

## **VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM FIREARMS**

### **Why is Public Health focusing on firearms when it is not that big of a problem in Santa Clara County?**

The Public Health Department Violence Prevention Program is taking a broad approach to violence prevention, and reducing access to firearms is only one aspect of a comprehensive program. Additional aspects include the development of a data surveillance system and resource inventory to assess community needs and strengths, assessment and support of effective school and community based violence prevention programs including PeaceBuilders, working with the Domestic Violence Council and Child Abuse Council to promote and support prevention aspects, working with other organizations on addressing media violence, and working with the San Jose Gang Prevention Task Force and Latino Youth Forum in the area of youth violence. We are using the State Attorney General's Report, **Violence Prevention: A Vision of Hope**, as one of the sources that guide action planning from a comprehensive perspective, consistent with the public health approach.

### **Why do we need any firearm violence prevention effort in Santa Clara County when we don't have a significant problem with violence?**

A core tenet of the public health approach is **PREVENTION**. We do not want to wait until we have more injuries and deaths to take action. Any amount of violence carries a significant emotional toll, as well as cost to the medical and judicial systems. See **Santa Clara County Firearm Facts** for more detail on specific data.

### **Why not wait for the State to pass legislation regarding firearm control?**

The State Legislature has not taken action to pass effective legislation, despite having bills introduced each year. The effects of violence and costs are mostly felt at the local level, and local action is necessary.

### **Have any other counties or areas taken such actions in relation to firearms?**

Alameda and Contra Costa Counties have taken county-wide action to control firearm violence, as part of the East Bay Public Safety Corridor. Consistent ordinances are being passed by cities within those jurisdictions. Also, similar efforts are occurring throughout the State and nation to reduce injuries and deaths resulting from guns.

### **Do ordinances work in reducing injuries and deaths due to firearms?**

The passage of ordinances to control firearm violence has occurred relatively recently, not allowing for longitudinal studies to be conducted yet. Preliminary data from Alameda and Contra Costa Counties indicate a reduction in firearm-related crime, injuries and deaths. In Boston, a comprehensive violence prevention community plan has led to a 80% decrease in the number of young people murdered with guns between 1990-1995.

### **What are the parameters of the model ordinances that will be considered across Santa Clara County cities?**

The ordinance addresses the following issues:

- Banning the sales of Saturday Night Special "junk" guns
- Requiring trigger locks at point of sale
- Requiring background checks on employees of gun dealers
- Ban residential gun dealers

**Are the model ordinances consistent with State and Federal law?**

Yes. The Legal Community Against Violence (LCAV) has thoroughly researched the legality of the local ordinances and confident that they are consistent with and supplement existing State and Federal law. LCAV has offered to do pro-bono work to support local jurisdictions.

**Why is it necessary to have county-wide effort when some areas do not have high crime rates?**

Having uniform ordinances in all 15 cities and the County will prevent gun dealers or purchasers from moving from one jurisdiction to another within the County to avoid regulation. In addition, firearms are the leading vehicle for suicide among men, a tragedy that occurs in all areas of the county.

**Can the County pass ordinances that affect the cities?**

No. The County ordinances will only affect the unincorporated areas of Santa Clara County.

**How many licensed gun dealers are there in Santa Clara County?**

As of February, 1997, there are 240 licensed gun dealers in the County. This number represents a decrease from 323 registered in 1996, with the drop probably being due to new regulations and fees in the National Crime Bill and the Brady Bill.

**How does the Firearm Violence Prevention effort and the ordinances affect sporting/recreational use of firearms?**

It does not affect responsible recreational or sporting firearm use.

**How can you enforce these ordinances and how much will it cost?**

It is not anticipated that there will be any significant cost associated with enforcement. Enforcement of the ordinances will occur within each jurisdiction as with other regulations such as seat belt law and sales of tobacco. There are already lists of "junk guns" established and available through the State law enforcement agencies.

**How does the public feel about regulating firearm availability?**

A recent public opinion poll, conducted by EDK Associates, surveyed 300 registered voters in Santa Clara County and found that, upon understanding the issues involved, the majority of people support firearm regulations and would be motivated to contact an elected official to express their concern..

**What is or can be the role of the Public Safety and Justice Committee with this effort?**

Public Health would be very interested in participating on the Public Safety and Justice Committee to add a health perspective to the existing focus on law and justice. The causes of violence are complex, and, therefore, the necessary solutions will also need to be complex, with many parts of the community working together. The Committee can enhance collaborative efforts in the community by promoting the County agencies working closely in partnership with each other, and with community organizations in all areas of the continuum, prevention - intervention - treatment - suppression.