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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF

*Children
Families &
Learning*

**DANGEROUS
WEAPONS
INCIDENTS
IN
MINNESOTA
SCHOOLS**

Minn. Stat. § 121.06

**1998-1999
SCHOOL
YEAR**

January 2000

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1998/99

MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF

*Children
Families & Learning*

*COMMISSIONER:
CHRISTINE JAX, Ph.D.*

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DANGEROUS WEAPONS INCIDENTS IN MINNESOTA SCHOOLS 1998-99 SCHOOL YEAR

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Estimated Cost of Preparing this Report

Minnesota Statute § 3.197 requires that a report to the legislature contain, at its beginning, the cost of preparing the report. This report summarizes information that the Department of Children, Families & Learning (CFL) already collects as a part of its normal business functions. Therefore, the cost information reported here does not include the cost of gathering the data but rather is limited to the estimated cost of analyzing the data and preparing the document. The cost of preparing this report is estimated at \$2,900.

Purpose of the Report

Under Minnesota Statute §121A.06, school districts are required to report individual incidents involving the use or possession of a dangerous weapon on school grounds by an enrolled student. These individual reports are submitted to CFL and used as the basis for an annual summary of findings. This document summarizes findings from the 1998-99 school year (the sixth year that information on dangerous weapons has been reported by Minnesota public schools).

Limitations of the Data

The data summarized below are based on confirmed incidents reported by local school districts. It is unknown how many incidents went unreported.

Previous reports have cited limitations in generalizability of results due to incomplete reporting by school districts across the state. This problem was largely resolved in 1998-99 as only two small districts failed to report to CFL. The state's remaining 345 school districts contacted CFL with documented incidents, or, in many cases, verification there were no dangerous weapons incidents during the 1998-99 school year.

General Findings

School districts are asked to select from the following categories of weapons when reporting a disciplinary incident:

- No Weapon/None Reported
- Handgun
- Long Gun (Rifle/Shotgun)
- B-B Gun
- Replica/Toy Gun
- Knife/Cutting Instrument
- Blunt Object
- Fire/Explosives
- Other Weapon

CFL received local reports of 1,611 confirmed incidents involving dangerous weapons for the 1998-99 school year, which is a 2.7% increase from the 1,558 incidents reported the previous year. This apparent increase may be a result of the more complete reporting across the state in 1998-99.

Table 1 shows a comparison of annual totals over the six years since CFL started receiving reports. Yearly comparisons are limited because some districts have historically underreported or failed to report all incidents. The year with the most complete reporting is 1998-99.

Table 1. Dangerous Weapons Incidents Reported Annually, 1993-94 to 1998-99					
1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
872	1,224	1,161	992	1,568	1,611

Table 2 contains a comparison of the four major categories of dangerous weapons. Possession or use of a knife or cutting instrument continues to comprise the vast majority of weapons cases, plus there was a sharp increase of 48.5% from last year. The fire/explosive category (e.g., lighters, fireworks) declined by 26.2%.

Table 2. Comparison of Types of Dangerous Weapon* Incidents, 1993-94 to 1998-99						
	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Firearms: All Types	172	189	326	152	162	169
Knife/Cutting	459	666	665	680	567	843
Fire/Explosive	NA	NA	51	50	84	52
Blunt Object	NA	NA	119	110	74	70

*Firearms include handguns, long guns, B-B guns, look-alikes, replicas and toys. "Other weapons" are not reported in this table. Note also that this table also does not account for incidents where the weapon type was not reported.

Lethal Firearms Incidents

One of the most prominent concerns about violence in schools has to do with firearm incidents that could result in death or serious injury. Most of the “firearm” incidents in Minnesota involve toys, replicas, and B-B guns, and relatively few incidents involve lethal handguns and long guns (shotguns and rifles).

Minnesota continues to have no recorded fatalities on school grounds due to a firearm incident. This is explained in part by the nature of lethal firearm incidents, which typically involve possession without discharging the weapon. In 1998-99, only 1.8% or 29 of the 1,611 incidents involved lethal firearms (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 3. Type of Firearms in Reported Incidents, 1998-99		
Type of Firearm	Number of Incidents	% Firearm Incidents
BB Gun	38	22.5%
Handgun	15	8.9%
Replica/Toy	102	60.4%
Shotgun/Rifle	14	8.3%
Other firearm*	Undetermined	—
TOTALS	169	100%

*Paint ball or splat ball gun, stun gun, ammo, etc.

All *long gun* incidents occurred in rural school districts except one. The lone exception for the Twin Cities area occurred in a Hennepin County school.

Nine of the 15 *handgun* incidents occurred in Hennepin County schools, with the remaining cases in rural areas. There were no reported handgun incidents in any of the other six counties in the Twin Cities area.

Table 4 provides a comparison of lethal firearm incidents for the past three years. The total number of reported incidents has continuously declined over this period because the handgun incidents are down by 67.3%: handgun incidents went from 46 to 25 to 15 over this three year period.

Table 4. Lethal Firearm Incidents, 1996-99			
Type of Firearm	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Handgun	46	25	15
Long Gun	11	9	14
TOTALS	57	34	29