



## POSITION STATEMENT

### Concealed Carry Legislation Related to Mass Shootings

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NaBITA, on behalf of its Advisory Board, states its position in opposition to state legislation forcing colleges and universities to permit the concealed carry of guns on campuses. NaBITA is also opposed to state legislative efforts allowing concealed carry permits to be issued without requiring background checks and training, which make an already bad situation much worse.

In an effort to further a political agenda promoting widespread access to firearms, some gun advocates and state legislators have advanced legislation to permit carrying of concealed weapons on college and university campuses to deter mass shootings, rampage violence, and even sexual violence. This position makes several erroneous assumptions, which are addressed in this position statement.

NaBITA does not believe that widespread access to firearms will make college campuses safer, and is in fact concerned that doing so could have dangerous, if not disastrous consequences, not just on mass shootings, but on the incidence of completed campus suicides.

The first erroneous assumption undergirding the advancement of concealed carry legislation is that those who hold concealed carry permits have basic training in the safety and proper use of firearms by the nature of having obtained a permit (United States Government Accountability Office, 2012)<sup>1</sup>. However, this is not necessarily the case, as some states require only an application, background check, and fee. Regardless of training, simple statistics tell us that having more guns on campus raises the likelihood of accidental discharges, brandishing of firearms during arguments, and guns being unsafely stored or stolen from social settings such as residence halls<sup>2</sup>.

The second erroneous assumption is that the presence of more firearms on campus would cut short an active shooter's attack or facilitate a faster active-shooter response. While some people might believe that people with concealed carry permits can provide a fast response to an active shooter, the reality is that law enforcement first responders would face increased difficulty distinguishing an attacker from other armed individuals attempting to respond, potentially leading to increased casualties. Likewise, the skill level and maneuvering needed to respond effectively during a mass shooting require advanced training that is well beyond what most concealed carry permit holders possess. That is why the University/College Police Section of the International Association of Chiefs of Police adopted a resolution

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<sup>1</sup> United States Government Accountability Office (2012). Gun Control: States' Laws and Requirements for Concealed Carry Permits Vary across the Nation. United States Government Accountability Office. Retrieved from [www.gao.gov/assets/600/592552.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/assets/600/592552.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> New Yorkers Against Gun Violence. Fact Sheet: Accidental Shootings. Retrieved from <http://nyagv.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Accidental-Shootings-NYAGV.pdf>.

in 2012<sup>3</sup> to promote the prohibition of concealed carry weapons on campuses. Furthermore, the use of guns in self-defense is a rare phenomenon.

The International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA) cited statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in their 2008 position statement against concealed carry, noting “out of the 30,694 Americans who died by gunfire in 2005, only 147 were killed by firearms in justifiable homicides by private citizens.”<sup>4</sup> A “justifiable homicide” is defined by the FBI as the killing of a felon in the commission of a felony. For 2013, the CDC reported a total of 33,694 gun deaths in the United States.<sup>5</sup> For that same year, the FBI listed just 223 of those as justifiable homicides by private citizens.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the idea that having more guns on campus can serve as a deterrent to active shooters ignores: 1) that active shooters often see themselves as martyrs who do not intend to or want to survive their planned attacks, and therefore count on being shot; and 2) that while most campus rampages are planned, having a gun on hand can make it easier for an individual who has lost his temper as the result of an altercation, who has consumed mind-altering substances (including alcohol), or who is experiencing a psychological break, to carry out a spontaneous attack.

We cannot ignore the problems caused by inserting guns into college settings, where many individuals are already experiencing crises of mental health and self-harm behaviors. Of the 41,149 total suicides that occurred in 2013, more than half were completed with a firearm<sup>7</sup>. Suicide is the leading cause of death for college students<sup>8</sup>. There is an drastic increase in students seeking mental health services on campuses.<sup>9</sup> Having more firearms on campus puts a lethal and common tool for suicide in the proximity of students during a time of heightened stress, emotion, and development. While owning a gun does not make someone suicidal, it may make someone who is already suicidal more likely to act. Easy access to a firearm is a critical risk factor in suicide prevention for this very reason<sup>10 11 12</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> 2012 Resolutions. International Association of Chiefs of Police. Retrieved from [www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/2012Resolutions.pdf](http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/2012Resolutions.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Position Statement: Concealed Carrying of Firearms Proposals on College Campuses (2008). International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators. Retrieved from [www.iaclea.org/visitors/PDFs/ConcealedWeaponsStatement\\_Aug2008.pdf](http://www.iaclea.org/visitors/PDFs/ConcealedWeaponsStatement_Aug2008.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> National Vital Statistics Report, Deaths: Final Data for 2013. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64\\_02.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_02.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Crime in the United States, 2013. Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Criminal Justice Information Services Division. Retrieved from [www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/violent-crime/murder-topic-page/murdermain\\_final](http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/violent-crime/murder-topic-page/murdermain_final).

<sup>7</sup> Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injury. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from [www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/suicide.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/suicide.htm).

<sup>8</sup> College Student Suicide. Suicide.org. Retrieved from [www.suicide.org/college-student-suicide.html](http://www.suicide.org/college-student-suicide.html).

<sup>9</sup> Watkins, D.C., Hunt, J.B., & Eisenberg, D. (2011). Increased Demand for Mental Health Services on College Campuses: Perspectives from Administrators. *Qualitative Social Work*, 11(3), 319–337.

<sup>10</sup> Miller, M., Azrael, D., Barber, C. (2012). Suicide Mortality in the United States: The Importance of Attending to Method in Understanding Population-Level Disparities in the Burden of Suicide. *Annual Review of Public Health*. Vol. 33: 393–408.

In addition, it is important to note that no major higher education organization supports firearms on campus. Along with IACLEA and IACP, many other associations have also taken positions against concealed carry, including Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education; the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International; the American College Personnel Association; the Association of Student Conduct Administrators; the National Association for Campus Activities; Leaders in Collegiate Education; and the Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education.

NaBITA firmly opposes concealed carry on college campuses and encourages those interested in preventing mass shootings on their campuses to focus on the development and promotion of Behavioral Intervention Teams (BITs)<sup>13</sup> while also bolstering mental health support services<sup>14</sup>. Developing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with local law enforcement and other first response agencies, as well as extending training opportunities to those agencies, can help to ensure a fast and effective response in the event of an incident.

Finally, NABITA encourages legislators who share our concerns about the prevention of mass shootings and campus violence to focus on methods of primary prevention that have demonstrated value, namely an awareness of risk factors outlined by the U.S. Secret Services, Department of Education, the FBI, and other law enforcement agencies, with a focus on early intervention and the provision of timely and adequate mental health services, other campus supports, and student conduct processes<sup>15 16 17 18</sup>.

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*NaBITA is an independent, not-for-profit association committed to providing education, development, and support to college, university, school, and workplace professionals who endeavor to make their campuses and workplaces safer through caring prevention and intervention. With more than 2,100 members, NaBITA is an active and engaging association offering an annual conference, an annual Campus Threat Management Institute, online trainings, and certification trainings each year. NaBITA is a clearinghouse for hundreds of BIT-related model policies, training tools, templates, and other materials. For more information, please visit [www.nabita.org](http://www.nabita.org).*

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<sup>11</sup> Suicides Account for Most Guns Deaths. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/05/24/suicides-account-for-most-gun-deaths/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/05/24/suicides-account-for-most-gun-deaths/).

<sup>12</sup> Firearm Access is a Risk Factor for Suicide. Harvard School of Public Health. Retrieved from [www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/risk/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/risk/).

<sup>13</sup> Sokolow, B., Lewis, S., Manzo, L., Schuster, S., Byrnes, J. & Van Brunt, B. (2011). Book on BIT. A publication of the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association ([www.nabita.org](http://www.nabita.org)).

<sup>14</sup> Van Brunt, B. (2012). Ending Campus Violence: New Approaches to Prevention. New York, NY: Routledge.

<sup>15</sup> The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Shootings in the United States. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from [www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/preventingattacksreport.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/preventingattacksreport.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective. Federal Bureau of Investigation. Retrieved from [www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/school-shooter](http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/school-shooter).

<sup>17</sup> Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence. International Association of Police Chiefs. Retrieved from [www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/schoolviolence2.pdf](http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/schoolviolence2.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Mass Victimization: Promising Avenues for Prevention. Federal Bureau of Investigation. Retrieved from [www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/mass-victimization-promising-avenues-for-prevention](http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/mass-victimization-promising-avenues-for-prevention).