

# Injuries to Illinois and Chicago Youth: Intentional and Unintentional Firearms



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In the United States, homicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 15 to 19 and the fourth leading cause of death for children under the age of 15. Among children over 10 years of age who have been a victim of homicide, the vast majority have been due to firearms.

This CHDL Data Brief focuses on hospitalizations and deaths from both intentional (homicide and suicide) and unintentional firearm injuries of children ages 0 to 19 living in Illinois between 2000 and 2007.

Rates of hospitalization and deaths for males have been somewhat reduced since 2000, and this appears to slowly be driving down the overall rates of hospitalization and death (Figure 1). Rates of both hospitalization and death for males is significantly higher than for females. In fact, the male death rate is higher than the female hospitalization rate.

Figure 2. Hospitalizations for Firearm Injuries by Type, 2000-07

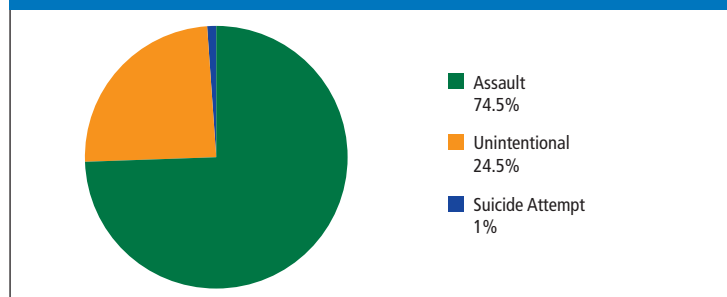
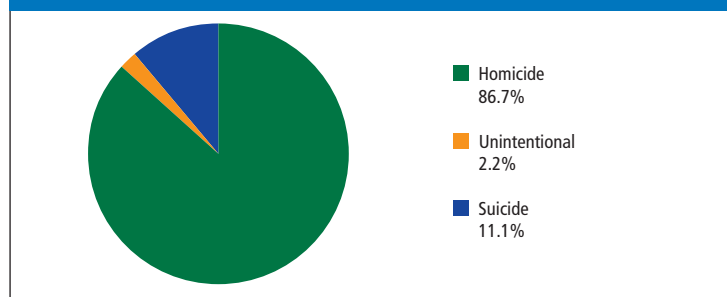


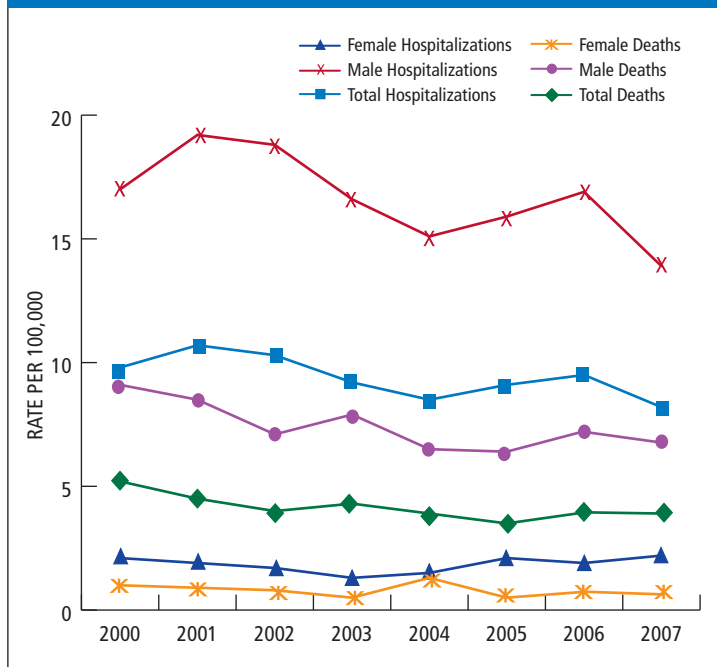
Figure 3. Firearm Deaths by Type, 2000-07



## A NOTE ON AIR GUNS AND PAINT BALL GUNS

In Illinois between 2005 and 2007, there were 44 hospitalizations (rate of 0.4 per 100,000) due to injuries from air guns (such as BB guns) and paint ball guns. The Edwardsville Region in Illinois had the highest rate of hospitalizations at 1.1 per 100,000. Deaths from other types of firearms cannot be determined because death records do not include this information.

Figure 1. Hospitalizations and Deaths from Firearm Injuries by Gender and Year, 2000-07, 0 to 19 Years of Age



## Assault and Homicide are Leading Causes of Hospitalization and Death Due to Firearms

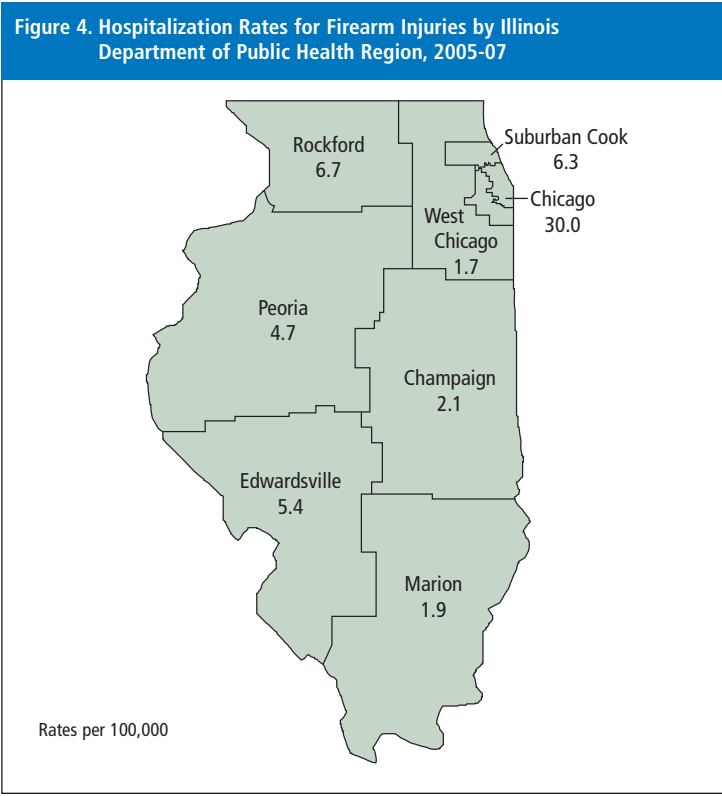
Nearly 75% of hospitalizations for firearm injuries are due to assault and 85% of deaths from firearm injuries are considered homicides (Figures 2 and 3). The main difference between the causes of hospitalization and the causes of death are with regard to suicide and unintentional injury. Very few hospitalizations for firearm injuries are due to a suicide attempt, whereas approximately 12% of firearm deaths are due to suicide. Conversely, very few deaths are caused by unintentional injuries.

## Hospitalizations Due to Firearm Injuries Increase Dramatically with Age

Hospitalization rates for firearm injuries for youth ages 15 to 19 are ten times higher than for youth ages 10 to 14 (32.9 per 100,000 versus 3.3 per 100,000 respectively). This is consistent throughout Illinois.

# Northwestern Illinois has Highest Rates of Hospitalizations Due to a Firearm Injury

- Outside of Chicago (discussed on page 3), Suburban Cook has the highest rate of firearm death for adolescents (Table 1).
- Suburban Cook and the Rockford region have the highest rates of hospitalizations due to firearm injuries for the 15 to 19 age group with rates of 23.1 per 100,000 and 22.3 per 100,000 respectively (Table 1).
- Edwardsville has the highest death rate in Illinois outside of Cook County.
- The rate of hospitalizations for firearm injuries in the Rockford and Suburban Cook regions are over three times as high as the neighboring West Chicago Region (Figure 4).
- The rate of firearm injury to young adolescents (ages 10 to 14) is very low in most of Illinois, with numbers generally too low to compute rates.

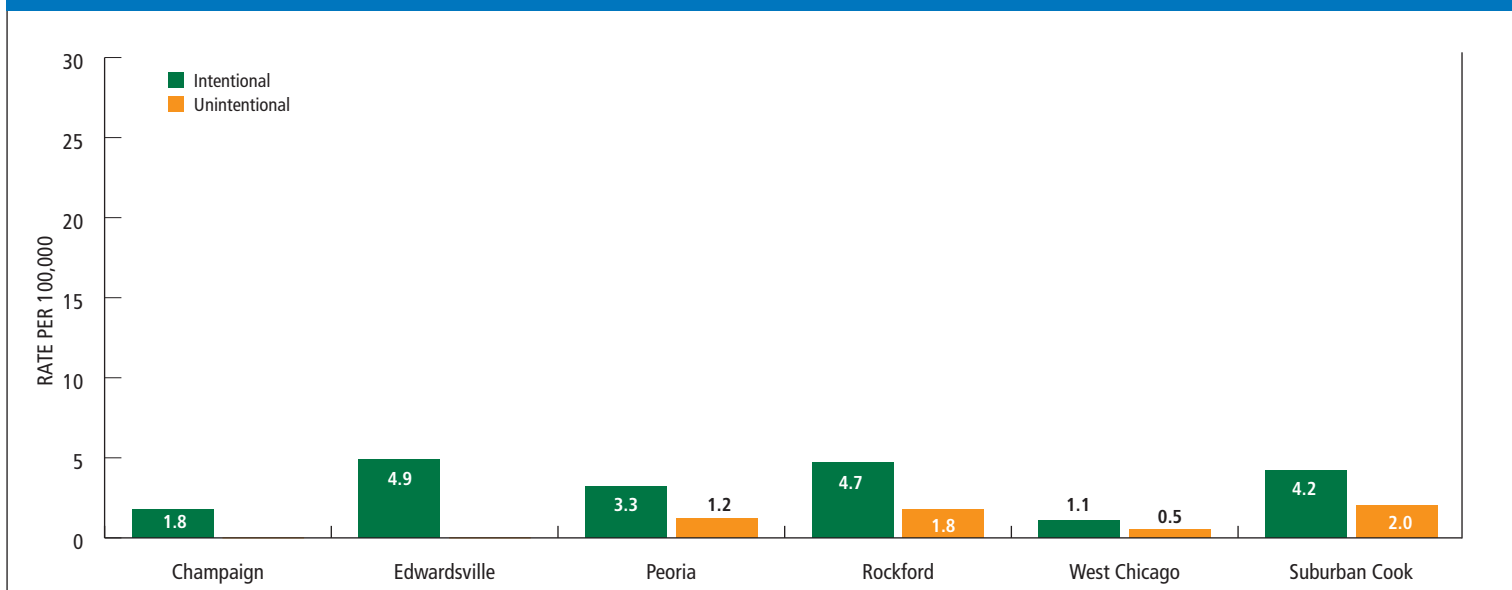


**Table 1. Hospitalizations for Firearm Injuries and Firearm Deaths by Illinois Region & Age Group, 2005-07**

	Illinois	Champaign	Edwardsville	Marion	Peoria	Rockford	West Chicago	Suburban Cook
10 to 14	3.3	*	*	*	*	*	*	1.1
15 to 19	32.9	6.7	17.3	6.8	16.5	22.3	6.5	23.1
All ages	9.4	2.1	5.4	1.9	4.7	6.7	1.7	6.3
Deaths (2000-07)	4.1	1.6	2.7	1.0	1.7	1.8	1.3	3.2

\* Denotes rates not calculated; fewer than six events

**Figure 5. Hospitalizations for Firearm Injuries by Illinois Region & Type, 2005-07**



There are not enough suicide attempts by firearm in any region to display rates. The Marion region does not have sufficient number of incidences to calculate rates by type of injury and therefore is excluded.

# Chicago's South and West Sides Have Higher Rates of Hospitalizations for Firearm Injuries Compared to the North Side

- The rates of firearm hospitalization and death in Chicago are at least four times higher than any other region in Illinois (Figure 4).
- The rate of unintentional firearm injury in most regions of Chicago is about three times higher than other regions in Illinois (Figures 5 and 7).
- Hospitalization rates for firearm injuries are between two and three times lower in the North and Northwest regions than any other region of the city (Figure 6).
- Southwest and Far South Chicago adolescents ages 15 to 19 have very high hospitalization rates due to firearm injuries at 139.3 per 100,000 and 134.1 per 100,000 respectively (Table 2).

Figure 6. Hospitalization Rates for Firearm Injuries by Planning Region, 2005-07

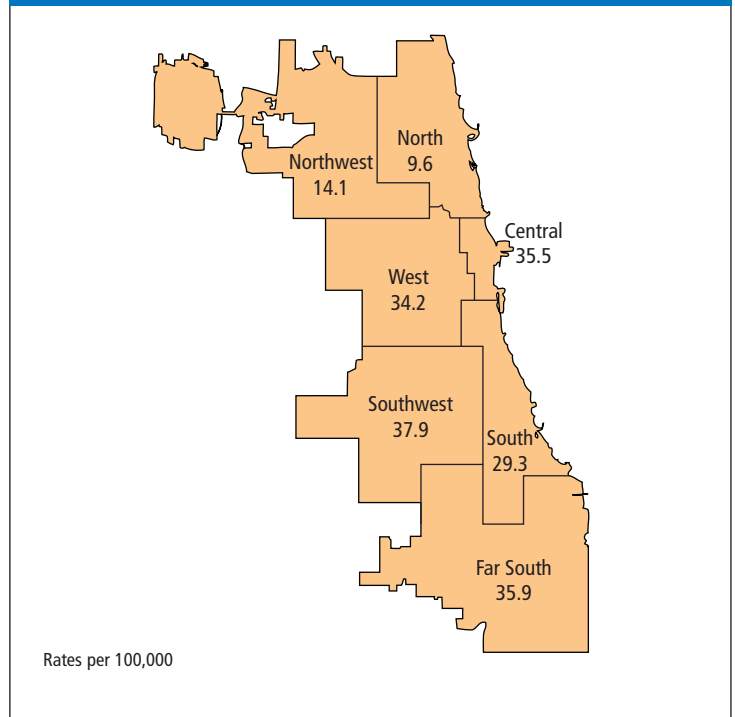
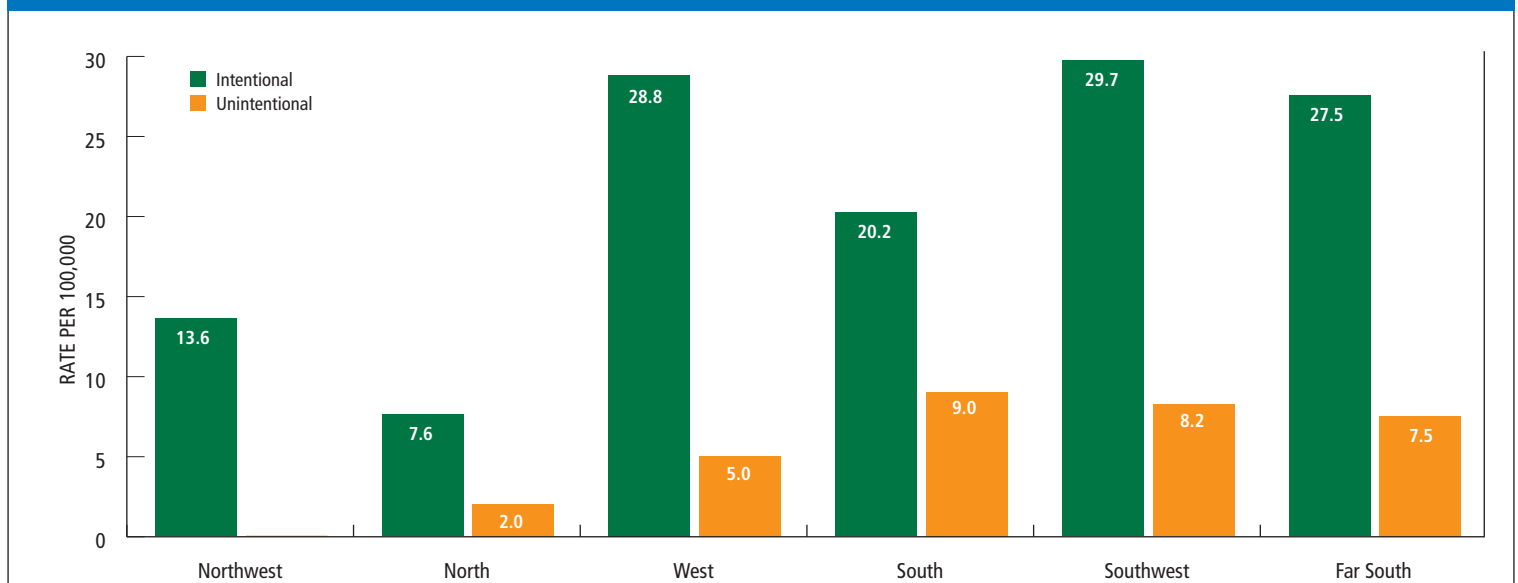


Table 2. Hospitalizations for Firearm Injuries and Deaths by Chicago Region & Age Group, 2005-07

	Chicago	Northwest	North	West	Central	South	Southwest	Far South
10 to 14	13.1	*	*	10.8	*	16.6	20.9	14.6
15 to 19	108.7	57.5	33.6	123.9	124.1	106.0	139.3	134.1
All ages	30.2	14.1	9.6	34.2	35.5	29.3	37.9	35.9
Deaths (2000-07)	11.4	7.0	2.3	13.9	*	16.9	13.1	10.1

\* Denotes rates not calculated; fewer than six events

Figure 7. Hospitalizations for Firearm Injuries by Chicago Region & Type, 2005-07



There are not enough suicide attempts by firearm in any region to display rates. The Central region does not have sufficient number of incidences to calculate rates by type of injury and therefore is excluded.

# Teach Your Child to Stay Cool When Things Heat Up

## TEACH...

- How to be angry without losing your temper
  - Being angry does not have to lead to a fight.
  - If you think you are about to “lose it,” find something to relax your mind and come back later.
- Have a good attitude — treat everyone with respect.
  - Telling yourself that all people, even those who you don’t know, have a decent side makes it possible to treat them with respect.
  - Then, when you feel angry or upset with someone, your first reaction would be not to fight.
- Talk to a person’s decent side.
  - Don’t crowd.
  - Find out why this person is upset.
  - Explain your side.
  - Try to make things right.
- If you feel fear, leave.
- Walking away doesn’t mean you’re weak. It takes more courage to leave than to stay and fight.
- Help keep others safe by not staying to watch a fight.
- Get help from a trusted adult.
- A gun or other weapon does not make anyone safer. It only means that someone may be seriously hurt or killed.

*Adapted from “Staying Cool When Things Heat up” Connected Kids: Safe, Strong, Secure, American Academy of Pediatrics*

## Protecting Your Child From Gun Injury

- A home is safer without a handgun.
- In homes with guns, children are safest if:
  - Guns are stored unloaded and locked up or with a trigger lock; and
  - Bullets are stored and locked in another place.
- Even if you do not own a gun, you need to make sure that the homes your child visits are safe, too.
  - Ask your neighbors, friends and family if they have a gun before you child visits their homes.
  - If they do, keep your child away from homes where there are guns or where guns are not stored safely.

*Adapted from “Your Child on the Move: Reduce the Risk of Gun Injury” Connected Kids: Safe, Strong, Secure, American Academy of Pediatrics*

## Gun Control Policies

- Support legislation that requires background checks for all private handgun sales to help reduce illegal trafficking of handguns.
- Support regulation and oversight of licensed gun dealers.
- Oppose laws that allow for carrying concealed handguns. Research shows that carrying concealed weapons leads to more violence, not less.
- Call on law enforcement to trace the flow of illegal handguns and assault weapons that end up in the hands of street gangs or drug dealers.

Visit Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence ([icpgv.org](http://icpgv.org)) for more information.

*Adapted from Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence*

**FOR MORE CHILD SAFETY TIPS AND RESOURCES VISIT**  
[childrensmemorial.org/parents/safetynews](http://childrensmemorial.org/parents/safetynews)

## METHODS

Hospitalization data in this report were obtained from the Illinois hospital discharge database, CompData, which is maintained by the Illinois Hospital Association. Death data were obtained from the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Hospitalization cases include children ages 0 to 19 who were admitted to the hospital and subsequently discharged between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2007. Excluded cases were those who had expired and those not living in Illinois. Only cases that had an external cause of injury code (E-Code) were included in this report. Death cases were excluded if the decedent was not an Illinois resident or cause of death was not due to a firearm.

Rates were calculated for all of Illinois and regions of Illinois using 2000 census data for the year 2000 and census estimates for 2001 through 2007. For multi-year rates, cases and populations were summed and the average rate was calculated with the results. Census estimates were not available for Chicago regions and all Chicago rates were calculated using 2000 census data. There is some evidence that the Chicago population is decreasing in some communities, hence some rates may be underestimates.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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