

National Association for the Education of Young Children

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Vice President Joe Biden
Old Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President:

On behalf of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the nation's leading voice for high-quality, affordable early childhood education for all children from birth through age eight, I am pleased to submit our suggestions for preventing future tragedies of violence in the lives of children.

Violence prevention requires a multifaceted approach and an understanding of human development. Research shows the importance of children's social-emotional development from birth. Young children's positive and negative emotions serve important functions, motivating every aspect of their development and learning. While feelings of interest, pleasure, and curiosity promote positive development, strong feelings of sadness or anger can cause children to avoid certain kinds of learning situations or relationships. Positive emotional development helps children to become better able to regulate their expressions of emotion and to develop a clear sense of right and wrong. Positive social development promotes pro-social behavior in young children, through which children learn the value of caring, sharing, and helping.

Studies of high-quality, *comprehensive* early childhood programs such as the Abecedarian Project, Chicago Child Parent Centers, and HighScope, have shown better outcomes in terms of fewer special education placements, lower juvenile delinquency, and higher graduation and employment rates of the children in those comprehensive approaches. Yet funding for such types of early childhood education programs remains dismally inadequate. Only one in six eligible children receives child care assistance, and providers' reimbursement is substantially lower than the cost of quality services; Early Head Start serves only three percent of eligible babies and toddlers; and fewer than half of the eligible preschool age children can enroll in Head Start. As a matter of education policy, we need to connect social and emotional development more intentionally to teaching and learning for all ages of children.

Our policy recommendations are:

- Provide guidance and other resources, including financial resources, to encourage states, school districts, and community-based organizations to use those funds available in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for professional development of teachers, other school personnel, and school leaders on supporting each child's social and emotional development. The Act now calls for professional development to help children meet academic standards, and research demonstrates that the ability of younger children to meet those high expectations for literacy and

mathematics is inter-connected with their social and emotional development. The Common Core must be connected to standards, professional development, and resources on other key aspects of learning such as social and emotional development and approaches to learning. The U.S. Department of Education should encourage states to focus on these domains in addition to the Common Core in their systems of elementary and secondary education at the state, local, and classroom levels.

- Provide guidance and other resources – including additional financial resources – to administrators and educators responsible for or receiving Child Care & Development Block Grant, Head Start, Early Head Start, Promise Neighborhoods, or home visiting funds, on the importance of professional development in the areas of social-emotional development, the use of developmental screening and diagnostic evaluation, and the referral to family and child services as needed to create socially and emotionally healthy home environments as well as program environments.
- Conduct a public outreach campaign on how the ways we speak to and treat children can lead to aggressive and violent behavior. NAEYC with the American Psychological Association a few years ago created television, radio, and print materials under a campaign called ACT Against Violence. View these materials under “Public Service Announcements” at: <http://actagainstviolence.apa.org/materials/publications/naeyc/index.html>

NAEYC looks forward to working with you to prevent further violence – both occurring regularly across the nation each day and unexpectedly in places such as Newtown and Aurora – in the lives of children and communities.

Respectfully,



Jerlean Daniel, PhD
Executive Director

NAEYC resources:

NAEYC Statement on Newtown, Connecticut

www.naeyc.org/newsroom/pressreleases/statement_on_violence_against_children

Resources for educators and families on coping with violence

www.naeyc.org/content/coping

Resources on positive guidance and social and emotional development

www.naeyc.org/content/bullying-and-positive-guidance

NAEYC Position Statement on Violence in the Lives of Children

www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSVIOL98.PDF

NAEYC Statement on Media Violence in the Lives of Children

www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSMEVI98.PDF