



Office of Justice Programs

Office of Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency Prevention

Office of the Administrator

Washington, D.C. 20531

23 FEB 2000

Guns -
Kids x Guns

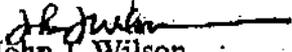
MEMORANDUM FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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



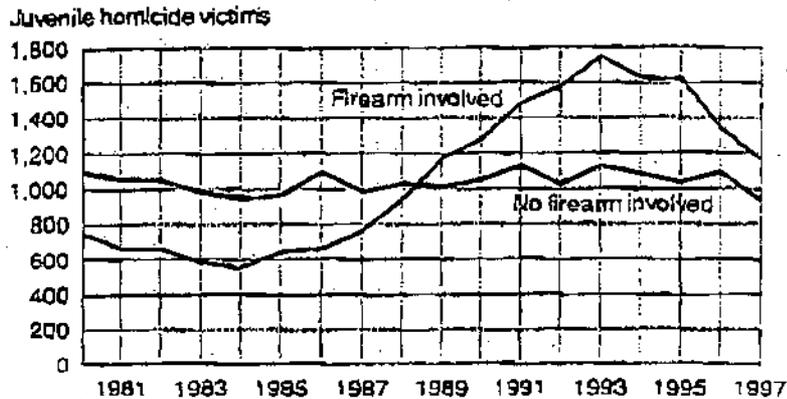
The rise in murders of juveniles between 1984 and 1993 was all firearm related, as was the subsequent decline

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.

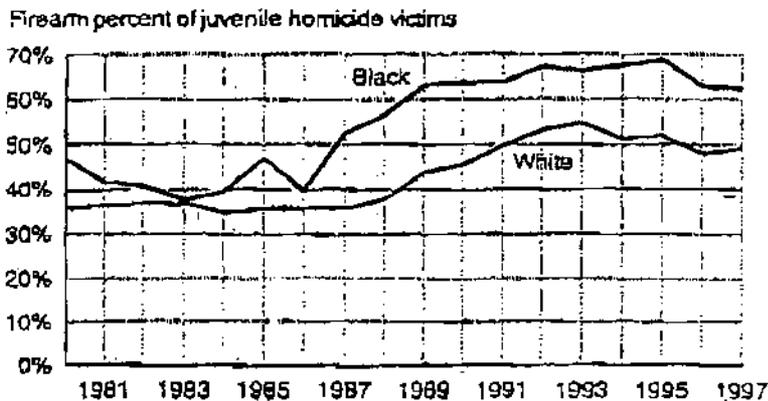
The annual number of juveniles killed with a firearm increased substantially between 1987 and 1993, while other types of homicide remained constant



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



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 ¹	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.

¹ 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 4 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 25% 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 victim is generally an acquaintance killed with a firearm

All juveniles killed by other juveniles between 1980 and 1997 (33% were under age 6); nearly half of these murders (48%), the juvenile offender was the parent of the victim. In another 18%, 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, 63% were age 12 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?

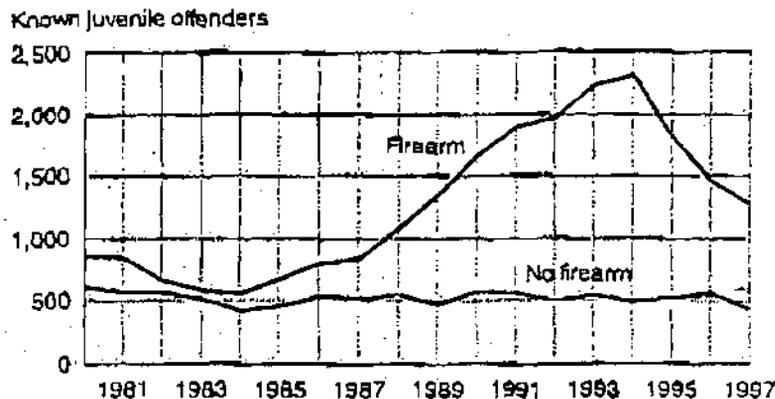
Between 1980 and 1997, the large majority (93%) of known juvenile homicide offenders were male. More than half (56%) were black. Of known juvenile homicide offenders, 42% were

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 (85%), 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



■ 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

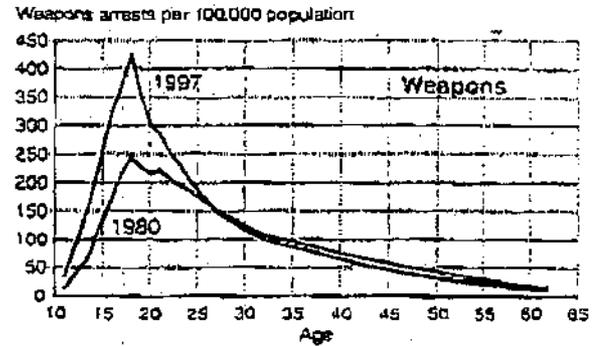
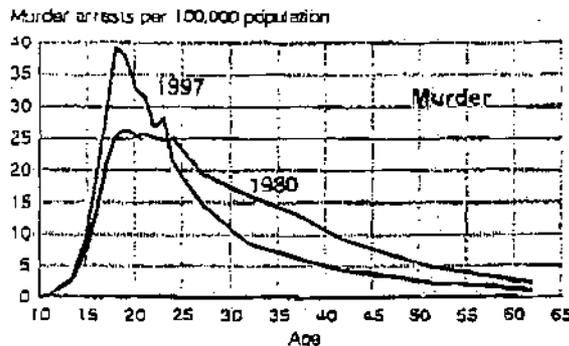
their own race. Same-race killing was most common for white youth (90%) and less common for blacks (76%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (58%), and American Indians (48%).

A greater proportion of white youth and American Indian youth killed family members than did youth of other races: American Indian (57%), 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 rate to arrest curves for 1980 and 1997 is similar to that for weapons law violations. (See murder graph and weapons graph.) For murders, 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.

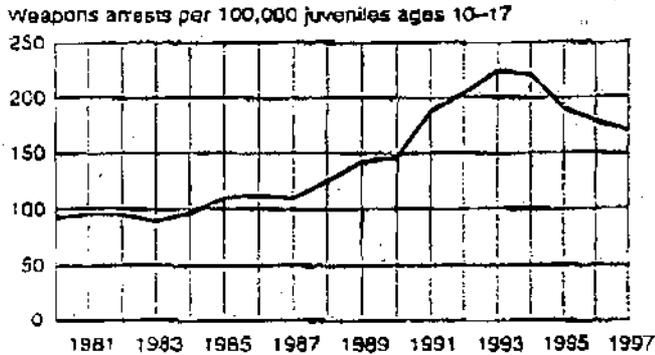
Age-specific arrest rate trends for murder are similar to those for weapons violations



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).

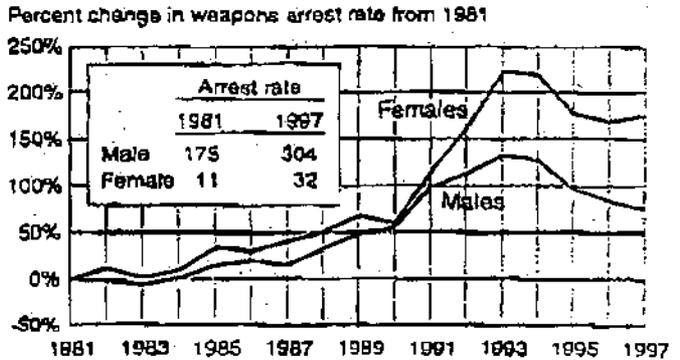
Juvenile arrest rates for weapons, which increased sharply during the late 1980's and early 1990's, began declining in the mid-1990's

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



■ 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.

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



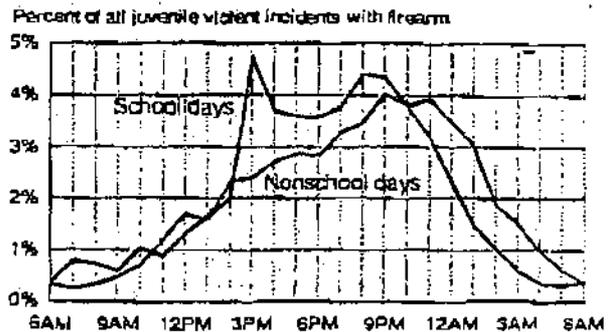
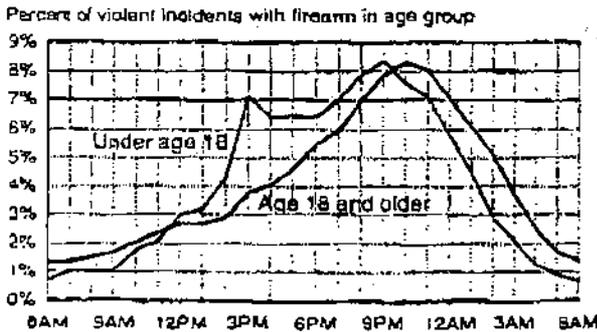
■ Even with its greater increase, the female rate in 1997 was only 10% of the male rate.

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

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).

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



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's 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 70,000 crime guns were traced from 2,000 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 ages 17 or younger.

Age	Percent of crime guns
All	100%
17 or younger	11%
18-24	32%
25 or older	57%

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

4 in 5 recovered firearms were handguns

A handgun was the most common type of recovered firearm traced by law enforcement. Of these, a semi-automatic pistol was the most frequently possessed handgun among all age groups (52%). Semiautomatic pistols were more common among youth under age 18 (58%) and those ages 18-24 (60%) than among persons age 25 or older (41%).

Type of gun	Age		
	17 or younger	18-24	25 or older
Total	100%	100%	100%
Semiautomatic pistol	58%	60%	47%
Revolver	26%	23%	27%
Long gun	12%	15%	25%

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

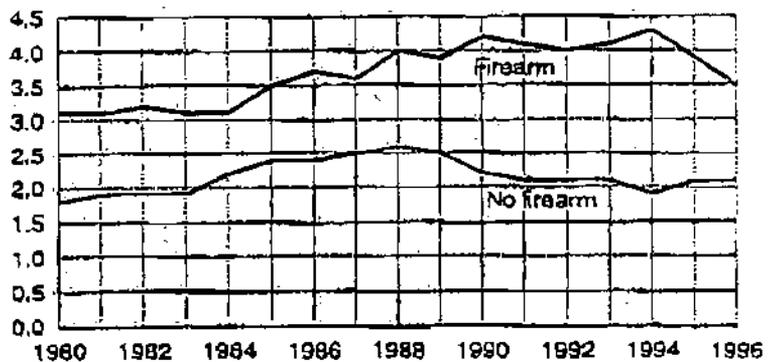
Males accounted for 8 in 10 youth suicides; white youth also accounted for 8 in 10 suicides.

	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	1.6	10.3
Male	179	1,249	2.3	16.3
Female	65	273	0.8	3.8
Nonwhite	54	295	1.4	7.7
Male	43	247	2.2	12.7
Female	11	48	·	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

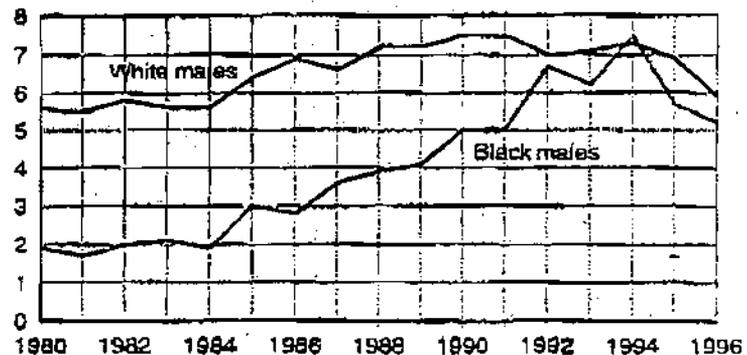
Suicides per 100,000 youth ages 10-19



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).

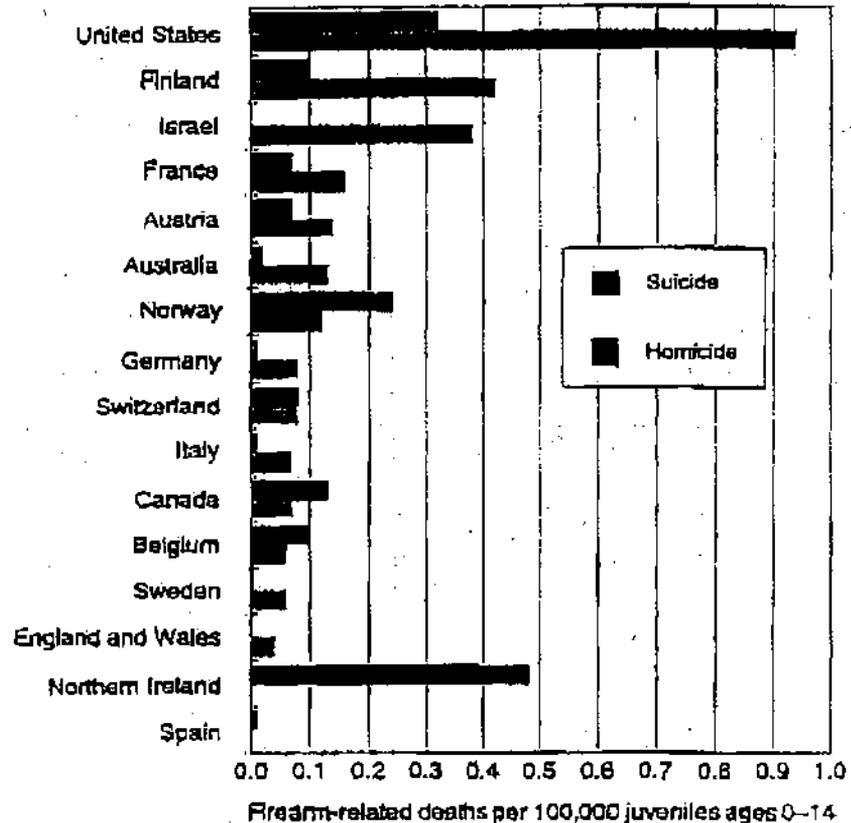
A similar pattern was seen in the suicide rates of children under age 15. Overall, the U.S. suicide rate was twice the rate for the other countries combined (0.55 vs. 0.27). For suicides involving firearms, however, the suicide rate in the U.S. was almost 11 times the rate for the other countries combined (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—26 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 expressed 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, Office of Statistics, includes the Bureau of the Statistics of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency.

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).

March 6, 2000

MEETING WITH VERONICA MCQUEEN

DATE: Tuesday, March 7, 2000
TIME: 12:40 p.m. – 12:50 p.m.
LOCATION: The Oval Office
FROM: Bruce Reed
Kris M. Balderston
Sonia G. Chessen

I. PURPOSE

To offer your condolences for the death of her daughter, Kayla Renee Rolland, after she was shot by another student at Theo J. Buell Elementary School in Michigan last week.

II. BACKGROUND

On Tuesday, February 29, Kayla Rolland (age 6) was shot and mortally wounded by a classmate inside their first grade classroom at Theo J. Buell Elementary School in Mount Morris Township, Michigan. Rolland was treated by paramedics at the school and then pronounced dead shortly after being rushed to the Hurley Medical Center in Flint, MI.

On March 2, Michigan authorities charged Jamelle Andrew James, 19, with involuntary manslaughter for allowing a stolen pistol to fall into the hands of the six-year-old boy who shot Kayla. The boy was living with James and his uncle Sir Marcus Winfrey after his mother was evicted from her home last month. At the time of the shooting, the boy's father, Dedric Darnell Owens, was in jail for violating probation after serving a two-year sentence on cocaine and burglary charges. A petition alleging child negligence has been filed against the boy's mother, Tamarla Owens, in Family Court in an effort to put the boy in state custody. Michigan prosecutors do not plan to charge the first-grader because he is too young to have had any criminal intent.

A memorial service was held for Kayla on Friday, March 3, in Mount Morris Township, Michigan. Buell Elementary School opened for classes yesterday with 80 percent attendance, including 83 percent of the first-graders.

During your visit, Veronica will be accompanied by her husband, Mike McQueen, who has lived with the family since Kayla was six months old. Veronica works at

an auto-supply factory, and Mike is retired from service in the U.S. Navy. Kayla's natural father, Ricky Rolland, has outstanding warrants for his arrest and did not live with her.

The McQueen's have traveled to Washington to participate in a "Today Show" interview with Katie Couric which will air at 7:12 a.m. on Tuesday morning.

III. PARTICIPANTS

YOU

Veronica McQueen, Kayla Rolland's mother
Michael McQueen, Kayla Rolland's stepfather

IV. PRESS PLAN

Closed Press. White House Photo only.

V. REMARKS

Informal remarks

VI. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- **YOU** greet the McQueen's.
- **YOU** participate in a brief meeting with them.

VII. ATTACHMENTS

- Newsweek cover story, 3/13/00
- Letter from the Department of Justice to Mrs. McQueen, 3/2/00

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Did Kayla Have to Die?

After a 6-year-old kills his classmate, the search for answers raises fears about parenting and guns. Untangling the troubled life of a little boy.

By Keith Naughton and Evan Thomas
Newsweek, March 13, 2000



Saying goodbye: Mourners hug outside the Buell Elementary classroom where six-year-old Kayla Rolland was shot by a classmate (Aaron Lee Fineman)

The father knew it even before he was told. When a fellow inmate informed Dedric Darnell Owens that there had been a shooting at his son's school, "a cold, sickening feeling came over me," Owens later told the local county sheriff, Bob Pickell. "I knew it was my son that did the shooting," said Owens, who was in jail for violating probation after serving a two-year sentence on cocaine and burglary charges. Sheriff Pickell asked Owens, how could he be so certain? "Because of his past violent acts," answered Owens, according to Pickell. The first grader had already been suspended from school three times for fighting, once for jabbing another kid with a pencil. In between jail terms, Owens had asked his son why he fought other kids. "Because I hate them," the boy answered. Owens said his son spent his time "watching violent movies and TV." The boy's mother seems to have been otherwise engaged. The authorities tried to step in. The boy was scheduled to begin therapy with a counselor for "anger management" in a week or two.

It was too late. The 6-year-old boy settled a schoolyard score last week by taking a .32-semiautomatic and shooting his first-grade classmate, Kayla Rolland, age 6, in the chest. As she lay bleeding to death on the floor of the classroom, the boy did not seem to understand what he had just done. It's never easy to know the mind of a 6-year-old, but the shooter's must have flickered with demons, a jumble of dark images from fantasy and real life unrestrained by conventional morality. He was the product of an

Cover Talk
How old a child must be to both know in his mind and feel in his heart that lying, stealing, cheating, hurting—let alone murdering—are morally wrong is a matter of scientific debate. But the question of when is not nearly so fraught as the question of how: the fragile steps toward a child's understanding that lying, stealing, cheating and hurting are out of bounds. Join coauthor Sharon Begley for a live talk Wednesday, March 8, 2000, at



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• Last Word
by Anna Quindlen

International Edition

Special Issues

morality. He was the product of an environment and family that the word dysfunctional does not begin to capture.

Wednesday, March 8, 2000, at noon E.S.T. to discuss.

Submit questions now

Even measured against the grotesque history of school shootings, the killing of little Kayla, who was known as "Kay Kay" and liked to ride a pink-wheeled bike and watch "Barney," was horrifying. (The prior youngest-ever school killer was a 10-year-old.) Kayla's death left parents everywhere wondering how children learn from right and wrong—and worrying anew about how to keep their own kids out of the line of fire (sidebar, "Learning Right From Wrong"). President Clinton called for a "summit meeting" of congressional leaders this week to discuss tighter gun-control laws, like a measure requiring gun dealers to sell weapons with trigger locks. Will the school shooting, plus yet another random spree in Pennsylvania last week (by an angry tenant who killed an apartment maintenance man and two strangers at fast-food restaurants), push the debate over the too-easy availability of guns toward some concrete laws and voluntary safeguards? The shooter in Michigan is so young that he will not be charged with a crime, but Kayla's murder will undoubtedly be a source of blame and recrimination for months to come.

The search for answers should start with the boy's sordid home life. For the shooter, home was a shabby two-bedroom house at 1103 Julia Street in gritty Mt. Morris Township, near Flint, Mich. Vodka bottles and car parts littered the yard. Strangers wandered in and out at all hours of the night—to buy, sell and use crack cocaine, police suspect. A blown-out window is covered with a blue tarp. "In the last month we've been hearing gunshots at midnight and 1 a.m.," said Willard Oscar, 36, a short-order cook who lives next door, as he loaded his car to move his family away. "It's the worst house in the neighborhood."

The boy lived there with his uncle, Sir Marcus Winfrey, 21, and another man, Jamelle James, 19. The boy slept, when he could, on a couch in the living room. His mother, Tamarla, left him and his 8-year-old brother in his uncle's keeping a couple of weeks ago after she had been evicted from her own house nearby. "They trashed that house," said neighbor Lori Lafond. "The parents were always in the yard cussing and fighting and drinking."

The sign over the door at the boy's school, Buell Elementary, reads "We care for our children and we care for their safety." The drug dealers were so thick outside that at one point last year extra police had to be brought in to clear a path for children walking home from school. "There's a lot of gangs and a lot of drugs in this neighborhood now," says Mike Hogle, 55, a retired GM worker. "When I grew up here, the neighborhood had a lot of working families. Now it's people on welfare."

Kayla Rolland's family is an exception to the rule. Kayla's mother, Veronica McQueen, rises early to go to her job at an auto-supply factory. Her stepfather, Michael McQueen, got Kayla and her brother and sister ready for school each morning. Kayla was a bright student who excelled at reading. "She was a little tomboy," says family friend Yvonne Young. "She really didn't care for Barbies. She'd never wear a dress. She was just so full of life. We always told her that she was going to be the first woman president."

On the day before she died, Kayla and the boy who shot her exchanged

words, and he says she slapped him. He wanted to get even by scaring Kayla—not killing her, he later told police. So he went home and found a gun. He didn't have to look very hard. He had seen his uncle's friend Jamelle twirling a pistol around his finger, investigators say the boy told them. The weapon was a cheap .32-caliber semiautomatic. The boy found the weapon under a pile of blankets in the bedroom and hid it. The next morning he stuffed the gun, loaded with three bullets, in his trousers and walked the two blocks to school. He neglected to bring with him his "Daily Progress Report." Students are supposed to bring the form, signed by a parent or guardian, back to school each day. Police later found the boy's progress report, unsigned, sitting on top of the television set.

As his fellow first graders lined up in the hallway to head to computer class just before 10 a.m., he waited in the classroom with a few others, including Kayla. She had dressed that morning in her favorite blue jeans, a flowered shirt and pink boots, and pulled her shoulder-length hair into a purple "scrunchy." When their teacher, Alicia Judd, went out into the hall to settle the children, the boy pulled out the gun, swung it toward two other girls and finally leveled it at Kayla. "I don't like you," he said, and pulled the trigger. The bullet tore through Kayla's chest, piercing her heart. She slumped to the floor next to her desk. "There was a splash of blood all over the floor and she said, 'I'm dying'," her classmate Haili Durbin, 6, told NEWSWEEK. "Then Kayla didn't talk anymore. She had her eyes closed."

When the shot rang out, Miss Judd ran back into her classroom and frantically called 911 on her cell phone. Kayla was bleeding profusely when the paramedics arrived. At the hospital, her mother, Veronica, rushed in from work, expecting a broken arm or some schoolyard injury. Told that Kayla had passed away, she threw herself against the wall and shrieked, "Where's my baby?" Led into the trauma room to see the body, dressed in a white hospital gown trimmed with teddy bears, she broke down again, hugging the dead child and begging, "Please wake up."

After he shot Kayla, the boy put the gun in his desk and ran into the hallway, where he was caught by school officials. Taken to the police station, the boy shooter casually told his story to investigators, apparently showing little remorse. "I don't think he understood that pulling the trigger kills," said Genesee County prosecutor Arthur Busch. "He appeared to take this as, 'Well, this just kinda happens on television'." After his interrogation, the boy sat in his chair, drawing pictures (police did not say of what). Because a judge is unlikely to find that the boy had the requisite criminal "intent" to be charged with the shooting, the authorities had to look elsewhere to appoint blame. A police raid on his uncle's house on Julia Street turned up a stolen 12-gauge shotgun and some crack cocaine. The pistol used in the shooting was also stolen; police believe that the gun probably came into the house as payment for drugs. On Thursday, police arrested Jamelle James and charged him with involuntary manslaughter for providing the boy with the gun. He pleaded not guilty. The boy's mother, Tamarla, was accused of neglect because, according to the authorities, she knew "marijuana was being smoked daily" in her brother's house.

Haunted by the shooting, some children don't want to revisit the scene of the crime. "My son is scared to death to go back to school," says Lori Lafond. "He's just terrified. He says, 'Mom, what if it happens to me?' I don't know what to tell him." School authorities are unsure what to do.

There is talk of metal detectors and sealing up Room 6, where the shooting took place.

Inevitably, the lawyers arrived on the scene. Representing Kayla's mother, Veronica McQueen, J. Dallas Winegarden Jr. announced that the family was "devastated" by the tragedy. Kayla's biological father, Ricky Rolland, hired Geoffrey Fieger, who represented Dr. Jack Kevorkian as well as Nathaniel Abraham, a 13-year-old tried for murder as an adult in Michigan. Fieger said he would begin an investigation "not just to sue someone" but because, he said, "I'm interested in social justice."

Conceivably, the boy could be back at Buell Elementary before the end of the year. Because he is so young, school rules only allow for a maximum suspension of 80 days. That may be too soon for his classmates and their parents, who are sure to protest. Last weekend thousands of mourners said goodbye to little Kayla, as she lay in her tiny white coffin in her blue jeans, surrounded by teddy bears. The boy's future is uncertain, to say the least. He is temporarily in the custody of his aunt, while the court system decides on whether he can be reunited with either parent. More likely, he will enter a maze of social services faced with the difficult task of turning a casual killer back into a little boy.

With Joan Raymond in Flint

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March 2, 2000

Ms. Veronica Anne McQueen
1208 W. Princeton Avenue
Flint, Michigan 48505

Dear Ms. McQueen:

I am writing to extend our heartfelt condolences on the recent death of your daughter Kayla Rolland. Although there is very little we can say to ease the pain you are feeling, on behalf of the Attorney General and the staff of the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) we want you to know that we are deeply saddened by this tragedy. We have made several efforts to assure assistance is available to you and to Kayla's school community in the aftermath of this terrible tragedy. We thought it might provide some small degree of relief to you if we took this opportunity to let you know about some of the resources available to assist you.

The Department of Community Health, Crime Victims Services Commission administers the state crime victim compensation program and victim assistance services program in Michigan. The victim compensation program provides financial assistance to victims of crime and surviving family members of crime victims for out-of-pocket expenses related to a victimization. This includes assistance covering cost such as funeral expenses, lost wages, and medical and mental health counseling expenses. Through the victim assistance services program community-based agencies are funded by the Crime Victim Services Commission to provide a wide range of assistance to crime victims.

Both of these programs are overseen by Mr. Michael J. Fullwood and he has identified several programs in your community that stand ready to offer assistance to you. This assistance includes help in obtaining crime victim compensation benefits, criminal justice advocacy to assist you in providing and securing information to law enforcement and prosecutors, information and referral services, and intervention with creditors and employers as necessary, as well as a host of other support. If you wish to contact Mr. Fullwood or Leslie O'Reilly of his staff directly for more specific information about services and resources available to you, please call 517/373-0979.

We realize that these are very difficult times for you and your family. Please know that we stand ready to work closely with the Crime Victims Services Commission to offer assistance to you and your family.

Sincerely,

Kathryn M. Turman

Director

cc: Michael Fullwood, Director
Crime Victims Services Commission

Arthur A. Busch, Prosecuting Attorney
Genesee County

Lt. Robinson
Mt. Morris Township Police Department

No, Michigan does not have a CAP law per this excerpt from Handgun Control's 1999 State Grades.

Michigan

Michigan received a C- because it failed to enact stricter laws this year while coming dangerously close to weakening existing gun laws. The Michigan House, under intense pressure from the gun lobby, passed a very liberal concealed handgun bill on May 18 and the Senate passed their version on May 26. Governor Engler had indicated a willingness to sign the legislation despite strong opposition from the public -- 80% according to a poll in the June 1, 1999 Detroit News. These bills are now apparently stopped from further consideration. In addition, Michigan does not allow cities and counties to enact gun violence prevention legislation, **and does not have a Child Access Prevention law.** In 1996, 158 children and teenagers in Michigan died as a result of firearms.

Eric thought this info should
be in briefing memo for mtg
w/Veronica McQueen, but
memo deadline hit before LS +
DB could track it down so
thought you may want for
briefing w/the President
- Anna-