



NEWTOWN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES TIPSHEET

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FILMMAKER STATEMENT

When I asked Francine Wheeler, one of the bereaved mothers of the children killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School what she wanted to talk about during a recent visit, she replied,

“My brain says, well I just want to keep talking about Ben. I want to talk about Ben all the time because I want him to stay alive. I want to talk about Ben’s friendship with this one who died and how much he loved school and I was looking at a letter to the families recently and they were naming every victim and my brain said maybe his name won’t be on the list and maybe he’ll just be alive...you know these crazy things. It’s been two years but I’m still there.”

At the core of it all is the unbearable loss of a child...multiplied by 20 innocent first graders along with their 6 educators...the collective trauma that was inflicted within the context of one small community...the added element of human intent that ended these lives...the weapons accessed to enable it...the world’s attention and our own national remembrance fleeting all too quickly on to the next shooting.

Over the course of the next three and a half years, a story of aftermath unfolded: what emerged was a rich mosaic of human connections formed amongst members of the growing club to which no one wants to belong. During a time when the town carefully balanced the need for privacy and recovery along with a desire for the story of their tragedy to affect change, access was a delicate process.

I have been privileged to build a coveted trust with many individuals from Newtown, and have been deeply inspired by the strength of their journey from isolation to reconnection and by the mantra that this horrific event not solely define Newtown, but also define a moment for meaningful change in our nation.

-Kim A. Snyder, Director/Producer

DIRECTOR Q&A

Q: How did you find yourself making a movie about Newtown?

A: I went to Newtown only 6 weeks after the tragedy. A non-profit organization that had connections with Newtown’s interfaith community had asked me to help them develop some short form video content. One of the first subjects I met and then interviewed was Father Bob Weiss, who had buried eight of the twenty children in one week. The way in through the faith community gave me a broader view, which led me to the idea of making a portrait of a town and its collective



grief. Much of the conversation about Newtown has been rightfully led by the victims' families, but less has been heard from the other parts of the community.

Q: What does bearing witness mean to you?

A: I thought a lot about the core idea that if you don't document and remember something, you can't prevent it from happening again. And that remembering can be cathartic. On the first anniversary, we told a local congregation that we would be available to film at their church if anyone had anything they needed to say. For some of these first videos, I left the room and told them that they could record whatever they needed to. These confessionals were just so raw and powerful - I hadn't seen anything quite like them. We started to actively seek out more subjects and witnesses. There was no one I approached who didn't feel like they needed or wanted to do this. There was some kind of healing in it for everybody. I was seeing emotions I had never experienced or seen before.

Q: How did you build trust in the community?

A: It was all very organic. I would question myself and wonder if I should proceed more systematically. But in the wake of this horrific act, I was interested in showing the connections amongst people that arose from these incredible situations. It was like a thread you pull - one person would suggest another who would suggest another. There are 28,000 people in the town all with stories. I hope this might serve as a catalyst for those who feel compelled to share their stories to do so moving forward.

Q: How did you approach the families?

A: Intuitively, I didn't want to approach the families for most of that first year. I didn't even try. It was almost eight months later when I met the first family. I sensed they were experiencing a feeling of being 'othered' and I tried to be straightforward. People never know what to say to anybody in this situation, and I didn't know what to say, but acknowledging that I didn't helped begin the trust-building. They felt I was working gently with them and would introduce me to more people. We built our movie via word of mouth.

Q: Have the families depicted in the film seen the film?

A: The week before picture lock I felt compelled to show them parts of it as they were able. The timing sucked because it was right before the anniversary. I set a date for each family individually, since they're all at different places in their grief. I gave them many options for screening - I offered to get on the phone, talk them through; come sit with them; a transcript; watch the whole movie or parts as they liked. Eventually they all opted to watch with me, three nights in a row. Two out of



three families opted to skip the beginning. The reaction was pretty consistent – they were all very affected but also felt that it honors their children. That it had beauty in it.

Q: What are your hopes for the film now that it is complete?

A: I hope people will see it as an artful film about grief and collective trauma. I hope that it will also put a human face on the issues of gun violence. I'd like to see it take that dialogue into a less polarized space. I saw so much dignity in Newtown, and I hope the film honors that. I hope people think about how we deal with grief in America and how challenged we are with this. After three years of making this film, and sitting with the material in editing for over a year, I am grateful for how powerfully it seems to move people.

SCREENING CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

The shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut forever changed the conversation about gun violence. Through the stories of parents, school staff, first responders, faith leaders, neighbors and others, Newtown shows how an entire community was traumatized by the events of that day. Film screenings offer an opportunity for viewers to discuss ways in which they too were affected by news of the Newtown tragedy. The strategies in this guide are meant to not only reaffirm empathy for the survivors but also to help meet these broader engagement goals:

- Cultivate action and community collaboration around individual and collective resilience.
- Raise awareness around gun violence as a public health priority, and help audiences better understand the complex effects it has on communities.
- Spark conversations about gun violence that move away from politically polarized debates and instead towards community-centric dialogue.
- Build empathy across urban, suburban, and rural communities affected by varying types of gun violence.
- Connect audiences with local resources around mental health and violence prevention.

RELEVANT TOPICS & ISSUES

- Individual and collective grief and healing
- Community resilience
- Trauma-informed care for individuals and communities
- Gun violence prevention as a public health priority
- Student mental health and supportive learning environments
- Urban, suburban, and rural perspectives on gun violence



POTENTIAL AUDIENCES

- Parents and parent groups, such as local PTAs
- High school and university students
- K-12 educators, administrators, and school staff
- Faith and interfaith groups
- Counselors and mental health professionals
- Law enforcement, first responders, and medical professionals

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Newtown is an affluent, suburban community of about 28,000 people in southwestern Connecticut. On the morning of December 14, 2012, it became the site of one of the deadliest and most shocking mass shootings in U.S. history. Twenty school children, all ages six to seven, and six educators were slain by a gunman at Sandy Hook Elementary (*Los Angeles Times*, 2012). The 20-year-old shooter, whose name has been omitted intentionally from the film and this guide, first fatally shot his mother in their home before driving to the nearby elementary school. Dressed in combat gear, he carried a semi-automatic rifle, two semi-automatic pistols, and hundreds of assault-style bullets in high capacity magazines taken from his mother (*Barron*, 2012). He shot his way through the secured entrance and opened fire in the school office, where morning announcements were being made over the school's PA system, and then made his way to two first grade classrooms. Police responded to the first 911 calls from inside the school within minutes. The shooter took his own life as police approached. The official death count for the day is 28, although many memorials exclude from the list of victims the shooter and his mother, who some consider an accomplice for her role in making weapons available to her son. No clear motive for the shooting was ever determined. Many point to the shooter's mental health issues, experiences being bullied in school, and estranged relationship with his parents as possible contributors (*CNN*, 2013).

The nation responded to the tragedy in Newtown with an outpouring of grief and support. Within hours of the shooting, citizens petitioned the White House for gun law reform and donated in droves to anti-gun violence organizations. Within days, President Obama announced the formation of a task force to propose recommendations on curbing gun violence. A month later, the White House issued the "Now is the Time" report (https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/wh_now_is_the_time_full.pdf), which recommended:

- expanding the background check system to close loopholes
- renewing a federal ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazines
- making schools safer by improving security and climate

- increasing access to mental health services through Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act

President Obama immediately signed 23 executive orders, and sent the remaining 13 proposals to Congress to consider (*The New York Times*, January 2013).

In April 2013, the Senate failed to pass proposed measures to expand background checks and renew the federal assault weapons ban (*The New York Times*, April 2013). Several states have passed laws similar to those defeated federally since the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting. Others have expanded gun rights laws, such as concealed carry, arguing that armed citizens can stop active shooters before police arrive on the scene. For more information on gun laws by state, refer to the state scorecard created by the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (<http://gunlawscorecard.org/>).

In January 2015, ten Sandy Hook parents and survivors filed a lawsuit against Remington, the manufacturer of the assault rifle used by the shooter. A Connecticut judge dismissed the suit in October 2016, but the families have appealed (*NPR*, 2016).

Unfortunately, Newtown has fallen victim to the rise of fake news websites and conspiracy theorists, which claim that the Sandy Hook shooting was a hoax staged to force changes to gun laws (*New York Magazine*, 2016). They are a small minority, but vocal and disruptive to the community's grieving process.

Sources:

- *CNN*. 2013. "Conn. police release final report on Newtown school shooting." <http://www.cnn.com/2013/12/27/justice/connecticut-newtown-shooting-report/>
- *Los Angeles Times*. 2012. "Connecticut school shooting victims." <http://graphics.latimes.com/towergraphic-connecticut-school-shooting/>
- *The New York Times*. 2012. "Nation Reels After Gunman Massacres 20 Children at School in Connecticut." <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/15/nyregion/shooting-reported-at-connecticut-elementary-school.html>
- *The New York Times*. January 2013. "What's in Obama's Gun Control Proposal." <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/01/16/us/obama-gun-control-proposal.html? r=1&>
- *The New York Times*. April 2013. "Senate Blocks Drive for Gun Control." *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/18/us/politics/senate-obama-gun-control.html>
- *New York Magazine*. 2016. "The Sandy Hook Hoax." <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/09/the-sandy-hook-hoax.html>

- NPR. 2016. "Sandy Hook Gun Lawsuit Heads To Connecticut Supreme Court."
<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/12/01/504026267/sandy-hook-gun-lawsuit-heads-to-connecticut-supreme-court>

KEY FACTS ABOUT GUN VIOLENCE IN THE U.S.

For political reasons, gun violence research gets very little attention by the Center for Disease Control. However, non-governmental research shows that gun violence – which includes mass shootings, homicides, suicide, and accidental shootings involving a gun – is a significant public health concern.

- Approximately 111,000 people are shot and 33,000 people die each year from guns (Brady Campaign to Prevent Violence, 2016).
- An average of 48 children and teens are shot every day and 7 die as a result (Brady Campaign to Prevent Violence, 2016).
- Suicide accounts for 60 percent of all gun deaths (*The New York Times*, 2015).
- Gun violence costs an estimated \$229 billion each year in the U.S. (*Mother Jones*, 2015).
- Seven of the 10 deadliest mass shootings have occurred in the last 10 years (*Los Angeles Times*, 2016).

In addition, CNN's interactive guide "Mass Shootings in America" (<http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/13/health/mass-shootings-in-america-in-charts-and-graphs-trnd/>) offers a comprehensive review of recent mass shootings.

Sources:

- Brady Campaign to Prevent Violence. 2016. "Key Gun Violence Statistics."
<http://www.bradycampaign.org/key-gun-violence-statistics>
- *The New York Times*. 2015. "Gun Deaths Are Mostly Suicides."
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/09/upshot/gun-deaths-are-mostly-suicides.html? r=0>
- *Mother Jones*. 2015. "What Does Gun Violence Really Cost?"
<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/04/true-cost-of-gun-violence-in-america>
- *Los Angeles Times*. 2016. "Deadliest U.S. mass shootings, 1984-2016."
<http://timelines.latimes.com/deadliest-shooting-rampages/>



KEY MENTAL HEALTH CONCEPTS

Trauma is an emotional response to a highly distressing event. It can have extensive and unpredictable effects on an individual's life long after the incident occurs, including mood swings, flashbacks, nightmares, or migraines. Relationships and work performance often suffer as a result (APA, "Trauma," 2017).

Collective trauma happens when an adversity affects a group of people and disrupts the social norms and routines that define a community. Natural disasters, human-made tragedy, or economic deterioration have all been shown to result in collective trauma (Saul, 2013).

Trauma-informed care is a service approach that acknowledges the extensive effects trauma can have on individuals and actively seeks pathways to recovery. Key principles include ensuring physical safety, compassionate listening, and focusing on individual strengths and resilience. Everyone from police officers to community conveners (like yourselves) can practice trauma-informed care when interacting with community members and creating policies for their institutions (SAMHSA, 2015).

Individual resilience refers to one's capacity to persevere when faced with adversity or trauma. People build resilience over their lifetime, which helps them to regulate emotions and behaviors despite high levels of distress (APA, "The Road to Resilience," 2017).

Community resilience is the ability of a community to mobilize its resources in response to a natural disaster or human-made tragedy. A resilient community has the infrastructure, such as first responders, and social support networks, such as faith-based groups, to help its citizens build individual resilience (Community and Regional Resilience Institute).

For additional guidance on mental health concepts, search the topics listed by the American Psychological Association (<http://www.apa.org/topics/index.aspx>).

Sources:

- American Psychological Association (APA). 2017. "Trauma." <http://www.apa.org/topics/trauma/>.
- American Psychological Association (APA). 2017. "The Road to Resilience." <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>
- Community and Regional Resilience Institute. "What is Community Resilience?" <http://www.resilientus.org/about-us/what-is-community-resilience/>
- Saul, Jack. 2013. *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing*. <https://books.google.com/books?id=Ve0dAAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover>



[r&dq=collective+trauma&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjll_j1us3RAhUJOCYKHSw8BzcQ6AEIITAB#v=onepage&q=collective%20trauma&f=false](https://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions)

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). 2015. <https://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions>

FRAMING THE CONVERSATION

Newtown is an emotional film and may bring up some difficult feelings for your viewers. Consider having a counselor at the event for anyone who has first hand experience with gun violence, losing a child, or other trauma. You can also designate a “safe space,” such as a quiet area in the venue’s lobby, for anyone that may need a moment away from the film or conversation. At minimum, having a few boxes of tissues on hand might be appreciated.

If audience members are strongly affected by the content, it is important that they do not leave the event feeling demoralized or paralyzed by grief. As an event organizer, you have the opportunity to lead your audience through a post-screening discussion or activity that leaves people feeling empowered and hopeful. Make sure to give due credit to the examples of healing, resilience, and positive change present in the film and in your community. In addition, these guides from the American Psychological Association may be helpful: “Managing Your Distress in the Aftermath of a Shooting” (<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/mass-shooting.aspx>); “Helping your children manage distress in the aftermath of a shooting” (<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/aftermath.aspx>).

As noted above, the filmmakers made a conscience decision not to include the shooter’s name in the film. Media coverage that glorifies the perpetrators of violence has been shown to breed copycats. We suggest you follow the filmmaker’s lead and keep the shooter’s identity in obscurity. However, that does not mean you should not address issues related to the shooter, for example: mental health, social isolation, or access to weapons.

CONVERSATION STARTER

Your *Newtown* DVD features the following conversation starter on the menu screen before the film starts:

How did the Sandy Hook shooting change the national conversation about gun violence?

Project the conversation starter before the film begins and as guests are taking their seat at the venue. Encourage participants to turn to a person sitting near



them to share their answers for two to three minutes. If time permits, invite a few people to share their answers with the entire group, or they could also share how they were personally affected when they heard the news of the Sandy Hook shooting.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS AND/OR SPEAKERS

Newtown interviews members from a diverse cross-section of the town to understand how tragedy affects an entire community. You can recreate this conversation by inviting representatives from some of the following specializations to discuss issues of community resilience and gun violence prevention in your local context.

- **Counselors and mental health professionals** can speak to a variety of issues in the film, including stages of grief, collective trauma, trauma-informed care, and resilience. Your local hospitals or private practices may have trauma specialists. You can also check to see if there are local affiliates of the Trauma Recovery Network (<http://www.emdrhap.org/content/trauma-recovery-network/>) and the Trauma Survivors Network (http://www.traumasurvivorsnetwork.org/trauma_centers).
- Look for representatives from your local educational institutions to address how news of shootings or local gun violence affects school climate. For example, **school psychologists, educators, or students** might be able to discuss the school's trauma-based care programs or efforts to foster a positive learning environment. Reach out to your local school district or college administrators for referrals. You can also search for regional school psychologists through The Association For University and College Counseling Center Outreach (<https://auccco.wildapricot.org/directory>) or the National Association of School Psychologists (<https://www.nasponline.org/membership-and-community/find-a-state-association>).
- If gun violence is prevalent in your area, help viewers understand the local public health impact by inviting **emergency response professionals** to share their experiences. For example, first responders, ER doctors, or law enforcement could speak anecdotally to the frequency and types of gun violence. You can also ask if they are familiar with regional gun violence trends. The American Medical Association, which has declared gun violence a public health crisis, may be able to offer a local reference (<https://amaa.memberclicks.net/contact-us>).

- **Faith and interfaith leaders** serve an important role in helping community members process the difficult emotions of grief, loss, and disorientation after tragedy. Invite interfaith leaders to discuss ways to foster individual and community resilience. You can search for a faith leader from your state among the 4,000 signatories of the “Standing with the Clergy of Newtown: A Letter to the U.S. Senate from American Religious Leaders” (<http://www.piconetwork.org/tools-resources/document/letter-from-Newtown-with-signers-2013-03-10.pdf>).

Have changes to gun laws recently passed in your state? Invite **local policymakers or advocates** to educate your audience about current initiatives aimed at preventing gun violence and/or increasing gun rights. This might be an elected official or perhaps a parent leading protests with organizations like Moms Demand Action (<https://momsdemandaction.org/>). Try a local media search to find the people active in violence prevention near you. Please note that this approach may generate more politically charged conversation. Remember that your screenings cannot include any direct advocacy. You should be transparent about this from the onset if you will be working with any local policymakers or advocates. The focus of the discussion should be on education and awareness, and not directly advocating for any specific legislation. More information around advocacy guidelines and restrictions for your screenings is included in the Indie Lens Pop-Up Program Toolkit on page 9 (http://independentlens.s3.amazonaws.com/indie-lens-pop-up-program-resources/Indie-Lens-Pop-Up_Program_Toolkit_FINAL_2016.pdf).

PANEL DISCUSSION

Your speakers will have varying areas of expertise and experience in the issues raised in the film. Some may be able to address discussion topics across the categories listed below. Review with your speakers prior to the conversation and select questions accordingly.

Counselors and Mental Health Professionals

- The film shows us the devastating effects that the Sandy Hook tragedy had on the individual and community level. As we continue to witness mass shootings and other forms of gun violence in the news, how does this affect our collective mental health? Are we as a nation traumatized?
- What are resources locally that community members can access to get the support they need to cope with trauma and grief? Are there mental health resources that you would like to see more of in our community?



- Most people who inflict harm on themselves or others exhibit warning signs to the people closest to them before committing an act of violence. What are the warning signs that family members, mentors, or peers need to know? What should we do if we see a warning sign?

School Psychologists, Educators, or Students

- How have students reacted to news of Sandy Hook and other school shootings – or perhaps experiences with local gun violence? What questions, emotions, or behaviors surface in schools after these tragedies and how do you respond?
- How does your school work to create a positive school climate where students feel safe and supported? Are there programs, for example around violence prevention, trauma-informed care, or social inclusion, that you find hopeful?

Emergency Response Professionals

- What types of gun violence, for example mass shootings, homicide, suicide, or accidental shootings, do you see on the job? How does this issue show up in our community?
- In the film, ER doctor William Begg says “This is a public health emergency. Thirty thousand people a year die.” Do you agree that gun violence is a public health emergency? If so, how might viewing gun violence through a public health lens change the current political conversation, research funding, prevention efforts, or discussions with your patients?
- Current legislation and federal funding restricts research on deaths caused by firearms in the U.S. How would better data affect gun violence prevention programs and policies? Are there parallel examples of other health crises where research has helped save lives?

Faith and Interfaith Leaders

- Several people in the film expressed the difficulty in reaching out to the families who lost loved ones at Sandy Hook. “What do you say?” is the common question we hear. As someone who often comforts those in mourning, what advice would you give to people who want to reach out to someone who is grieving after tragedy?
- What role do you see faith leaders playing in the national dialogue about gun violence and its prevention? How can interfaith communities work together to be part of the solution?

Policymakers or Advocates

- Many thought that the Sandy Hook shooting would result in changes to federal gun laws. As we see in the film, the reforms proposed in 2013 failed – much to the disappointment of the families involved. Why do you think Congress failed to pass reforms?

- Although a federal gun law overhaul did not happen in 2013, what changes have occurred since Sandy Hook? How have states answered the call for gun violence prevention? Where does our state stand on the issues and are there any gun laws currently in consideration?

TOWN HALL FORUM

Rather than a panel of experts, consider hosting a town hall-style forum that invites diverse audience members from youth to gun owners to voice their perspectives on the issues. We recommend having a skilled moderator or facilitator on hand to guide the conversation according to the engagement goals for the film. Counselors or interfaith leaders often make good moderators because of their experiences creating safe spaces for people to share openly. In addition, the Public Conversations Project (<http://www.whatisessential.org/>) is a great resource for facilitation tips. If you need help finding or paying for a professional facilitator for your screening, please contact ITVS to see how they can support.

Consider inviting community leaders and/or press to be the “audience” to listen to community concerns about the issues in the film and respond when necessary. In addition, you can also take notes or a recording to publish on your organization’s website (make sure to obtain proper permissions if recording). Have the appropriate microphones available so that all audience members can hear the comments and encourage people to keep their comments concise so that more people can participate. These sample questions can aid in sparking discussion among your audience:

- How did the Sandy Hook shooting change the national conversation about gun violence? (note: this question appears on the DVD menu as a conversation starter)
- How were you personally affected when you first heard news about the Sandy Hook shooting? What do you remember from that day?
- What emotions surfaced for you while watching the film? Did hearing the survivor stories in the film feel differently than watching news coverage about Newtown? Why or why not?
- What signs of individual and collective healing did you witness in the film? What events, conversations, or efforts by the Newtown survivors facilitate resilience?
- Who are the community members most affected by gun violence? Do you think their voices are well represented in the conversation about gun violence prevention? Why or why not?
- What does our community have to learn from Newtown? What changes would you like to see locally to promote mental health, community resilience, and/or violence prevention?



Find additional questions in the Engagement Tip Sheet by Film Sprout (http://independentlens.s3.amazonaws.com/1800/Newtown/Newtown_Community-Engagement-Tipsheet.pdf).

URBAN, SUBURBAN, AND RURAL DIALOGUE

Gun violence affects children and families in all communities. In general, urban centers tend to battle high homicide rates while rural communities experience some of the highest suicide rates in the country. While these types of gun violence account for the vast majority of deaths, urban or rural communities do not typically receive the national attention that Newtown did in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting. To see the homicide or suicide rates near you listed by county, see the interactive map “U.S. gun deaths, 2004-2010” created by *The Oregonian* (<http://projects.oregonlive.com/ucc-shooting/gun-deaths>).

As an outgrowth of her film *Newtown*, director Kim A. Snyder has collaborated with *Independent Lens* to create an online series called “We Are All Newtown,” which profiles community leaders across the country who are battling the devastating effects of gun violence. For example, in one of the shorts Pastor Sam Saylor pleads for people to pay attention to the high rate of homicide happening everyday in the streets of Hartford, Connecticut – just 50 miles from Newtown. He lost his own 20-year-old son to gun violence, and he realizes that although his predominantly Black, urban community in Hartford is different in many ways to Newtown, both communities share the commonality of collective grief.

The topic of gun violence can be polarizing, but *Newtown* screenings and discussions can be designed to help audiences build empathy across geographic and socio-economic conditions. Consider bringing community members from nearby urban, suburban, and rural areas together in person or online via the OVEE virtual screening platform (<http://ovee.itvs.org>) to watch *Newtown* and one of the “We Are All Newtown” short films (forthcoming at <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/newtown>). If you plan on using OVEE, you are welcome to contact ITVS for guidance on how to design your online event. After watching the content, discuss shared concerns and ideas for how citizens can come together to prevent gun violence in their region. These questions can help speakers and audience members start an intercommunity dialogue:

- Describe your community for those who have never been there. How does it compare to suburban Newtown? How does it compare to nearby cities and towns? What differences and/or commonalities did you notice in the film?

- How does gun violence – including homicide, suicide, or unintentional shootings – affect your community? How are your young people in particular impacted by gun violence?
- How has collective grief shown up in your community? Could you relate to the ways that the Newtown community members expressed their grief? Why or why not?
- Suicides and homicides tend to receive relatively little attention compared to the national response of the Newtown tragedy. Why do you think some forms of gun violence receive more attention than others in mainstream media or policy debates? How have media or policymakers responded to gun violence concerns in your community?
- What are community leaders doing to address gun violence and its mental health effects in your area? What resources or initiatives exist locally? How can those outside your community support these efforts?
- How can urban, rural, and suburban community leaders work together to prevent gun violence? What regional and/or statewide initiatives might support our collective goals?

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES BEYOND A PANEL

If time allows, these engagement activities are particularly effective when they supplement a panel discussion or town hall forum:

- Incorporate a memorial at your event. This could mean a moment of silence for all gun violence victims, reading or displaying the Sandy Hook victims' names and ages (listed here: <http://graphics.latimes.com/towergraphic-connecticut-school-shooting/>), or reading or displaying names of local gun violence victims. This could also be a virtual candle-lit vigil where audience members hold up their illuminated smart phones during a moment of silence. Audience members could download an app that simulates candle light (the easiest way to do this is to search the keyword "candle" in the app store included on a smart phone). A sample candle image can be downloaded at <http://independentlens.s3.amazonaws.com/1800/Newtown/CandleVigil.jpg>. This image can be printed, cut, and held over a lit smart phone to illuminate the candle. Print on mid-weight, glossy paper to allow for best reflection. Please be sure to test printing and use with a phone before mass duplication. If you will be incorporating a virtual candle-lit vigil, we recommend that you notify audience members in advance of the event via email or other communication with simple instructions, such as how to download the app, so they will be prepared to participate. Special thanks to WEDU in Tampa, FL for developing this engagement activity idea.

- Ask viewers to write messages of support or post photos to social media sites using the hashtags #NewtownPBS and #WeAreAllNewtown to let the families and community members featured in the film know that you stand with them. As event organizers, you can also use these hashtags as a place to share event photos and audience quotes with the film team.
- Partner with local schools to bring the prevention programs offered by Sandy Hook Promise (http://www.sandyhookpromise.org/prevention_programs) to your community. For example, the Start with Hello curriculum trains students on ways to foster social inclusion in schools, and the Know the Signs program and PSA (<https://youtu.be/A8syQeFtBKc>) helps parents, teachers, and youth identify the warning signs that someone exhibits when they are thinking about harming themselves or others.
- Organize a resource fair to educate and connect community members around the issues in the film. For example, your resource fair could help someone dealing with trauma find a mental health center or a faith-based support group, or a parent may be interested in joining a Parent-Teacher Association to help improve school climate. Look to the Potential Partners and/or Speakers section for ideas on who to invite to your resource fair. Make sure to set up resource tables in a high traffic area of your event so audience members cannot miss them.
- Consider having an art therapy activity at your event. Invite participants to draw themselves as superheroes defending mental health or keeping communities safe from violence. Perhaps their superhero becomes a bullet-repellent shield whenever guns are misused. Whatever the superpower, imagining oneself as a hero can be an empowering exercise that motivates someone to get involved.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://newtownfilm.com/> - The website created by the filmmakers for the documentary Newtown. It includes information on the #WeAreAllNewtown engagement campaign and forthcoming educational materials.

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/newtown/> - The companion site created by Independent Lens for Newtown with additional content to support Indie Lens Pop-Up screenings and the PBS broadcast.

<http://www.sandyhookpromise.org/> - Sandy Hook Promise is the organization started by several Newtown parents including Nicole Hockley and Mark Barden,



who are featured in the film. It designs curriculum and advocates for policy aimed at preventing gun violence.

<http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-gun-policy-and-research/> - Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research conducts public health and policy research on gun violence prevention.

<https://www.thetrace.org/> - The Trace is an independent, nonprofit news organization dedicated to expanding coverage of guns in the U.S.

<http://everytown.org/> - Everytown for Gun Safety is a movement of moms, teachers, mayors, gun owners, and others that are concerned about gun violence. It includes the groups Moms Demand Action and Mayors Against Illegal Guns.

<http://americansforresponsiblesolutions.org/> - Americans for Responsible Solutions was started after the Sandy Hook shooting by former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, herself a survivor of gun violence, to advocate for gun violence prevention legislation.

<http://www.bradycampaign.org/> - The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence is the advocacy organization that was instrumental in passing federal background check laws in the 1990s. It is named in honor of the family of Jim Brady, who was shot during the assassination attempt on Ronald Reagan.

<http://www.tuesdayschildren.org/> - Created after the September 11th terror attacks, Tuesday's Children supports families and communities in the aftermath of terrorism or traumatic loss.

<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/> - Mental Health America promotes the importance of mental health and advocates for prevention and early intervention. It offers tools to screen for common mental health conditions and campaigns to promote understanding.

<https://resiliencycenterofnewtown.org/> - The Resiliency Center of Newtown was founded to support survivors and community members after the Sandy Hook shooting.

<http://chri.inl.gov/> - The Community Health Resilience Initiative is a federal effort to support communities in crisis with resources, such as guidelines for emergency communication technology or tools for talking to children about disasters.

<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/> - The National Center for Safe Supportive Learning Environments is a federal effort created to help schools address issues of bullying, violence, substance abuse, and other issues that disrupt learning.



<http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/> - Created by the Center for School Mental Health at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, this site provides research on common mental health concerns found in schools and studies models for promoting student mental health and safety.