Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

New Brief Offers Child-focused Look at Research and Policies to Prevent Unintentional Firearm Injury and Death

PolicyLab and the Center for Violence Prevention identify promising, evidence-based policy and public health options to keep youth safe

Philadelphia, PA – December 8, 2020 – A new *Evidence to Action* brief released today by PolicyLab and the Center for Violence Prevention (CVP) at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), "Preventing Unintentional Firearm Injury & Death Among Youth: Examining the Evidence," provides recommendations rooted in research for new public health approaches to protect children from the dangers of firearms. This brief is the first of its kind to review the effectiveness of various firearm policies through a child-focused lens.

In this unique new resource, PolicyLab and CVP, research centers at CHOP, took a deep dive into the existing evidence on gun-related policies and interventions that could have an impact on unintentional firearm injury and death among youth based on the strength of the available data. Following this review, the authors offer action-oriented recommendations for policymakers, providers, health care systems, community organizations, and caregivers, including implementing Child Access Prevention laws, building out a comprehensive firearm-focused research agenda and promoting safe gun storage practices for families.

"While we have made progress in devoting more funding to firearm research, we still lack sufficient evidence on policies that work to protect communities, particularly when it comes to our children," said Rebecka Rosenquist, MSc, health policy director of PolicyLab at CHOP. "As we work to fully understand the impact firearms in the home and community have on youth, we've identified evidence-based policies that warrant immediate action to address shortcomings in a system that isn't adequately protecting our nation's children."

This issue has come into focus even more during the COVID-19 pandemic as gun sales have spiked, children are spending more time at home, potentially with less supervision, and rates of firearm-related injury and death are on the rise. For example, as COVID-19 cases climbed between March and May 2020, there was a 30% increase in unintentional shooting deaths by children compared to the average during the same time frame over the last three years.

"With gun sales at an all-time high during the pandemic, the threat of firearm-related injury among children is an even more urgent public health crisis," said Joel Fein, MD, MPH, co-director of CHOP's Center for Violence Prevention and attending physician in CHOP's Emergency Department. "It is our hope that the recommendations outlined in this brief can inspire action among decision-makers, health care systems, providers and community leaders to make much-needed progress on this critical issue."

As of 2018, firearm-related injury remained the second-leading cause of death for children. In 2019 alone, there were more than 300 unintentional shootings by children, resulting in 120 deaths and more than 200 injuries. Despite significant national attention to shootings involving children and resulting calls for gun reform, little has been done to address gaps in research or enact policies that can help curb firearm-related injury and death among youth.

Read this new brief here.

Suggested Citation: Krass P, Cavello L, Sabrick J, Matone M, Rosenquist R, Fein JA. *Unintentional Firearm Injury & Death Among Youth: Examining the Evidence.* PolicyLab at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; 2020. Retrieved from bitly.com/Preventing-Unintentional-Firearm-Injury.

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About PolicyLab at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia: PolicyLab at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) is dedicated to achieving optimal child health and well-being by informing program and policy changes through interdisciplinary research. Founded in 2008, PolicyLab is a Center of Emphasis within the CHOP Research Institute, one of the largest pediatric research institutes in the country. With more than 30 highly-regarded faculty and 60 passionate staff who bring expertise from myriad of fields covering health, research and health policy, our work focuses on improving public systems, improving health care delivery and improving child health outcomes. For more information, visit **http://www.policylab.chop.edu**.

About the Center for Violence Prevention at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia: The Center for Violence Prevention at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) aims to reduce exposure to and impact of violence among children, teens, and families. Our multidisciplinary team of researchers, clinicians, and specialized staff conduct community-focused research and design innovative, evidence-based programs that are implemented, disseminated and sustained across clinical, school and neighborhood settings. Our work is trauma-informed and rooted in racial equity and social justice. For more information, visit **https://violence.chop.edu**.