on Dec. 19 released a detailed position statement in response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings.

"The Newtown tragedy is incredibly shocking and saddening," said Amanda B. Nickerson, PhD, director of UB's Alberti Center and associate professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology in UB's Graduate School of Education.

"Uniting with other scholars who study the issues of violence prevention and school safety provided an important opportunity to come to a balanced consensus about the most critical issues that we must face in order to achieve meaningful action in light of this tragedy."

Nickerson was one of the nine co-authors from universities throughout the nation who drafted the statement and who are acting as contacts and spokespeople for the larger group they represent.

The position statement, released through an organization called the Interdisciplinary Group on Preventing School and Community Violence, was endorsed by more than 100 professional organizations representing over 4 million professionals from groups such as the American Federation of Teachers, multiple divisions of the American Psychological Association, the Child Welfare League of America and

other education and mental health associations.

The complete position paper and a list of endorsing organizations is available at curry.virginia.edu/articles/sandyhookshooting.

The statement also earned the endorsement of more than 100 nationally recognized researchers and practitioners, including deans of prominent university colleges of education and social work.

The driving force behind the statement was to communicate scientifically informed principles and recommendations for practitioners, policymakers and the public at large. The co-authors hope the statement will "build consensus on a course of meaningful action."

"We all share a common priority: Keeping our children safe," the researchers and practitioners state. "We need to come together in our communities to share our grief and talk about how we can move forward in light of this tragic event.

"While schools are of paramount concern, the location of a shooting is not its most important feature, although it is the most visible," the document stated. "From the standpoint of prevention, what matters more is the motivation behind a shooting. It is too soon to draw conclusions about this case, but in every mass shooting we must consider two keys to prevention: (1) the presence of severe mental illness and/or (2) an intense interpersonal conflict that the person could not resolve or tolerate."

The group also urged caution about intensifying security within schools.

"We cannot and should not turn our schools into fortresses. Effective prevention cannot wait until there is a gunman in a school parking lot. We need resources such as mental health supports and threat assessment

teams in every [school](#) and community so that people can seek assistance when they recognize that someone is troubled and requires help."

Provided by University at Buffalo

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