Firearm fatalities in children

Findings of the Child Death Review Commission
2008-2018

28 firearm fatalities occurred among Delaware children between the ages of 3 and 17 from 2008 to 2018.

43% were preventable

Nationally, firearm-related deaths are the 3rd leading cause of death among children between the ages of 1 and 17 years, and the 2nd leading cause of injury-related death.

Nine of the 28 child deaths in Delaware were preventable, meaning that if the child or someone nearby did not have access to a loaded firearm, the death would not have occurred.

Out of the 9 preventable firearm-related deaths:

- 67% were preventable: Accidental
- 33% were preventable: Suicide
- 0% not preventable

- The use of a firearm in a suicide attempt is lethal 75% of the time, much higher than other methods of self-harm.
- Teen suicides are often impulsive, with some studies indicating that many teens spend 10 minutes or less deciding on their action.
- A highly lethal means of injury, such as a firearm, at the time of crisis is a crucial factor in whether a suicide attempt will be fatal.

1 The absence of guns from children’s homes and communities is the most reliable and effective means to prevent firearm-related injuries in children and adolescents. Adolescent suicide risk is strongly associated with firearm availability. While teen suicide rates have been declining, and suicide attempts have been decreasing separately, rates of adolescent firearm-related deaths have remained constant. Physician counseling of parents about firearm safety appears to be effective, but firearm safety education programs directed at children are ineffective. – Pediatrics, November 2012, VOLUME 130 / ISSUE 5

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Policy Statement
