

# Shootings raise concerns about teen firearm access

BY JARON VON RUNNEN  
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MCCRACKEN COUNTY — In the wake of two recent shootings — one in Mayfield on Friday involving a 14-year-old boy and another in early August in Paducah — law enforcement officials and prosecutors are explaining the ways teenagers gain access to firearms and how they are held accountable if they use them to commit crimes.

Federal law prohibits minors from possessing handguns and handgun ammunition, with exceptions for activities with adult supervision, such as hunting, target practice and shooting competitions, according to McCracken County Sheriff Ryan Norman. McCracken County Attorney Cade Foster said there are multiple scenarios in which teens find access to firearms.

“The first is people who are lawful owners of firearms, and they leave them out in their car and their cars are unlocked,” Foster said. “Unfortunately, some juveniles go out and about in the community at night, they check door handles and if they’re unlocked, they will go in and check the glove compartments and take firearms. The other way is that they will burglarize a pawn shop. In Paducah, in particular, we had a Cash Express Pawn Shop get a car run through it by some juveniles, and they stole 11 firearms. The last way is from their parents.”

Norman added that most of the time, minors who get handguns do so outside of the home. He said sometimes firearms are traded on the street and sold to juveniles.



MCCRACKEN COUNTY ATTORNEY CADE FOSTER

When a minor is caught with a firearm and arrested, the case then falls into the hands of prosecutors. Foster explained that county attorneys in Kentucky prosecute every crime in district court.

“Depending on the severity of the offense, they’re either charged, cited and sent home to their parents or they’re detained and taken to the juvenile detention center,” Foster said. “They are held there until we have a detention hearing, where we look at the case. The judge looks at the case, and we make a determination of whether or not to send the children back into the community with an ankle monitor — maybe some rules and restrictions — or keep them detained.”

If the juvenile is sent to the detention center,

Foster explained that court-designated workers work with the minor, aiming to rehabilitate the juvenile and determine the services they need to be put on a better path.

Foster said the aim is to balance the juvenile’s needs and future with the safety of the community. Depending on the severity of the case, the court decides whether they are tried as an adult.

“If a juvenile, for instance, shoots into a crowd of people or, heaven forbid, they kill somebody, they are subject to being what’s called transferred and tried as an adult,” Foster said. “We do want to help juveniles get rehabilitated, but our main goal is to protect the community, and if they cross that line, they don’t get to get an ‘out-of-jail free’ card.”



JARON VON RUNNEN | Times Leader

“Explain it to them, show it to them, tell them how it works and explain the dangers of a firearm,” McCracken County Sheriff Ryan Norman said. “Explain that they can be deadly or can seriously hurt or injure somebody. Hopefully, that would make them less curious.”

He said a juvenile’s actions in the criminal world can have a lasting impact, which is why the court tries to balance rehabilitation and public safety.

Norman said children are naturally curious, so if they see a firearm lying around a home, they could be naturally

drawn to it. He encourages parents to have discussions about guns with their children.

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Norman and Foster each recommend locking vehicles. They also said it is important to keep a firearm accessible in a home in case of emergencies, but to make sure it is locked away so children cannot find it.

## HUDSON

FROM PAGE A4

Paducah Police Department, where a memorial was displayed alongside his police cruiser.

Community members lined the route with flags and signs of support as police vehicles and emergency responders escorted Hudson to his final resting place.

Hudson served with the Paducah Police Department for a decade. He started as a patrol officer and went on to serve the community as a D.A.R.E. instructor in elementary schools, as a member of the Paducah Police Department’s S.W.A.T. team, a training officer and a detective. He was promoted to sergeant in May. Additionally, Hudson was a member of the department’s honor guard, assisting with funerals for his fellow officers.

In an Aug. 15 news conference regarding Hudson’s death — the result of complications from a cardiac condition exacerbated by the stress of responding to the deadly Aug. 9 shooting on Boyd Street — Paducah Police Chief Brian Laird emphasized his deep commitment to the community he served.

“Ryan was a tremendous presence in our region, and there’s no doubt he is leaving a lasting impact. This is a loss that will be felt forever,” Laird said.



PHOTOS BY ADAM STUMP | Times Leader

The procession traveled along Alben Barkley Drive, Lone Oak Road and Broadway, ending at the cemetery on North 13th Street.



Paducah Power System trucks suspend an American flag over Broadway as the funeral procession for Sgt. Ryan Hudson makes its way to Maplelawn Park Cemetery on Aug. 23.



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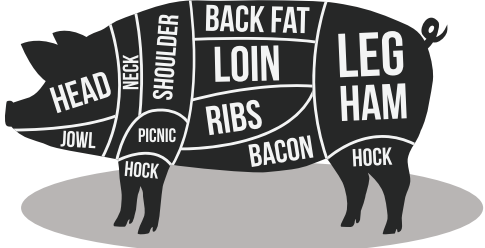
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