



## **13-Year-Old Texas Boy Accidentally Shot Dead by ‘Best Friend’ While Playing With a Loaded Gun**

Jack Phillips

January 23, 2019

A Texas teenager was fatally shot by his friend when they were apparently playing with a loaded gun, according to new reports on Jan. 22.

Gabriel Fernandez, known as Gabe, was accidentally shot in the head and died, his mother told [ABC News](#).

“He loved my son. They were best friends,” Jennifer Valdez said of her 13-year-old son and his best friend.

About 20 minutes after Gabe and his 15-year-old brother Nick left home to the friend’s house, Valdez got a “hysterical” phone call from Nick, saying that his brother was shot.

“He was just hysterical, telling me that ‘Gabe’s dead, Gabe’s dead.’ ‘What do you mean Gabe’s dead?’ ‘Gabe’s dead, he shot him in the head,’” Valdez told ABC.

“I ran over and there was people standing outside and little girls crying,” she said.

A neighbor was doing “compressions and giving him mouth to mouth,” Valdez, a nurse, recalled.

“I could see where the bullet had exited out of his head,” she added.

The mother went into the ambulance with Gabe when the emergency responders arrived on the scene. But about 10 minutes later, Valdez said she knew her son died.

“The paramedic in the back told [the driver] to turn the lights off,” Valdez said. “I knew my baby was gone at that moment,” she added.

The Houston Police Department is investigating the shooting, reported [KRTK](#), which said it is not clear where the gun came from.

It also isn’t clear why the 13-year-old who accidentally shot Gabe had the gun.

Valdez said her son’s friend called her to apologize over what happened, and she is asking for prayers for the boy’s family. “Now he’ll have to live the rest of his life knowing he killed his best friend,” she told ABC. “I feel remorse for him too... he’s a baby too.”

“I wish they would’ve told me that they had (the gun) there,” she told KRTK. “I would’ve went to their mom and told them something. Don’t hide it. Don’t think it’s cool. It’s not cool.”

Valdez added that Nick “just kept crying and saying ‘It was an accident, we didn’t know. It was an accident,’” ABC News reported.

### Accidental Gun Deaths Down

Far fewer Americans fall victim to firearm accidents than some two decades ago, even though people own more guns, according to new data.

Accidental firearm discharges killed 486 people in 2017, down more than 50 percent since 1997, according to mortality data collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Meanwhile, gun sales increased more than 80 percent between 1999 and 2017, according to The DataFace, a San Francisco data analysis company, which based its estimates on FBI background check data. There appears to be a mix of factors behind the phenomenon.

The gun industry has claimed credit for the dropping accidental gun deaths, pointing to its safety education efforts going back to at least the 1920s (pdf), including distribution of tens of millions of safety booklets and placing public service announcements in the media.

“The situation would be considered by many observers as proof that private safety programs can be more effective than government regulation,” said Kopel, associate policy analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute think tank, referring to declining rates of accidental gun deaths among children in a 1993 manuscript “Children and Guns: Sensible Solutions.”