PHILIPPINE PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION
COMMITTEE ON ADVOCACY LEGISLATION AND MULTIMEDIA
(CALM)

Joint Position Statement
Philippine Psychiatric Association (PPA)
Philippine Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (PSCAP)

On the Conduct of the Nationwide Simultaneous School Safety Drill for Active Attack Incidents (*In response to the DepEd Memorandum dated August 12, 2026, as published in Philstar.com, August 21, 2026*)

August 22, 2026

The **Philippine Psychiatric Association (PPA)**, together with the **Philippine Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (PSCAP)**, affirms a shared commitment to safe, secure, and resilient learning environments. On August 12, 2026, the Department of Education (DepEd), through the Office of the Secretary, issued a Memorandum directing schools nationwide to conduct a **Nationwide Simultaneous School Safety Drill for Active Attack Incidents** on August 25, 2026. The directive was subsequently reported in *Philstar.com* on August 21, 2026.

Preparedness in schools is essential, but the methods chosen must be trauma-informed and grounded in evidence.

Joint Position:
The conduct of a **simulation of a live shooter attack drill should be DEFERRED**. Such simulations differ from routine safety drills like earthquake or fire exercises, which are necessary and beneficial. Simulated active-attack exercises expose learners to hyper-realistic scenarios of violence. Current evidence does not show that these simulations reduce casualties or prevent incidents, while multiple studies demonstrate that they can cause lasting psychological harm across age groups.

Evidence Base:
The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2025) found insufficient evidence that simulations improve safety outcomes and advised against high-intensity drills or deceptive practices.[1] A large-scale study analyzing 54 million social media posts across 114 schools documented a 42 percent increase in stress and anxiety language and a 39 percent increase in depression language, sustained for at least 90 days after drills.[2] The American Academy of Pediatrics (2020) cautioned against involving children in high-intensity shooter simulations and emphasized that deception should never be used.[3] Professional consensus from NASP, NASRO, and AACAP (2026) likewise recommends **banning hyper-realistic simulations**, **requiring advance notice**, and **embedding school mental health professionals in planning**.[4]

Recommendations:
School safety is best strengthened through measures that protect without causing trauma. Locks, controlled entry points, and perimeter security should be prioritized. Protocols must be trauma-informed, with clear advance notice and the involvement of guidance counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and child psychiatrists.

Instead of live simulations, schools can adopt tabletop exercises. These are simple, discussion-based activities where teachers, staff, and parents sit together and talk through "what if" scenarios. For example, participants might ask: *"If an intruder enters, who locks the doors? Who calls parents? Where do students go?"* This approach builds coordination and preparedness without frightening children.

Participation should be inclusive, with accommodations for learners who have disabilities, sensory-processing needs, or prior trauma. Each school should conduct a needs assessment before developing and implementing drills, to ensure that the unique characteristics of its community are considered.

Finally, a joint Mental Health Task Group, composed of DepEd, DOH, and specialty groups such as PPA and PSCAP, should be convened to generate Philippine-specific outcome data before any nationwide mandate is scaled.

Commitment to Learners' Safety
The joint request of PPA and PSCAP to **defer the simulation of a live shooter attack drill** is anchored in the same goal that guided DepEd's directive, the protection of Filipino learners. That goal is best achieved through preventive, trauma-informed, and evidence-based measures, so that schools remain places of safety, resilience, and hope.

PPA Board of Directors 2026-2027
PSCAP Board of Directors 2026-2028

References

1. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2025). *School Active Shooter Drills: Mitigating Risks to Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Health.* Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
2. ElSherief, M., et al. (2021). *Impacts of school shooter drills on the psychological well-being of American K-12 school communities: a social media study.* Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 8, Article 315. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00993-6
3. Schonfeld, D.J., et al. (2020). *Participation of Children and Adolescents in Live Crisis Drills and Exercises.* Pediatrics, 146(3):e2020015503. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-015503
4. NASP, NASRO, AACAP, & Safe and Sound Schools. (2026). *Best Practice Guidance for School Safety and Lockdown Drills.* Bethesda, MD: NASP.
5. Department of Education, Office of the Secretary. (2026, August 12). *Conduct of the Nationwide Simultaneous School Safety Drill for Active Attack Incidents* [Memorandum]. As reported in *Philstar.com* (2026, August 21).