



# CSPV SCHOOL VIOLENCE FACT SHEET

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## Preventing Firearm Violence

- Over the past decade homicide rates among adolescents have increased dramatically, and, at a pace exceeding that of nonfatal assaultive behavior. The increase is almost entirely attributed to homicides involving firearms.
- Suicide rates among adolescents have more than tripled since the early 1950s and, again, the increase is attributed to suicides involving firearms.
- The primary context for youth firearm injuries is interpersonal violence, which accounts for about 60% of both fatal and nonfatal firearm injuries between children and adolescents.
- In 1992, 5,262 of five- to nineteen-year-olds in the United States died of gunshot wounds. Of these:
  - 62% of the violent acts were homicides,
  - 27% of the violent acts were suicides,
  - 9% of the violent acts were unintentional injuries, and
  - 2% of the violent acts were the result of undetermined causes.
- Firearm injuries rank as the fifth leading cause of death for 5- to 9-year-old children and the second leading cause of death for children aged 10 to 14 and 15 to 19 in 1992.
- The use of firearms by school-aged youths is much greater among those who live in the inner city.
- In a survey representative of U.S. students in the sixth through twelfth grade, 13% of respondents said someone else had seriously threatened to shoot them.
- One hundred five school-associated violent deaths occurred in the United States from 1992 to 1994.
- Male school-aged children are at 7.3 times greater risk of fatal, and 6.0 times greater risk of nonfatal, firearm injuries than females. This gender gap in the risk of firearm-related fatalities increases with age.
- The presence of a gun in a violent interaction dramatically increases the likelihood that one or more of the participants will be killed.
- Many school-aged children in American society can easily obtain a firearm if they wish, even though the laws forbid the sale of firearms to minors.
- In a 1993 survey, nearly 8% of school-aged youth nationwide reported that they had carried a gun during the 30 days preceding the survey. Males were significantly more likely than females to have carried a gun. Blacks were significantly more likely than whites to have carried a gun.

- The main reason given by adolescents for obtaining or carrying guns is a self-protection. Research suggests that this explanation is an oversimplification. Additional motivational factors for carrying a gun include involvement in delinquent activities, such as drug dealing, and a propensity for aggressive behavior.
- More and more children are witnessing gun violence and such direct exposure can cause severe psychological trauma and adversely affect the educational climate in schools.
- The beginning of the increase in lethal youth violence is associated with the widespread introduction of crack cocaine. Most researchers attribute the continued increase in lethal firearm injuries to a greater access to firearms and a greater willingness to use firearms on the part of children and their assailants.
- No school is an island. What happens to children inside and on the way to and from school reflects what is happening in surrounding communities.
- To understand the problem of guns and gun violence in schools, the violence problem in its larger social context must first be understood.

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The information for this fact sheet was excerpted from the following book chapter. *Violence in American Schools* was developed by CSPV through a grant from the W.T. Grant Foundation:

Mercy, J.A., & Rosenberg, M.L. (1998). Preventing Firearm Violence In and Around Schools. In D.S. Elliott, B. Hamburg, & K.R. Williams (Editors), *Violence in American Schools: A New Perspective*, (pp. 159-187). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

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