

## Kids and Guns: A Major Minor Problem

### Depiction Suggestions

- ◆ Attempt to show safe ways young students can tip off the police or school authorities that a fellow student has a gun, and show how this action can bring about a positive outcome.
- ◆ Try to highlight the fact that teenagers often act impulsively and the presence of guns may increase the likelihood that a transient emotion may turn into a fatal event. A situation quickly escalates into one from which there is no turning back; the anger or despair may be fleeting but the outcomes are permanent and can destroy lives on both sides of the gun.
- ◆ Where appropriate to the story, consider portraying a teenage girl threatening to break up with her boyfriend unless he gets rid of his gun - or a boy doing the same with a gun-owning girlfriend.
- ◆ Try to incorporate the negative peer pressure placed on high school or college students who carry guns.
- ◆ When appropriate, try to depict parents, teachers, counselors and even peers giving advice to students about alternate forms of conflict resolution.

*Bothered by a large and drunken party of college athletes, a neighbor shot a gun into the air, probably as a warning. When one of the partygoers was grazed by a bullet that ricocheted off a vehicle, several of the athletes stormed the shooter's house and grappled with him. In the ensuing struggle, the shooter's handgun was taken from him and used to take his life. Several of the intoxicated athletes were charged with crimes.*

—Raleigh News & Observer, 9-1-99

- ◆ Consider depicting parents assigning blame for their child's death to easy firearm access by minors or criminals.
- ◆ Since young people tend to consider themselves immortal, when a teen gang member is shot, try portraying his or her shock at being the victim rather than the killer.
- ◆ Think about opportunities to show tough kids being exposed to the severe injuries sustained by gunshot victims by having them visit an emergency room.
- ◆ Consider showing the "cool", popular high school kids making disparaging remarks about teens having guns.

- ◆ Attempt to demonstrate the consequences of teenagers simply being caught possessing guns (e.g., jail time, probation, expulsion from school, etc.).

- ◆ Where possible, show the tragic consequences of allowing firearms to be accessible to children.

*A Georgia police officer allowed a 13-year-old boy to handle his gun, believing it was unloaded. The boy unintentionally shot and killed himself and the officer was subsequently suspended.*

—APB, 8-14-00

- ◆ Explore legal prosecution or civil action being taken against parents for negligently leaving a gun available to a child who then uses it to either intentionally or unintentionally harm themselves or others.
- ◆ Attempt to provide a positive role model by showing parents making gun safety inquiries of other households where their children visit, asking about storage, accessibility, and so on.

*The last words a 13-year-old Maryland boy heard from his friend were “Don’t worry, it’s not loaded.” The shooter was a 9-year-old boy who found a 9mm handgun in his father’s dresser. The victim, killed by a gunshot wound to the head, had gone to his house to play.*

—APB News, 5-11-00

- ◆ If guns are shown in the home, consider having parents respond to children who ask to look at it or play with it by relating some tragedies that have befallen children who have done so.
- ◆ Attempt to show kids being rewarded for urging friends not to touch a gun they’ve found.
- ◆ Bear in mind that lecturing children about not touching guns has proven ineffective and may give gun-owning parents a false sense of security.
- ◆ Attempt to show friends reacting negatively to a youth who’s showing off a gun. Reactions might range from alarm, fear or outrage to disapproval or simply concern.
- ◆ Since bringing shame to the family is of major importance in some cultures, consider showing a young person forgoing the use or possession of a gun because these actions may come to disgrace his or her relatives.

- ◆ Look for an appropriate situation to illustrate the possibility of kids getting into guns that parents thought were secured. Be mindful, however, of influencing young viewers to do the same.

*A sixth grader who wanted to go to jail so he could be with his mother held his teacher and classmates at bay with a pistol he found on his father’s dresser. The gun had a trigger lock, but the boy apparently found the key and removed it.*

—Washington Post, 3-24-00

- ◆ When appropriate, incorporate parents having heart-to-heart talks with their children, especially teenagers, about guns not being an acceptable resolution to the problems they face with school yard bullies or anything else. Likewise, try showing parents and teachers telling kids that guns may just make their problems worse by escalating an angry situation into a lethal one.
- ◆ Consider showing that even so-called “toy” guns, like pellet or BB guns or prop guns, can cause real injuries and even death.
- ◆ When appropriate, depict parents being prosecuted for failing to securely store a gun that their child subsequently used to kill or injure others.
- ◆ If gunplay is to be included in a production likely to draw younger viewers, try to show the consequences immediately, since members of this audience generally have a short attention span and could come away with the wrong message if consequences are delayed or absent.

*Two kids, jealous of their father’s girlfriend, shot her to death and arranged the crime scene to make it look like an accident. The 13-year-old girl and her 12-year-old brother were charged with murder. They said they were playing with their dad’s gun and it went off. They finally confessed to the crime after police confronted them about inconsistencies in their story.*

—Reuters, 1-8-99

- ◆ Remember that use of toy guns by on-screen children may reinforce young viewers’ desire to focus role-play activities on violent play.

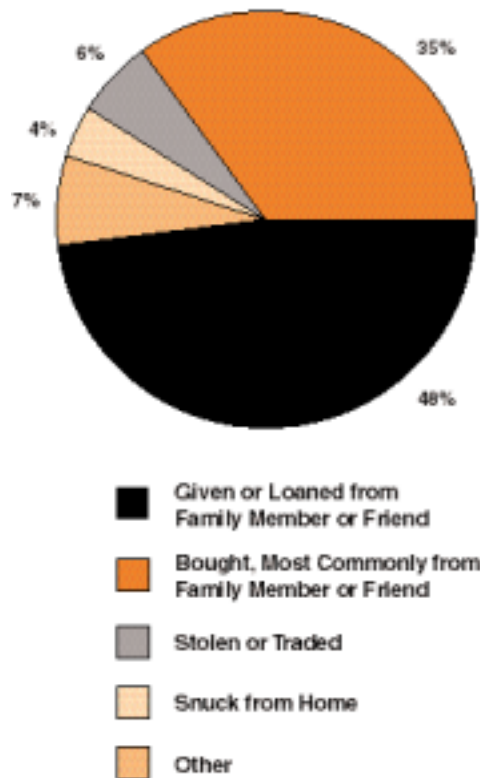
# Kids and Guns: A Major Minor Problem

## *Kids on the Trigger Side*

### Fact Sheet

- ◆ One out of ten firearms recovered by the police is from a juvenile 17 and under.<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ 15% of 6th through 12th graders surveyed said that during the 30 days prior to the survey they carried a handgun at some time, for some purpose.<sup>2</sup>
- ◆ 85% of three to four year olds are strong enough to pull the trigger of the average gun.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ 59% of surveyed school children in the 6th through 12th grades said they could get a handgun if they wanted one.<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ Over 6,000 students were expelled in 1996-97 for bringing guns to their public schools.<sup>5</sup>
- ◆ 63% of armed male U.S. College students who binge drink reported getting into fights and arguments in the past year compared with 22% of unarmed male students.<sup>6</sup>
- ◆ 18 to 20 year olds commit 84% of all homicides in which a perpetrator was identified.<sup>7</sup>
- ◆ An estimated 3.2 million non-powder guns are sold in the U.S. each year, most intended for use by people aged 8 to 18.<sup>8</sup>
- ◆ Youth suicide rates increased by 29% from 1980-1994, largely due to gun-related suicides. In fact, gun-related suicides accounted for 96% of the increase.<sup>9</sup>

Source of Handguns for U.S. Male 10th and 11th Graders Who Reported Carrying One



Source: National Survey, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Oct. 1998.

◆ Among people 10 to 19 years old, there were 1,308 suicides with guns in 1996 - more than 3 every day.<sup>10</sup>

Sources

1. Department of the Treasury, 1997.
2. Louis Harris Research poll, 1999.
3. Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 1995.
4. Louis Harris Research poll, 1999.
5. U.S. Department of Education.
6. Journal of American College Health, 1997.
7. Department of the Treasury and Department of Justice, 1999 study of 1992 data.
8. U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, 1994.
9. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 1996.
10. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 1997.

***Spotlight on Depiction of Health and Social Issues***

Proprietary To:

**Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.**

[www.eiconline.org](http://www.eiconline.org)

1760 Reston Parkway, Ste. 415 • Reston, VA 20190-3303  
Telephone: (800) 783-3421 • Fax: (703) 481-1418

500 S. Buena Vista St • Burbank, CA 91521-7283  
Telephone: (866) 289-4347 • Fax: (818) 955-6870

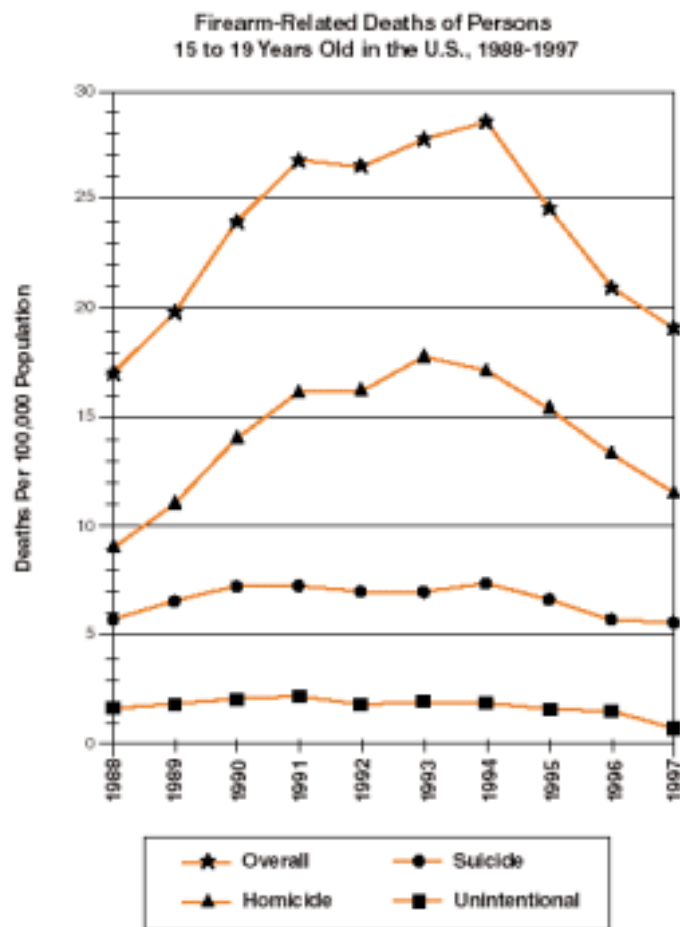
# Kids and Guns: A Major Minor Problem

## *Kids in the Cross-Hairs*

*Spotlight on Firearm Violence and Safety*  
**Chapter 6: Kids and Guns:  
 A Major Minor Problem**  
*Kids in the Cross-Hairs*

### Fact Sheet

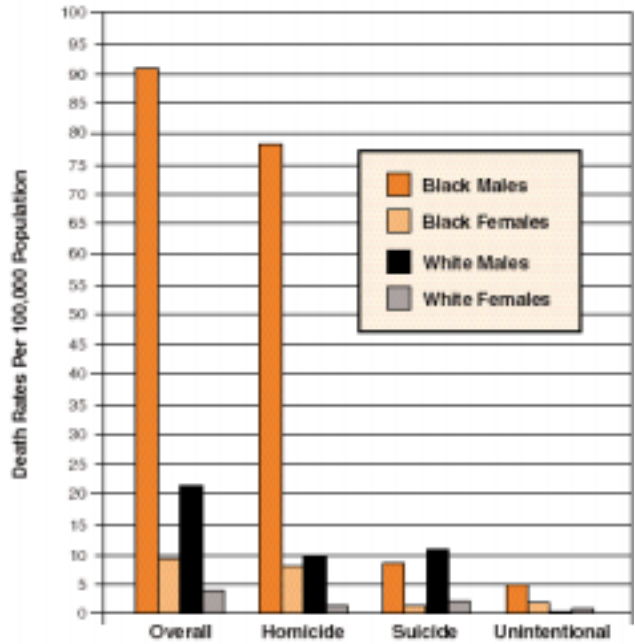
- ◆ Firearm death among U.S. children 14 and younger is 12 times higher than in the other 25 industrialized countries combined.<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ Gun death disproportionately affects young people. Firearm injuries were the second leading cause of death for young people between 10 and 24 years of age.<sup>2</sup>
- ◆ The United States has the highest rate of childhood homicides, suicide and firearm-related death among industrialized nations.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ 35% of surveyed students in the 6th through 12th grade feared their life is likely to be cut short because of guns.<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ 31% of unintentional firearm deaths occur in youths under 20 years old.<sup>5</sup>
- ◆ In 1997, there were 33,436 firearm-related deaths, of which 4,223 of the victims were children and adolescents younger than 20 years of age.<sup>6</sup>
- ◆ In 1997, firearms were the third leading cause of death for 10 to 14-year-olds.<sup>7</sup>



Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000.  
 Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997 data.

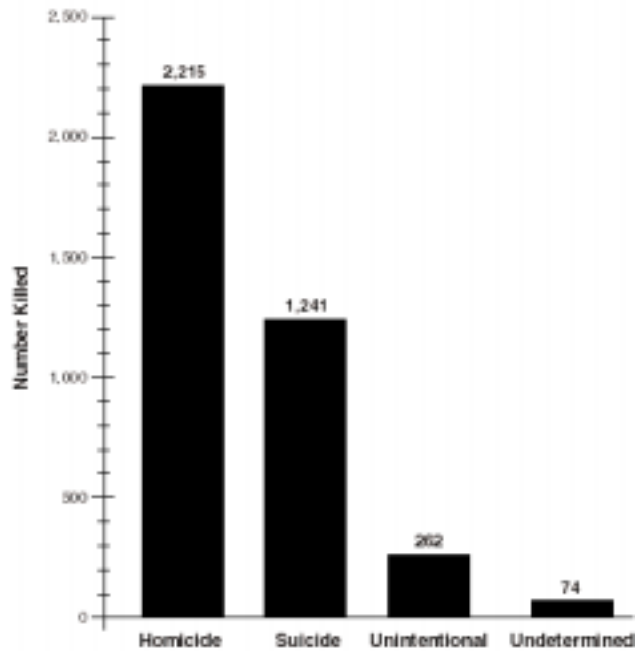
- ◆ Nearly 29% of those who died from firearm injuries were 15-24 years old.<sup>8</sup>
- ◆ Among young people 10 to 19 years old, there were 1,261 suicides with guns in 1997, more than three every day.<sup>9</sup>
- ◆ Among 15 to 24 year olds, suicide is the third leading cause of death. Firearms are used in 62% of the suicides.<sup>10</sup>
- ◆ In 1997, 15.5% of firearm suicide victims were younger than 25.<sup>11</sup>
- ◆ Between 1980 and 1994, the overall suicide rate for persons ages 15 to 19 increased by 29%. The increase in firearm-related suicides accounted for 96% of the increase in the overall suicide rate.<sup>12</sup>
- ◆ 67% of adolescents who committed suicide between 1991 and 1993 used a gun obtained in their home.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ Nationwide, 4% of students had missed one or more days of school during the 30 days preceding the survey because they had felt unsafe at school or when traveling to or from school.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ About 1.4 million homes with about 2.6 million children kept firearms in a place very accessible to children.<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ Among ages 10 to 14, 73% of homicides were firearm deaths; for ages 15 to 24, it was 84%.<sup>16</sup>
- ◆ In 1994, nearly 90% of homicide victims 15 to 19 years were killed with a firearm.<sup>17</sup>
- ◆ The greatest increase in firearm-related mortality was among young persons 15 to 24 and adults 75 and older.<sup>18</sup>
- ◆ Children are more likely to be shot at home than on the street.

Firearm-Related Deaths Per 100,000 For Blacks and Whites in the U.S. in 1997, 15-19 Years Old



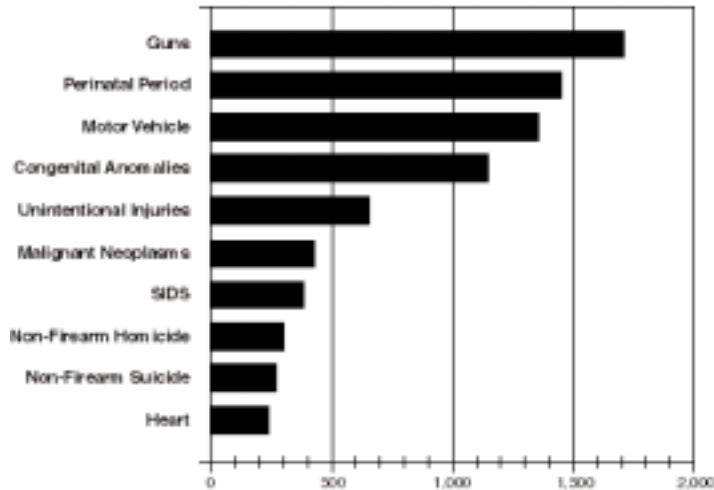
Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000.  
 Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997 data.

1998 Firearm Deaths of Persons Age 19 and Younger in the U.S.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Vital Statistics Reports for 1998, Vol. 48, 2000.

Leading Causes of Death to Youth Age 0-24, California



Source: The Campaign to Prevent Handgun Violence Against Kids. Adapted from the State of California Department of Health Services, Death Records, 1998.

Of 177 gun injuries and 18 deaths examined, 71% of the victims were shot at home, with 51% in their own homes and 20% in another residence. Less than 10% were shot in a public area.<sup>19</sup>

◆ In 1996, 13 children, age 19 and younger, were killed with guns everyday in this country.<sup>20</sup>

◆ The U.S. has the highest rate of overall gun death for children under 15 years of age, as compared to 25 other industrialized countries combined. The U.S. overall gun-related death rate is nearly 12 times higher, the gun homicide rate is nearly 16 times higher, the suicide rate nearly 11 times higher, and the unintentional gun death rate is 9 times higher.<sup>21</sup>

Sources

1. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 1997.
2. Fingerhut, L. et al., National Center for Health Statistics, 1997.
3. New England Journal of Medicine, 1998 and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997.
4. Louis Harris Research poll, 1999.
5. Firearm Injury Center, University of Pennsylvania Medical Center.
6. American Academy of Pediatrics.
7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999.
8. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1994.
9. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999.
10. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997.
11. Firearm Injury Center, University of Pennsylvania Medical Center.
12. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1996.
13. Journal of Adolescent Health, March 2000 study of Colorado adolescents.
14. Youth Risk Behavior Survey, CDC, 1997.
15. American Journal of Public Health 4/2000.
16. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
17. National Summary of Injury Mortality Data, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1987-94.
18. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 1962-94 data.
19. Groner, J, Columbus, Ohio Children's Hospital Study as reported by Reuters 12/00.
20. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 1998.
21. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997; 46.

Spotlight on Depiction of Health and Social Issues

Proprietary To:

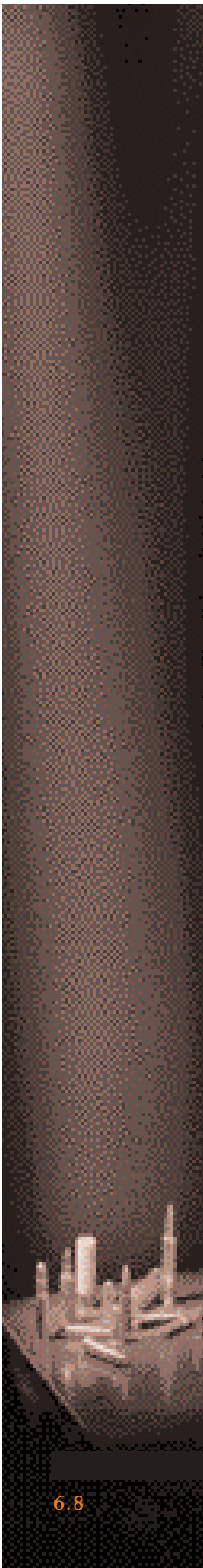
Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.

[www.eiconline.org](http://www.eiconline.org)

1760 Reston Parkway, Ste. 415 • Reston, VA 20190-3303  
Telephone: (800) 783-3421 • Fax: (703) 481-1418

500 S. Buena Vista St • Burbank, CA 91521-7283  
Telephone: (866) 289-4347 • Fax: (818) 955-6870

Spotlight on Firearm Violence and Safety  
Chapter 6: Kids and Guns:  
A Major Minor Problem  
Kids in the Cross-Hairs



***Spotlight on Depiction of Health and Social Issues***

Proprietary To:

**Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.**

[www.eiconline.org](http://www.eiconline.org)

1760 Reston Parkway, Ste. 415 • Reston, VA 20190-3303  
Telephone: (800) 783-3421 • Fax: (703) 481-1418

500 S. Buena Vista St • Burbank, CA 91521-7283  
Telephone: (866) 289-4347 • Fax: (818) 955-6870