



For Information Contact:

Eve Herold, 703-907-8640

press@psych.org

Erin Connors, 703-907-8562

econnors@psych.org

December 23, 2012

Release No. 12-45

American Psychiatric Association Responds to NRA Comments

ARLINGTON, Va. (December 23, 2012) — The American Psychiatric Association expressed disappointment today in the comments from Wayne LaPierre, Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Rifle Association both Friday and today conveying the NRA's response to last week's shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut.

The association objected to LaPierre's assumption that horrendous crimes such as the one committed by shooter Adam Lanza are commonly perpetrated by persons with mental illness. In addition, he conflated mental illness with evil at several points in his talk and suggested that those who commit heinous gun crimes are "so possessed by voices and driven by demons that no sane person can ever possibly comprehend them," a description that leads to the further stigmatization of people with mental illnesses.

The APA notes that people with mental illnesses are rarely violent and that they are far more likely to be the victims of crimes than the perpetrators. "Only four to five percent of violent crimes are committed by people with mental illness," said the APA's president, Dilip Jeste, M.D. "About one quarter of all Americans have a mental disorder in any given year, and only a very small percentage of them will ever commit violent crimes," he added. "On today's Meet the Press, Mr. LaPierre used the word 'lunatic' as a catch phrase for those who commit violent crimes. Such language is not only offensive, it further contributes to the idea that violent crimes are necessarily committed by people with mental disorders."

The APA's CEO, James H. Scully, M.D., noted that contrary to LaPierre's remarks, "The idea that mental illness and evil are one and the same thing is simply a relic of the past and has no place in our public dialogue. People who are clearly not mentally ill commit violent crimes and perform terrible acts every day. Unfortunately, Mr. LaPierre's statements serve only to increase the stigma around mental illness and further the misconception that those with mental disorders are likely to be dangerous."

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psychiatry.org.

###