

The Public Health Costs of Gun Violence

Is gun violence a serious problem in Illinois?

- Every year, over 1,000 people die from firearm-related injuries in Illinois, or three deaths daily.
- One child, teenager, or young adult in Illinois is killed by gun violence everyday on average.
- In 2008, Illinois acute care hospitals reported 1,547 cases of firearm-related hospitalizations.
- Over half of all hospitalized gun shot victims in Illinois are teenagers and young adults ages 15 to 24.
- A 2008 Chicago Sun-Times survey of 500 school children found that half of the 5th-8th graders surveyed knew a friend or relative that had been shot and more than a third had lost a relative or friend to gun violence.

What are the costs of gun violence?

- In Illinois, the average charge for a firearm-related hospitalization in an acute care hospital is about \$52,000. Gun-related hospitalizations resulted in charges totaling \$80.5 million in 2008.
- The overall cost of gun-related injuries in America, including healthcare, disability, unemployment, and other societal costs, is about \$100 billion a year.
- Studies show that 35% of urban youth exposed to community violence are likely to develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can impact their emotional and behavioral health. PTSD is often accompanied by depression and a high prevalence of individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders have been exposed to trauma or suffer from PTSD.

Can Illinois' health care system afford the costs of gun violence?

- Only one third of gun-related hospitalizations in Illinois acute care hospitals are covered by private insurance - 40% of hospitalized gun shot victims are uninsured and 27% have public health insurance.
- Illinois hospitals absorb considerable expenses for providing care to uninsured patients and those covered by Medicaid and Medicare, which reimburse hospitals far less than the actual costs of that care.
- In the next ten years, Illinois hospitals may lose \$8 billion in anticipated Medicare funding. In addition, Illinois hospitals that serve large numbers of low-income and uninsured patients may lose even more federal funding.

Why does Illinois need universal background checks?

- Background checks are not required under federal or Illinois law for the private sales of firearms. This means that gang members, felons, domestic violence offenders, and individuals with severe mental illness are able to access firearms through private sales or transfers.
- Thousands of guns are sold in Illinois every year without background checks on the purchasers through private transactions. Nationwide, 40 percent of all gun transactions occur through no-questions-asked private deals that require no background checks.
- This loophole also allows criminals to purchase guns for the purpose of illegal gun trafficking. Roughly 20 percent of gun trafficking investigations involve transfers by unlicensed, private sellers who are not required to conduct a background check.
- The cost of a background check will be under \$10 compared to the \$52,000 average cost of a gun-related hospitalization.

Do background checks really work?

In 2008, background checks conducted at federally licensed gun stores and gun shows in Illinois detected 914 Firearm Owner Identification (FOID) card holders who had fallen into a prohibited purchaser category since obtaining a FOID card (up from 859 in 2007, a 6% increase). [Thanks to background checks, these individuals were denied guns.](#)

Who supports universal background checks?

Nine in ten Illinois voters support requiring background checks before the sale of guns by private individuals. More than two thirds of NRA members (67%) and gun owners (68%) in Illinois support universal background checks for handgun sales.

Senate Bill 3709 and House Bill 5480

Senate Bill 3709, sponsored by Senator Kotowski, and House Bill 5480 would close the private sale loophole and hold all handgun purchasers to the same background check standard by requiring the private sale of handguns to occur at the place of business of a federally licensed firearm dealer (FFL), who must then conduct a background check on the recipient. SB 3709 would exempt transfers between spouses, parent and child, and grandparent and grandchild.

What is Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence?

Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (ICPGV), a project of Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence (ICHV), is a research-based public education campaign formed in 2007 to promote meaningful gun policy reform in Illinois. Working with a statewide advisory group representing law enforcement, the medical and public health community, local and state policymakers, victims, advocacy organizations, youth, and the faith-based community, ICPGV informs and educates the public on the facts about gun violence and prevention policies.

For more information, contact Mark Walsh, Campaign Director at mark@icpgv.org or (773) 209-1002.

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