

# VIOLENCE

## Impact on Children Learning



## SHINING A LIGHT ON HOW GUN VIOLENCE IMPACTS KIDS



**Kentucky Education Commissioner Dr. Wayne D. Lewis**

“Children who grow up in violent neighborhoods seldom realize their way of life is not typical. Their lives may include regularly hearing gunshots through the night and sometimes during the day, losing friends, family, and neighbors to gun violence, and continually being fearful of becoming the victim of violent crime.

No parent wants that kind of life for their children, but that is what life looks like for children living in violent neighborhoods across the U.S., including children in some Louisville neighborhoods. The trauma they suffer is unlike anything children growing up in upper middle class or affluent neighborhoods could imagine. And the impact of that trauma, while often unrecognized, is significant; often impacting their ability to reach their learning potential at school.

Recognizing and responding to the trauma of students who experience violence has to be part of how we educate them. There is no way to reasonably expect students who have experienced such trauma to leave their fears, anxieties, and pain at home when they come to school. Instead, it is incumbent upon schools to help connect students with community resources as appropriate, and to do our absolute best to be sensitive to and accommodate students’ social and emotional needs as we work to meet their academic needs in schools.”



**Jenny Benner, Senior Director-Child Development Center, Chestnut Street Family YMCA**

“As an early childhood educator, it has become more common to see children who have been affected in some way by violence. Many of the children we serve are too young to verbalize their trauma or stress. Because of this, we have to ensure early childhood educators have the training and support needed to help these children build resilience. We focus heavily on a child’s social-emotional development and the first step is to make sure they feel safe and loved.

Once in a safe environment, they will open up to learn skills necessary to be successful in school and life. It is also important to teach problem-solving and how to resolve conflicts appropriately, using words. I believe this skill is lacking in some children and they are most likely to continue cycles of violence because that is all they know. This report shines a light on how important education is, even as early as infancy, and my hope is that this will start a dialogue about how we as a community can come together to serve children to our best ability!”



### **Jefferson Family Court Judge Derwin Webb**

“When I was 15 years old, one of my good friends was accidentally shot and killed by a friend. A few years later, that same shooter was accidentally shot and killed by someone else. Today, we have kids killing kids — at random times — intentionally. Louisville, we are better than this. Guns have no names, bullets have no names, but our children do. So, I am asking you to please, please stop the violence. I started YOUNG Men’s Academy at Whitney Young Elementary, a mentorship program, to try to help, and I applaud this report and all efforts to

bring attention to the needs of kids exposed to violence, and to help them reach their potential.”



### **Dr. J. David Richardson, Chief of Surgery, University of Louisville Hospital**

“Having been involved in the care of the injured for over 40 years, I applaud the current focus on the downstream effects of gun violence in our community. As trauma surgeons, our team focuses on the “victim” or injured. We analyze their care and outcomes through our quality review process, but we have few, if any, mechanisms for examining the effects on families, neighbors, or others in the community who are impacted by this violence. I have been particularly concerned about the children

who bear witness to these acts, even if they are not directly or physically injured. How can a growing, evolving, learning, adapting brain develop as we would desire in an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear? I have heard countless stories of the deleterious effects of these acts of violence and their negative impact on the culture and well-being of our neighborhoods. While it is cliché to state “our children are our future”, it is nonetheless true. The children who are exposed to gun violence in Louisville deserve better.”



### **Troy Pitcock, retired LMPD Major 2<sup>nd</sup> Division**

“Gun violence has a horrifying impact on our youth. Witnessing it directly or the remnants of violence at police crime scenes are situations too many of our youth are exposed to, many times at such early ages. These situations have life lasting implications on children, at times creating a perception such violence is acceptable. A lack of parental support can enhance the believe to our youth that such actions are acceptable or even the proper method to deal with conflict.”