

PRESS RELEASE

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Council Speaker Quinn, Children's Defense Fund release report on the impact of gun violence on children

The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) releases its report on gun violence against children, *Protect Children, Not Guns*, at a time when major U.S. cities are calling for strategies to combat illegal firearms. Citing the most recent data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the report reveals that 2,827 children and teens died as a result of gun violence in 2003 – more than the number of American fighting men and women killed in hostile action in Iraq from 2003 to April 2006.

“Just as gruesome as incoming casualties from a battlefield, the bodies of young gunshot victims stream into urban hospital trauma centers on the frontlines of an undeclared war on America’s children,” said Donna Lawrence, Executive Director of the Children's Defense Fund-New York. The children that die every year from gunshot wounds come from all racial groups and are all ages. Some of the children killed by guns are too young to start kindergarten.

The report shows that the number of firearm deaths of children in New York was 131 -- more than two per week. New York had the fourth highest number of firearm deaths of children in the country, following California, Texas and Illinois.

"This report provides further evidence that gun violence is a serious threat to kids across New York City," Speaker Quinn said. "We are going to combat gun violence by going after criminals who stockpile guns, and those who paint their weapons to look like toys or possess illegal guns. We are not going to back down until we rid our City of the illegal weapons that are endangering residents and taking innocent lives."

The *Protect Children, Not Guns* report comes as many U.S. mayors also are recognizing the toll that gun violence is taking on our country and are seeking solutions. At a recently convened mayoral summit, that was cosponsored by New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg fifteen Mayors from across the country called for national leadership in the war on gun violence. Since the summit in April, an additional 37 Mayors have endorsed this urgent message and joined the Mayoral coalition.

“These calls for leadership are laudable.” said Ms. Lawrence, “On behalf of the tens of thousands of children and teens we have lost to senseless gun violence, CDF implores our leaders in Washington to seize this opportunity for taking a stand for common sense gun safety, which our country has tragically been lacking for far too long. The time for action is now before we lose thousands more children to senseless gun violence.”

In addition to child and teen gun deaths exceeding the number of American military casualties in Iraq, here are some of the deadly facts detailed in the report about the toll gun violence is taking on America's children:

- In 2003, 56 preschoolers were killed by firearms, compared to 52 law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.
- More 10- to 19-year-olds die from gunshot wounds than from any other cause except motor vehicle accidents.
- Almost 90 percent of the children and teens killed by firearms in 2003 were boys.
- Boys ages 15 to 19 are nearly nine times as likely as girls of the same age to be killed by a firearm.
- In 2003, there were more than nine times as many suicides by guns among White children and teens as among Black children and teens.
- The firearm death rate for Black males ages 15 to 19 is more than four times that of White males the same age.
- The seven states that recorded the most deaths among children and teens by firearms in 2003 were California, Texas, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, Florida and North Carolina. The state with the fewest child gun deaths was Hawaii with one.
- The rate of firearm deaths among children under age 15 is far higher in the United States than in 25 other industrialized countries combined. "We have many more handguns and much weaker gun laws than any other country," says Harvard Professor David Hemenway, who has worked to develop strategies to combat illegal firearms.

The Children's Defense Fund calls for the support of common sense gun safety measures; congressional passage of legislation that closes the gun show loophole to criminal background checks on those purchasing guns from unlicensed dealers; and renewal of the ban on assault weapons. Parents should remove guns from their homes; organize nonviolent conflict resolution support groups in their congregations and communities; and refuse to buy video games and other products for their children that glamorize or make violence socially acceptable or fun.

Community leaders should turn schools and places of worship into venues of quality summer and after-school programs for children as positive alternatives to the streets. They should also adopt proven programs like Ceasefire Initiatives that bring families, faith groups, social service providers and law enforcement together to halt the killing of teens by other teens. "It is imperative that we make our homes, our streets and our communities safe from firearms now for the sake of our children," said Mrs. Edelman.

The release of the report comes just a week after a string of children were injured in shootings in New York City. A six and a seven-year old were shot in Harlem two weeks ago. Then, on Wednesday of last week, a seven-year old boy in the Bronx was shot while he was playing in his front yard.

For the full report, visit: www.cdfny.org/gunreport.pdf

The Children's Defense Fund's Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.