



GUNS AND CHILDREN  
AS VICTIMS

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# GUN CONTROL



## TO GET YOU THINKING

### Two children killed in gun incident

Empangeni police are investigating a case of murder and holding an inquest (i.e. an official inquiry to determine the cause of a person's death) after a child was shot and killed when a boy was playing with a gun. The boy then turned the gun on himself, and died at the scene, police said.

Police spokeswoman Colonel Thembeke Mbhele said it was alleged that on February 3, 2018 at 11.50pm, an 11-year-old boy was playing with his father's licensed firearm when a shot went off and struck his 2-year-old sister.

"The victim was taken to hospital for medical attention where she later died. The brother allegedly turned the gun on himself after seeing what had happened to his sister."

Mbhele confirmed that the boy too had died of his injuries at the scene.

"We urge all licensed firearm owners to ensure that they do not violate the Firearms Control Act by failing to safeguard their firearms because it amounts to a criminal act.

Contravening the Act may lead to unnecessary deaths and violators may face harsh prosecutions," she said.

Gun Free South Africa (GFSA) director Adele Kirsten said the tragedy facing the family was two-fold; in that the gun responsible for the two deaths had most likely been purchased with the intention to protect the family from external danger yet had become the main source of danger within the home.

Speaking to the Mercury, Kirsten said families needed to exercise caution when purchasing guns, more so in homes where there were children. "Children and guns are a lethal combination; children are quite observant and curious beings. They know where a gun is kept, and most probably know where the key for the safe is stored, they're bound to explore," she said. "This incident is a reminder as to what an impact guns have on society. This family must be reeling in pain and shock, their pain is unimaginable." Evidence shows that there are five risk factors that make having guns in the home unsafe for everyone:

- Femicide
- Suicide
- Accidental shootings
- Theft (of the weapon) and
- Guns being used against the family

SOURCE: Mercury Reporter. "Two children killed in gun incident." Mercury. 4 February 2018, 2:26PM. <https://www.iol.co.za/mercury/news/two-children-killed-in-gun-incident-13095710>



### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

How could this tragic incident have been avoided?

**The Firearms Control Act** is the law in South Africa that regulates gun ownership. Can you think of other ways to reduce guns, especially in the home?

What do you think could be added to the gun law to help prevent children becoming victims of gun violence?



### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT...

If you're like most parents or caregivers, you probably have some questions the first time your child or a child in your care asks to play with a new friend or in a new place.

- How will they be supervised?
- Are the TV shows and games age-appropriate?
- What about Internet access and pets and allergies?

However, there's one important question that over half of parents or caregivers never think to ask:

**"Is there an unlocked gun where my child plays?"**

## TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT GUN SAFETY

- The best way to protect your children from injury and death by a gun is to keep your home free of guns and avoid households where guns are kept.
- Never leave children unsupervised in a home with a gun. Ensure that the gun is safely locked away in a safe with the safe key also out of reach of anyone but the owner.

SOURCE: Kids Health

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### IN SOUTH AFRICA

Research shows that **guns are a leading cause of death** for older children across South Africa. Children from 15 years of age are most often killed in interpersonal conflicts. Interpersonal conflict refers to people who are close to each other like romantic partners, friends or family members who are in disagreement with each other.

Since 2014, **THE LEADING CAUSE OF NON-ABUSE RELATED MURDERS FOR CHILDREN IS GUNSHOT WOUNDS (49.2%)**, followed by stab wounds (44.3%) and blunt force wounds (6.6%).

Over a 20-year period, 467 children under the age of 12 were admitted to a Cape Town children's hospital after being shot:

- **Of the 476 children over the period 1991 to 2010, a total of 43% WERE THE VICTIMS OF CROSSFIRE.**
- **OTHERS WERE SHOT DELIBERATELY by an adult (9%); shot deliberately by another child (3%); shot while playing with a firearm (2%); shot by gangsters (5%); or were the victims of an "accidental" shooting (14%).**

#### IN THE USA

Every day, approximately **46 children and teens between the ages of 0-19 years are shot in murders, assaults, suicides and suicide attempts, unintentional shootings and police intervention.**

Every day, **7 children and teens die from gun violence:**

- **4 ARE MURDERED**
- **3 DIE FROM SUICIDE**

Every day, **40 children and teens are shot and survive:**

- **31 INJURED IN AN ATTACK**
- **1 SURVIVES A SUICIDE ATTEMPT**
- **8 SHOT UNINTENTIONALLY**



SOURCES: 1. Key Gun Violence Statistics  
 2. Kids in the Crossfire  
 3. When Guns Kill the Innocent  
 4. Kids Health  
 5. Cutting Gun Deaths In Half By 2025

## GUNS AND CHILDREN AS VICTIMS: MYTHBUSTERS

MYTH	FACT
Children don't know where their parents hide guns	While most parents with guns think their children do not know where the guns are hidden, 8 out of every 10 children from 5 to 7 years old knows where their parents' guns are hidden.
A child is not capable of firing a gun	While many parents think their children are not capable of firing a gun, children as young as 3 years are strong enough to pull the trigger of most guns.
Children know the difference between real guns and toy guns.	Few children younger than 8 years can tell the difference between a real gun and a toy gun.
Children know better than to touch a gun	Parents often believe their child would not touch a gun because "he knows better", but studies have found that most children do handle a gun if they find one, even if they have been taught not to.
Non-powder guns, like BB, pellet and paintball guns, are just toys	Non-powder guns can fire at the speed of traditional guns and lead to nearly 22,000 injuries each year, especially eye injuries (BB guns are a type of air gun designed to shoot metallic ball projectiles called BBs).

SOURCE: Gun Safety

## DIFFERENT WAYS TO TALK ABOUT GUNS AND CHILDREN AS VICTIMS

These questions can help guide your radio shows and outreach.

They are angles to the bigger topic of guns and children as victims.

You have many examples of how to develop your outreaches and radio shows from previous guides. Use them to expand on some of the angles below.



What are the ways we can keep children from becoming victims of gun violence in our communities?



What are the ways gun violence can be reduced in places where children are mostly found, such as homes, play parks and schools?



In what ways are the current gun laws not protecting children from becoming victims of gun violence?