THE CASE FOR AFFIRM

THE COLLECTIVE WILL OF MEDICINE WILL SOLVE THE FIREARM INJURY EPIDEMIC
AFFIRM AT A GLANCE

MISSION AND VISION
AFFIRM is the nation’s leading non-profit fully dedicated to ending the American firearm injury epidemic using the public health approach. We are a nonpartisan network of healthcare professionals, public health experts, and researchers who aim to prevent firearm injury through research, innovation, and evidence-based practice. We are gun owners and non-gun owners committed to reducing the rate of firearm injuries and deaths.

Since our founding in 2017, AFFIRM enables and funds transformative, high-impact innovations to reduce firearm injury in the United States.

PURPOSE
We believe in an inclusive approach to a historically divisive topic. Firearm injury is a non-partisan problem that transcends class, race, and geography. Each of us, our families, and our communities are at risk of firearm injury every day. Each one of us, therefore, can be part of the solution. There are no sidelines - only front lines.

AFFIRM has created a coalition of major US healthcare leadership organizations, representing over two-thirds of American physicians. Together, with a wide array of community-focused organizations such as 4H Shooting Sports Clubs, we leverage our expertise against this epidemic.

GOALS AND FUNDRAISING OBJECTIVES
Our goal is to achieve a 50% decrease in gun deaths by 2025, using a public health approach.

AFFIRM seeks funds to fully implement the following three programs by 2023 that, together, will achieve this goal:

RETHINK: $3.7 million
A “shark-tank” style application of public health principles through a competitive evaluation of ideas. With a panel of leading medical and research experts, AFFIRM anticipates granting $75,000 to the 45 most promising concepts over the next three years.

REFRAME: $2.0 million
REFRAME is a playbook-driven, community-based collaborative designed to foster dialogue and action in the local resolution of firearm injury. AFFIRM anticipates a per-event cost of $50,000, based on a mix of virtual and, as conditions permit, in-person events, with 40 communities.

RESOLVE: $3.3 million
Drawing upon the best insights of RETHINK and REFRAME, AFFIRM will advance and fund, at $500,000 each, the best six concepts to RESOLVE the issue of firearm injury.
DRIVERS OF FIREARM INJURY

There are approximately 430 million guns owned by private citizens in the United States. Only 46% of firearms are stored safely, and less than 2/3 of gun owners have received formal gun safety training.

OVERLAPPING AND COMPOUNDING RISK FACTORS

PRIOR VIOLENCE
Prior exposure to violence is one of the most significant predictors of future violence.
Youth who have been in physical fights or bullied, and adults who have been shot or arrested, are at higher future risk of both getting shot and shooting others.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
A woman’s risk of being killed increases exponentially if her abuser has access to a gun.
People who perpetrate domestic violence are more likely to shoot both themselves and others.

SUBSTANCE USE
The use of illicit drugs and alcohol change how the mind works and diminish an individual’s ability to cope with the stressors that many of us experience in life.
When unaddressed or untreated, and combined with firearm access, the risk for suicide, homicide, and unintentional shootings increases.

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS
Depression and hopelessness are deeply linked to the risk of firearm suicide. Further, mental illness does not, in general, increase the risk of hurting others. Having a mental illness increases one’s risk of being a victim of violence.

AGING POPULATION
Individuals living with dementia and their families are at an increased risk of firearm suicide, homicide, and unintentional injury as cognitive function declines.


90% of suicide attempts with a gun are fatal.
Most individuals who survive a first attempt, DO NOT MAKE A SECOND ATTEMPT.
FIREARM INCIDENCE IN THE U.S.

133,895
People were injured by a gun in the U.S. in 2017. That’s more than 200 people per day.

77
Women are shot and killed by a domestic partner each month.

56%
Of suicides among American youth are with a firearm, demonstrating a stark increase over the past decade.

20% INCREASE IN FIREARM RELATED INJURIES AND DEATHS
The CDC defines an epidemic as the occurrence of more cases of the disease, injury, or other health condition than expected in a given area or among a specific group of persons during a particular period.


Of suicides among American youth are with a firearm, demonstrating a stark increase over the past decade.


TYPES OF FIREARM INJURY AND DEATH
Fewer than 1% of gun-related deaths are from mass shootings, counter to common beliefs, but nearly 75% of Americans report being afraid of a mass shooting incident.

All of these types of firearm injuries and deaths are preventable.
AFFIRM'S APPROACH

To increase security and decrease the risk of firearm injury and death in the United States.
"As healthcare professionals, we are responsible for the public's health. Firearm injury is a public health epidemic, and we know we can fix it. Medicine has decreased deaths in every epidemic, from car crashes to HIV. We know we can stop this epidemic too."

- Dr. Megan Ranney, Chief Research Officer

**EPIDEMICS IN THE UNITED STATES**

**HIV**

The public health approach slashed the death rate of HIV without taking away sex. Instead, media campaigns focused on encouraging safe sex, providing access to prevention, and reducing the stigma surrounding an HIV diagnosis.

The same applies to firearm injury. We can reduce the rate of injury without taking away people’s guns, but rather by focusing on safety and prevention.

**COVID-19**

We know that the frontlines of medicine and public health are best at addressing health crises. Medical professionals are leading with real-time innovation to enable, not eliminate, human interaction and social proximity.

Like with COVID-19, medical professionals are uniquely equipped to handle the epidemic of firearm injury.

**MOTOR VEHICLES**

Mortality rates and injuries caused by vehicular crashes are substantially lower now than in years past due to improvements in mechanical safety and education on lowering risky human behaviors, such as driving while tired or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Similarly, there are ways to make the "mechanics" of firearms safer (e.g., proper storage) and reduce human risk factors.
The problem of firearm injury is more than bullet holes. We, as emergency physicians, know how deep this problem runs - but more importantly, we know it doesn't have to be this way.

CHRISTOPHER BARSOTTI, MD, FACEP, FAAEM, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MEGAN RANNEY, MD, MPH, FACEP, CHIEF RESEARCH OFFICER
PROGRAMS OVERVIEW AND STRATEGY

RETHINK: $3.7 MILLION

A public health issue as complex as firearm injury requires the leadership of innovators and risk takers. AFFIRM is launching a "shark tank" inspired competition, moderated by a panel of expert physicians, to bring together the best researchers in matters of public health to provide real, evidence-based solutions.

We will provide seed funding for the most promising ideas, chosen through a "shark tank" style evaluation and application of public health principles with 45 ideas seed-funded at $75,000 each.

REFrame: $2.0 MILLION

REFrame events are a practical way to both create and translate scientific research into local communities. REFrame creates an opportunity to share knowledge and experiences, develop a shared sense of purpose, and gain practical insights for action. These events are community-specific, built on expert opinion and evidence regarding firearm-related injuries and deaths.

Through REFrame, AFFIRM facilitates productive conversations between key stakeholders and community leaders, creating hope and agency among community members, and measuring outcomes by conducting pre/post-event assessments with the attendees.

RESolve: $3.3 MILLION

To fully RESolve the issue of firearm injury through implementing public health principles, AFFIRM aims to create standards, safe practice, and permanent change based on the learnings of seed-funded ideas and community-based structured dialogues. These standards likely include gun owner-focused protocols for safe firearm access, carrying, use, education, and effective interventions for both healthcare professionals and bystanders.

We will draw upon the best insights of RETHINK and REFRAme to advance and fund, at $500,000 each, the best six concepts to address and RESOLVE firearm injury.
**AFFIRM'S SUCCESSES**

**RETHINKING THE ISSUE THROUGH CRITICAL RESEARCH GRANTS**

Development of a Consensus-Driven Educational Curriculum on Firearm Injury:

*Project period: March 2019 - February 2020*

This project brought together a multidisciplinary group of national experts on firearm injuries from within medicine and public health to identify educational and curricular priorities at all levels of medical education. It created a national standards for medical and nursing education about firearm injury presented at AAMC in November 2019.

Firearm Injuries and Recidivism at St. Louis Level I Trauma Hospitals:

*July 2019 - June 2021 (ongoing)*

This work will continue to estimate the region-wide characteristics of patients with firearm injuries who present to level I trauma hospitals for acute medical care. It will delineate patients at the highest risk for recidivism by developing novel predictive modeling of firearm injury recidivism.

**REFRAMING CONVERSATIONS SURROUNDING FIREARM INJURIES AND DEATHS**

AFFIRM, along with members of the Berkshire medical community and leaders from the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), hosted a community conversation for interested citizens in December 2019. Healthcare providers, police officers, teachers, social workers, service providers, faith-based community groups, and community leaders convened at the Berkshire Medical Center auditorium to discuss suicide prevention in the community. The meeting was designed to gather locally relevant insight and ideas about what is working, where the gaps are, and what can be done to prevent suicide.

Based on this inaugural REFRAME event, an action group was formed and reported the following:

- Emergency nurses who attended REFRAME incorporated lethal means assessment and counseling in their practice the very next day.
- A regional morning talk show added dedicated segments the following week on firearm injury prevention with REFRAME participants as guest speakers.
- REFRAME organizers were invited by health systems and suicide prevention organizations to explore integrating REFRAME with health delivery systems.

**RESOLVING TO CREATE MEANINGFUL CHANGE**

As a result of the curricular grant, we partnered with the American Association of Medical Colleges to develop key objectives for firearm injury prevention education for students across the nation - and to develop first-in-class curricula for students at Brown University, UCSF, and elsewhere.

We are now partnering with legislators across the country to establish funding for healthcare professional education.

Dr. Tamara O’Neal was a Chicago-based emergency physician, shot in 2018 at age 38 by her former fiancé as she was leaving her hospital. The Dr. Tamara O’Neal Memorial Fund, established through AFFIRM and in partnership with Dr. O’Neal’s friends, family, and the Illinois College of Emergency Physicians, is a scholarship fund to support Black women physicians dedicated to addressing the structural determinants of gun violence.
MILESTONES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

OCTOBER 2017
AFFIRM was incorporated.

MARCH 2018
AFFIRM's First Annual Retreat brought together more than 20 key stakeholders, including three partners: American College of Surgeons, ACEP, Massachusetts Medical Society, publishers of the New England Journal of Medicine.

SEPTEMBER 2018
AFFIRM achieved 501c3 public charity status and began developing fundraising strategies and building a coalition of medical leadership organizations that are essential to AFFIRM's mission.

NOVEMBER 2018
In response to a page released by the American College of Physicians regarding firearm injury, the NRA tweeted, "Someone should tell self-important anti-gun doctors to stay in their lane." AFFIRM quickly responded by saying, "ThisIsOurLane," leading to an open letter co-signed by 41,000 physicians.

AFFIRM launched the Dr. Tamara O'Neal Memorial Research Fund.

NOVEMBER 2019
Dr. Megan Ranney, Chief Research Officer of AFFIRM, hosted a TEDx Talk titled "Now the public health approach can solve gun violence."

DECEMBER 2019
A $25 million bill was passed by Congress, with research dollars earmarked to study gun violence. Through the advocacy efforts from AFFIRM leadership, funding was secured where there had been no significant federal research dollars since 1996.

DECEMBER 2019
AFFIRM pilots REFRAIME, in partnership with the Berkshire Medical Community and leadership from the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), focused on the prevention of firearm suicide.

MARCH 2020
In recognition of the public health emergency of COVID-19, AFFIRM is the founding partner for GetUsPPE. This national organization has delivered more than 3.5 million pieces of donated personal protective equipment to those in need.

SEPTEMBER 2020
The CDC granted Dr. Megan Ranney, AFFIRM Chief Research Officer, a $1.95 million, 3-year award to study the REFRAIME method in partnerships with 4-H Shooting Sports.

Q4 2020
AFFIRM is holding two REFRAIME events in Q4 2020— one in Chicago on structural racism & firearm injury, and one in Washington on preventing targeted violence.
FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH

December 2019 marked the end of a 24-year moratorium on federally-funded firearm injury prevention research. The leadership of AFFIRM, along with our partner organizations and colleagues, played an essential role in advocating for funding, which resulted in the approval of $25 million research dollars.

In September 2020, the CDC apportioned the first funding installments through 18 grants that will address the most pressing questions surrounding firearm injury.

AFFIRM is taking a lead role in answering one of these questions. We have been granted $1.9 million over three years to our study titled "Reframing Firearm Injury Prevention Through Bystander Interventions for Youth Shooting Sports Participants." We will determine the effectiveness of bystander intervention in changing firearm injury prevention norms, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors among a sample of fifty 4-H Shooting Sports Club communities.
HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"If I had known about this service sooner, I would have used it—maybe my friend would still be alive today.”

Lauren Neales RN, BSN, knew the patient brought to the ER with a self-inflicted gunshot wound. It was her friend’s fiancé. The fiancé’s injury was not survivable, but her friend’s grief should have been. Lauren’s friend ended her own life the next day with the same gun. At REFRAME, Lauren learned about a service that connects families who experience suicide with peers for mentorship and support. Among several others, this service was entirely unknown to ER and hospital staff who care for the highest risk patients in their moments of highest risk.

Many regional services are missing their target population through a lack of coordination with emergency services. REFRAME creates a new infrastructure to build relationships among stakeholders and integrate resources that service the community. “We all need to learn what we can do right now, in the best way possible, and when it matters most.”

"I would never have thought to reach out if I had not been a part of REFRAME.”

Emergency department charge nurse, Valerie DiSiena RN, BSN, grieved with the family and friends of an ER patient who was unable to be resuscitated. The patient had harmed herself intentionally, and her husband found her too late.

Val saw that the husband, a law enforcement officer, was at the lowest moment of his life, and communicated her concerns for his safety to his loved ones present: “He needs you now. Keep him safe from his guns.” And they did. “Learning when and why suicide risk increases, and told in the voices of my community, made it all relatable. Now I see opportunities to prevent suicide that I previously didn’t know existed.”

"Discussing my patient’s access to firearms in that moment brought his family together and probably saved his life.”

Vascular surgeon, Dr. Elie Semaan MD, knew something was wrong when his patient arrived for his pre-operative appointment. His daughter’s concerns about him were palpable, noting her father’s depression had increased during his illness. The patient was a veteran and had a collection of firearms, and Dr. Semaan discussed with the patient his access to lethal means and risk of suicide in his moment of crisis.

This interaction created an opportunity for the patient and his family to reflect on his life’s value and importance. This incident opened new channels for hope and healing, and when the patient showed up for his scheduled surgery two weeks later, his daughter commented, “I haven’t seen him this hopeful in a very long time.” REFRAME is where we learn from each other how and when to talk about the health risks related to guns.
AFFIRM IN THE MEDIA
THE LEADERS OF AFFIRM ARE TRUSTED VOICES AND ROUTINE CONTRIBUTORS TO THE NATION'S LEADING NEWS OUTLETS.
PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS
If you are looking to join the mission of AFFIRM, here's what you can do.

1. **MAKE A DONATION.**
   It is only through the generous support of our donors that we can continue our work. No donation is too small. We recognize the uncertainty of these times, but remain steadfast to our mission of reducing firearm injury and death in the United States.

2. **HOST A REFRAME IN YOUR CITY.**
   Communities nationwide continue to be affected by firearm injury incidents, and we know that change begins with communication. REFRAME events CHANGE THE CONVERSATION surrounding firearm injuries and promote healing, collaboration, and transformation. Contact us at info@affirmresearch.org to learn more.

3. **EDUCATE YOURSELF AND OTHERS.**
   It's a difficult topic to discuss, but a critical topic to understand. Phrases like "gun violence" and "firearm injury" can be polarizing, but it's essential to recontextualize this issue as a public health crisis, and not a political or criminal justice issue. There are so many factors, both human and device, that contribute to injury and death rates. To learn more about gun violence as a public health issue, visit affirmresearch.org, or contact our education team for more resources.

4. **EXPLORE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES.**
   We know that we can't do this alone, and we rely on our network of volunteers to further our mission. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, contact info@affirmresearch.org.

5. **SHARE OUR MESSAGE.**
   Sign up for our emails and follow us on social media, where we will continue to share research updates and important news. Please share our message with your networks ask that they #StandAFFIRM with our team.