



CONTACT:
Bonnie Cook
Executive Director
Mental Health America of Greater Dallas
214.871.2420 ext. 108
Bcook@mhadas.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Mental Health America of Greater Dallas Mourns Victims Of Shootings

Offers Guidelines To Help In Responding To Impact Of Event; Calls For Action To Prevent Such Episodes In Future

Statement of Bonnie Cook, Executive Director of Mental Health America of Greater Dallas

DALLAS (May 24 2022)— Mental Health America of Greater Dallas joins in mourning the loss of those killed in the tragic shootings in Uvalde, Texas. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims and hope for the full recovery of those who were injured and everyone who is affected by this horrific event.

At this point, we do not know the motivation behind this tragic and senseless act.

We do know that events like this will impact families, the community and the nation. Many may feel at risk and may experience feelings of anxiety and fear. Parents may be groping with how to discuss these and similar events with their children.

In partnership with our national organization, Mental Health America of Greater Dallas has developed guidelines to help Texans respond and cope with tragic events, which can be found at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/information/get-info/coping-with-disaster.

To guide discussions about the shooting, Mental Health America of Greater Dallas offers the following suggestions for parents as they communicate with young people in Texas.

- **Talk honestly about the incident, without graphic detail, and share some of your own feelings about it.**
- **Encourage young people to talk about their concerns and to express their feelings, and validate the young person's feelings and concerns.**

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- **Limit television viewing. It can be difficult to process the images and messages in news reports.**
- **Recognize what may be behind a young person's behavior. They may minimize their concerns outwardly, but may become argumentative, withdrawn or allow their school performance to decline.**
- **Keep the dialogue going even after media coverage subsides. Continue to talk about feelings and discuss actions being taken to make schools and communities safer.**
- **Seek help when necessary. If you are worried about a young person's reaction or have ongoing concerns about his/her behavior or emotions, contact a mental health professional at their school or at your community mental health center. Your local Mental Health America Affiliate can direct you to resources in your community.**

Mental Health America of Greater Dallas' website has a number of additional resources on its website to help provide support and perspective to those directly affected by the tragedy and our community. (www.mhadallas.org/coping-disaster)

Unfortunately, tragedies like these are happening far too often in our society. Gun violence is affecting too many lives. The expression of sympathies cannot be our only response. It is time to recognize that guns and gun violence are major public health problem, and we need to desperately enact sound state public policy that seriously addresses gun control and limits the number of available firearms in this country.

Public policy is only a partial solution. There is an abundance of research that provides us with the effects of gun violence on the social determinants of health. Let us all come together to create and sustain safe and supportive school environments and communities that address the needs of our adolescents to prevent violence in our schools.

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About Mental Health America of Greater Dallas:

Mental Health America of Greater Dallas, founded in 1947, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization working to promote mental wellness through community education and policy advocacy. MHA-Greater Dallas serves as a catalyst to identify, assess, and respond to mental health needs in the community. As a facilitator and coordinator for local mental health service providers, MHA-Greater Dallas operates through long-range strategic planning along with immediate responses to community crises as they arise. In addition to our efforts to supply information, education, and advocacy related to mental health issues, we also provide preventive programs designed to equip high-risk populations (including children, adolescents, the homeless, and the indigent) with information and skills to combat stress and adversity. learn more: www.mhadallas.org.