Law and Policy Issues in Reducing Firearm Violence among Children and Teens: The Role of Public Health

Presenter: Jon S. Vernick, J.D., M.P.H.
Moderator: Ellen Schmidt

Audio will begin at 2:00 PM ET.
You can listen through your computer speakers or call 866-835-7973
Meeting Orientation

- If you are having any technical problems joining the webinar please contact the Adobe Connect hotline at **1-800-416-7640** or email csninfo@edc.org

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Introductory Polls
Reducing Gun Violence Among Children and Teens

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Guns in the United States

An estimated 280 million guns in private hands:

- Of these, about 60% are long guns (rifles and shotguns) and 40% handguns
- About 1/3 of households and 1/4 of individuals have at least one gun
- Of households with children and guns, 22% store guns loaded and 32% unlocked
Firearm-related Deaths in the U.S., 2010

Total Firearm Deaths = 31,672

- Suicide: 19,392
- Homicide: 11,078
- Unintentional: 606

Source: CDC, WISQARS
Non-Fatal Firearm Injuries

• An estimated 73,505 non-fatal injuries in 2010 (requiring at least ED treatment)

• About 2.3 non-fatal firearm injuries for every fatality

Source: CDC: WISQARS
Gun Deaths and Injuries Among Children and Young Adults

- From 2000 to 2010, for those ages 0 to 20 years, 41,251 gun deaths, including:
  - 27,030 homicides
  - 11,450 suicides
  - 1,883 unintentional deaths
  - 514 deaths of undetermined intent

- Also, more than 200,000 non-fatal injuries requiring at least ED treatment
Firearm Homicides by Type of Gun, 2010

Total Firearm Homicides for which Type of Gun is Known = 6,836

Handgun: 88%
Rifle: 5%
Shotgun: 5%
Other guns: 2%

Source: FBI, UCR
Some Ways to Prevent These Deaths and Injuries

1) **Child Access Prevention Laws**: Owner/storage focused

2) **Safer Gun Designs**: Gun focused

3) **Mentoring and Violence Interruption**: User/Community focused
Child Access Prevention (CAP) Gun Laws

• Require a gun owner to store his/her gun so that young child cannot gain easy access
• Age limit varies by state
• Penalty (felony or misdemeanor) varies
• 18 states (and DC) currently have CAP
• No new CAP laws enacted recently
Evaluations of CAP Laws

• Enactment of CAP laws associated with fewer (-23%) unintentional gun deaths among children 0-14 (Cummings et al.)

• Associated with fewer (-8%) suicides among teens 14-17 (Webster & Vernick, et al.)

• Felony penalty more effective

• No information yet about changes in storage practices associated with CAP
Safer Gun Designs

- Guns can be made safer
- Loaded chamber indicator (LCI) tells if a pistol is loaded
- Personalized (aka “smart”) guns operate only for authorized users
- Consumer Product Safety Commission is forbidden to regulate safe design of guns
PICTURES REMAINING

SHOOT 3

13
15
Personalized Gun with Locking Device: Prototype
A gun designed so that it could be fired only by a person wearing an electronically coded ring would reduce the number of suicides, accidental shootings and crimes committed with stolen guns. Engineering students at the Johns Hopkins University “personalized” a .38-caliber revolver as a prototype of such a gun.

**How it works**

1. **Metal block controlled by electromagnet prevents revolver from firing.**
2. Authorized user’s ring, embedded with microchip, makes electrical contact with grip of gun.
3. Microcircuit in gun grip reads number programmed into chip in ring. If it matches, current flows from battery, operating electromagnet, withdrawing block and allowing gun to be fired.

SOURCE: The Johns Hopkins University
When the User Grips the Handle . . .

1. A signal is sent from the gun to the wristband . . .
2. . . which responds with a coded signal.
3. If the code matches, a chip releases a blocking mechanism, enabling the gun to be fired.

Sources: Colt's Manufacturing; SmartLinks

Photograph by George Ruhe for The New York Times
Proportion of all unintentional firearm deaths preventable by various safety devices

In a study using medical examiner data from Maryland and Wisconsin:
-- 20% of deaths preventable by LCI
-- 37% of deaths preventable by a personalized gun
-- 442 deaths might have prevented in 2000 if all guns had both devices: many involve children

Source: Vernick et al., Injury Prevention; 2003
Design Changes Supported by the Public

- 73% support law requiring LCIs
- 71% support personalized guns law
- California and Massachusetts have LCI laws; New Jersey has a novel personalized gun law

Source: Teret, Webster, Vernick et al., *NEJM* 1998
“CeaseFire = “Safe Streets” Community Intervention

• Begun in Chicago by Gary Slutkin and colleagues
• Replication in Baltimore
Core Components of CeaseFire

- Outreach to high-risk youth in high-risk neighborhoods with credible messengers
- Conflict mediation/Violence Interruption
- Community mobilization including clergy and CBOs
- Public education: posters, PSAs
Community Mobilization
Public Education

DON'T SHOOT.
I want to grow up.

CeaseFire Hotline
312-355-0206
www.ceasefirechicago.org

The Chicago Project for Violence Prevention
Summary of Chicago CeaseFire Evaluation

• 7 intervention sites with 33-59 months of post-intervention follow-up
• Significant reductions in shootings in 6 sites (Skogan, et al.)
• Reductions were significantly greater than comparisons in 4 sites (-16% to -34%)
• No retaliatory homicides in 4 sites
Baltimore Safe Streets

- Initially implemented in 4 neighborhoods beginning in June 2007
- Substantial difference in implementation across neighborhoods
- Estimated cost of $375,000 per year/per neighborhood
- Evaluation examined multiple outcomes
Conflicts Mediated Per Month and Outreach Staffing by Site

- McElderry Pk
- Cherry Hill
- Ellwood Pk
- Madison Eastend

- Yellow bars represent outreach FTEs
- Red bars represent mediations
Responses to Questions on Support for Shooting to Settle Disputes, Survey Waves 1 and 2 Combined: % Reporting Not OK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think it’s okay to shoot someone if ...</th>
<th>% No Int.</th>
<th>% No Comp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guy dancing with girlfriend.</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy beat up my brother last week.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy robbed me of $50 and boots.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy hasn’t paid $100 he owes me.</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy disrespects me in front of my friends. I think he is carrying a gun.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Baltimore Safe Streets: Evaluation

- Substantial reductions in homicides in 2 neighborhoods with best implementation (Cherry Hill: -56%; McElderry Pk: -53%)
- Some reduction in border neighborhoods
- On-street survey of high risk youths:
  - 86% less likely to have strong support for using guns to settle disputes in intervention
  - Evident at 6 months and sustained 22 months
Two Approaches that Do Not Appear to Work

- Gun buy-back (turn-in) programs
- Teaching children to always be safe around guns
Gun Buy-Back (Turn-in) Programs

- Very popular programs
- Guns often exchanged for some incentive (cash, product, etc.)
- Police usually involved to be sure gun is not stolen or associated with a shooting
- Very “successful” programs might net from several hundred up to 1,000+ guns
Gun Buy-Back Programs: The Good News

- Relatively easy to implement
- May serve as a form of community mobilization to address gun violence
- May reduce household level risk factors
Gun Buy-Back Programs: The Bad News

- No evidence of reduction in street crime
- Relatively few guns recovered compared to number in circulation
- Disproportionately:
  - Lower risk people
  - Lower risk guns
  - Non-functioning guns
- May discourage communities from more effective approaches
Teaching Children to Always Be Safe Around Guns

• No evidence that children exposed to various educational interventions are less likely to play with guns they find in the home

• Dangerous to rely on education alone
Guns: Some Legal Issues

• Second Amendment

• Preemption

• Recent Gun Law Changes
District of Columbia v. Heller

• Decided by Supreme Court: June 26, 2008
• Established individual right to own handguns in the home
• Struck down D.C.’s handgun ban
• Certain law are presumptively valid:
  -- prohibiting felons or the severely mentally ill from owning guns
  -- requiring safe storage
  -- imposing conditions on the sale of guns
  -- restricting the carrying of dangerous or unusual weapons
Since *Heller*

- Numerous challenges to gun laws
- Overwhelmingly the lower courts have upheld gun laws
- Some remaining issues, including restrictions on carrying guns outside the home
Preemption

• Primary federal gun law (Gun Control Act of 1968) permits states to act if their law doesn’t conflict with federal law
• Localities have only the powers granted by the state
• More than 40 states preempt some or all local gun laws
• Some preemption is not total, though
Recent Gun Law Changes

• U.S. Senate fails to pass a universal background check law
• 4 major state laws since Newtown: NY, MD, CT, CO
• Other trends:
  • “Stand your ground” laws
  • Expansion of concealed carry laws
  • Physician counseling law in Florida
Conclusion

• Public health approach works: 1) identifying risk factors; 2) developing interventions; 3) implementing those interventions; and 4) evaluating results

• We do know something about what works and what doesn’t: no single approach

• We can reduce the risk of gun violence for children and families.
Questions?
Thank you!

Thank you for your participation!

Please take a moment to take a brief survey on your webinar experience:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/firearmpolicy_may222013