

An Agenda for Firearms and Violence Research: Where Do We Go From Here?

Dr. Charles Wellford

University of Maryland

Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice

In 2004 the National Research Council (Wellford, Petrie and Pepper, 2004) completed an analysis of the research on firearms and violence. That report found that understanding the role of firearms in violent crimes and suicide was critical to reductions in violent deaths and injuries; indicated that little more could be learned about the effect of right-to-carry laws and defense gun use by continuing to use data and methods that were unable to provide valid and reliable answers to issues raised by these topics (the report concluded for example that the then existing evidence could not establish whether right-to-carry laws increased, decreased, or had no impact on crime). Recently, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) convened a working group to assess what we have learned since the NRC report and to chart a course for future firearms research. The group, whose report is available on the NIJ website, identified seven focus areas. This presentation reviews those conclusions and offers additional suggestions for research to reduce gun violence.