



Picture This

A resource for creators...

Picture This is a guide to the key issues within the realm of gun violence affecting different populations today, as identified by advocates, policy-makers, and others working to prevent gun violence, safety and injury prevention.



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Researching health and public issues can be as basic as finding research papers on the Internet or as complex as delving into public policy and the philosophical positions of interest groups. Most important is the perspective of people who, for one reason or another, make a deep commitment and dedicate their time to a cause. Numerous individuals and organizations provided insight to the complex issues of guns and gun violence as we created *Picture This: Gun Violence, Safety and Injury Prevention*.

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Special Message to the Creative Community

Recently the Entertainment Industries Council, Inc. (EIC) hosted the national leadership of organizations working to prevent gun violence, as well as professionals whose constituents are affected by gun violence, at the National Association of Broadcasters in Washington, D.C. This meeting, called *Picture This*, was the follow-up to a similar *Picture This* meeting held last year, which focused on substance abuse, addiction, and treatment.

This document provides an understanding of the many landscapes of gun violence, safety and injury prevention and hopefully it will spark new, creative ways of addressing the issues within the storylines you develop. As a creator, you will be armed with the most current information available and a stronger sense of how your audience responds to the myriad topics related to the broader issue of gun violence, safety and injury prevention.

The purpose of the most recent *Picture This* was to ascertain the key issues related to gun violence that different populations across the country are experiencing today. The issues discussed ranged from policies and legalities to suicide and gun storage, from urban violence and empowerment of youth to rural gun use and the perceptions of gun ownership by much of the general public. The results of the discussions are detailed in this document. Facts are footnoted, and some anecdotal information is provided by experts participating in *Picture This*.

Before delving into such a complex issue, it is important to acknowledge the elephant in the room: There *is* a raging debate in America about gun use, gun ownership, and gun-related laws. This debate polarizes individuals, affects people on a personal and often emotional level, and is passionately argued by both sides of the issue – those who oppose guns and those who favor them. However, the issue is not entirely black and white; there are many shades of grey that deserve analysis in light of the “slippery slope” argument so often employed for the issues of gun violence and injury prevention. It is EIC’s belief that if we can accept the fact that there is an argument, we can move past it to look at real facts and the lives and communities affected by gun violence, as violence impacts people’s lives today.

EIC’s mission and operating principles uncompromisingly protect the creative freedom of the entertainment community, while recognizing and promoting those productions that accurately depict and proactively address the epidemic of violence. This is evidenced by the *EDGE Awards* (Entertainment Depictions of Gun Education), given annually to television and film productions whose storylines discourage gun violence and promote gun safety and injury prevention. Visit eiconline.org for more information about the *EDGE Awards* and the submission process. Entry forms are available for download.

As always, please let us know if EIC (www.eiconline.org) and our technical assistance service, *First Draft* (310.446.7818), can provide you with additional information and resources for accurately depicting gun violence, safety and injury prevention and other health and social issues. Accurate depiction yields powerful entertainment, and we salute your contributions to “the art of making a difference.”

Sincerely,



Brian Dyak
President and CEO
Entertainment Industries Council, Inc.

FULL PAGE NEW FIRST DRAFT AD

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Setting the Scene

Most people have impressions of gun violence that are not always accurate. Public relations campaigns by pro-gun organizations, as well as the news and entertainment media play a large part in forming the public's perception of the issue. This is in part because the incidents of gun violence most publicized are those with the most shock value, or those that strongly support a belief system, political, or legal position. There are several myths and misconceptions that are constantly perpetuated, often unintentionally.

The Challenge: Broaden the manner in which you portray gun violence so that the characters you develop and the situations you create realistically capture the complexity and diversity that surrounds gun violence. Consider the facts and challenge the popular myths and misconceptions.

A gun in the home will make you safer?

There is a commonly-held notion that a gun in the home will make one safer but, in truth, all gun carriers are dangerous, even law abiding citizens who have a gun in their home for personal protection. In fact, a gun in the home is more likely to be used against the owner or the owner's family than as self-defense against an intruder.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES!

Police have charged the grandfather of a three year-old boy who fatally shot himself in the face with a gun he found at the grandfather's apartment. The grandfather was babysitting the boy, who found the gun hidden in a bedroom while he was playing. The grandfather has been charged with misdemeanor child neglect and failure to store a firearm out of the reach of a minor.

Associated Press
17 March 2004

A gun in the home is used in fewer than 2% of home invasion crimes.¹ Further, a gun kept in the home is four times more likely to be involved in an unintentional shooting, seven times

more likely to be used in a criminal assault or homicide and 11 times more likely to be used to commit or attempt suicide than to be used in self-defense.²

Despite the overwhelming evidence that demonstrates the elevated risk of injury or death when a gun is kept in the home, there is still a widely held notion that a gun in the home will make one safer. There is a reasonable explanation for the disconnect between fact and fiction about the risk of keeping a gun in the home – firearms are deliberately marketed with the intent of persuading consumers to believe that they are essential to the protection of homes and families. The firearms industry and related organizations are very successful in promoting this notion despite the fact that public health studies have repeatedly proven that gun ownership greatly increases the likelihood of homicide or injury to loved ones. The facts speak for themselves:

- ➔ For every time a gun is used in the home in a legally justifiable shooting there are 22 criminal, unintentional and suicide-related shootings.³
- ➔ The presence of a gun triples the risk of a homicide in the home.⁴
- ➔ The presence of a gun in the home increases the risk of suicide fivefold.⁵
- ➔ The presence of a gun dramatically increases the chance that a domestic violence incident will end in murder, often within seconds after a gun is brandished.⁶

One issue both pro- and anti-gun advocates can agree upon is safety. If you choose to have a firearm in

your home, it is imperative to store it as safely as possible. Safety methods can include lock boxes and trigger locks.

The National Rifle Association (NRA) advises a lock box, for sale at a discount to its members, which utilizes the verification of an authorized person's fingerprints to control and permit access. This lock box cannot be overridden, and there are no special security codes, which makes it unlikely that it could be opened by anyone not authorized to use it.

Public safety groups, gun manufacturers and the NRA agree that if you must keep a gun in your home, the following safety steps have to be applied:

- Learn the characteristics of your firearm.
- Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.
- Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.
- Keep your finger off the trigger.
- Never rely on a mechanical safety.
- Keep gun unloaded and action open until ready to shoot.
- Know your target and what's behind it.
- Use only the correct ammunition for your firearm.
- Know what to do in case of a misfire.
- Wear protective ear and eye equipment.
- Keep firearm free of obstructions and well maintained.
- Don't modify your firearm.
- Do not mix guns with alcohol; over-the-counter, prescription or illegal drugs; or fatigue.

A Lake City woman was airlifted to the hospital after her gun accidentally fell into her commode and shot her in the buttocks. The woman had recently completed a firearms safety class and purchased the gun to protect herself from robberies.

Lake City Reporter (Florida)
21 October 2002

Above all else, remember that a gun in your home is most likely to cause harm or death unintentionally or to someone you know intimately. Weigh your decision to own a gun for protection with the statistically proven consequences.

A gun dealer was injured in his shop when a handgun being handled by a customer accidentally discharged. There was no clip in the gun, but a round had been in the chamber. The shooter was a steady customer for five years, who visited the shop two or three times a week.

Herald Palladium (Michigan)
21 April 2004

Unlikely characters

The Challenge: Consider the true demographics of gun violence, and create characters that do not fall into often false stereotypes – especially the “superpredator.”

The Superpredator:

Unfortunately, many Americans have the misconception that urban areas contain a risk far greater than the suburbs, and that a young black man in the city is more dangerous than a white kid in the suburbs. The over-depiction of poor, urban black violence and the under-depiction of middle-class suburban or rural white violence can perpetuate and solidify racial stereotypes. While gun violence is certainly an epidemic among inner-city minority populations, it is not a universal trait for a race or generation of youth. Indeed, while young black men are often depicted as dangerous, the rash of school shootings which inspired the term “superpredator” were committed by young white men.

Consider that location and race are not the best indicators for violent behavior. Access to firearms, mental illness, fear of bullying, family problems, substance abuse and addiction, and unstable homes are among many factors that can contribute to gun violence. These factors span race, religion, gender and economic status.

more extensive explorations of the role that media may play in creating or sustaining these negative attitudes,” says Dr. Mary Beth Oliver, Co-Director of the Media Effects Laboratory at Penn State. “Mismemory” of the kind highlighted by this study has grave implications on issues from law enforcement to social interaction.

The Challenge: Consider incorporating into your scripts the following types of relationships and characteristics that can prevent violence among your young characters:

- ✓ Positive role models; exposure to a greater number of positive than negative behaviors.
- ✓ Development of self-esteem and self-efficacy.
- ✓ Supportive relationships, including those with teachers and friends.
- ✓ Strong social skills.
- ✓ Good peer relationships.
- ✓ A close, trusting relationship with an adult outside the family.
- ✓ Great empathy and support from the mother or a mother figure.

Women

Domestic Violence and guns are a deadly combination. Contrary to popular belief, many women who are murdered are not killed by strangers, but with a firearm by men they know. More than four times as many women are murdered by guns used by their husbands or intimate acquaintances than are killed by strangers’ guns, knives, or other weapons combined.⁷

Gun violence in intimate partner relationships does not always involve a gunshot

fatality or even physical injury. A recent Harvard School of Public Health study emphasized that hostile gun displays against family members occur more often than guns used for self-defense and that hostile gun displays are often acts of domestic violence directed toward women. While such displays may not require a trauma surgeon, consider the mental impact caused to the woman or family member involved. Such traumatic instances can cause

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES!

Five boys and two girls aged 11 and 12 were sentenced in Alamosa, CO after taking guns and bullets into their middle school. They were given community service and probation and were expelled from their school.

Associated Press
2004

Criminal Stereotypes:

A recent Penn State research study concluded that racial stereotypes affect witnesses’ memories of suspects. “In essence, our findings support the notion that stereotypes of black men as violent criminals are reflected in what people recall from news reports... Americans’ reliance on news for information points to the need for

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES!

A 61-year-old man was arraigned Monday on allegations that he shot his wife while she watched TV in bed and then threatened to kill police who responded to the scene. The shooter told police he “flipped out” while he and his wife were arguing because he didn’t want her taking a four-day trip to New Mexico to visit her mother. The woman was sitting up in bed, snacking on salmon and watching former President Ronald Reagan’s funeral on TV when her husband shot her with a .38-caliber pistol from about 10 feet away.

The Oregon
15 June 2004

long-lasting psychological and emotional consequences.

Children and Young Adults:

In the United States, alarming numbers of children die or are badly injured as a result of gun violence. In 2000 alone (most current statistics available), the death statistics for people age 19 and under are staggering:

1,776: Firearm Homicide
1,007: Firearm Suicide
193: Unintentional shooting

Young people can find themselves caught in the crossfire of domestic violence and crime. Older children use guns for impulse suicides or to kill themselves or others, intentionally or unintentionally. Even very young children can kill or injure someone if they have access to a gun that is not stored properly. Children as young as two have enough strength to discharge guns with a very light trigger pull. For example, in 1996 the three-year-old daughter of a District of Columbia police officer unintentionally shot and killed herself with her father's service pistol.

Suicide

Access to firearms for people who suffer from psychiatric problems has the potential to be deadly. Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death in America, according to the National Institute on Mental Health (NIMH). NIMH also reports that scientific evidence has shown that almost all people who take their own lives have a diagnosable mental or substance abuse disorder, and the majority have more than one disorder. This means that the feelings that often contribute to suicidal behaviors are treatable. Research about these disorders will give scientists, physicians, social workers, teachers and others a better understanding of the symptoms that accompany thoughts of suicide, which may help prevent the act.

Which of your characters are at the greatest risk?

- 4 times as many men commit suicide as women.
- Women report suicide attempts 2 to 3 times as often as men.
- White males commit suicide more than any other group, 72 percent of suicides.
- The highest rates of suicide are for those over the age of 65.
- Suicide rates are generally higher than the national average in the western states and lower in the eastern and midwestern states.

There is a complexity to the depiction of suicide. While portraying suicide risks the danger of being instructional, entertainment media can heighten awareness of the warning signs that a loved one is considering suicide. The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) and the National Mental Health Association (NMHA) indicate the following behaviors as warning signs of suicidal thoughts:

- Unusual personality changes.
- Lack of interest in things they used to enjoy.
- Changes in eating and/or sleeping habits.
- Withdrawal from friends and family.
- Absences from school or work.
- Decrease in performance at school or work.
- Changes in personal hygiene.
- A strong sense of guilt, shame or emptiness.
- Obsessions with death.
- Giving away belongings, including pets.
- Strange or unusual behavior.

The Aftermath You Never See

For every firearm fatality in the United States, there are two non-fatal firearm injuries. If even a single gunshot wound is survived, there may be a lifelong series of medical and psychological challenges that face the victim, his or her family members and healthcare providers. The American Association of People with Disabilities reports that gun violence is one of the fastest growing causes of disability in the United States.

The Challenge: Consider depicting the relatively unexplored reality that could face a non-fatal gunshot wound victim: a colostomy bag, a feeding tube, becoming paralyzed, loss of sexual function, depression, unemployment, brain damage, blindness, and other physical and mental problems.

In addition to the physical and emotional devastation caused by non-fatal gunshot wounds, the economic implications are incredibly taxing. Among the most serious firearm injuries, such as traumatic brain injury (TBI) and spinal cord injury (SCI), the lifetime of care and rehabilitative services can cost upwards of \$1,000,000 over the course of a patient's life. Even victims with less serious injuries suffer significant financial impact. Because many gunshot victims are uninsured, taxpayers, through public healthcare and public debt, pay almost 85% of medical charges due to gunshots. It is estimated that more than 64,000 Americans are injured by gunfire every year, requiring some \$2.3 billion in direct medical treatment. By some estimates, lost productivity and other costs raise the annual price tag for gun injuries to more than \$100 billion.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES!

A 17-year-old teen is accused of shooting his 16-year-old ex-girlfriend in the waiting room of a women's health clinic. The gunshot left the girl a quadriplegic, and her family has filed a \$50 million lawsuit against the defendant.

The Desert Sun (California)
19 May 2004

Another major issue to consider is the debilitating consequences for the person whose hand is behind the trigger. In fact, the act of shooting a gun, even for protection, is a highly traumatic event.

People who fire weapons, including law enforcement and military personnel who are trained to do so, very often suffer psychological effects including

nightmares, phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety attacks, etc.

The Other Victims

Secondary victims are often forgotten in the wake of gun violence. These victims include the parents, children, siblings, spouses and friends of the gunshot victim. These are the people who most often have to deal with law enforcement, the medical examiner, the court system, and the press during their grieving process. The impact to the secondary victims can be long and traumatic.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES!

A soldier recently returned home from Iraq committed suicide. He had begun showing signs of post traumatic stress disorder, and had told his family that one of his main reasons for distress was that he shot and killed two unarmed Iraqi soldiers after being ordered to do so.

The Republican (Mass)
24 August 2004

Guns and Politics

A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed.

**2nd Amendment,
U.S. Constitution**

The crux of the political debate — extending from our communities to Capitol Hill — is the interpretation of the 2nd Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Many argue that the 2nd Amendment gives unrestricted rights to American citizens to own firearms; however, many historians and scholars as well as U.S. courts, have concluded that the 2nd Amendment was designed to protect state-organized militias rather than the individual right to own firearms.

The federal court system has never struck down a gun control measure as unconstitutional, and has upheld the belief that the 2nd Amendment pertains to militias, as the Founding Fathers had a deep distrust of a federal army. In fact, the following decisions from the United States Supreme Court indicate that restrictions on gun ownership *are* constitutional⁸.

Making a case out of it..

- “In 1886, the Court ruled in *Presser v. Illinois* that the 2nd Amendment functions only as a check on the power of the federal government preventing it from interfering with a state’s ability to maintain a militia and in no way limits the states’ power to regulate firearms.”
- “... 1939 decision, *United States v. Miller*. In *Miller* the Court upheld a federal law making it a crime to ship a sawed-off shotgun in interstate commerce. Refusing to strike down the law on 2nd Amendment grounds absent any evidence that a sawed-off shotgun had ‘some reasonable relationship to the preservation or efficiency of a well-regulated militia,’ the Court held that the 2nd Amendment ‘must be interpreted and applied’ only in the context of safeguarding the continuation and effectiveness of the state militias.”
- “In *United States v. Warin*, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in 1976 expressed exasperation with the misguided arguments made by the defendant in attempting to persuade the court that the federal law prohibiting possession of an unregistered machine gun

violated his 2nd Amendment rights. Upholding the defendant’s conviction, the court stated, ‘It would unduly extend this opinion to attempt to deal with every argument made by the defendant... all of which are based on the erroneous supposition that the 2nd Amendment is concerned with the rights of individuals rather than those of the states.’ ”

- “... the most significant case is the 1980 decision in *Lewis v. United States*. The majority opinion, joined by then Chief Justice Warren Burger and current Chief Justice William Rehnquist, ruled that the restrictions contained in the Gun Control Act of 1968 prohibiting felons from owning firearms were constitutional. In its analysis, the Court applied a ‘rational basis’ standard, which requires that the remedy need merely be ‘rationally related to a legitimate purpose.’ ... When determining whether a statute meets equal protection requirements, statutes that impinge on fundamental, individual rights such as freedom of speech or the right to counsel are judged by the more rigorous ‘strict scrutiny’ standard. In *Lewis*, the Court stated, ‘These legislative restrictions on the use of firearms do not trench upon any constitutionally protected liberties.’ The opinion listed voting, the practice of medicine, and even holding office in labor organizations as ‘activities far more fundamental than the possession of a firearm.’ ”
- “And in January 1991 the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear a challenge to the 1986 congressional ban on the manufacture of new machine guns. The Court let stand a ruling by the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals in *Farmer v. Higgins* that denying the plaintiff a license to manufacture a new machine gun was not unconstitutional.”
- “Most recently, in 1996, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit held that an individual had no standing to raise a 2nd Amendment claim. In *Hickman v. Block* the court held, ‘Because the 2nd Amendment guarantees the right of the states to maintain armed militia, the states alone stand in the position to show legal injury when this right is infringed.’ ”

Assault Weapons: Military Guns, Public Purchase?

In 1994, Congress passed a ban on the production of certain semiautomatic assault weapons — military-style guns — as well as high-capacity ammunition magazines that hold more than 10 rounds. The law banned specific assault weapons by name and also classified as assault weapons semiautomatic firearms that could accept a detachable ammunition magazine and had two additional assault weapon design characteristics. This law — despite the support of police organizations and the general public — sunset on September 13, 2004.


In response to the ban, many manufacturers began making “post-ban” versions of the banned weapons, whose differences were only cosmetic. These new guns have been marketed and exploited by their manufacturers as circumventing the Assault Weapons Ban. As with the outlawed weapons, the newer versions are capable of spraying with bullets a large area very quickly, and being reloaded very quickly.

In order to keep these dangerous weapons unavailable for purchase in the United States, it is critical that Congress pass, and the President sign, a bill which will strengthen President Clinton’s 1994 Assault Weapons Ban.

A teddy bear or a handgun?

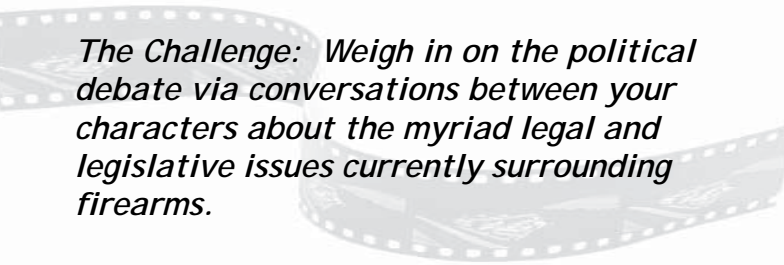
Guns are virtually the only consumer product in the United States not regulated for safety standards because the political debate that surrounds this issue is crippling. The Consumer Federation of America reports that the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) regulates the safety of nearly 15,000 consumer products used in or around the home but no federal agency has the power to ensure that guns manufactured and sold are safe. Teddy bears are more regulated than guns in America.

Safety regulations have done much to decrease the rate of accidental injury resulting from the misuse or faulty manufacturing of other consumer products. For instance, more than thirty years ago the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) was established in response to the growing concern about traffic fatalities. The NHTSA created safety regulations addressing the following components of automotive manufacturing: accelerator control systems; warning devices; head restraints; door locks; occupant crash protection; seat belt assemblies; child restraint systems; side impact protection; roof crush resistance; rear impact protection; and flammability of interior materials. Using the NHTSA model, the gun manufacturing industry could be regulated to incorporate basic safety standards, thus eliminating many accidental injuries each year.



A teen who was paralyzed by a gun judged to be defective lost a half-million dollar attempt to buy the gun company liable for his injuries. He was seven when a gun misfired and the bullet severed his spine. A jury decided that the gun was defective and awarded the boy the largest verdict ever in a product-liability lawsuit involving a gun manufacturer.

Witchita Eagle
12 August 2004



The Challenge: Weigh in on the political debate via conversations between your characters about the myriad legal and legislative issues currently surrounding firearms.

Examples of Actions the U.S. Department of Justice could take under the Firearms Safety and Consumer Protection Act⁹:

- ⊙ Issue recalls and order repairs to faulty models of firearms.
- ⊙ Set minimum safety standards, including:
 - child resistant safety locks
 - magazine disconnect (prevents gun from firing once the ammunition magazine is removed).
 - load indicators so that people can easily see if a gun is loaded
- ⊙ Set minimum size requirements, since smaller guns can be more easily concealed, posing a greater threat to schools, airports, etc. (Congress has banned the importation of guns not meeting minimum height and length requirements, but there are no requirements for domestically manufactured guns.)
- ⊙ Ban specific models and classes of firearms or firearms products that are known to be faulty or pose a greater risk than the norm.

Footnotes:

1 Kellerman, AL, et. Al. *Weapon involvement in home invasion crimes*. JAMA. 1995: 273: 1795-1762.

2 Kellerman, A, et al. Injuries and deaths due to firearms in the home. The Journal of Trauma; Injury, Infection, and Critical Care. Vol. 45, No. 2, 1998.

3 Brady Campaign – Firearm Facts, <http://www.bradiycampaign.org/facts/factsheets/?page=firefacts>

4 Ibid

5 Ibid

6 Doctors Against Handgun Injury, <http://www.doctorsagainsthandinjury.org>

7 *When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2001 Homicide Data: Females Murdered by Males in Single Victim/Single Offender Incidents*. 2003. Violence Policy Center, Washington, D.C.

8 Violence Policy Center, <http://www.vpc.org>

9 Consumer Federation of America, <http://www.consumerfed.org>

Conclusion

It is our hope that you, the creator, have been inspired by this edition of *Picture This* to incorporate into your storylines some real life examples, current events, statistics, and portrayals of critical issues surrounding gun violence, safety and injury prevention. All genres of entertainment can and do impart information to their audiences, which in turn may influence real-life decisions and beliefs. If the information that audiences receive via their favorite television shows, films and music recordings is factual, they will be armed with information upon which they can form educated opinions.

Gun violence is not an issue only appropriate for police, medical or legal dramas. All types of programming — from television comedies to country music — can find an angle of the issue that will appeal to their audience while maintaining the integrity of the production.

EIC was established in 1983 by leaders of the entertainment industry to provide creators with accurate information and resources for use in the depiction of health and social issues. EIC operates under the principle that creative integrity must be protected and respected; we utilize a nonjudgmental process; promote volunteer participation; and recognize that the industry is one small piece of the societal puzzle which sets and implements its own agenda. We have a great wealth of free-of-charge resources for creators interested in portraying a variety of issues, and can connect you with experts in various fields with whom you may speak confidentially.

As you know, EIC produces the *PRISM Awards*, the annually televised awards show honoring the accurate depiction of substance use, addiction and recovery in entertainment productions. Using *PRISM* as a model, EIC has launched another awards program, the *EDGE Awards* (Educational Depictions of Guns in Entertainment), to honor productions with content that accurately increases awareness about gun violence, safety and injury prevention. It is our belief that those creators with the courage and creativity to address gun violence responsibly should be publically honored by their colleagues within the entertainment industry, policymakers on Capitol Hill, and the public at large. You may download a call for entry or learn more about the *EDGE Awards* by visiting eiconline.org, emailing eschollian@eiconline.org or calling 703.481.1414.

EIC applauds your proactive efforts to responsibly address gun violence, safety and injury prevention. Your programming offers a very real opportunity to change the nature of public discussion about gun violence by challenging myths, promoting a complete understanding of the myriad issues, and motivating audiences to take positive action to stop gun violence. Although the various issues presented in this edition of *Picture This* can be argued philosophically and academically, the danger to public health by gun violence is undeniable — you are in a unique position to help curb the epidemic of violence growing in America today.