



# ***The Kid Angle***

*Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children*

---

## **"Bullets, drugs, and automobiles" killing children at increased rate March 30, 2023**

Contact: Michele Kayal, VP Media and Communications,  
[MicheleK@FirstFocus.org](mailto:MicheleK@FirstFocus.org)

---

Lawmakers have been so busy trying to protect children — from knowledge — that they have completely overlooked the fact that **a growing number of our kids are literally dying**.

A new analysis in the Journal of the American Medical Association finds that **[the mortality rate for children ages 1-19 increased nearly 11% between 2019 and 2020, and went up another 8.3% the following year](#)**. While the House of Representatives spent last week passing a bill to shield children from challenging literature or discussion of uncomfortable topics such as slavery and the Holocaust, **children were actually killed or injured by the following:**

**Gun Violence:** **[Gun violence is the No. 1 cause of child death in this country](#)** and accounted for nearly **[half of the increased mortality](#)** identified by JAMA. Add three more children to those statistics from Monday's shooting in Nashville. The prevalence of gun violence — and the apparent acceptance that dead children are just "the price of freedom" — explains why lawmakers and some media felt safe focusing on the **[shooter's gender identity](#)** and the impropriety of the **[president's joke about ice cream](#)** before his press conference rather than the fact that an AR-15 has left three more tiny bodies on the floor of an American classroom. The **[Bipartisan Safer Communities Act](#)**, passed in June, nodded to the mental health component of this crisis with **[funding for school-based services](#)**. But Congress can — and must — do much, much more to **[pass meaningful gun safety reform](#)**.

**Suicide:** Between 2007 and 2019, the **[suicide rate for children aged 10-19 increased nearly 70%](#)**, according to JAMA. Researchers peg the deepening adolescent mental health crisis — and corresponding diminished access to mental health care — as a major cause of the trend, noting that the COVID-19 pandemic "poured fuel on the fire." To combat this growing problem, Congress must expand the children's mental health workforce and funding to support it, invest in the proven strategies of school-based mental health models and peer-to-peer networks, and ensure that crisis response systems such as the national 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline are structured to respond to the **[very specific needs of children and teens in crisis](#)**. **Oh, and one more thing:** Stop bans on life-saving, mental-health relevant care for children like the ones in **[Florida](#)**, **[Missouri](#)**, **[Arkansas](#)**, **[Kentucky](#)**, **[Iowa](#)**, and a growing number of other states.

***Our children are not just dying. Many are also suffering life-long harm as a result of:***

**Poverty:** Child poverty disadvantages children long into adulthood, costing this country **[roughly \\$1 trillion every single year](#)** in health care costs, lost productivity and other expenditures. Thankfully, child poverty has a proven,

easily implemented solution: [The improved Child Tax Credit that slashed child poverty nearly in half in 2021](#). Combining a permanent child allowance with [a national child poverty reduction target](#) would drastically reduce child poverty — and, experts say, ultimately eradicate it. All we need now is courage on the part of Congress to embrace these solutions.

**Hunger:** At last count, [9 million U.S. children — or 1-in-8— were living with hunger](#). And those [numbers are rising](#). Hunger saps children of energy needed to learn and grow, hinders their brain development, makes them more likely to be [hospitalized, to suffer with conditions like anemia and asthma](#), and injures every aspect of their physical, mental, and social well-being, even into adulthood. Federal investment in children’s nutrition programs during the COVID-19 pandemic kept children fed and healthy, but most of these programs have since expired. Congress must immediately [restore investment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\), offer universal school meals, and improve school nutrition services](#). And lawmakers must resist pressure to **burden these and other food programs with work requirements or other restrictions as they debate the upcoming Farm Bill**.

**Homelessness:** More than 1 million U.S. children are homeless — a staggering number that actually greatly [underestimates the problem](#). Homelessness inflicts [disastrous consequences on children’s health, nutrition, education and general well-being](#), and makes them more vulnerable to homelessness as adults. Perhaps, instead of requiring that schools provide parents with comprehensive lists of all reading materials available in the building as the House did last week, Congress, state and local policymakers could work to [keep children from being evicted](#), establish a [national renters credit](#) that fills gaps in housing assistance, and extend [housing assistance to more families with children](#).

Let’s stop pretending that certain books, and ideas, and exploration of self, and knowledge of historical events present life-or-death scenarios for our children. Let’s start solving the real problems that steal their health, safety, security and lives every single day.

**To quote JAMA:** “Bullets, drugs, and automobiles are now causing a youth death toll sufficient to elevate all-cause mortality rates, the largest such increase in recent memory. Without bold action to reverse the trend, children’s risk of not reaching adulthood may increase.”



Photo by [Liv Bruce](#) on [Unsplash](#)



First Focus on Children  
1400 I Street NW  
Suite \$50  
Washington, DC 20005  
United States

If you believe you received this message in error or wish to no longer receive email from us, please (Unsubscribing is not supported in previews).