



UMC Advocacy Team – January 2018 (1-2)

## CHILDREN AND GUN SAFETY



**SUMMARY OF POSITION: For the safety of children in child care facilities and homes, we support having weapons, firearms, or ammunition separated, secured, and locked away.**

### UNITED METHODIST OFFICIAL STATEMENTS

The United Methodist Church values children as a gift from God, and Jesus welcomed and blessed children. Our Social Principles (Para. 162C) state “Once considered the property of their parents, children are now acknowledged to be full human beings, but beings to whom adults and society in general have special obligations. . . .” It calls us to take responsibility for . . . education **and protection**. (*emphasis added*) As followers we are called to advocate for the prevention and reduction of gun violence and promotion of public safety. Resolution #3081 in the 2016 Book of Resolutions, page 180, goes on to encourage the church to “work to reform (*childcare*) regulations when they do not mandate standards that serve the best interests of children.”

### SUPPORTING FACTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

1. “Centers should not have any firearms, pellet or BB guns (loaded or unloaded), darts, bows and arrows, cap pistols, stun guns, paint ball guns, or objects manufactured for play as toy guns within the premises at any time. If present in a small or large family child care home, these items must be unloaded, equipped with child protective devices, and kept under lock and key with the ammunition locked separately in areas inaccessible to the children. Parents/guardians should be informed about this policy.” [Recommendations from The National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Educational Programs, Third Edition (in collaboration with the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Service Administration, and US Department of Health and Human Services) for health and safety standards in child care.]

**2. The Iowa Department of Human Services has recommended that our Iowa child care facilities and homes follow guidelines like those noted above:**

**A. All weapons and firearms shall be inaccessible to a child of any age.**

**B. There shall be a written policy regarding weapons and firearms that includes maintaining weapons and firearms in a locked place; maintaining ammunition in a separate locked place from the firearms; and any motor vehicle used to transport children shall not contain a loaded gun/any ammunition be separate and in a locked container.**

**C. Parents shall be advised if there are any weapons on the premises.**

3. A USA Today report notes that “children under age 12 die from gun accidents in the US about once a week,” mainly from access to loaded guns and a guardian’s inattention. [Added Agony, Justice is uneven when kids die in gun accidents, May 24, 2017] Furthermore, research using information from the non-partisan Gun Violence Archive of new and police reports showed that there were 152 accidents from 2014 to 2016 in which children either killed themselves or another child. Several of these occurred in Iowa.

4. According to the National Physicians Alliance (2014), 89% of accidental gun deaths of children occur at home with the majority resulting from unsupervised playing with a gun. In addition, 30% of handguns are kept loaded and unlocked and in a 2006 study, 73% of children under the age of 10 knew where firearms were kept and over a third admitted to playing with the weapons.

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