

Sample Social Media: Use #NotYourScapegoat

- If we are to successfully ensure the safety and well-being of our kids, we must go beyond the single goal of preventing acts of mass violence. The goal of a safe and successful school is to ensure students have the supports needed to succeed - not to stigmatize or isolate them.
- Identifying young people who may be at risk of harming themselves or others is critical to safe school efforts; but we will fail if we ignore the broader issues at play. The goal of a safe school is to ensure they have the supports needed to succeed - not to isolate them.
- Students who receive behavioral interventions, learn social skills and techniques for self-regulation, and have access to counseling and other mental health supports are more resilient and less likely to experience negative consequences of more intensive mental health problems.
- Identifying young people who may harm themselves or others is critical to safe school efforts. But any threat assessment team must:
 - Be inter- and multi-disciplinary
 - Provide or refer the student to needed services in the school or community
 - Include a plan for ongoing support
- Falsely blaming people with mental health disabilities for violence will stigmatize these individuals, violate their right to privacy, and will likely dissuade some people from seeking help at all.
- Our most effective school safety efforts start with ensuring a supportive learning environment and a positive school climate. That means creating an inclusive culture that celebrates diversity and fights stigmas around mental health problems, disabilities, and other differences.
- Children who feel valued and safe, and who receive the supports they need, don't turn to violence as a solution to their problems.
- Effective school safety requires:
 - Strong leadership & equitable policies
 - Trusting relationships between students and adults
 - An inclusive & welcoming culture
 - Protecting students' civil rights & using positive discipline strategies
 - School-employed mental health professionals
- The assumption that people with mental health disabilities, including those with perceived mental health disabilities, are inherently dangerous and that targeting them will solve our country's gun violence problem is simply wrong.
- The President and some legislators have stated that people with mental health disabilities are the primary perpetrators of gun violence, suggesting surveillance and institutionalization as possible mitigation strategies. These proposals are misguided, harmful, and wrong.
- Safe schools for all, 101:
 - ✔ (green check mark emoji) A positive school climate
 - ✘ (red x emoji) Invasive surveillance
 - ✔ (green check mark emoji) A safe and supportive learning environment
 - ✘ (red x emoji) Institutionalization threats
 - ✔ (green check mark emoji) Restorative justice discipline practices
 - ✘ (red x emoji) Stigmatization of people with mental illness or disabilities
- Legislation that targets people with mental illness will not be effective in reducing gun violence. Falsely blaming them only heightens stigmatization, violates their right to privacy, and will likely dissuade some people from seeking help at all.
- When a threat assessment team identifies a "threat," overly punitive disciplinary approaches, such as zero-tolerance policies, are not helpful. Instead, schools should be referring students to the services and supports they need to reduce the risk and be safe.

- It is an act of prejudice to use people with disabilities as scapegoats for the increasing incidences of mass shootings and acts of mass violence in this country.
- Children and youth who feel connected and supported are better able to learn, interact positively with peers, and seek help when they are having difficulty coping. And they don't turn to violence as a solution to their problems.
- "I get really really tired of hearing the phrase "mental illness" thrown around as a way to avoid saying other terms like 'toxic masculinity,' 'white supremacy,' 'misogyny' or 'racism.'" #NotYourScapegoat
https://www.salon.com/2015/06/18/its_not_about_mental_illness_the_big_lie_that_always_follows_mass_shootings_by_white_males/
- "The convenient cries of 'mental health' after mass shootings are worse than hypocritical. They're factually wrong and stigmatizing to millions of completely nonviolent Americans living with severe mental illness." #NotYourScapegoat <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/11/9/16618472/mental-illness-gun-homicide-mass-shootings>
- People with mental health disabilities discuss harmful and dangerous ideas about mental health and gun violence, and tell policymakers that they are #NotYourScapegoat <https://rootedinrights.org/video/people-with-mental-health-disabilities-shut-down-dangerous-ideas-about-gun-violence/>
- Mental illness is not linked to gun violence. However, people with access to a gun were 18 times more likely to have used one to threaten violence. #NotYourScapegoat <https://www.sciencealert.com/new-study-shows-why-we-really-need-to-stop-blaming-mental-illness-for-gun-violence>
- Extreme risk protection order laws remove firearms from people with an observed history of dangerous behavior, not a diagnosis. #NotYourScapegoat <https://medium.com/@CSGV/its-time-to-retire-the-term-red-flag-law-89dbe2764d8>
- "People with psychiatric disabilities are the wrong focus for gun safety measures. It is time to stop scapegoating these Americans in the search for solutions to the problem of gun violence." #NotYourScapegoat <http://www.bazon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Wrong-Focus-Mental-Health-in-the-Gun-Safety-Debate-2019-nh.pdf>
- An autistic teenager's experience with a school threat assessment shows the harmful effects of labeling students as threats. People with disabilities are #NotYourScapegoat https://www.oregonlive.com/news/erry-2018/06/75f0f464cb3367/targeted_a_family_and_the_ques.html
- ASAN wants to change the conversation that we, as a society, have about gun violence and people with mental health disabilities. Misinformation and stereotypes hurt some of the most marginalized people in our society. We can do better. #NotYourScapegoat <https://autisticadvocacy.org/policy/briefs/gunviolence/>
- "After repeated exposure to a piece of information, people will start assuming it's true, whether or not it actually is, simply because they've heard it so many times" #NotYourScapegoat <https://time.com/5645747/gun-violence-mental-illness/>
- "Instead of stigmatizing mental illness, doctors across the country have called for years for mass acts of gun violence to be treated as a public health issue." #NotYourScapegoat <https://www.communitycatalyst.org/blog/stop-stigmatizing-mental-illness-and-call-gun-violence-what-it-is-a-public-health-crisis#.XXflsShKiUm>
- "Each time gun violence and mental illness are discussed together, we ultimately reinforce the discriminatory assumptions which animate our laws and justify dehumanizing treatment and oppression of psychiatrically disabled people." <https://talkpoverty.org/2019/09/17/surveillance-mentally-ill-mass-shootings/>
- Mental health disabilities are not the cause of gun violence.
- Blaming people with mental health disabilities is a distraction; address the real problem—gun violence.

- Institutionalization, segregation, and registration of people with mental illness are not the answers — institutionalization is harmful & will not stop gun violence
<https://time.com/5645747/gun-violence-mental-illness/>
- Scapegoating people with mental illness stigmatizes all people with disabilities.
- “Whether based on ignorance, discrimination or hate, the belief that ending gun violence can occur by targeting people with mental illness is wrong...”
<https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/458017-guns-that-are-killing-us-not-mental-illness>
- Mental health disabilities are not predictors of violent act or mass shooting. “...in the real world, these persons are far more likely to be assaulted by others or shot by the police than to commit violent crime themselves.” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4318286/>
- Mental illness isn’t a major risk factor for gun violence. Legislation efforts must focus on the real problem: anger, hate and access to weapons. <https://nbcnews.to/33hOjL7>
- Here’s what people with mental health disabilities have to say about gun violence:
<https://rootedinrights.org/video/people-with-mental-health-disabilities-shut-down-dangerous-ideas-about-gun-violence/>

Posts to Share / Retweet:

<https://twitter.com/ACLU/status/1171915320673497088?s=19>

<https://www.facebook.com/18982436812/posts/10156282119876813/>

<https://twitter.com/ACLU/status/1171915320673497088>

Articles for background information:

The Dangers of the Mental Health Narrative When it Comes to Gun Violence – Forbes

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/sarahkim/2019/08/07/the-dangers-of-the-mental-health-narrative-when-it-comes-to-gun-violence/#2e25b21a6a65>

The Dangers of Linking Gun Violence and Mental Illness – TIME

https://time.com/5645747/gun-violence-mental-illness/?fbclid=IwAR1mGDkEz0aHoPqCOghtdI7sFX5s4Gbz8uGGLImDLai4fsSEJQvEOQ_7qOA

You Can’t Stop Mass Shootings by Punishing People with Mental Illnesses – Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/08/07/you-cant-stop-mass-shootings-by-punishing-people-with-mental-illnesses/>

Increasing Surveillance of Mentally Ill People Won’t Stop Mass Shootings – Talk Poverty

<https://talkpoverty.org/2019/09/17/surveillance-mentally-ill-mass-shootings/>

I have a mental illness. Don’t scapegoat, institutionalize people like me after shootings. – USA Today

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/voices/2019/08/20/gun-reform-mental-illness-health-violence-column/2051696001/>

Why Mass Murderers May Not Be Very Different From You Or Me – NY Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/08/opinion/mass-shootings-mental-health.html?searchResultPosition=2>

No, Mr. President, Hate is Not a Mental Illness – Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/08/07/no-mr-president-hate-is-not-mental-illness/>

White House weighs controversial plan on mental illness and mass shootings – Washington Post
https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/white-house-considers-controversial-plan-on-mental-illness-and-mass-shooting/2019/09/09/eb58b6f6-ce72-11e9-87fa-8501a456c003_story.html

Trump's Plan to Stop Violence Via Smartphone Tracking Isn't Just a Massive Privacy Violation – Slate
<https://slate.com/technology/2019/09/trumps-harpa-smartphone-tracking-mental-illness-privacy-wont-work.html>

Trump's plan to monitor the mentally ill to curb gun violence is messy and flawed – Washington Post – Op-Ed
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-plan-to-monitor-the-mentally-ill-to-curb-gun-violence-is-messy-and-flawed/2019/09/14/a942979e-d40a-11e9-86ac-0f250cc91758_story.html

Mental Illness is a distraction in conversations on gun violence advocates say – Hartford Current
<http://www.courant.com/politics/hc-pol-mental-illness-gun-violence-20190902-sziituso4fh5dh5pejw6mbb7nq-story.html>

Experts reject Trump's call for mental hospitals to fight gun violence – PBS
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/experts-reject-trumps-call-for-mental-hospitals-to-fight-gun-violence>

Resources/fact sheets for background information:

Wrong Focus: Mental Health In The Gun Safety Debate – Bazelon <http://www.bazelon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Wrong-Focus-Mental-Health-in-the-Gun-Safety-Debate-2019-nh.pdf>

The Relationship between the Availability of Psychiatric Hospital Beds, Murders Involving Firearms, and Incarceration Rates – Bazelon
<http://www.bazelon.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/1.16.13-Analysis.pdf>

Protect Children Not Guns Factsheet: <https://www.childrensdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2017-Child-and-Teen-Gun-Deaths.pdf>

Survey about parent and student worries around shootings/guns:
<https://www.childrensdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/YouGov-SafeSchools-Final-Sep-18-2018-1.pdf>

Truth about guns factsheet: <https://www.childrensdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/the-truth-about-guns.pdf>

Principles for School Safety, Privacy, and Equity:
<https://ferpasherpa.org/schoolsafetyprinciples/>

Threat Assessment at School:
<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/threat-assessment-at-school>

Threat Assessment for School Administrators and Crisis Teams:
<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/threat-assessment-at-school/threat-assessment-for-school-administrators-and-crisis-teams>