

November 25, 2015

Our future is our kids: Questions for the candidates

By Kate Carr, Deborah Hersman and Colleen Sheehey-Church



What is the number one cause of death to children under 19? Surprising to some, the answer is unintentional injury—car crashes, drug overdoses, drivers impaired by alcohol or distracted by cell phones, infants dying of suffocation for unexplained reasons. What is even more frustrating is that most of them can be prevented.

If a presidential campaign is about the future—best embodied in setting a vision for our children—we believe that the candidates should spend some time answering questions about how we can prevent these tragedies. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 7,645 children ages 19 and under lost their lives in 2013 to preventable injuries.

We urge the presidential candidates to consider the following questions.

Preventable injury is a leading cause of death for children and has many associated costs, but funds for prevention are always the first dollars cut in the federal budget. What is your position on investing in prevention as a way to save lives and tax dollars?

There is an epidemic in our country involving the use, abuse and dependence on opioid medications. A National Safety Council survey revealed that a majority of Americans who are prescribed opioids have at least one risk factor for becoming addicted. In part, the opioid epidemic is perpetuating the new heroin crisis and an increase in crime—this impacts big city America and also suburban and rural communities. Further, the epidemic is hitting Americans at all ages. What concrete steps would you take to tackle this epidemic?

Estimates are that 2.6 million fewer children engaged in competitive sports over the past seven years. The consequences for the next generation are dire, as we face higher healthcare costs and an increase in obese children. How will you use the White House to engage our kids and encourage them to be more active and safe?

One of the most successful campaigns to save lives and change behavior was Mothers Against Drunk Driving coming together to pass strong laws and make drinking and driving socially unacceptable, but there's still carnage on roads because of impaired drivers. How will you join with MADD and others to continue the fight against all forms of impaired driving?

The kids who die each year from unintentional injury would field at least 347 soccer teams. More must be done to stop unintentional injuries and deaths, especially among our children—a goal of our three organizations. We ask the presidential candidates in both parties to develop responses to these questions. Drugs, traumatic brain injury and highway deaths are matters we can do something about. We only need a national strategy and the leadership to stand with us. We can start by agreeing that our nation needs to make a genuine investment in prevention as part of healthcare. We are ready to help.

*Carr is president and CEO of **Safe Kids Worldwide**. Hersman is president and CEO of the **National Safety Council**. Sheehey-Church is national president of **Mothers Against Drunk Driving**.*

[On line version](#)