Port Chester-Rye Union Free School District

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Aurelia L. Henriquez, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

September 13, 2024

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Providing students and staff in the Port Chester Schools with a safe educational environment remains a top priority. This includes keeping our students safe from gun violence. As we begin the school year, we write to enlist parents to help us with this mission.

About 4.6 million children in America live in homes with access to an unlocked or unsupervised gun. Every day, eight kids are unintentionally injured or killed as a result of "family fire," which is a shooting involving an improperly stored or misused gun from the home. Studies have shown the majority of school shootings and youth firearm suicides are linked to firearms accessed at home. According to a recent FBI study, 76 percent of the firearms used in school shootings were obtained from the home of a parent or close relative.

Evidence shows we can protect students and children by encouraging gun owners to practice safe firearm storage. That means storing firearms locked, unloaded, separate from ammo, and inaccessible to children. A nationwide study found that 87 percent of kids know where their parents' guns are kept, and 60 percent have handled them. In fact, studies of all types of school-based gun violence show that keeping students away from guns in the home is a critical way to reduce violence. According to one study, locking all household firearms could reduce firearm suicide and unintentional firearm fatalities among youth by up to 32%. Simply put, if guns are left loaded and unsecured in a home, children are at risk.

Even if you do not own a gun, your children may encounter one at the home of a friend or relative. We have a shared responsibility under the law to protect our children from guns. New York Penal Code 265.45 requires a loaded firearm in the home to be stored in a locked box container or secured with a trigger lock if you own a firearm, shotgun, or rifle. A violation of this law is a misdemeanor. However, the consequences for our children are greater.

The Port Chester Schools and several other school districts in Westchester County have partnered to promote the safe storage of firearms. Click here to learn more and download helpful resources, including a secure storage fact sheet, information about talking to your children about guns, and facts and resources on child firearm suicide.

Sincerely,

Dr. Aurelia L. Henriquez
Superintendent of Schools