

Asperger's Association of New England

Changing Perspectives — Changing Lives

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Statement to the Community Regarding the Connecticut Tragedy

December 15, 2012

At the Asperger's Association of New England, we share the horror and sadness of people across the world. The shootings in Newtown, Connecticut, were a terrible and incomprehensible act of violence. We convey our deepest sympathy to the victims, their families and friends, and their community.

Early reports have suggested that the suspect, Adam Lanza, might have been diagnosed with Asperger



syndrome or a mental health condition. This has not yet been confirmed. Having Asperger syndrome does not preclude acts of violence, just as having any other condition, or no condition, does not preclude acts of violence. Some people with autism spectrum disorders have co-existing mental health conditions or other complex issues. Nevertheless, violence is not part of the Asperger or autism profile. People with Asperger syndrome or any other form of autism are far more likely to be the victims than the perpetrators of violence. Although it is impossible to conceive of a mass shooting as a mentally healthy act, the vast majority of mental health issues are not associated with violence.

Our overwhelming concern is for the families of the victims through their deep, enduring grief and devastation. We hope too that the conversation around Adam Lanza will be thoughtful and considerate of people who have Asperger syndrome or other forms of autism and their families. When myths and misunderstandings are perpetuated, nonviolent people with the same condition suffer. It is painful and frightening to feel associated by virtue of a diagnosis with someone who has committed such a horrific crime.

Discussing this tragedy is challenging for families and very upsetting for children who have Asperger syndrome. Our staff is available to give advice or support relating to this issue during normal business hours: (617) 393-3824. We are exploring ways to provide additional support around any concerns relating to the terrible loss of these innocent lives. If there is a way that we can support the families and friends of the victims or the Newtown community, we will be here for them.

Links

- Washington Post: [Autism experts say no evidence of link between Asperger's and violence like in Connecticut](#)
- Autistic Self-Advocacy Network: [ASAN Statement on Media Reports Regarding Newtown, CT Shooting](#)
- NASP Resources:
 - [A National Tragedy: Helping Children Cope](#)
 - [Coping with Crisis—Helping Children With Special Needs](#)
- SAMHSA:
 - [Disaster Distress Helpline](#)
 - [Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event](#)
- [Helping Children Cope With Tragic Loss](#) by Robert Evans, Ed.D
- ABC News: [Connecticut School Shooting: 4 Tips to Help Kids Cope](#)
- Autism Spectrum Quarterly: [Crisis and the Individual with Autism](#)
- American Psychological Association:
 - [Helping your children manage distress in the aftermath of a shooting](#)
 - [Managing your distress in the aftermath of a shooting](#)
 - [Five Questions on the Tucson, Ariz., Shootings for Psychologist Joel Dvoskin, PhD](#)(question #3 is relevant)
- REMS: [Psychological First Aid \(PFA\) for Students and Teachers: Listen, Protect, Connect – Model & Teach](#)

- NEA Health Information Network: [School Crisis Guide: Help and Healing in a Time of Crisis](#)
- New York Life: [After a Loved One Dies: How children grieve and how parents and other adults can support them](#)