



# GUN VIOLENCE: EFFECTS ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Northstar Public Health Conference on Gun  
Violence

Minneapolis, MN

September 13, 2017

Prolonged or unmediated exposure to toxic stress affects brain development (cf. Harvard Center for the Developing Child):

- ▶ Safe, stable, nurturing environment can foster learning empathy, impulse control, anger management, and problem solving, all skills that protect against effects of violence
- ▶ In environments that don't feel safe, brains form different connections to better recognize and respond to threats – even when they may not exist – and trigger fight or flight
- ▶ In persistently threatening environments, potential to act preemptively increases

## EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE MAY ALTER NEURODEVELOPMENT