

THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR JUVENILE GUNS IN OAKLAND: RESULTS OF OAKLAND GUN TRACING STUDY

The Oakland Gun Tracing Committee was formed in 1999 to determine the sources of guns recovered from juveniles involved in crimes and to identify factors which place youth at risk for gun violence. In January 2000, the Committee initiated Oakland's first Gun Tracing Project. Committee members included: Councilmember At-Large Henry Chang, Jr; The Oakland Police Department; The Oakland City Attorney's Office; Youth ALIVE!; The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms.

PROBLEM: FLOW OF GUNS INTO OAKLAND

- The Oakland Police Department (OPD) recovered a total of **2,963 crime guns** in 1998 and 1999 from suspects of all ages; **210** were linked to **juvenile crimes**.
- OPD initiated federal traces on only two juvenile crime guns in 1999.
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Crime Gun Trace Reports (1999): Oakland, CA: The Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative. Washington, DC: Department of the Treasury, 2000, p. 11.

GOAL:

Reduce gun deaths and injuries to youth by researching and addressing the *supply* of and *demand* for guns by juveniles in Oakland.

DEFINITION OF GUN TRACING

- Systematic tracking of firearms from manufacturer to purchaser for the purpose of aiding law enforcement in identifying suspects involved in criminal violations, establishing stolen status, and proving ownership.
Bentsen, L. (1994). The National Tracing Center, Washington, DC: US Department of the Treasury. In: Promising Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence. US Department of Justice, OfJJDP; 1999. Report #NCJ-173950.

BENEFITS OF GUN TRACING

Tool for local law enforcement to disrupt the flow of illegal firearms into communities

- Links crime gun sellers, purchasers and possessors across jurisdictions.
- Identifies suspects connected to gun trafficking and firearm violence.
- Holds accountable those who sell or profit from the illegal sale of guns.

GUN TRACING PROCESS

- Local law enforcement agencies have access to two firearm tracing systems:
 - California Automated Firearm System (AFS) maintained by the State DOJ.
 - The National Tracing Center of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms.
- A gun must be physically present and include a readable serial number.

Methods:

Members of the Committee gathered both supply-side and demand-side data regarding all gun crimes in Oakland in 1998 and 1999 in which a juvenile was either an offender or victim. The following data sources were utilized:

- 1998 & 99 OPD firearm violations records involving juveniles (age 17 & under)
- Criminal history as recorded in the Ala. Co Probation Depart. JUVIS database
- Coroner's Bureau records

- Information from the State's Automated Firearm System (AFS) and the National Tracing Center of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF)

Major Findings:

- ◆ 132 guns involving juveniles in 1998/99 were physically recovered by OPD
- ◆ 263 juveniles involved in gun-related crimes (170 suspects and 93 victims)
- **Supply-Side**
Of the 132 guns physically recovered from juveniles:
 - less than 4% were reported as lost or stolen.
 - 52 of the recovered guns were successfully traced¹ through either the State of California's Automated Firearm System (AFS) or the National Tracing Center (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms).
- ◆ **The market supplying Oakland youth with firearms appears to be primarily a local problem of undocumented, street-level transactions between individuals. "Straw purchasers" buy guns legally and sell them illegally to juveniles and felons.**
- ◆ 60% of the guns in the Gun Tracing Project, which were traced back to a particular dealer's jurisdiction, were legally purchased within the SF Bay Area.
- ◆ Only 33 firearms were traced back to a specified dealer; 55% of these were purchased from Trader Sports in San Leandro (no other single dealer sold nearly as many of the crime guns used during the study period).
- **Demand-Side**
Out of all 263 juvenile suspects and victims:
 - 70% of the suspects and 43% of the victims are African American males.
 - 55% (51) of juvenile gun victims were attacked by suspects of their own race.
 - 32% (84) had a minimum of 5 interactions with probation.
 - 78% of those assessed do not reside with both biological parents (30% nationwide).

SUPPLY SIDE LIMITATIONS AND SURPRISES:

- ◆ No information was available for secondary sales or the illegal gun market.
- ◆ Local officials did not know that gun tracing is required in Oakland by both a state law (AB 2011) and a federal mandate (Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative).

SUPPLY-SIDE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO THE OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL (APRIL 2001):

1. Implement a *comprehensive* firearms tracing program in the Oakland Police Department, which includes the following components:
 - Employ a full-time, non-uniformed permanent Firearm Technician Analyst (est. cost \$67,000) in the property section to coordinate all tracing efforts.
 - Submit *all* recovered guns for tracing to both the state and federal systems²;

¹ A "successful" trace, as defined by the Gun Tracing Committee, reveals the gun manufacturer, date and location of initial legal sale, as well as the initial purchaser's identifying information.

² An electronic system linking AFS with ATF was introduced in January 2002; thus, submitting crime gun information to the state and federal systems is now a one-step process. (AB 2011, Hertzberg, 1998, Ch. 911)

- Establish a centralized database with the ability to analyze trace information; identifying trends and patterns connected to gun crime and juvenile gun violence.
 - Maintain regular communication and share information with other law enforcement agencies in the region, the State Department of Justice, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and firearms, and other organizations involved in firearm crime investigation and intervention.
2. Create a city ordinance mandating the timely reporting of gun theft and loss to local law enforcement.
 3. Create a task force to establish dialogue and coordination among local, state and national agencies managing separate gun information systems, as well as community groups affected by gun violence.
 4. Construct prompt, effective and coordinated services for juveniles when they first come in contact with the criminal justice system.

Findings: Supply Dealer Jurisdiction (Identified for 72 guns confiscated from juveniles)
 75% of the guns were purchased in California (54). **80% of the guns purchased in California (43) were purchased in the Bay Area. Of the guns purchased in the Bay Area, 20 (37%) were purchased in San Leandro.**

