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Office of Justice Programs

Office of Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency Prevention

Office of the Administrator

Washington, DC 20537

23 FEB 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

THROUGH: THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

THE ACTING ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Laurie Robinson
Assistant Attorney General
Office of Justice Programs

FROM:


John J. Wilson
Acting Administrator

SUBJECT: Advance Notification of OJJDP Publications

PURPOSE: To provide you with advance copies and notification of the pending release of a 1999 National Report Series Bulletin: *Kids and Guns* (NCJ 178994).

DISCUSSION: This Bulletin, extracted from OJJDP's recent publication *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*, provides an overview of the national statistics that show the devastating impact that availability of guns has had on the lives and well-being of American youth. The Bulletin notes that while other types of homicide remained constant, the number of juveniles killed with a firearm increased greatly between 1987 and 1993. An analysis of the data show that the rise in murders of juveniles from the mid-1980's through the 1993 peak year was all firearm related, as was the subsequent decline in juvenile murders that occurred between 1993 and 1997. The Bulletin also reports on the large role guns have in juvenile suicides. The Bulletin suggests that despite the sobering statistics, there are steps we can take to make our children and communities safer, and it provides further resources on these steps.

COORDINATION: The information in the Bulletin, including selected graphs and tables, was taken from the *1999 National Report*. As part of the series, it is also designed to give readers quick, focused access to some of the Report's most critical findings. Several Department of Justice and other Federal agencies provided data for and reviewed the *1999 National Report*, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Bureau of the Census, National Center for Health Statistics, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and we

have consulted with Bea Witzleben, Office of the Deputy Attorney General. The 1999 National Report Series of Bulletins exemplifies OJJDP's commitment to consolidate and analyze data from diverse sources and makes the information easily available to policymakers and practitioners to help them meet the crucial challenges facing the juvenile justice system.

DISSEMINATION: This Bulletin will be made available to the APA Cadre of Experts on Youth Violence, Congressional Black Caucus members, Native American tribal leaders, U.S. Attorneys, Governors, mayors, prosecutors, sheriffs, police chiefs, juvenile and family court judges, public and private juvenile facility administrators, community-based organizations including OJJDP juvenile mentoring program grantees, Weed and Seed sites, Title V recipients, drug-free communities grantees, policymakers, and researchers. We have consulted with the OJP Office of Congressional and Public Affairs, which has made preliminary plans to issue a publications advisory. The Bulletin also will be posted on OJJDP's Web site immediately after publication.

TIMETABLE: OJJDP will begin releasing this document 14 days from the date of this memorandum.

If additional information regarding this document is needed, I may be reached at 202-307-5911.

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FEBRUARY 2000

1999 NATIONAL REPORT SERIES

Juvenile Justice Bulletin

Kids and Guns

As the Nation moves into the 21st century, the reduction of juvenile crime, violence, and victimization constitutes one of the most crucial challenges of the new millennium. To meet that challenge, reliable information is essential. *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report* offers a comprehensive overview of these pervasive problems and the response of the juvenile justice system. The National Report brings together statistics from a variety of sources on a wide array of topics, presenting the information in clear, nontechnical text enhanced by more than 350 easy-to-read tables, graphs, and maps.

This Bulletin series is designed to give readers quick, focused access to some of the most critical findings from the wealth of data in the National Report. Each Bulletin in the series highlights selected themes at the forefront of juvenile justice policymaking and extracts relevant National Report sections (including selected graphs and tables).

Administrator's Message

Guns kill. In many cases, guns kill our children. Sometimes the guns are fired by other juveniles, often by acquaintances or family members. This Bulletin, drawn from *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*, provides an overview of the national statistics that show the devastating impact that the availability of guns has had on the lives and well-being of American youth.

While other types of homicide remained constant, the number of juveniles killed with a firearm increased

greatly between 1987 and 1993. A close look at the numbers shows that the rise in murders of juveniles from the mid-1980's through the 1993 peak year was all firearm related, as was the subsequent decline in juvenile murders that occurred between 1993 and 1997.

Guns play a large role in suicides as well. Families, teachers, and friends have virtually no chance to reach out to youth in desperate need of help when that desperation is signaled by the immediate and often fatal impact of a gunshot wound. Statistics show that for every two youth age 19 or younger murdered in 1996, one youth committed suicide. The rate of youth suicides involving a firearm increased 39% between 1980 and 1994, and although firearm-involved suicides declined 19% from 1994 to 1996, these numbers are still much too high.

Despite these sobering statistics, it is important to remember that there are steps we can take to make our children and our communities safer. In fact, a number of communities have made progress in countering the threat of gun-related violence by bringing together law enforcement, elected officials, prosecutors, judges, schools, community organizations, and citizens to develop their own comprehensive, strategic violence prevention plan. The experiences of these communities are described in the OJJDP publication *Promising Strategies To Reduce Gun Violence*. This OJJDP Report provides a wealth of practical information and tools that communities can use to develop their own firearm violence reduction programs.

The recent decline in firearm-related juvenile homicides and suicides is encouraging and reinforces the need to remain vigilant in keeping handguns and other weapons out of the hands of children. Rational gun control policies, community involvement in schools, better relationships between law enforcement agencies and communities, support for parents in supervising and disciplining their children, and help for teens in despair are all approaches that we can use in our efforts to reduce the illegal use of firearms by juveniles.

Shay Bilchik
Administrator

OJJDP

Robert J. J. [Signature]

The rise in murders of juveniles between 1984 and 1993 was all firearm related, as was the subsequent decline

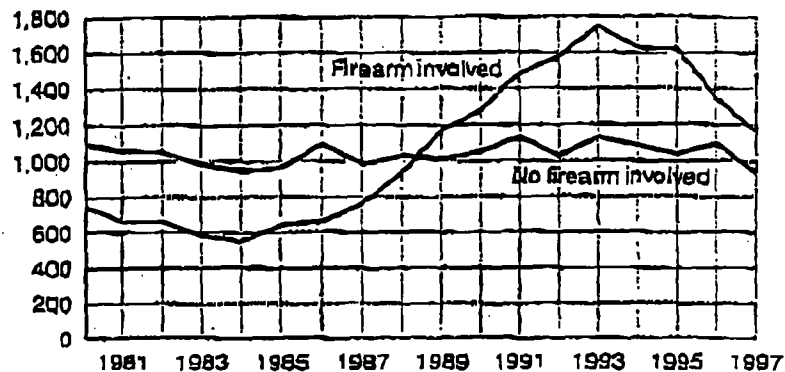
The increase in juvenile homicides is tied to firearm use by nonfamily offenders

A study of the 65% increase in juvenile homicides in the 7-year period from 1987 to 1993 shows that increases did not occur proportionately in all types of homicides. Over this period, homicides by family members held constant, while homicides by acquaintances increased substantially. The increase was disproportionate for black victims, with the growth in the number of black victims twice that of white victims. Most significantly, nearly all of the growth in juvenile homicides was in the number of older juveniles killed with firearms.

The decline in juvenile homicides between 1993 and 1997 brought the number to a level just 20% above that of 1987 (the last year in which juvenile homicides were within their historic range). Both the decline from 1993 to 1997 and the growth from 1987 to 1993 involved substantial changes in the number of murders by acquaintances and in the number of murders of older youth and black youth. The proportion of homicides committed with a firearm, which had increased dramatically between 1987 and 1993, however, did not decline between 1993 and 1997. Therefore, the major legacy of the growth in juvenile homicides from 1987 through 1993 is that it increased the proportion of juveniles killed by firearms.

The annual number of juveniles killed with a firearm increased substantially between 1987 and 1993, while other types of homicide remained constant

Juvenile homicide victims

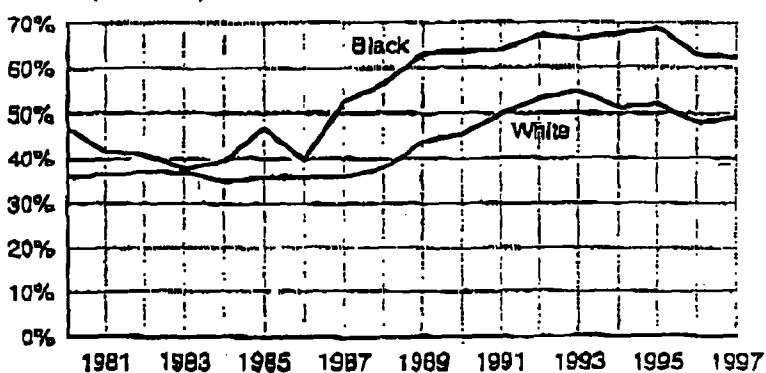


- In 1980, fewer than half (41%) of the juveniles murdered were killed with a firearm. The proportion of juvenile firearm homicides began to increase in 1987 and peaked (at 61%) in 1993. Since then, the proportion has declined somewhat, with 56% of juvenile homicides involving a firearm in 1997.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980-1997 (machine-readable data files).

The use of firearms in juvenile homicides was common in the 1990's for both black victims and white victims

Firearm percent of juvenile homicide victims



- In the early 1980's, proportions of juvenile homicides involving a firearm were roughly equal for white victims and black victims.
- The proportion of black juvenile homicides involving a firearm increased substantially during a 3-year period in the late 1980's.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980-1997 (machine-readable data files).

Homicides of juveniles ages 15 to 17 were more likely to involve a firearm than were homicides of adults

Percent killed by firearm in age group



- Over the 10-year period from 1987 to 1997, the proportion of homicides committed with a firearm increased in most victim age groups.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980-1997 [machine-readable data files].

Between 1980 and 1997, 3 out of 4 murdered juveniles age 12 or older were killed with a firearm

Weapon	Age of victim				Victim ages 0-17	
	0-17	0-5	6-11	12-17	Males	Females
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Firearm	51	10	42	75	60	31
Knife/blunt object	14	11	19	15	13	17
Personal ^a	19	48	11	3	15	27
Other	16	30	28	7	12	25

- Nearly half (48%) of all murdered children below age 6 were killed by offenders using only their hands, fists, or feet.
- Male murder victims were nearly twice as likely as female victims to be killed with a firearm.

^a Personal includes hands, fists, or feet.

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980-1997 [machine-readable data files].

Since 1980, 1 in 4 murders of juveniles involved a juvenile offender

Nearly 38,000 juveniles were murdered between 1980 and 1997. A juvenile offender was involved in 25% of these crimes when an offender was identified. In murders of juveniles by juveniles, about 1 of every 6 also involved an adult offender. Between 1980 and 1997, the victim and the offender were the same race in 91% of murders of juveniles by juveniles.

The proportion of juvenile murders that involved a juvenile offender increased from 21% in 1980 to 33% in 1994—the peak year for all murders by juveniles. In 1980, an estimated 400 juveniles were killed by other juveniles, growing to nearly 900 in 1994; by 1997, this figure had fallen to about 500, or about 1 of every 4 juveniles murdered that year.

When juveniles kill juveniles, the victims are generally acquaintances killed with a firearm

Of juveniles killed by other juveniles between 1980 and 1997, 75% were under age 12. In nearly half of these murders (44%), the juvenile offender was the parent of the victim. In another 14%, the juvenile offender was another family member. Firearms were rarely used when the victim was under age 6 (10%).

Of juveniles killed by other juveniles, 30% were age 15 or older. Fewer than 5% of these older juvenile victims were killed by family members; 76% were killed by acquaintances and 19% were killed by strangers. Between 1980 and 1997, 77% of these older juveniles were killed with a firearm.

All of the increase in homicides by juveniles between the mid-1980's and mid-1990's was firearm related

It is difficult to assess the exact number of murders committed by juveniles

Based on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) Supplemental Homicide Report (SHR) data, 18,200 persons were murdered in the U.S. in 1997—the lowest number in more than a generation. Of these murders, about 1,400 were determined by law enforcement to involve a juvenile offender; however, the actual number is greater than this. In 1997, the FBI had no information on the offender(s) for about 6,900 reported murders (38% of the total). These may have been homicides for which no one was arrested or the offender was otherwise not identified, or these may have been cases for which the local agency did not report complete information to the FBI. Regardless, the number of murders committed by juveniles in 1997 was undoubtedly greater than 1,400, but just how much greater is difficult to determine. If it were assumed that the murders without offender information were similar to those with offender information, then about 2,300 murders (or 12% of all murders) in 1997 had at least one offender who was under the age of 18 at the time of the crime.

The 1,400 murders known to involve a juvenile offender in 1997 involved about 1,700 juveniles and 900 adults. Of all murders involving a juvenile, 31% also involved an adult, and 13% involved another juvenile. In all, 44% of all murders involving a juvenile involved more than one person.

Whom do juveniles kill?

Between 1980 and 1997, most victims in homicides involving juveniles were male (83%). Slightly more victims were white (50%) than black (47%). In 27% of homicides by juveniles, the victim was also a juvenile. Victims in 70% of homicides by juveniles were killed with a firearm. Of all victims killed by juveniles, 14% were family members, 55% were acquaintances, and 31% were strangers.

Who are the juvenile murderers?

Between 1980 and 1997, the large majority (93%) of known juvenile homicide offenders were male. More than half (56%) were black. Of known juvenile homicide offenders, 42% were

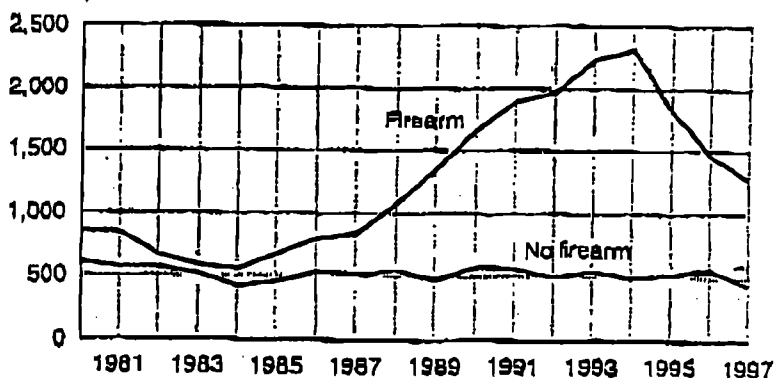
age 17, 29% were age 16, and 17% were age 15; 88% of juvenile homicide offenders were age 15 or older.

Murders by the very young are rare

Annually between 1980 and 1997, fewer than 10 juveniles age 10 or younger were identified as participants in murders—a figure that has remained essentially constant over the time period. The majority of these young homicide offenders were male (88%), and more than half (54%) were black. In these cases, the victim was equally likely to be either a family member or an acquaintance (43%). A firearm was involved in 50% of the murders committed by these young offenders.

The sharp decline in homicides by juveniles between 1994 and 1997 was attributable entirely to a decline in homicides by firearm

Known juvenile offenders



Between 1980 and 1987, firearms were used in just over half (54%) of all homicides involving a juvenile offender. Then firearm-related homicides began to increase, so that, by 1994, most homicides by juvenile offenders (82%) involved the use of a firearm.

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's *Supplementary Homicide Reports* for the years 1980-1997 [machine-readable data files].

Boys and girls tend to kill different types of victims

Between 1980 and 1997, 54% of male juvenile homicide offenders killed an acquaintance, 37% killed a stranger, and 9% killed a family member. In comparison, the victims of females were more likely to be family members (39%) and far less likely to be strangers (15%).

Between 1980 and 1997, about 1% of male offenders killed persons under age 6, while 18% of the female offenders killed young children. Because there were so many more male offenders than female offenders, however, roughly equal numbers of male and female juvenile offenders were involved in the murder of young children. Annually between 1980 and 1997, about 25 male and 25 female juvenile offenders were tied to the death of a child under age 6.

Males were far more likely than females to kill with a firearm. Between 1980 and 1997, 73% of male juvenile homicide offenders used a firearm, while 14% used a knife. In contrast, 41% of female juvenile homicide offenders used a firearm and 32% used a knife. While

27% of females used other means to kill (e.g., hands or feet, strangulation, drowning, or fire), only 13% of males killed by these means.

Black juveniles were more likely to commit murders with firearms than were youth of other races

In the U.S. in 1997, about 1 of every 16,000 youth between the ages of 10 and 17 was identified as participating in a homicide. This is a rate of 56 known offenders for every 1 million youth in the U.S. population ages 10-17. This rate was greater for black youth than youth of other races: black (194), Asian/Pacific Islanders (44), American Indians (34), and whites (30).

Between 1980 and 1997, 72% of black juvenile homicide offenders used a firearm in their crimes. This proportion was higher than that for Asian/Pacific Islander (67%), white (59%), or American Indian (48%) youth.

Youth were most likely to kill persons of their own race. Between 1980 and 1997, 81% of juvenile offenders were involved in murders of persons of

their own race. Same-race killing was most common for white youth (90%) and less common for blacks (76%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (58%), and American Indians (48%).

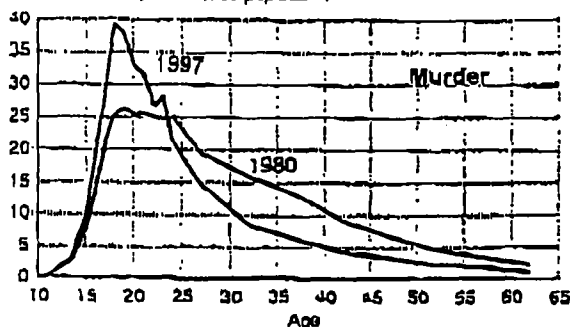
A greater proportion of white youth and American Indian youth killed family members than did youth of other races: American Indian (16%), white (16%), black (7%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (7%).

Growth in murders by juveniles is linked to weapon use

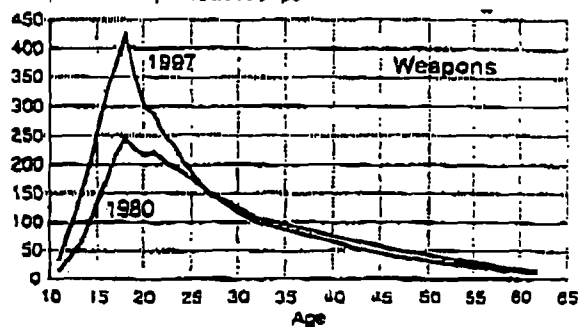
Relevant to an understanding of juvenile murder arrest trends is the link between murder rates and weapon use. The relationship of the murder and arrest curves for 1980 and 1997 is similar to that for weapons law violations. (See murder graph and weapons graph.) For both, the rates were lower in 1997 than in 1980 for all persons above age 25, but there were substantial increases in murder rates among juveniles and young adults. The age-specific arrest rate trend profile for weapons violations is comparable to that for murder, showing large increases for juveniles and young adults.

Age-specific arrest rate trends for murder are similar to those for weapons violations

Murder arrests per 100,000 population



Weapons arrests per 100,000 population

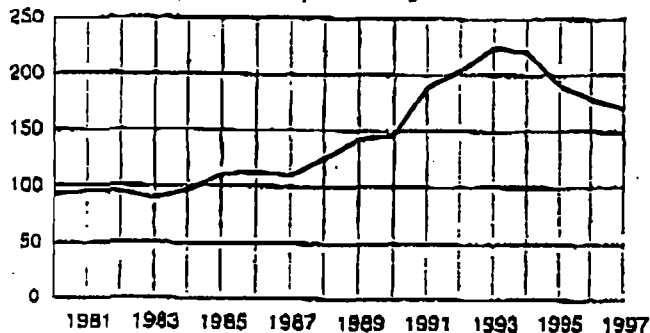


Source: Authors' analysis of arrest data from an unpublished FBI report for 1980 and from *Crime in the United States 1997* and population data from the Bureau of the Census for 1980 from *Current Population Reports*, P25-1095 and for 1997 from *Estimates of the population of States by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin: 1997* (machine-readable data file).

Juvenile arrest rates for weapons, which increased sharply during the late 1980's and early 1990's, began declining in the mid-1990's

The juvenile arrest rate for weapons law violations doubled in the 6-year period between 1987 and 1993

Weapons arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10-17

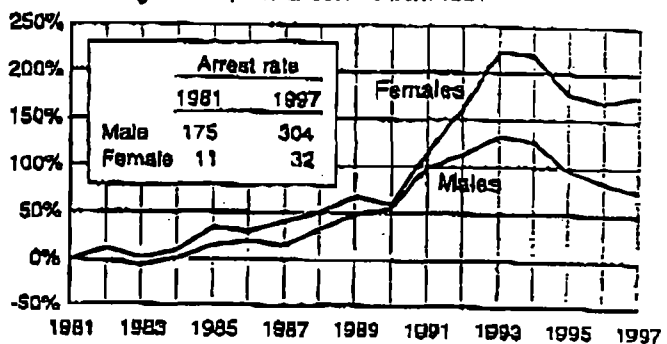


- The decline between 1993 and 1997 brought the juvenile arrest rate for weapons law violations to its lowest level since 1990, but the rate was still 55% above the 1987 level.

Source: Authors' analysis of arrest data from unpublished FBI reports for 1980 through 1994 and the FBI's *Crime in the United States* reports for 1995, 1996, and 1997 and population data from the Bureau of the Census for 1980 through 1989 from *Current Population Reports*, P25-1095 and for 1990 through 1997 from *Estimates of the population of States by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin: 1990-1997* (machine-readable data files).

Female arrest rates for weapons law violations nearly tripled between 1981 and 1997, while the male rate nearly doubled

Percent change in weapons arrest rate from 1981



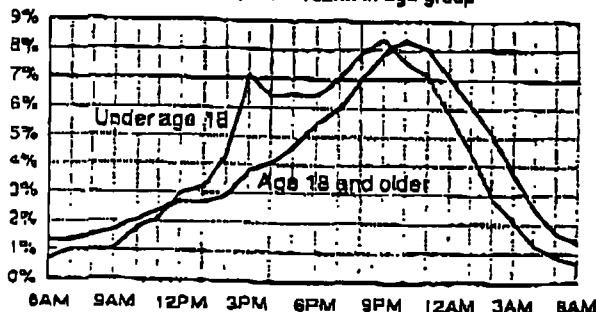
- Even with its greater increase, the female rate in 1997 was only 10% of the male rate.

Note: Arrest rates are arrests per 100,000 males or females ages 10-17.

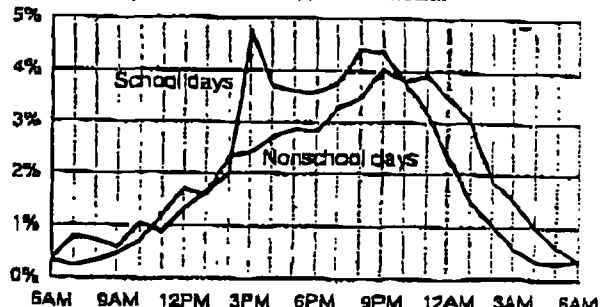
In general, the temporal pattern of violent crimes committed by juveniles with firearms is similar to the adult pattern, except for the high proportion of juvenile firearm-involved crimes that occur immediately after school on school days

Violent crime committed with a firearm

Percent of violent incidents with firearm in age group



Percent of all juvenile violent incidents with firearm



Note: Violent crime includes murder, violent sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. Data are from 12 States (Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Dakota, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia).

Source: Authors' analyses of the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System master files for the years 1991-1996 (machine-readable data files).

1 in 5 juvenile arrestees carried a gun all or most of the time

Gun use and crime among male arrestees/detainees is studied

The National Institute of Justice interviewed a sample of arrested and/or detained individuals during the first 6 months of 1995 to learn about gun acquisition and use. Seven of eleven study sites provided data on juvenile males: Denver, District of Columbia, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Phoenix, St. Louis, and San Diego.

Although sites varied, the juvenile males studied were disproportionately black or Hispanic, and most were age 15 or older. Because 5 of the 7 sites limited the study to juveniles in detention rather than all juveniles arrested, the offense profile for juveniles studied was skewed to more serious offenses (crimes against persons ranged from 15% to 29%). Also, the proportion of juveniles who admitted to current membership in a gang ranged from 2% to 41%.

Juveniles are more likely than arrestees overall to commit a crime with a gun

The proportion of respondents who were charged with a weapons offense ranged from 1% to 12%. Among the juvenile males interviewed, however, 20% said they carried a gun all or most of the time, compared with 14% of arrestees overall.

Juvenile arrestees were nearly twice as likely as arrestees overall to say they had stolen a gun (25% vs. 13%). Gang members and drug sellers were also more likely than other arrestees to have stolen a gun (each about 30%).

Overall, 23% of arrestees who owned a gun had used one in a crime. The proportion was higher for juveniles (33%) and higher still for drug sellers (42%) and gang members (50%).

Arrestees were often the victims of gun violence

Juvenile males and gang members were more likely than arrestees overall to have been shot at. The proportion who said they had been shot at was about 4 in 10 overall, compared with about 5 in 10 for juvenile males and about 8 in 10 for gang members.

Although juveniles were more likely than adults to be shot at, they were not more likely to suffer gunshot injury. Overall, 16% of arrestees reported gunshot injuries.

Arrestees say they carry guns for protection and respect

Two-thirds of respondents said they had a gun for protection/self-defense. Almost one-third of arrestees agreed that, "Your crowd respects you if you have a gun." Among drug sellers and gang members, the proportion agreeing was higher (4 in 10). When asked when using a gun was appropriate, 9% of arrestees agreed that, "It is OK to shoot someone who disrespected you." Among juveniles, the proportion agreeing was double (18%). Among drug sellers, 21% agreed, and among gang members, 34% agreed.

More than half of crime guns were recovered from adults ages 25 years or older

In 1996, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms established the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative to trace crime guns (i.e., any firearm illegally possessed, used in a crime, or suspected to have been used in a crime) recovered by law enforcement. More than 76,000 crime guns were traced from 27 cities during a 1-year period between 1997 and 1998. Almost one-half (44%) of crime guns were recovered from persons under the age of 25. 11% were recovered from youth age 17 or younger.

Age	Percent of Crime Guns
All	100%
17 or younger	11%
18-24	32%
25 or older	56%

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

4 in 5 recovered firearms were handguns

Handgun was the most common type of recovered firearm traced by law enforcement. Of these, semi-automatic pistols were the most frequently possessed handgun among all age groups (52%). Semi-automatic pistols were more common among youth under age 18 (58%) and those ages 18-24 (60%) than among persons age 25 or older (47%).

Type of gun	17 or younger	18-24	25 or older
Total	100%	100%	100%
Semi-automatic pistol	58%	60%	47%
Revolver	29%	24%	23%
Long gun	12%	15%	29%

Note: Detail may not total 100% because of rounding.

A new survey of youth shows that handgun carrying is linked to other problem behavior

A new survey will follow a cohort of youth as they make the transition from school to work

The first wave of the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97) interviewed a nationally representative sample of 9,000 youth who were between the ages of 12 and 16 at year-end 1996. The survey asked youth to report whether they had engaged in a variety of deviant and delinquent behaviors, including carrying a handgun. Plans are to interview members of this cohort every 2 years to track changes in delinquent and criminal activity over the life course.

- Youth who had ever used marijuana were more likely to have sold marijuana (24% vs. <1%), carried a handgun (21% vs. 7%), or been in a gang (14% vs. 2%) at some point than youth who never used marijuana.
- Youth who had ever sold marijuana were more likely to have sold hard drugs (i.e., cocaine, LSD, or heroin) (40% vs. 1%), carried a handgun (35% vs. 8%), or been in a gang (24% vs. 4%) than youth who never sold marijuana.
- Active marijuana users (i.e., youth who used marijuana during the month prior to the survey) were more likely to have consumed alcohol (78% vs. 14%) or carried a handgun (12% vs. 2%) during that period than youth who did not use marijuana.
- Youth who had carried a handgun in the last 12 months were also more likely to have been in a gang than youth who did not carry a handgun during this period (15% vs. 1%).

The survey also found that more than half of all 16-year-olds who had ever committed assault, carried a handgun, or belonged to a gang had done so for the first time by age 12. In contrast,

less than one-fifth of all 16-year-olds who had ever used marijuana, sold any drugs, or sold hard drugs (i.e., cocaine, LSD, or heroin) had done so for the first time by age 12.

Recent participation (i.e., within the last 12 months or 30 days prior to the interview) in delinquent acts such as carrying a handgun varied by race and ethnicity for males and females

Behavior	Males ages 12-16			Females ages 12-16		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
Carried a handgun						
Last 12 months	10%	8%	8%	2%	2%	2%
Last 30 days	5	5	4	1	1	1
To school in last 30 days	< 1	1	1	0	0	< 1

- In the year preceding the interview, white males were less likely to have been in a gang than black and Hispanic males but more likely to have carried a gun.

Note: The white and black racial categories do not include youth of Hispanic ethnicity. Hispanic youth can be of any race.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Bureau of Labor Statistics' The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (machine-readable data file).

Among 15-year-olds, employed youth were significantly more likely to have carried a gun in the last 12 months than unemployed youth

Behavior	15-year-olds		16-year-olds	
	Unemployed	Employed	Unemployed	Employed
Carried a handgun				
Last 12 months	5%	8%	7%	6%
Last 30 days	3	4	4	3

Source: Authors' analysis of the Bureau of Labor Statistics' The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (machine-readable data file).

For every two youth (ages 0-19) murdered in 1996, one youth committed suicide

7% of all suicides in 1996 involved youth age 19 or younger

FBI data indicate that about 3,900 youth age 19 or younger were murdered in the U.S. in 1996. The magnitude of this problem has captured the public's attention, but much less attention has been given to the fact that for every two youth murdered, one youth commits suicide.

The National Center for Health Statistics reported that 30,903 persons committed suicide in the U.S. in 1996. Of these, 7% (2,119) were youth age 19 or younger. Overall, suicides increased 9% between 1980 and 1996. For youth younger than age 15, the increase was 113%. Despite this large increase, these youngest suicide victims accounted for just 1% of all suicides in 1996.

Young suicide victims are disproportionately male and white

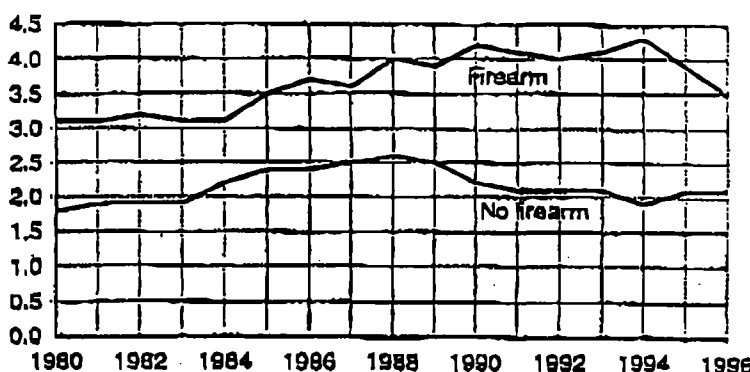
Males accounted for 8 in 10 youth suicides; white youth also accounted for 8 in 10 suicides.

	Number of suicides		Suicides per 100,000 youth	
	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-19	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-19
Total	298	1,817	1.8	9.7
Male	222	1,496	2.3	15.6
Female	76	321	0.8	3.5
White	244	1,522	1.8	10.3
Male	179	1,249	2.3	16.3
Female	65	273	0.9	3.8
Nonwhite	54	295	1.4	7.7
Male	43	247	2.2	12.7
Female	11	48	0.2	2.6

* Too few cases to obtain a reliable rate.

The rate of youth suicides involving a firearm increased 39% between 1980 and 1994, before declining 19% to the 1996 level

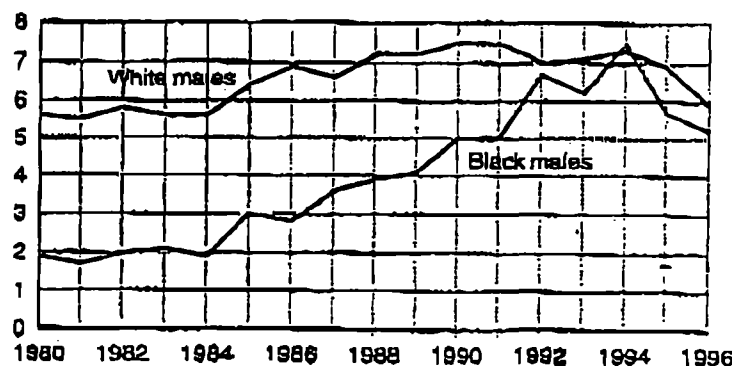
Suicides per 100,000 youth ages 10-19



Source: Authors' analysis of the National Center for Health Statistics' 1979-1996 data from the compressed mortality file (unpublished data).

The firearm-related suicide rate for young black males peaked in 1994 at a level higher than the rate for young white males, before declining to the 1996 level

Firearm-related suicides per 100,000 youth ages 10-19



- Between 1994 and 1996, firearm-related suicide rates decreased 19% for young white males and 31% for young black males.
- In 1996, firearm-related suicide rates for young white males declined to mid-1980's levels, while the rate for young black males was more than twice the 1980 rate.
- Changes in firearm-related suicide rates for young black males were similar to homicide patterns for young black males between 1980 and 1996.

Source: Authors' analysis of the National Center for Health Statistics' 1979-1996 data from the compressed mortality file (unpublished data).

U.S. child homicide and suicide rates exceed rates for other industrialized countries

Rates of firearm-related homicides and suicides are high in the U.S.

A study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention compared the homicide and suicide rates for children under age 15 in the U.S. with the rates for several other industrialized countries. Each country reported data for 1 year between 1990 and 1995; U.S. data were reported for 1993. The number of homicides per 100,000 children under age 15 in the U.S. was five times the number in the other countries combined (2.57 vs. 0.51). The rate of child homicides involving a firearm, however, was 16 times greater in the U.S. than in the other countries combined (0.94 vs. 0.06).

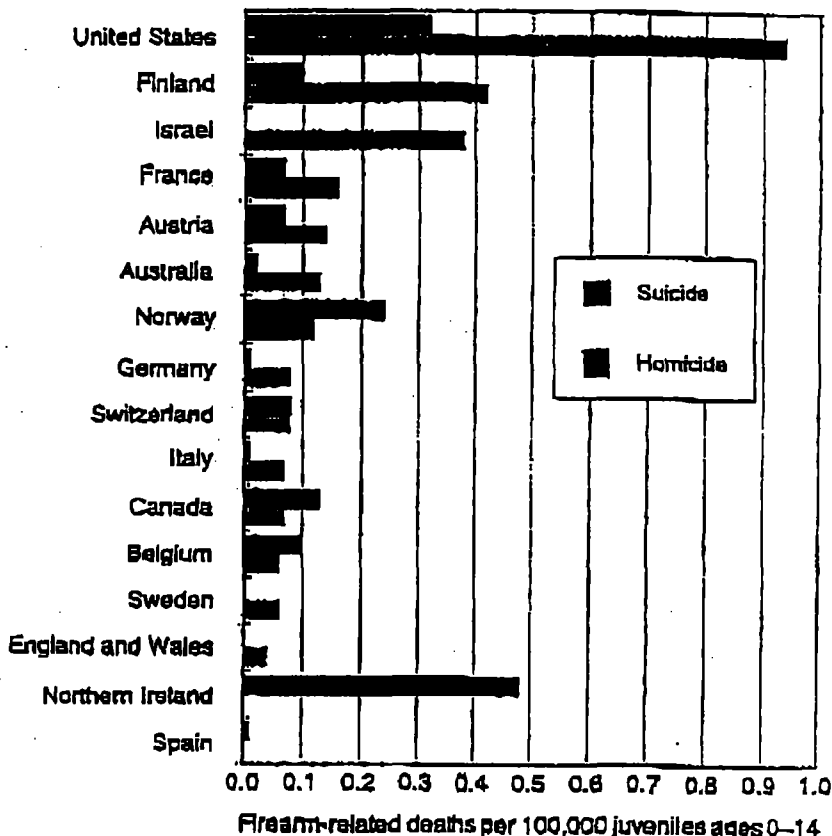
A similar pattern was seen in the suicide rates of children under age 15. Overall, the U.S. suicide rate was twice the rate for the other countries combined (0.55 vs. 0.27). For suicides involving firearms, however, the suicide rate in the U.S. was almost 11 times the rate for the other countries combined (0.32 vs. 0.03).

	Homicide rates*		Suicide rates*	
	U.S.	Foreign	U.S.	Foreign
Ages 0-4	4.10	0.95	0.00	0.00
Firearm	0.43	0.05	0.00	0.00
No firearm	3.67	0.05	0.00	0.00
Ages 5-14	1.75	0.30	0.84	0.40
Firearm	1.22	0.07	0.49	0.05
No firearm	0.53	0.24	0.35	0.35
Ages 0-14	2.57	0.51	0.55	0.27
Firearm	0.94	0.06	0.32	0.03
No firearm	1.63	0.45	0.23	0.24

* Rates are the number of homicides or suicides per 100,000 children in the age group.

Note: Data were provided by Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England and Wales, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Norway, Scotland, Singapore, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland, and Taiwan.

The U.S. firearm-related homicide rate for children is more than twice that of Finland, the country with the next highest rate



Note: If both suicide and homicide rates for a country were 0, that country is not displayed on the graph. Data were provided by Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England and Wales, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Norway, Scotland, Singapore, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland, and Taiwan.

Source: Authors' adaptation of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Rates of homicide, suicide, and firearm-related death among children—28 industrialized countries.

Homicides involving a firearm were about 10% of all homicides among younger children (ages 0-4) in the U.S. in 1993. In contrast, about two-thirds of U.S. homicides among older children (5-14) involved a firearm. In other countries, firearm-related homicides were less than one-quarter of all homicides in either age group.

While nonfirearm-related suicide rates were the same among older children in the U.S. and other countries (0.35), firearm-related suicide rates in the U.S. were 10 times greater than those in other countries (0.49 vs. 0.05).

Sources

Information for this Bulletin was taken/adapted from chapters 2, 3, and 5 of *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*. For a full listing of sources for these chapters, see pages 49, 84, and 140 of the *National Report*.

Resources

The 1999 OJJDP publication *Promising Strategies To Reduce Gun Violence* (253 pp., NCJ 173950) presents profiles of 60 demonstrated or promising programs and strategies that address the problem of gun violence. *Promising Strategies* also examines the problem of gun violence from a national perspective (including current trends) and discusses the process of developing a solution. Each program profile in the publication covers program type, goals, target group, target area, and contact information. The profiles are arranged in five categories: comprehensive gun violence reduction strategies, strategies to interrupt sources of illegal guns, strategies to deter illegal gun possession and carrying, strategies to respond to illegal use of guns, and education initiatives and alternative prevention strategies. The publication also includes a section on resources for research, technical assistance, and education; geographical and alphabetical program indexes; and a matrix of participating agencies. *Promising Strategies To Reduce Gun Violence* is available online from the OJJDP Web site (www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org) under the Publications section or can be ordered from OJJDP's Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse (e-mail puborder@ncjrs.org; call 800-638-8736; or write to the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000).

Answers to frequently asked questions about juvenile justice statistics as well as periodic updates of data presented in *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report* are available on the Internet in the OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book, which can be accessed through the OJJDP home page at www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org through the JJ Facts & Figures prompt.

Also available from OJJDP is the *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report* CD-ROM. With the CD-ROM, users can view the full report in a portable document format (PDF). The CD-ROM also provides a comprehensive "educator's kit" that includes the following: statistical information from full-page, presentation-ready graphs (also available for display in Microsoft Powerpoint); data for the graphs (also available in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets); more than 40 source documents in PDF; and links to government Web sites to obtain more information.

For information on OJJDP initiatives related to the reduction of juvenile crime, violence, and victimization, contact the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse (JJC) at www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org or call 800-638-8736.

Acknowledgments

Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report, from which this Bulletin is drawn, was prepared by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ). The authors are Howard N. Snyder and Melissa Sickmund. The *National Report* benefited from the assistance of many individuals in addition to the authors, including staff at NCJJ, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse.

Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official policies of OJJDP or the Department of Justice.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a part of the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. It includes the Bureau of Juvenile Justice Statistics, the Bureau of Juvenile Justice Research, and the Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services.

HOW TO GET YOUR FREE COPY

Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report is available online from the OJJDP Web site (www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org) under the JJ Facts & Figures section and the Publications section or can be ordered from OJJDP's Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse (e-mail puborder@ncjrs.org; call 800-638-8736; or write to the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000).

file: gun
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NUMBER OF PAGES (INCLUDING COVER): _____

COMMENTS: - BJS Gun Prosecutions + Brady Check Reports
(Q&A, Holder Statement + Talking Points)



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STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER

WASHINGTON, DC – The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) released two reports today on Federal Firearms Offenders and Background Checks for Firearm Transfers. The Deputy Attorney General issued the following statement:

"Over the past seven years this Administration has implemented a national strategy to reduce crime and gun violence in this country. This strategy has proven effective and has made our streets and communities safer.

"Our strategy includes increased coordination between federal, state and local law enforcement, a focus on the most serious violent offenders, a steady increase in total firearms prosecutions and sentences, and effective measures to prevent gun violence before it occurs. The BJS reports provide data on parts of our strategy which further document its effectiveness.

"The number of violent crimes committed with firearms in the United States is 35 percent lower today than it was in 1992. Our goal of increased punishment for gun offenders is being realized. Since 1992, the total number of state and federal weapons prosecutions has increased more than 22 percent. The number of federal criminal cases brought under the two primary provisions of the Gun Control Act was nearly 16 percent greater in 1999 than in 1992.

"Consistent with the statistics we released in January of this year, the BJS report shows that the number of defendants charged with all types of federal gun crimes is on the rise. Despite a drop in the mid-1990's, preliminary data for 1999 indicates that the number of people charged with federal gun crimes in 1999 should be equal to the number of people charged in 1992, even though there has been a dramatic drop in gun crimes during that same period.

"Under our strategy, law enforcement authorities have worked together to ensure that the most serious criminals are treated most severely. The number of firearm offenders sent to federal prison for more than 5 years is up more than 41 percent. The average sentence for federal firearms offenders increased nearly 2 years between 1992 and 1998. When the United States Supreme Court issued a decision in 1995 limiting their ability to use one of the most powerful charges under the Gun Control Act, federal prosecutors compensated by increasing the use of sentencing guideline enhancements against violent offenders. The use of this enhancement increased 31 percent between 1995 and 1998.

-more-

- 2 -

"Of course, our strategy does not rely merely on punishing offenders after crimes have been committed. We are also working to implement measures to prevent gun crimes before they occur. New data released by BJS today shows that by the end of 1999, federal and state authorities working together to implement the Brady Law had stopped 536,000 felons, fugitives, domestic abusers, and other persons not legally allowed to have a gun from getting a gun.

"Despite our success, we must not become complacent. There are still 89 Americans – including 12 young people – dying every day from gunshot wounds. We must continue our efforts to prevent crime and gun violence and our tough enforcement strategies at the federal, state and local level."

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Talking Points Re BJS Gun Reports (Reports for Release June 4, 2000)**BJS Bulletin: Background Checks for Firearms Transfers, 1999****The BJS Special Report: Federal Firearms Offenders, 1992-98**

- The BJS Reports demonstrate the success of the Administration's national gun policy. The reports show that:

[Regarding the Background Check Report:]

- ▶ Since the Brady Law became effective in 1994, federal, state, and local law enforcement authorities, working together, kept guns out of the hands of over 536,000 felons, fugitives, and other persons not legally allowed to have guns;
- ▶ In the first full year of the Brady Law's National Instant Criminal Background Check System alone, federal, state and local law enforcement authorities, working together, kept guns out of the hands of 204,000 felons, fugitives, and other persons not legally allowed to have guns;

[Regarding the Federal Firearms Offenders Report & Prosecutions:]

- ▶ As indicated in the statistics released by the Department of Justice in January of this year, there was a dip in the number of defendants charged with federal gun crimes in the mid-90s, which was due in substantial part to the Supreme Court's decision in Bailey v. United States. The decision in Bailey limited the ability of federal prosecutors to use one of the most powerful charges of the Gun Control Act;
- ▶ Despite the dip in the defendants charged with federal firearms offenses in the mid-1990s, the number of gun offenders who are being charged with federal gun crimes is on the rise, even though there are 35% fewer gun crimes today than in committed since 1992;
 - ▶ Without the limitations imposed by Bailey, the number of defendants charged with a 924(c) offense should have increased rather than decreased. BJS estimates that 2,500 more defendants would have been charged with 924(c) during the 33 months following the December 1995 decision if the Supreme Court had decided Bailey differently.
- ▶ Federal prosecutors compensated for the Bailey decision by increasing the

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number of sentencing enhancements sought for use of a gun. In this way, federal prosecutors assured that gun criminals who used firearms in the commission of a violent crime or drug trafficking offense obtained longer sentences;

- ▶ Following Bailey, the number of defendants receiving a guideline enhancement for weapon use or possession increased. Before Bailey, a 924(c) conviction obviated their use, given the bar on double penalties. Post-Bailey, in January 1996, 17 % more defendants received a guideline enhancement for weapon use than during November 1995. Between 1995-98, the number of defendants annually receiving a guideline enhancement for weapon use increased 31% -- from 2598 to 3393.

[Regarding the Federal Firearms Offenders Report & Sentences:]

- ▶ Federal law enforcement have targeted federal resources to the most serious violent offenders. The average sentence for a federal gun offender increased from 79 months (about 6.5 years) to 100 months (over 8 years) between 1992 and 1998.
 - ▶ Between 1992 and 1998, the number of federal gun defendants sentenced to a prison term of 3 years or more increased from 51% to 71% of those sentenced to prison. The proportion sentenced to 5 years or more increased from 41% to 53%.
- ▶ Federal prosecutors have worked to bring effective prosecutions. From 1992 to 1998, there was an increase in the percentage of convictions obtained in cases where prosecutors charged the defendant with using a firearm in the commission of a violent crime or a drug trafficking offense. Moreover, from 1992 to 1998, an increasing proportion of defendants convicted of a firearms offense was sentenced to prisons. In 1998, 91% of those convicted were sentenced to prison, up from 85% in 1992.

[General Talking Points on Related Topics:]

- **Crime is down.** This success has been attained during a period in which the overall number of violent crimes committed with firearms in the United States has dropped significantly. While violent crime committed with guns has fallen by more than 35% from 1992 to 1998, firearms enforcement is at an all time high. We have achieved increased coordination, more prosecutions, and greater sentences. The streets of America are safer than they have been in over a generation.

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- **We're keeping guns out of the wrong hands.** Our gun violence reduction strategy includes not only vigorous enforcement of the gun laws and punishment of gun criminals, but also effective prevention measures to stop gun crimes before they occur. Over the last five years, the Brady Law has stopped more than 536,000 felons, fugitives, and other prohibited people from getting guns, preventing an untold number of crimes. In 1999 alone, BJS estimates that over 204,000 criminals and other persons not legally allowed to have guns were stopped by the Brady Law from getting guns. BJS data shows that over 70% of those individuals were convicted felons or under felony indictments.
- **Firearms prosecutions are up.** Since 1993, funding for state and local law enforcement has increased by nearly 300% – due in large part to the resources provided in the 1994 Crime Bill. Federal, state and local law enforcement authorities are now working more closely than ever to combat gun violence through comprehensive strategies.
 - ▶ Nationally, firearms convictions are up dramatically. Since 1992, combined federal and local gun cases have increased by more than 22%.
 - ▶ According to data from the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, the number of federal criminal cases in which charges were brought under the two primary provisions of the Gun Control Act was nearly 16% greater in 1999 than in 1992. The 1999 data indicate a 25% increase in the number of federal firearms cases compared to 1998.
 - ▶ BJS data released today show the same trends as the data released in January of this year from the Executive Office for United States Attorneys. The 1999 data in the BJS report are preliminary, and, as noted in the report, the 1999 numbers cited in that report will rise as additional data are received.
 - ▶ The BJS report is derived from an in-depth look at data from the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, and includes a review of charges in addition to those released in the data from the Executive Office for United States Attorneys in January of this year. For each year in which we have final numbers, the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts numbers have been higher than the figures from the Executive Office for United States Attorneys.
 - ▶ The data used by BJS also differs from the data used by the Executive Office for United States Attorneys in that each data set records the dates of the relevant court filings differently.
- **Sentences for the worst offenders are longer.** Federal prosecutors have targeted our limited resources and focused on the most serious offenders. According to the

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Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, the number of high-level firearms offenders (those sentenced to 5 or more years) is up by more than 41% since 1992. The average sentence for firearms offenders in federal court increased by more than 2 years between 1992 and 1999. The BJS figures released today confirm that sentences for federal firearms offenders are up significantly.

Despite the good news, reducing gun violence remains a top priority. Although violent crime is down, tragedies like the shootings in recent months, and the fact that 12 young people in America die every day from gunshot wounds – remind us that we must do more to reduce firearms violence even further. We must build upon our success in reducing crime to provide greater protection for our children and all of our citizens. This requires keeping guns out of the hands of criminals and children, and enforcing the law effectively when gun crimes are committed.

- **We're working together.** The Clinton Administration's firearms enforcement strategy is committed to a partnership between federal and state authorities. Substantial federal resources are allocated to both prevent access to firearms by prohibited persons and incarcerate violent gun offenders. We have also forged partnerships with state and local authorities, who make the vast majority of arrests and undertake the vast majority of prosecutions.

- ▶ These partnerships are effective and make sense. They allow each community to identify their unique firearm and other violent crime problems and implement the strategies that are most likely to have a positive impact on these local problems.
- ▶ They also build on the reality that state and local law enforcement have responsibility for combating the vast majority of violent crime in our country, and have the lion's share of the resources to do so.
- ▶ Efforts not based on this coordination -- like efforts to require wholesale federalization of firearms offenses by bringing all cases into the federal system -- will shift cases that can be handled effectively at the local and state level to the federal level. This will prevent federal law enforcement officials from targeting their resources effectively to investigate and prosecute uniquely federal crimes such as interstate gun trafficking and gang violence.

- **Results speak for themselves.** The increased collaboration among federal, state, and local law enforcement has resulted in: (1) a more efficient distribution of prosecutorial responsibilities, (2) a steady increase in total firearms prosecutions and, most importantly, (3) a sharp decline in the number of violent crimes committed with guns.

- ▶ By closely cooperating with state and local law enforcement, ATF has been able to trace 200,000 crime guns annually, and provide information about potential

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traffickers to state and local police and prosecutors, and identify and convict those illegal sources of guns to criminals and juveniles.

- ▶ Coordinated law enforcement efforts in Boston, Massachusetts, Richmond, Virginia, and elsewhere, involving all levels of law enforcement and community leaders, have produced very dramatic drops in the cities' violent crime rates. Strategies such as "Project Exile" in Richmond, VA, "Operation Ceasefire" in Boston, MA, "Project I.C.E." in Birmingham, AL, "Project SAFETY ON" in Minneapolis, MN and "Project Impact" in Omaha, NE are making a difference in reducing gun violence. Called by many names, these strategies are founded on one principle: these local partnerships know best about what works to reduce gun violence in their communities.

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Questions and Answers re BJS Reports (Reports for Release June 4, 2000)

BJS Bulletin: Background Checks for Firearms Transfers, 1999
The BJS Special Report: Federal Firearms Offenders, 1992-98

Regarding the Report on Federal Firearms Offenders

Q: The report just released by BJS indicates that the number of defendants charged with a federal firearm offense decreased from a peak in 1992. Does this confirm the accusations of the NRA that the Clinton Administration has failed to enforce the federal firearms laws?

A: Absolutely not. Overall, prosecutions are up. Since 1992, combined state and federal weapons prosecutions have increased more than 22%. And according to data from the Executive Office of the U.S. Attorneys, the number of federal criminal cases in which charges were brought under the two primary provisions of the Gun Control Act was nearly 16% greater in 1999 than in 1992.

Under our strategy, federal law enforcement authorities have worked to ensure that the most serious criminals are treated most severely. By targeting the worst offenders, the average sentence for federal gun defendants has increased by almost two years, and a greater percentage of federal gun defendants are now serving prison terms. (The average sentence for a federal gun offender increased from 79 months (about 6.5 years) to 100 months (over 8 years) between 1992 and 1998.) The BJS report confirms what we already knew: there was a dip in federal firearms prosecutions in the mid-1990s, primarily due to two factors: our strategy of targeting the most serious offenders, and the United States Supreme Court's decision that limited federal prosecutors' ability to use one of most powerful charges under the Gun Control Act. The report statistically demonstrates that without the limitations imposed by the Supreme Court's decision, 2,500 more defendants would have been charged by federal prosecutors in the 33 months immediately following the decision.

Q: Even after the Bailey decision, there were plenty of federal firearms offenses committed in the mid-1990s. Why didn't federal prosecutors go after those cases?

A: They did. Despite the fact that the Bailey decision required U.S. Attorneys to devote considerable time and resources to defending convictions they obtained under the prior interpretation of the Gun Control Act, federal prosecutors still pursued violent gun criminals and drug traffickers who use guns. As documented in the BJS report, between 1995 and 1998, the number of federal defendants charged with a violent or drug offense increased 25%. Even though federal prosecutors were not able to charge the same Gun Control Act violations they would have been able to if the Supreme Court had decided Bailey differently, they still went after these defendants and compensated for the Supreme Court's decision by increasing the use of sentencing guideline enhancements. The use of

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this guidelines weapon enhancement increased 31% for offenders in such cases. This added, on average, 16 more months to each criminal's sentence.

Q: Why don't the BJS numbers match the number the Department of Justice issued in January of this year?

A: First, the numbers released in January were limited to the numbers of federal defendants (and cases) with charges under the two primary provisions of the federal Gun Control Act. The BJS report includes defendants charged with other gun offenses. Second, the numbers from the two releases are from different data sets. The BJS data includes information, for example, from U.S. magistrates, whereas the data released in January related only to filings before U.S. district court judges. Also, there will be some variation in the numbers because the data sets use a different reporting method. Overall, of course, the final numbers in the BJS report are higher than the numbers released in January, and the trends that the two data sets track are identical.

Q: According to the BJS report, there was not a significant increase in the number of charged defendants from 1998 to 1999, as previously stated by the Justice Department. How you explain the difference?

A: As the report states, the BJS data for 1999 is preliminary. There will be more defendants added to the 1999 count as BJS receives more data. BJS's experience with this kind of counting suggests that the additional data could show as many as 1,000 more defendants. In other words, we know that the numbers for 1999 will go up. Based on the overall consistency between the BJS data and the data used by the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys -- which was the data we released in January -- we should expect that the number of defendants charged in 1999 will show a trend consistent with the trend outlined in the January data.

Q: The BJS report documents that half the total decrease in federal firearms prosecutions can be attributed to fewer prosecutions of state level firearm offenses in federal courts pursuant to the Assimilated Crimes Act. Why did federal prosecutors stop charging these cases?

A: BJS did not analyze the reason for this decline. However, in many of those cases, the state also had the ability to charge the defendants with a state level offense, and it is likely that the decrease could be attributed to increased state prosecutions of these offenders. The 22% increase in combined federal and state prosecutions between 1992 and 1996 (we do not have data more recent than 1996) supports this reasoning.

Q: The BJS report documents that while the average prison term increased for defendants convicted of possession and transfer offenses, prison terms declined for those convicted of regulatory offenses. What accounts for this disparity?

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- A: The United States Sentencing Commission is responsible for the study and implementation of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines. The Guidelines, as they currently exist, expose a convicted felon or other illegal firearm possessor to a much heavier sentence than a trafficker. While many traffickers are also violent offenders, other traffickers or their accomplices do not have extensive criminal records, thereby limiting their exposure under the Sentencing Guidelines.
- Q: How do you explain the 62% decline in unregistered firearm cases (or National Firearms Act or NFA cases) under 18 U.S.C. section 5861(d)?
- A: We think this is largely a matter of prosecutorial charging strategy. As you can see from the BJS report, there was an increase in prosecutions under section 922(o) of title 18 of the criminal code (which prohibits machine gun possession) during the period of the decline you cite. Prosecutors appear to have been using other statutes, like 922(o), to handle this kind of offense.
- Q: Why did ATF's cases (or referrals) drop between 1992 and 1997?
- A: The ATF caseload dropped for a number of reasons, including a decline in the number of Special Agents, shifts in investigative focus to more complex cases, and the number of serious bombings and church arsons. As one of the lead bombing, explosives and arson investigation agencies in the country, ATF is often called upon to move resources into bombing and arson investigations, which are extremely resource-intensive and often call for the most experienced Special Agents.
- Q: The BJS reports states that the Attorney General issued a memorandum that allowed federal prosecutors to plea bargain in a way that allowed defendants to avoid the heavy penalty of 924(c). Doesn't that memorandum show that the Department does not treat gun offenses as seriously as it could?
- A: No. The Attorney General's memorandum was designed to clarify the guidelines that have been set down for federal prosecutors when they make decisions about what crimes to charge, and what plea bargains to make. Plea bargains can be used to assure prosecutors of an appropriate conviction, and are a necessary part of our criminal justice system. As the BJS report documents, the rate of conviction for the relevant gun offenders after the Attorney General's memorandum was *higher* than the rate of conviction prior to it, suggesting that the Attorney General's memorandum has assured swift and effective justice for more gun criminals.
- Q: One of the things that the Administration has previously said to explain the decrease in gun prosecutions is that there was a shift made to try to get at gun traffickers. The report suggests that regulatory and transfer offenses have actually decreased. How do you

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explain that?

- A: Under the Gun Control Act's current provisions, the charges that are often the most effective charges for punishing gun traffickers are charges characterized in the BJS report as "possession" offenses. (The BJS report was created by DOJ statisticians, who classified the charges against gun defendants into 3 categories, and the statisticians chose how to characterize a gun offense as possession versus transfer, for example.)
- Q: The reports show that over 536,000 criminals and others tried unlawfully to buy guns since the Brady Law was passed, but it looks like only at most 300 people were prosecuted under the applicable statute for lying on their Brady form. Doesn't that show that you are not enforcing the law?
- A: The primary purpose of the Brady Law was to keep criminals and others who are not allowed to have guns from getting guns. As these reports show, it has been very effective. Since the National Instant Check System came on line at the end of 1998, federal law enforcement officials now do have information about people who appear to have lied on their forms in an attempt to buy a gun. Federal authorities use that information, sharing it with state and local authorities as appropriate, to commence investigations against dangerous offenders. Obviously, given the large volume denials, it would not be possible for the federal criminal system to charge all of these persons. The limits on ATF resources, the limits on U.S. Attorney resources, and the limits on the federal judiciary and its resources would not permit us to prosecute all offenders, so law enforcement authorities -- as they do with all types of crimes -- try to target the most serious or dangerous offenders for the most severe punishment, like federal prosecution.

Report on Background Checks

- Q: Why are the numbers for the State denials -- and State checks -- in this report different from the numbers issued by the FBI?
- A: The FBI's report contained a conservative estimate of the number of State-issued denials. This estimate was based on the FBI's denial rate, as well as some State denial information that the FBI had. The BJS report was based on a study -- like the studies done by BJS under the interim Brady provisions -- designed to count the number of State checks and denials. As we expected, the state denial numbers were in fact higher than the FBI estimate.
- Q: The report shows that the States serving as Points of Contact for the NICS deny guns at a higher rate than the FBI. Why is that?
- A: We believe that the main reason for that is that the States have access to more information to check the prospective gun buyer against than the FBI does. In fact, this report

reinforces what we have been saying, we believe strongly that having the States participate as partners with the FBI in conducting Brady background checks is good for public safety. Because the States can access more records, they can perform a more thorough check. That is why we have been encouraging States to participate in the system, and why the States that do participate deserve special recognition.

Q: Why don't more States participate as Points of Contact in the NICS?

A: Probably the biggest reason is that right now if they participate, they have to fund the costs of participation themselves. We have asked Congress to allow the FBI to charge a fee for NICS checks -- putting the costs of running the background checks on the persons buying the guns -- which would likely encourage more States to participate, and which would certainly help the States that already participate.

Q: Isn't one of the reasons that some States have a higher rejection rate than the FBI that the States are denying on a different standard than the FBI?

A: It is clearly true that some States are allowed to deny people guns for different reasons than the FBI. For example, some States have laws permitting denials for offenses that the federal law does not cover.

file: gun control

THE VIRGINIA COMMITTEE FOR GUN-FREE SCHOOLS

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO:	Ann O'Leary	FROM:	Pamela L. Pouchot
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Dear Ms. O'Leary,

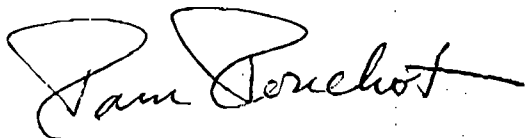
Just an update on our efforts to create gun free schools in Virginia.

On August 15, 2000 the Virginia General Assembly's House Sub-Committee on Militia and Police will meet to study two bills (HB 246 and HB 247) which were held over from the 2000 session.

HB 246 amends Code of VA 18.2-308.1 which currently permits firearms in unlocked vehicles on school property, firearms at school-sponsored and non-school sponsored functions, and curricular activities. Our bill creates a gun-free zone in public schools with the exception of law-enforcement personnel, government officials and military personnel while engaged in their official duties. This bill does not address facsimile weapons or air rifles, only firearms which expel a projectile by explosive device.

HB 247 amends Code of VA 18.2-280 which currently allows for the discharge of firearms on school property while engaged in lawful hunting, a program or curriculum sponsored by or conducted with the permission of the school or while in or on an established shooting range. Our bill forbids the discharge of a firearm, which expels a projectile by explosive device, on public school property.

Attached is a copy of the announcement of the August 15th meeting in Richmond. We need all the support we can get. I imagine the strategy of holding this meeting in August is to have as few interested parties as possible be present. We are working diligently to have a crowd witness the deliberations. Care to join us?





COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
HOUSE OF DELEGATES
RICHMOND

June 14, 2000

BRUCE F. JAMERSON
CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES AND
KEEPER OF THE ROLLS OF THE COMMONWEALTH IN
STATE CAPITOL
POST OFFICE BOX 400
RICHMOND VIRGINIA 23210

TO: Members of the Special Militia & Police Subcommittee
Studying Carryover Legislation regarding Firearms

FROM: Anne R. Howard, House Committee Operations, (804) 698-1540

This notice confirms a meeting for this special subcommittee of the House of Delegates Militia and Police Committee, to review the following carryover legislation regarding weapons on school property and other issues:

House Bill 246	Dillard, Patron
House Bill 247	Dillard, Patron
House Bill 310	Watts, Patron
House Bill 368	Scott, Patron

The meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 15, 2000, beginning at 10:00 a.m., in the Sixth Floor Conference Room of the General Assembly Building. Questions about the meeting's agenda should be addressed to Robie Ingram or Carey Friedman, Counsels to the Militia and Police Committee. If I may assist in any other way, please call me at the number above.

MEMBERS—SPECIAL MILITIA & POLICE SUBCOMMITTEE

The Honorable H. Morgan Griffith, Chairman

The Honorable Jay Katzen

The Honorable Beverly J. Sherwood

The Honorable R. Lee Ware

The Honorable James M. Scott

The Honorable A. Victor Thomas

The Honorable John H. Tate, Jr.

cc: The Honorable Roger J. McClure, Co-Chair, M&P
The Honorable Mary T. Christian, Co-Chair, M&P
Patrons, Carryover Legislation
Other Members, M&P Committee
The Honorable Bruce F. Jamerson
D. Robie Ingram, Senior Attorney, Div. of Legislative Services, (804) 786-3591
Carey Friedman, Staff Attorney, Div. of Legislative Services, (804) 786-3591
Interested Persons, Militia & Police Mailing List*

*Copies of above bills may be obtained from LIS site at <http://leg1.state.va.us/lis.htm>

Individuals requiring interpreter services or other special assistance should contact Anne Howard at (804) 698-1540, TDD (804) 786-2369, at least ten working days prior to the meeting.



file:gun control
One Bridge Street, Suite 300, Newton, MA 02458

In Ann O'heary

June 9, 2000

JOHN E. ROSENTHAL,
CHAIR AND CO-FOUNDER

ELIZABETH MILES,
PROJECT DIRECTOR

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HONORABLE PAUL EVANS,
BOSTON POLICE COMMISSIONER

HONORABLE MICHAEL ALBANO,
MAYOR OF SPRINGFIELD, MA

Ms. Melanne Verveer
Chief of Staff
Office of the First Lady
The White House
Washington, DC 20050

Re: Billboard Unveiling

Dear Melanne:

Our June 6, 2000 national billboard unveiling was a great success. In addition to the large 252' x 20' billboard, on the Massachusetts Turnpike, which reads: Kids Killed by Guns Today: 12. National Gun Laws Passed Today: 0. Tell Congress it's Time to Act., we launched our new media campaign which to date includes over 370 donated billboards throughout New England and print ads. Enclosed is a sampling of some of the newspaper articles including Newsweek and Associated Press (with photo) which was picked up around the country. Also attached is a copy of the 1/2 page, full color ad we placed in USA Today on Wednesday, June 7.

Participants at the unveiling included Republican Governor Paul Cellucci, Democratic State Attorney General Tom Reilly, and House and Senate leaders, Boston and Springfield Mayors Menino and Albano, Congressman Tierney, Police Chiefs from around the state and many victims' families.

We are planning similar press conferences and billboard unveilings in Rhode Island and Washington, DC, before Congress adjourns in July. It would be great to discuss a New York event with the First Lady and how the White House might participate in a Washington event, coordinated by Congressman Patrick Kennedy at the US Capital.

Please give my regards to the First Lady and call when you have a chance. Thank you so much for your ongoing support and encouragement.

Best Regards,

STOP HANDGUN VIOLENCE, INC.


John E. Rosenthal
Chair

Enclosure

SECRET CAMPAIGN CASH TV 'SURVIVOR' TALES

Newsweek



GUN CONTROL

A Massachusetts Billboard Takes Aim at Washington

MORNING COMMUTERS in Boston got a wake-up call five years ago when a group calling itself Stop Handgun Violence put up the nation's largest billboard just outside Fenway Park. The 252-foot-long sign, featuring photos of kids killed by gunfire, was meant to remind drivers of the rising death toll. Now the bill-

board people are back—and this time they're targeting the 2000 campaign. **KIDS KILLED BY GUNS TODAY: 12**, says the new giant billboard, with a local victim's picture. **NATIONAL GUN LAWS PASSED TODAY: 0. TELL CONGRESS IT'S TIME TO ACT.** Some 370 donated billboards throughout New England will carry a smaller version. State of-

ficials, including the Republican governor, want the nation to know that since the first billboard went up, they've passed the country's toughest gun laws, and gun deaths have dropped by more than half. Coincidence? Maybe—but gun-control forces see it as a powerful sign.

DEVIN GORDON, SUSANNAH MEADOWS and BRET BEGUN



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: DAVID N. BERKOWITZ FOR NEWSWEEK (2); NEAL PETERS COLLECTION/EPHOTOS.COM; INDEX STOCK, COURTESY HOLLAND MARK ADVERTISING; POLLY BORLAND—MATRIX

WEDNESDAY

June 7, 2000

The Standard-Times

Serving the communities of SouthCoast Massachusetts

Volume CLI, No. 98

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New Bedford, MA

Newsstand: 50 cer

National gun law campaign unveiled

By Chris Iven
Associated Press writer

BOSTON — It was an emotional day for the family 12-year-old Ross Mathieu left behind.

Several members of the slain New Bedford sixth-grader's family were in Boston yesterday to witness the launch of a national billboard campaign to shame Congress into passing gun control laws.

The giant billboard unveiled yesterday behind Fenway Park features the smiling face of the boy, who was accidentally shot and killed in 1996 while playing outside with a gun owned by his best friend's father. The friend, who didn't realize the gun was loaded, pointed the gun and pulled the trigger.

Some members of Ross' family cried as they watched the unveiling of the billboard from across the busy Massachusetts Turnpike.

"I should have him standing next to me," said Marc Mathieu, Ross's father. "If somebody can look at that, especially congressmen, and not do something about it, they don't have a moral bone in their body."

The billboard reads:

"Kids Killed by Guns Today: 12. National Gun Laws Passed Today: 0. Tell Congress It's Time to Act."

The numbers — in red on Mathieu's forehead — evoke the red dot produced by the laser sight of a gun.

Gun control activists and state (See BILLBOARD, Page A5)

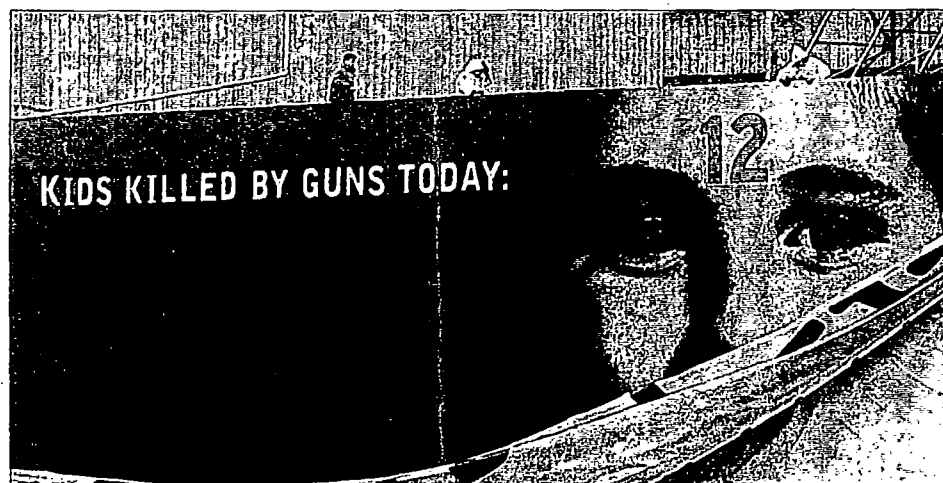


Photo by The Associated Press

Workers in rain gear unveil the newest Stop Handgun Violence billboard display along the Massachusetts Turnpike in Boston yesterday. The campaign features Ross Mathieu of New Bedford; the 12-year-old boy was killed in a handgun accident in 1996.

Billboard: Activist group unveils gun law campaign



leaders unveiled a 250-foot-long billboard as part of a nationwide campaign.

Another 370 donated billboards are expected to go up throughout southern New England within a month. And Stop Handgun Violence, which is organizing the campaign, expects as many as 1,000 similar billboards nationwide within six months.

Today, the group was to launch a nationwide print campaign featuring a photo of the U.S. Congress in session. It reads: "Columbine left 13 dead. And 435 paralyzed. Tell Congress it's time to act."

Stop Handgun Violence officials are starting their campaign in Massachusetts, home of the toughest gun control laws in the nation. Gun homicides and injuries in Massachusetts have each dropped by more than half since 1994.

The state laws, passed by a Democrat-controlled Legislature and a Republican governor, show that sensible gun control measures are possible and are effective, said John Rosenthal, president of Stop Handgun Violence.

"In Massachusetts, we have simply passed laws that require responsibility on the part of gun owners, gun dealers, gun manufacturers and

law enforcement," Rosenthal said. "We have proven that gun laws work."

Rosenthal, who owns the massive billboard, has used it to display handgun control messages since 1995, the year he founded Stop Handgun Violence.

Attorney General Tom Reilly, who was also at yesterday's unveiling, and his predecessor in office, Scott Harshbarger, have used the state's consumer protection laws to require that guns are both well-made and childproof.

Republican Gov. Paul Cellucci was among state governmental leaders of both parties who hailed the national campaign.

"Let's hope the rest of the country follows us," Cellucci said.

In a statement, the Gun Owners Action League of Massachusetts accused Stop Handgun Violence of "deceptive math" used in the billboard. To create the "scare statistic" of 12 child deaths from handguns per day, the group included people as old as 20, so that the victims of gang-related crime could be included, GOAL said.

Rosenthal said that guns caused the deaths of 32,000 people of all ages last year. Of those 18,000 were suicides, 13,000 were homicides and the rest were accidental, he said.

BOSTON Herald

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 2000 • 50 CENTS



STAFF PHOTO BY MIKE ADASKAVEG

NEW BILLBOARD: Attorney General Tom Reilly speaks yesterday at a press conference for Stop Handgun Violence, where a new Boston billboard was unveiled.

Anti-gun group unveils sign

By JOSE MARTINEZ

Three Christmases ago, Ann Marie Crowell never would have thought of attending yesterday's unveiling of a billboard urging Congress to do more to curb handgun violence.

But that was before her 12-year-old son, Brian, caught a bullet in the neck from a pistol a young friend had found unsecured in his

mother's bedroom. That night — Christmas Eve 1997 — changed Crowell's life. "His friend thought he had unloaded it. It went off," Crowell said after watching the unveiling of a 250-foot long billboard outside Kenmore Square over the Massachusetts Turnpike.

The billboard is the latest volley in the national campaign by the group Stop Handgun Violence.

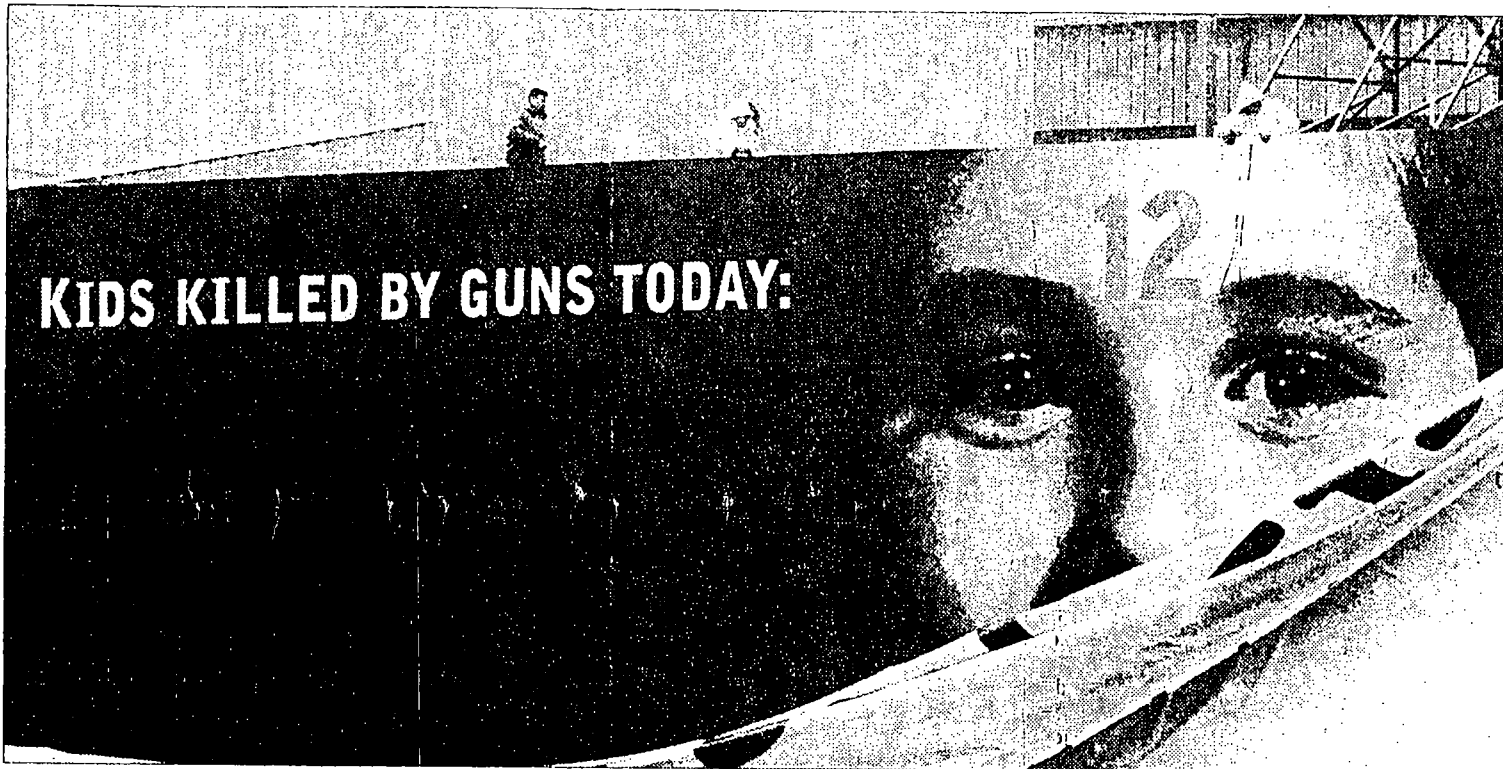
"Kids Killed by Guns Today: 12. National Gun Laws Passed Today: 0. Tell Congress It's Time to Act," the billboard reads, using federal statistics showing 12 people under the age of 19 are killed by a gun each day in the United States.

"More Americans died of handgun violence in the last 30 years

than in all the foreign wars combined. . . . More kids die from handgun violence than all natural causes combined," said Stop Handgun Violence founder John Rosenthal. "Sounds like a national emergency to me."

Rosenthal and Michael Barnes, president of the Washington-based Handgun Control, both praised Massachusetts for adopting the toughest gun laws in the country.

But Kevin Sowyrda, president of the Gun Owners Action League of Massachusetts, said the billboard is misplaced. "Unfortunately, most 5-year-olds are not going to drive down the Mass Pike and see the billboard. You need to get into the classroom."



Workmen in rain gear unveil the newest Stop Handgun Violence display along the Massachusetts Turnpike in Boston yesterday. The photo features 12-year-old Ross Mathieu, an accidental gunshot victim from New Bedford.

Associated Press

Billboards take aim at Congress

Gun control effort unveiled in Hub

By **DAN RING**

Staff writer

BOSTON — Springfield Mayor Michael J. Albano yesterday helped unveil a gigantic billboard that aims to persuade Congress to adopt gun-control laws as restrictive as those in Massachusetts.

The billboard's debut marks the start of a nationwide campaign.

Albano, Springfield Police Chief Paula Meara, Gov. A. Paul Cellucci and other leading public officials attended the unveiling in Boston.

"We're getting close to some real progress," said Albano, a longtime advocate of more restrictive gun laws. "The idea is to get the billboards up across the coun-

try and hopefully that will tip Congress to move on a solution."

The billboard, erected on the Massachusetts Turnpike near Fenway Park in Boston, features a photo of Ross Mathieu, a 12-year-old New Bedford boy killed in 1996 in a gun accident. The 252-foot-long, 20-foot-tall billboard says in part, "Kids Killed by Guns Today: 12. National Gun Laws Passed Today: 0. Tell Congress It's Time to Act."

John E. Rosenthal, chair of Stop Handgun Violence, which is sponsoring the billboard, said that nearly 200 similar, smaller billboards and signs will begin appearing in Western Massachusetts.

Springfield Outdoor Advertising Co. and Radding Signs of

Springfield will donate space on signs for the anti-gun message and the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority is providing signs on its buses for the cause.

Another 370 donated billboards are expected to go up throughout southern New England within a month. And Stop Handgun Violence expects as many as 1,000 similar billboards nationwide within six months.

Today, the group was to launch a nationwide print campaign featuring a photo of the U.S. Congress in session. It reads: "Columbine left 13 dead. And 435 paralyzed. Tell Congress it's time to act."

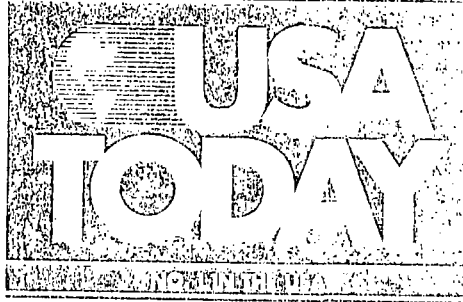
Since Massachusetts began approving tough gun laws in 1994, gun injuries in the state have been reduced by 53 percent and homicides with guns have been cut by 55 percent, Rosenthal said.

The Legislature and Cellucci in 1998 passed a law that bans the sale of junk handguns, increases penalties for certain gun-related crimes, bars anyone with a violent-crime conviction from obtaining a gun license and mandates a locked container for storage of guns.

Attorney General Thomas F. Reilly, who also attended yesterday's event, in April announced that Massachusetts would be the first state to use consumer protection rules to enforce new safety standards on handguns. The regulations require tamper-proof serial numbers, safety devices on semi-automatic handguns to show if a gun is loaded or to block it from firing without a magazine, performance tests and trigger locks.

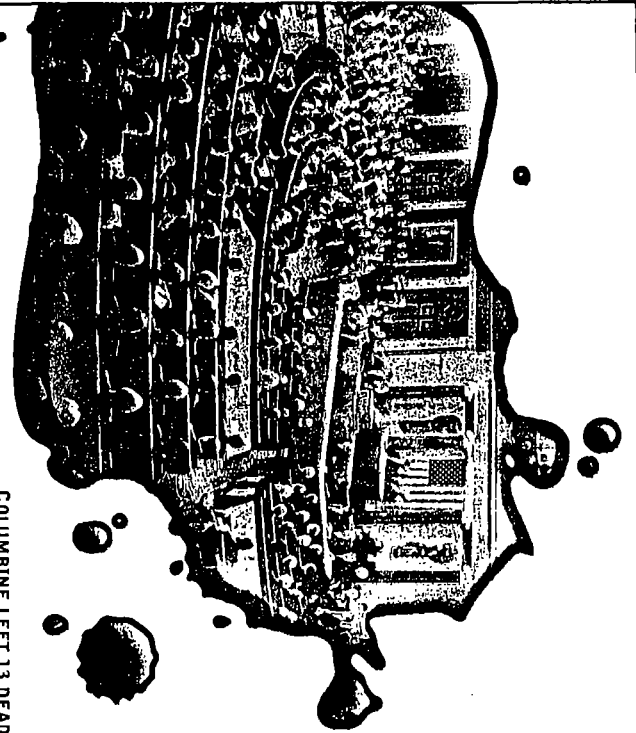
"Now it is Congress that must act to replicate the successful and proven Massachusetts gun laws," Cellucci said.

1/2 page Full Color Advertisement



50 CENTS

Wednesday, June 7, 2000



COLUMBINE LEFT 13 DEAD. AND 435 PARALYZED.

TELL CONGRESS IT'S TIME TO ACT
www.stophandgunviolence.org
1-877-SAFE-ARMS



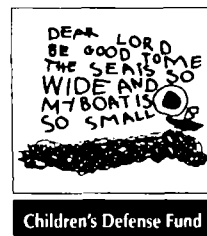
MEMORANDUM

all guns

TO: Administration Officials

DT: October 2, 2000

FR: Grace Reef and Jill Ward
Children's Defense Fund



RE: New CDF Report: Protect Children Instead of Guns 2000

Attached please find a new report from the Children's Defense Fund, which details the latest statistics on child gun deaths, including national trends and state-by-state information. The report documents the latest information on child firearm deaths by homicide, suicide and accident. While the number of young lives lost to gunfire continues to decline, it is still too high. To protect children and teens from harm, the report calls for enactment of a REAL national gun safety policy, including licensing and registration, mandatory trigger locks and consumer safety standards for firearms. Should you wish additional information, please contact Grace Reef, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, at greef@childrensdefense.org or 202-662-3558. You may also contact Jill Ward, CDF's Violence Prevention and Youth Development Coordinator at jward@childrensdefense.org or 662-3503.

Report Highlights

- In 1998, 3,761 children and teens lost their lives -- that's one child every 2 1/2 hours, 10 children and teens every day, more than 70 young lives every week.
- In 1998, more children and teens died from firearms than from cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, and HIV/AIDS *combined*.
- Between 1979 and 1998, nearly 84,000 children and teens were killed in America—*36,000 more than the total number of American soldiers killed in battle in Vietnam*.
- American children under age 15 are 12 times more likely to die from gunfire than children in 25 other industrialized countries combined.
- 61 percent of the 84,000 children killed by gunfire since 1979 were White; 36 percent were Black.
- Suicide accounted for 33 percent of children and teens killed by gunfire in 1998. More than two-thirds of firearms involved in self-inflicted firearm injuries and deaths come from either the victim's home or the home of a friend or relative.
- Although White youths commit suicide more often than Black youths, the overall suicide rate for Blacks has increased by 75 percent since 1980, and firearm suicides accounted for 96% of the increase in Black youth suicide between 1980 and 1995.

PROTECT CHILDREN INSTEAD OF GUNS 2000



The latest data released in 2000 show that in a single year 3,761 children and teens were killed by gunfire in the United States — that's one child almost every two and a half hours, 10 children every day, more than 70 children every week. Between 1979 and 1998, gunfire killed nearly 84,000 children and teens in America — 36,000 more than the total number of American soldiers killed in battle in Vietnam. In the United States, firearms outnumber children by a margin of almost three to one. It's time to stop protecting the approximately 200 million firearms in our country and start protecting the nearly 75 million American children and teens under age 19. It's time for a REAL gun safety policy in America. It's time to protect children instead of guns.

The latest deadly facts about children and gun violence in a single year show:

- 3,761 children and teens were killed by gunfire
- 2,184 were murdered by gunfire
- 1,241 committed suicide with a firearm
- 262 died from an accidental shooting
- 609 were under age 15
- 179 were under age 10
- 83 were under age 5
- Nearly three times as many children under 10 died from gunfire as the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty
- More children and teens died from gunfire than from cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, and HIV/AIDS combined

Other data show:

- Children are twice as likely as adults to be victims of violent crime and more likely to be killed by adults than by other children
- 61 percent of the nearly 84,000 youths killed by gunfire between 1979 and 1998 were White; 36 percent were Black
- Black children and teens are more likely than Whites to be victims of firearm homicide, while White children and teens are more likely than Black children to use a firearm to take their own life
- Male adolescents are six times more likely than female adolescents to commit suicide with a firearm
- Although White youths commit suicide more often than Black youths, the suicide rate for young Blacks has increased by 75 percent since 1980; according to a report published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, firearm suicides accounted for 96 percent of the increase in Black youth suicide between 1980 and 1995
- Homicide is the third leading cause of death among all children ages 5 to 14, and the leading cause of death among Black youths ages 15 to 24



Some good news, but we can do better

Between 1994 and 1998, youth firearm deaths dropped 35 percent after peaking in 1994 at 5,793 young lives. Since 1994, the number of Black children and teens killed by guns has decreased 45 percent, and the number of Whites has dropped 28 percent. Although it is encouraging that the number of child gun deaths per year has dropped below 4,000 for the first time since 1988, the number remains disturbingly high. We are still losing too many children. When compared to other industrialized countries, the numbers are even more staggering. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of firearm deaths among children under age 15 is almost 12 times higher in the United States than in 25 other industrialized countries combined. American children are 16 times more likely to be murdered with a gun, 11 times more likely to commit suicide with a gun, and nine times more likely to die in a firearm accident than children in these other countries. The impact of gun violence on children is, in many ways, an uniquely American phenomenon — a shameful distinction for the world's wealthiest and most powerful nation.

Homicide — Behind the Decline

Fifty-eight percent of young people killed by gunfire are victims of homicide. In 1998, homicide accounted for 2,184 deaths among children age 19 and younger. Although the decrease in firearm homicides accounted for most of the decrease in child firearm deaths from 1997 to 1998, not all communities are experiencing the decline. Many large cities, such as New York, Miami, and Boston, have experienced a decline in homicide rates over the last several years, but Baltimore's murder rate has remained stagnant. Underlying this disturbing trend is evidence that gun violence victims in Baltimore are getting younger. In 1999, Johns Hopkins Hospital treated 390 gunshot wounds, more than one a day, and almost two-thirds of the patients were between 15 and 20 years old.

Suicide — The Overlooked Crisis

Although most child gun deaths are homicides, two out of every five young firearm deaths are the result of suicide or an accidental shooting. Thirty-three percent of young people killed by guns take their own lives. In 1998, suicide accounted for 1,241

child and teen firearm deaths — an average of more than three every day. Between 1997 and 1998, the percent of child firearm deaths attributable to homicide declined, but the percentage of firearm suicides deaths increased. Guns are used in two out of three youth suicides and, unlike other attempted methods, are the most likely to be fatal. This is particularly notable considering federal law requires individuals be at least 21 years old to purchase a handgun, and more than 20 states have some minimum age requirement for the possession of rifles and long guns. So, where are children getting these guns? Unfortunately, in most cases, the weapons come from their own homes or from someone they know. More than two-thirds of firearms involved in self-inflicted firearm injuries and deaths come from either the victim's home or the home of a friend or relative.

Accidental Deaths — The Easiest Tragedy to Prevent

Accidental shootings accounted for about seven percent of child firearm deaths in 1998; 262 children and teens lost their lives in accidental shootings. America loses the equivalent of 25 youth basketball teams each year because a gun was left unlocked, loaded, and too easy for the wrong hands to reach. As with adolescent suicide, a vast majority of firearms used in unintentional shootings of children and teens come from the victim's home or the home of a relative, friend, or parent of a friend of the victim. A study reported in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that 1.4 million homes with 2.6 million children had firearms that were stored unlocked and loaded or unlocked and unloaded but stored with ammunition. A recent survey found that most gun-owning parents store their firearms loaded or unlocked, believing that their child can properly handle a gun and can tell the difference between a toy gun and a real gun.

AMERICA NEEDS A **REAL** POLICY ON GUN SAFETY

On Mother's Day 2000, hundreds of thousands of mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters, and others gathered on the National Mall in Washington, DC as part of the Million Mom March to urge the country to change fundamentally how guns are regarded and regulated. Hundreds of women shared personal stories of tragedies related to gun violence at the largest public rally against gun violence in the nation's history. These women and their families called on our national leaders to do more to protect our children — not just through greater enforcement of gun crime, but through a comprehensive, national policy to ensure every child's right to a safe, gun-free environment. It's time for a **REAL** gun safety policy that reaches children in all states. To protect children instead of guns, we must insist on national legislation to:

Register all firearms and license all gun owners

What does this mean?

- Require gun owners to register their firearms. Much like motor vehicle registration, a registration system for firearms will help police track the transfer of firearms that end up in the hands of children or those who would harm children. Requiring registration at ALL points of sale would ensure that background checks are conducted to make certain that gun buyers are not legally prohibited from owning a firearm. Such a system will help create a heightened responsibility and greater accountability for firearm ownership.
- Require potential gun owners to obtain a license in order to purchase or use a firearm. Much like a driver's license for operating an automobile, a licensing system for gun owners would require applicants to pass competence and safety tests before being allowed to use or own a gun.

Firearm deaths of children and teens, by age, race, and manner, 1998*

Age	All firearm deaths			Homicide			Suicide			Accident			Unknown/Intent		
	All races	White	Black	All races	White	Black	All races	White	Black	All races	White	Black	All races	White	Black
Under 1	5	2	1	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1-4	78	45	30	58	32	24	0	0	0	19	12	6	21	1	30
5-9	96	65	25	60	46	11	1	0	1	34	19	12	1	0	1
10-14	430	309	97	191	110	268	153	131	14	68	53	12	18	15	3
15-19	3,152	1,774	1,263	1,870	732	1,075	1,087	907	131	141	102	38	34	33	19
Total	3,761	2,197	1,416	2,184	924	1,179	1,241	1,038	146	262	186	68	74	49	23

*Data are for persons ages 0-19. The figures for All races include races other than White and Black. Separate tabulations for these other races are not available from NCHS's unpublished tabulations.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

How will it help?

- Registration will increase accountability for firearm owners who transfer or sell their firearm illegally or irresponsibly. Not only will registration help law enforcement's ability to trace weapons used in crime and hold individuals accountable for the illegal use of firearms, it will create a higher standard of responsibility for gun ownership to keep firearms out of the hands of children and those who would harm them.
- Similarly, licensing will ensure that gun owners know how to safely use and store their firearm and understand the consequences of allowing access to weapons by children and individuals not permitted to own or use firearms.
- Both licensing and registration will make it more difficult for the angry or depressed individual to impulsively buy a handgun to harm themselves or someone else. Massachusetts is the only state that has both licensing and registration for all firearms.

Encourage safe storage laws and mandatory trigger locks

What does this mean?

- Require safety devices, such as trigger locks, be sold with all new guns to prevent children from being able to load and fire them.
- Encourage state legislatures to enact Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws that call for strict penalties for adults who allow children access to firearms regardless of whether injury results.

How will it help?

- Safe storage devices, such as trigger locks, can prevent children and teens from accessing and operating firearms. Just five states – California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Hawaii – have passed legislation requiring that safe storage devices be sold with all new gun purchases.
- Safe storage policies help to ensure responsible gun ownership by adults. The estimated number of households with guns is as high as 40 percent, and one out of every three handguns is kept loaded and unlocked. A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that twelve states that have enacted CAP laws have witnessed a 23 percent drop in accidental shootings of children between 1990 and 1994. Based on this 1997 study, an estimated 216 children killed in unintentional shootings would still be alive today if CAP laws were in effect in every state. Eighteen states have enacted CAP laws since 1989.

Apply consumer safety standards to the gun industry

What does this mean?

- The gun industry is currently exempt from any consumer safety features. Toy guns and teddy bears are more regulated and must meet more rigorous safety standards than firearms.

Firearm deaths, by manner, persons ages 0-19, 1979-1998 (excludes legal intervention)

	Total	Homicide	Suicide	Accident	Unknown Intent
1979	3,710	1,651	1,220	726	113
1980	3,749	1,743	1,214	689	103
1981	3,589	1,660	1,213	604	112
1982	3,332	1,498	1,207	550	77
1983	2,962	1,238	1,150	504	70
1984	3,030	1,289	1,114	552	75
1985	3,169	1,322	1,256	519	72
1986	3,349	1,513	1,293	472	71
1987	3,400	1,573	1,281	467	79
1988	3,974	1,953	1,387	543	91
1989	4,384	2,367	1,380	567	70
1990	4,935	2,852	1,476	541	66
1991	5,329	3,247	1,436	551	95
1992	5,353	3,336	1,426	501	90
1993	5,715	3,625	1,460	526	104
1994	5,793	3,570	1,565	512	115
1995	5,254	3,249	1,450	440	115
1996	4,613	2,836	1,309	376	92
1997	4,205	2,562	1,262	306	75
1998	3,761	2,184	1,241	262	74
Total	83,606	45,277	26,340	10,208	1,781

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Division of Vital Statistics, Table 202 (unpublished); Calculations by Children's Defense Fund

How will it help?

- Oversight based on uniform standards will ensure that design flaws are identified and corrected and that simple and often inexpensive safety features, such as devices that show whether the chamber is loaded and internal trigger locks, are incorporated in the manufacture of the firearm. Massachusetts is the first and only state in the nation that has taken steps to impose consumer safety regulations on firearms.

Limit handgun purchases to one a month

What does this mean?

- In order to combat the practice of "gun-running," where an individual can purchase an unrestricted quantity of firearms and transport them to a state with weaker gun laws, several states have enacted one-gun-a-month policies that limit gun buyers to one gun purchase in a 30-day period.

How will it help?

- By prohibiting one-time purchases of multiple firearms, the practice of transporting massive numbers of firearms to illegal markets, known as gun-running, will be significantly curbed. Currently, only four states – California, Maryland, South Carolina, and Virginia – have a one-gun-a-month law limiting firearm purchases.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

**Tell your elected officials to get REAL
and support a gun safety policy to
PROTECT CHILDREN INSTEAD OF GUNS**

Firearm deaths of children and teens ages 0-19, by manner, 1996-1998

	Total*			Homicide*			Suicide			Accident			Unknown Intent		
	1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
Alabama	104	93	86	59	57	47	25	23	24	14	10	11	6	5	4
Alaska	22	23	16	16	9	3	12	10	10	4	2	3	0	2	0
Arizona	120	117	102	64	53	49	47	52	43	1	5	6	5	7	4
Arkansas	63	55	69	27	28	36	26	18	24	9	7	3	1	5	6
California	672	594	493	508	457	372	108	106	102	52	26	13	4	5	6
Colorado	43	57	60	15	22	29	23	31	26	14	4	14	4	0	1
Connecticut	36	21	23	29	17	15	6	3	6	3	0	2	0	0	0
Delaware	15	17	12	1	2	2	8	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
District of Columbia	62	65	30	59	59	27	1	4	0	0	1	0	2	1	0
Florida	190	165	154	116	108	80	57	44	65	12	12	18	5	4	1
Georgia	160	129	111	79	70	61	51	35	39	24	20	10	6	7	11
Hawaii	13	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	27	26	27	11	2	13	11	21	18	4	3	5	1	0	1
Illinois	308	255	264	263	211	206	33	29	40	7	10	13	5	5	5
Indiana	98	79	92	55	47	57	30	21	27	8	8	17	5	3	1
Iowa	22	33	26	18	8	16	13	20	15	0	3	5	1	2	0
Kansas	53	53	54	24	28	28	22	17	22	7	7	3	0	1	1
Kentucky	52	57	44	25	34	17	20	16	23	9	7	3	0	0	1
Louisiana	192	154	124	133	98	74	43	39	35	5	15	15	1	2	0
Maine	15	13	10	1	3	2	4	10	7	0	0	1	0	0	0
Maryland	106	101	108	88	91	89	15	11	13	3	2	2	2	0	4
Massachusetts	52	24	28	26	17	19	5	6	18	0	0	1	4	0	0
Michigan	157	150	135	96	103	87	42	41	43	13	10	3	6	2	2
Minnesota	56	55	34	25	26	12	21	25	22	6	4	0	4	0	0
Mississippi	77	81	55	38	41	28	19	28	10	18	11	17	2	1	1
Missouri	101	97	89	63	48	52	33	34	32	5	13	4	10	2	1
Montana	20	16	17	1	3	3	12	8	12	3	3	12	1	1	0
Nebraska	28	26	30	8	12	13	17	13	15	3	1	12	0	0	0
Nevada	36	34	48	25	21	26	8	13	20	3	0	1	0	0	1
New Hampshire	7	2	9	1	1	0	6	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Jersey	166	153	149	155	143	135	16	17	13	4	3	13	11	10	0
New Mexico	43	40	47	22	22	25	17	14	14	2	3	8	2	1	0
New York	199	146	123	150	107	88	43	33	28	6	1	5	10	2	2
North Carolina	135	92	88	70	45	43	49	37	30	15	4	13	1	1	2
North Dakota	19	8	7	0	0	12	8	8	3	1	0	1	0	0	0
Ohio	126	95	100	75	49	48	31	36	41	17	8	11	3	12	0
Oklahoma	61	82	61	30	48	22	25	29	30	5	3	6	1	2	3
Oregon	39	38	30	9	13	10	24	19	13	6	3	4	0	0	3
Pennsylvania	181	167	123	113	108	79	59	49	34	4	9	4	5	11	10
Rhode Island	16	14	15	15	2	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Carolina	78	54	60	39	32	30	27	16	23	9	5	7	1	1	0
South Dakota	10	12	12	1	0	2	9	17	9	0	5	1	0	0	0
Tennessee	123	117	109	66	64	53	32	37	38	23	12	16	2	1	2
Texas	359	377	322	202	194	176	121	139	108	27	39	29	19	5	9
Utah	37	35	32	11	10	12	24	24	19	0	0	1	2	1	0
Vermont	5	4	5	1	2	0	2	1	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
Virginia	109	114	97	54	68	46	43	39	39	12	5	9	0	2	3
Washington	67	83	66	31	35	28	31	36	32	4	8	5	1	1	1
West Virginia	16	23	19	6	9	5	8	10	12	2	3	1	0	1	1
Wisconsin	76	58	53	35	31	30	32	26	18	8	1	5	1	0	0
Wyoming	11	10	9	1	1	1	7	7	6	2	2	1	1	0	1
United States	4,613	4,205	3,761	2,836	2,562	2,184	1,309	1,262	1,241	376	306	262	92	75	74

*Total firearm deaths and homicide firearm deaths exclude firearm deaths by legal (police or corrections) intervention and deaths by air rifles.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, unpublished tabulations, Table III: Deaths from 282 selected causes. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.



America's young people want a REAL policy to protect children instead of guns

A recent poll by Hamilton College found that 9 out of 10 American high school students support key gun safety proposals. The study also found that while students believe that the Constitution protects the right of citizens to own guns, it does not prohibit government regulation of handgun sale and use.

- 96 percent support the registration of all handguns
- 90 percent support the licensing of handgun owners
- 87 percent support trigger lock requirements
- 78 percent support GAP laws
- 65 percent believe that laws governing the sale of firearms should be made more strict

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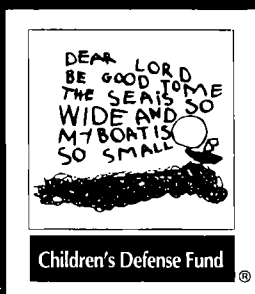
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The mission of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is to *Leave No Child Behind*® and to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start*, and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. CDF provides a strong, effective voice for *all* the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor and minority children and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investment before they get sick or into trouble, drop out of school, or suffer family breakdown.

CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by foundation and corporate grants, and individual donations. We have never taken government funds.