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Bystander intervention to prevent firearm injury: A qualitative study of 4-H Shooting Sports participants

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Ethics Approval Statement

All subjects participated voluntarily and received small compensation. The participants provide their written informed consent to participate in the study. The study was approved by the Lifespan Research Protection Office in Providence, RI.

Patient Consent Statement

All subjects provided consent for publication of the materials discussed in the interviews.

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Abstract

Aims: This qualitative study examines how youth and adult members of 4-H Shooting Sports clubs perceive firearm injury risk and risk reduction, and the applicability of a bystander intervention risk reduction framework in this community.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 youth and 13 adult members of 4-H Shooting Sports clubs across nine US states from March to December of 2021 until thematic saturation was reached. Deductive and inductive thematic qualitative analyses were performed.

Results: Six overarching themes emerged: 1) The tendency to view firearm injury as predominantly unintentional in nature; 2) Acknowledgement of a wide array of risks for firearm injury; 3) Perceived barriers to bystander action to prevent firearm injury including knowledge, confidence, and consequences of action; 4) Facilitators of bystander action including a sense of civic responsibility; 5) Direct and indirect strategies to address potential risks for firearm injury; and 6) Belief that bystander intervention skills training would be useful for 4-H Shooting Sports.

Conclusions: Findings lay the groundwork for applying bystander intervention skills training as an approach to firearm injury prevention in 4-H Shooting Sports, similar to how bystander intervention has been applied to other types of injury (i.e., sexual assault). 4-H Shooting Sports club members' sense of civic responsibility is a key facilitator. Prevention efforts should attend to the broad array of ways in which firearm injury occurs, including suicide, mass shootings, homicide, and intimate partner violence, as well as unintentional injury.

Keywords

firearm injury; bystander intervention; violence prevention; gun safety; adolescent; shooting sports; firearms

INTRODUCTION

Firearm injury is the leading cause of death for American youth ages 1–19.¹ Identifiable and modifiable risk factors for youth firearm injury of all types (unintentional, community violence, partner violence, suicide, mass shootings) include easy firearm access, substance use, history of violent victimization or aggression, depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts, and poor conflict resolution skills.^{2,3} More than 30% of youth live in a house with a firearm^{4,5}, and storage practices are often inconsistent.⁶ Many firearm injury prevention programs focus on reducing access through policy or through gatekeepers (e.g., clinician screening, secure storage). However, youth firearm injury prevention strategies can and should extend beyond these approaches.⁷ Prevention strategies are unlikely to succeed without parental and peer buy-in and involvement, particularly in communities with high rates of firearm ownership and use.^{8,9}

Bystander Intervention (BI) skills training is an evidence-based community-centered approach rooted in social psychological theories of helping behavior including the Theory of Planned Behavior.¹⁰ Its core precept is the active engagement of community members to notice health risks and then proactively intervene.¹¹ The BI model¹² posits that to engage in helping behavior an individual must: 1) notice a risk; 2) label the situation as a problem;

3) take personal responsibility for acting; 4) have the skills to help; and 5) take action. BI has been successfully used to increase individuals' awareness of risks for bullying and interpersonal violence in their community and increase individuals' willingness to act to reduce risks for harm.¹³ BI's focus on community may be uniquely applicable to youth firearm injury prevention within communities with high rates of firearm ownership.^{14–17}

Nationally, 4-H is a trusted and respected positive youth development program. The 4-H Shooting Sports program for youth ages 8–18, active in 47 states provides training to youth in safe and responsible firearm handling and practices, environmental conservation, and interpersonal development and leadership skills training. Instructors are trained in a curriculum that emphasizes unintentional injury prevention and safety. It has not previously developed or implemented programs discussing prevention of intentional firearm injury but has interest in expanding on its existing programming to reduce risk of all types of firearm injury. The applicability of the BI framework to 4-H Shooting Sports, and the knowledge and attitudes of 4-H Shooting Sports members regarding firearm injury risk reduction, remains unknown.

Purpose of the Current Study

This goal of this qualitative study was to explore perceptions of firearm injury risk and risk reduction among 4-H Shooting Sports volunteers and participants, and to specifically evaluate the barriers and facilitators of a bystander intervention-informed approach within this setting.

METHODS

Recruitment

Project investigators affiliated with 4-H Shooting Sports worked with the research team to identify a purposive sample of 4-H Shooting Sports adult and teen leaders representing a variety of Shooting Sports Clubs, ages, and training levels across the United States. Research staff sent an electronic informational sheet to the email of prospective participants (and parents of youth participants) using RedCap, a HIPAA-compliant web-based data collection tool.¹⁸ Potential participants were consented/assented via RedCap after reviewing the information sheet. Interviews were then scheduled and conducted via phone or video call, depending on participant preference. Participants received a \$50 electronic gift card. The study was approved by the Rhode Island Hospital/Lifespan Institutional Review Board.

Interview Protocol

A brief demographic survey, using questions drawn from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Questionnaire¹⁹ and Krus et al.'s 10-item firearm exposure scale²⁰, was administered using RedCap.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by both male and female bachelor's and master's level research staff (AS, MV) with no prior relationship to participants, who were previously trained and supervised by the Principal Investigator who has extensive

experience in conducting qualitative research and analyses. Interview design was informed by principles of Bystander Intervention,²¹ the Theory of Planned Behavior,²² and the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research.²³ Interviews explored current knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about firearm injury; personal or secondhand exposure to firearm injury; how participants recognize intentional firearm injury risk within their larger community; whether they feel equipped to intervene should risk present itself; and barriers and facilitators of bystander intervention (see Appendix). Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. A written debrief was completed after each interview and results were presented back to 4-H staff.

Data Analytic Plan

Thematic analysis²⁴ was used to create an initial coding schema. Deductive codes were developed from the theoretical frameworks used for interview design. Using analytic triangulation, two research assistants independently coded the data and inductive codes were created to capture emerging themes. Research assistants compared their findings in weekly coding meetings. Any disagreements between coders were brought to the meetings, thoroughly discussed, and (if needed) resolved by a third investigator. The coding structure was iteratively developed by adding inductive codes until the team found no other themes for the purposes of the study goals. The final coding scheme was applied to the full set of transcripts and contained 10 codes with 51 subcodes. Codes were entered into NVivo 1.5 (QSR International Pty Ltd., Doncaster, Victoria, Australia). Agreement between coders was strong ($k=0.809$). Codes that appeared fewer than 10 times across all transcripts were excluded from analysis.

RESULTS

Thematic saturation was reached after thirteen adult and eleven adolescent interviews.²⁵ Participants (age range 15–78) were from nine different states across all regions of the United States (see Table 1). All adults were 4-H Shooting Sports volunteer instructors. Most youth (82%) were involved in 4-H Shooting Sports in a leadership capacity. The majority were frequently exposed to firearms growing up (79%), said most of their friends own firearms (74%), and use firearms recreationally (78%). Three youth (27%) and six adults (50%) reported knowing a victim of a firearm crime.

Six major themes were identified, informed by the prespecified theoretical frameworks; few differences were observed between teens and adults. (See Table 2 for illustrative quotes). Themes centered around participants' identification of risk and awareness of what can be done (knowledge and attitudes), expectations to act (subjective norms), perceived capability of acting (perceived behavioral control) and intention. Additionally, themes address perceptions of Bystander Intervention framework, the feasibility of implementing a Bystander Intervention within 4-H, and the perceived impact it might have on community knowledge and safety behaviors.

Theme 1. Unintentional Firearm Injury Feels More Salient than Intentional Firearm Injury

Interviews contained 21 separate anecdotes about intentional firearm injury, spanning suicide, domestic disputes, homicide, school shooting (threat only), gang-related, police-related, and war. In the majority of anecdotes a firearm discharged (n=15), while the remaining involved the identification of a threat or risk (n=6).

When asked about exposure to any type of firearm injury, participants readily described examples of unintentional (“accidental”) firearm injuries over their lifetimes:

“There’s always gonna be accidents. It’s gonna some poor guy who shoots his brother in the woods ‘cause he thinks he’s a deer. Did he make a mistake? Absolutely. He didn’t identify his target before he pulled the trigger, which is what we teach the kids.” (#14A, 67yo, F).

Participants were less likely to talk about intentional firearm injuries as something relevant to their lives. Some explicitly said that such injuries did not occur in their community. Only a few initially described experiences with intentional firearm injury when asked, although anecdotes of intentional firearm injury often emerged later in the interview process.

Theme 2. Participants Easily Recognize Some Risks for Firearm Injury

Participants readily identified multiple risks for firearm injury. “Lack of seriousness” when using a firearm (e.g., goofing off, not recognizing the responsibility of firearm ownership) and lack of safety training were commonly identified as risk factors for unintentional firearm injury. Participants mentioned that these factors were addressed during 4-H Shooting Sports training. Almost all participants mentioned mental health difficulties as a risk factor for all types of firearm injury. They described these “mental health” warning signs as including depression and discussions of self-harm/suicide in the context of known firearm ownership.

Most participants mentioned situations involving heightened or intensified emotion and conflict as potentially “risky,” particularly for firearm homicide and suicide: *“When you get guns involved and tempers involved, oh, it could go bad fast”* (#20A, 68 yo, F). Other commonly identified risk factors for intentional firearm injury included recent behavior change, and one’s own experience/intuition about risk.

Less frequently identified risk factors were recent personal crises (such as bullying, death of a friend, abuse or receiving bad news), lack of parental involvement in a child’s firearm use, and illegal firearm access. No one mentioned dementia or partner violence as a potential risk.

Theme 3. Barriers to Bystander Intervention: Knowledge, Confidence, and Consequences

Most participants - both youth and adult - identified multiple barriers to intervening once they identify a risk.

Knowledge and Confidence.—The most common barrier was lack of knowledge about - and confidence in their interpretation of - risk factors. For example, one youth said: *“Also the fact of what if I’m wrong, second-guessing yourself. What if they’re doing it*

right, and I'm trying to be above and beyond with my firearm handling? (#3T, 17 yo M). Limited knowledge of what to do when perceiving a potential firearm risk was perceived as a further barrier to action: *"You can't really help when you don't know what type of assistance to provide."* (#21A, 46 yo, M). A couple of participants specifically mentioned lack of familiarity with laws around what they could or couldn't do. A subset also expressed ambivalence about the effectiveness of intervening as a strategy to reduce firearm injury.

Consequences.—Fears of the consequences of action were also commonly mentioned. Most participants identified anticipated negative social consequences (i.e., loss of social status, loss of a relationship, poor reactions from those involved) as a barrier to intervention. Some adult interviewees thought this fear would be especially salient for younger people:

"I think that's one of the things. [They fear] That they're going to be rejected... Especially with younger kids, is, 'Well, they're not gonna be my friend anymore.' That feeling of rejection is that—is probably the biggest thing" (#13A, 54 yo, M).

Age differentials could enhance this fear of consequences. For example:

"You go hunting and your grandfather does unsafe practices. The way he carries his shotgun across a fence. He leans a loaded gun against a truck, right? That's awful hard for a 14-year-old kid in that setting to say, 'Grandpa, you're not supposed to do that.'" (#17A, 55yo, M)

Personal safety was mentioned by more than half of participants as an obstacle to intervening in any type of firearm injury: *"I'm not tryin' to get a gun drawn on me"* (#21A, 46yo, M).

Theme 4. Facilitators of Intervention: "Somebody has to stand for something, right?"

Interviewees identified multiple reasons that they or their community members would be inclined to intervene, should they notice a risk. Almost all interviewees discussed a civic and personal responsibility to intervene in situations involving risk of firearm injury. Some mentioned approval from parents, friends, or the community as a motivator of intervening. For many, the importance of keeping a friend or family member safe superseded any risk of potential harm to a relationship. One interviewee explicitly weighed the competing demands and priorities of stepping in to prevent firearm-related injury, concluding:

I guess you could upset someone, right, but if I would rather see the person live and not be friends with them, than be friends and have not taken the appropriate measures to keep them safe. (#22A, 45yo, F)

Finally, several participants mentioned perceived potential personal or societal benefits from intervening, such as demonstrating care and concern for someone struggling, a feeling of pride about having done the right thing, and being a good example for others: *"I think other people that witness it would think that this person's doing the right thing by saying something."* (#14A, 67yo, F) Some mentioned that this type of community leadership was part of their 4-H training. Adults and teens alike also pointed to their extensive firearm training (within and outside of 4-H) as making it appropriate for them to intervene.

Theme 5. Some Interventions are Easier Than Others

Participants spontaneously described multiple potential actions they could take in the face of risky firearm behavior. They described how their decision-making about which type of action to take depended on both the type of risk identified, and their personal knowledge and relationships.

Direct action to prevent firearm injury was the most common type of intervention participants said they would use if they identified someone at risk. Participants were particularly willing to tell a friend to “stop messing around” if friends were acting carelessly or recklessly with or around firearms. Direct intervention was applied more frequently to unintentional than intentional injury scenarios but was felt to be an important strategy for both injury types.

Participants often mentioned the term “ceasefire,” a word used within 4-H Shooting Sports to indicate the immediate need to stop all use of a firearm when an unintentional injury risk is identified at a range. Many interviewees explicitly mentioned that 4-H empowers teens to directly intervene in these cases. For example, one instructor told us:

“The thing that our senior founding instructor stressed was don’t be afraid to yell to get attention. Don’t let ‘em start to get away with anything. If you see something, anything, developing, take care of it right there and then” (#10A, 78yo, M).

Delegation – asking someone else to help - also emerged as a commonly used strategy across all interviews. Participants reported they would be particularly likely to seek help in situations involving risk of suicide. They also identified delegation as more appropriate strategy for intervention when a personal relationship was more distant or non-existent.

Theme 6: Firearm Injury Prevention Training in 4-H Shooting Sports: Necessary, but with Caveats

In general, interview participants were enthusiastic about incorporating expanded firearm injury prevention awareness and bystander intervention strategies into 4-H Shooting Sports. Teens and adults alike expressed interest in teaching students how to be more effective at preventing firearm injury in their community. Most believed a bystander intervention curriculum would be easily compatible with the existing 4-H structure and feasible to implement. Multiple adults mentioned that although some firearm injury prevention is discussed in 4-H, there is a need for dedicated time for a deeper dive into this topic:

“I do think you could probably more formally put it into the 4-H curriculum for the different instructors ‘cause we do talk about it right now on every range at the beginning of the year... You could more formally build it in not as just suicide prevention but just being a vigilant bystander for any kind of bad outcome.” (#17A, 55yo, M).

Instructors and teens did express concern about the availability of 4-H resources (e.g., time, comfort, access to physical resources, liability) to support bystander intervention training.

Participants overwhelmingly stated that training in recognizing, and acting on, firearm injury risks was also needed outside of 4-H, including in schools. Participants said that education

must include non-firearm owners, given what seemed to be a significant probability that non-owners would also encounter risk situations.

Finally, the age of many of the 4-H Shooting Sports students was an implementation barrier identified by both instructors and teens. Participants mentioned the importance of training older youth and coaches to intervene to prevent firearm injury but expressed hesitancy about involving younger 4-H students, who might not be familiar with the concept of suicide.

DISCUSSION

Although many firearm injury prevention research agendas urge community and stakeholder engagement, achieving partnership with the firearm owning community has often been elusive in practice.²⁶ The current research bridges the researcher-practitioner gap by being, to our knowledge, one of first studies where violence prevention researchers partner with a national youth organization in communities with high rates of firearm ownership. Results broadly validate the viability of partnership, the firearm safety community's interest and intention in engaging in youth firearm injury risk reduction, and the appropriateness of the BI model as a framework for youth training.

One of the greatest takeaways from this study is the appropriateness of engagement with the 4-H Shooting Sports Program—a federally-supported organization that engages thousands of youth in firearm safety training annually—for a BI-based model of firearm injury prevention. Interview themes related to “civic responsibility,” and descriptions of existing elements of bystander intervention training in 4-H Shooting Sports (e.g., “calling ceasefire”), reinforce that trusted community organizations already see some elements of BI as part of their mission. Moreover, interviewees were mostly firearms owners themselves and live exclusively in communities with high rates of firearm ownership. Training youth in bystander intervention through an organization like 4-H Shooting Sports could, therefore, improve awareness and safety not just for the youth trained within the organization, but also for the adult instructors and for these communities with high rates of firearm ownership, thereby enabling capability, opportunity, and motivation for difficult discussions related to risky firearm practices across the lifespan.²⁷

Despite the extensive training of participants in unintentional firearm injury prevention, we identified multiple knowledge gaps related to identifying and responding to injury risk factors. Stakeholders identified and discussed risks for unintentional firearm injury far more readily than risk for intentional firearm injuries (mirroring national survey results).²⁸ Interviewees did acknowledge some familiarity with intentional firearm injury, but—whether out of lack of awareness, normative expectations, or lack of belief in its preventability—rarely identified suicide and/or homicide as a salient risk for their friends and neighbors. Just as notable was what risks 4-H Shooting Sports Clubs youth and adults *did not* mention. For example, few participants identified that a recent crisis could be a risk factor for firearm injury.²⁹ Other common markers of risk such as dementia, domestic violence, and social media posts were also unmentioned.^{30,31} Finally, no participants identified the potential for cumulative, converging, and interactive effects of multiple risk factors for gun-related injury and harm.³² Although knowledge is never sufficient for action,

it is a necessary first step. Addressing prevalence of intentional firearm injury in rural and firearm-owning communities,^{31,33,34} as well as common risk factors, is an easily addressed knowledge gap.

Themes aligned with many of the processes outlined in the Bystander Decision-Making model¹² (e.g., risk factors for firearm injury, contextual and situational stressors, anticipated responses to bystander intervention, potential intervention strategies), and identified ways to mitigate potential barriers to intervention. Participants spontaneously described a range of both direct and indirect bystander intervention strategies that could be used to prevent firearm-related injuries, and subtle ways of deciding which type of intervention to use, for whom. Others have reported that different intervention strategies (e.g., direct vs. delegate) result in different consequences and interpersonal responses from those involved.³⁵ Explicitly providing training on direct and indirect strategies for intervention, as well as exploring the appropriateness of additional strategies which arose less or not at all throughout the interviews (ex. distracting from or documenting a risk), could potentially enhance bystanders' sense of safety and control.³⁶ Importantly, unlike curricula focused on individual behavior change, programs based on the bystander intervention framework promote safer communities by increasing a sense of community (adult and youth) responsibility while also building skills for helping others.²¹

Consistent with literature on bystander intervention for sexual assault and intimate partner violence, participants often worried about potential negative reactions of peers to a BI.^{37,38} These findings suggest a need for prevention programs to both acknowledge the importance of personal relationships, and correct misperceptions around results of BI for firearm injury prevention.³⁹

Finally, these interviews suggest important considerations across the entire Consolidated Framework for Intervention Research²³ - whether about age, training capabilities, local resources, or external champions - for this type of work. Future research should more specifically examine these situational facilitators and barriers to youth BI firearm injury prevention.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study indicated readiness for incorporating BI training into respected and widespread firearm-training frameworks, such as 4-H Shooting Sports. Adult and youth leaders within the organization are willing and able to discuss all types of firearm injury. The organization and its members emphasize responsibility to one's community, and BI can easily capitalize on this value.

Limitations and Future Directions

Whereas the sample size was sufficient for thematic saturation, further research including a larger, more ethnically and racially diverse sample is warranted. It is also possible that non-4-H Shooting Sports members or non-participants would have different perspectives than interviewees. Lastly, this study was hypothesis-generating for the purpose of creating an intervention; it neither demonstrates causation, nor does it demonstrate feasibility and efficacy of a BI training program.

CONCLUSION

This study lays the groundwork for developing expanded bystander-based firearm injury prevention training for 4-H Shooting Sports clubs, with applicability to numerous other settings and groups. Engaging community partners and practitioners, like 4-H Shooting Sports, represents an important first step toward normalizing the discussion of firearm injury prevention. Our findings also underscore the need to raise awareness about the multiple ways in which firearm injury and death can occur and empower individuals with the ability to notice risks in their community and intervene.

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Data Availability Statement

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article [and/or] its supplementary materials.

APPENDIX

Aim 1 Key Informant Interviews

This agenda is intended to guide facilitators through the key content areas of data collection for the interviews, ensuring that the same content is discussed in each interview. While the agenda is used to guide the discussion, it is not a rigid script. This ensures that the facilitators gather data on the same topics in each interview, while also allowing for the flexibility to adapt and clarify questions to suit the needs of different participants. Similarly, questions need not be asked in this particular order. Rather, the facilitators will adapt the conversation as needed according to the narrative with each participant, pursuing both the a priori research topics as well as any emergent relevant themes that evolve from the discussion.

Welcome/Orientation (5 minutes)

Intent:

The intent of this section is to welcome participants and explain the purpose of the interview. We will introduce the interviewer and explain how the interviews will inform our research.

General Introduction Script:

Thank you for agreeing to participate. My name is [Interviewer's Name]. I'm part of a research team from Brown University and Rhode Island Hospital/Lifespan on the

“Reframing Firearm Injury Prevention” study, whose goal is to test a new firearm injury prevention program for youth 4-H Shooting Sports participants.

1. We would like to talk with you about your community, 4-H, and any experiences you might have had with firearm injury among friends, family, or community members. It is important for you to know there are no right or wrong answers – your honest opinions will be most helpful.
2. You can spend as much or as little time as you like answering each question, you can skip any questions that you’d rather not answer, and you can discontinue at any time.
3. You are the experts here. We are going to listen and ask you to elaborate on some of the topics we discuss.
4. The goal is to finish this interview in about 60 minutes. In order to do that and to cover all of the topics, we might choose to shorten a discussion on one subject in order to move along to the next topic.
5. You do not have to answer any question that you prefer not to answer. You can simply say to us “I’m going to pass on that” and we’ll move on.
6. This interview is voluntary, and you can stop at any time. Your answers will not be linked to your name.
7. We are recording the interview to make a transcript of the discussion. That transcript will not contain protected health information or identifying information about you.
8. Privacy reminder: all of our project staff is required to keep comments confidential.
9. When you share your experiences, you also can say “I know someone who...”
10. You will receive a \$50 gift card for your participation. Do you have any questions?

Part 1: Involvement with 4-H Shooting Sports (10 minutes)

Intent:

The intent of this section is to collect information about the participant’s involvement with 4-H Shooting Sports Clubs and learn more about the current curriculum for firearm safety.

1. Broad opening question (Note: This question is used to comfortably transition and engage participants early on): Tell me about your experiences with 4-H.
 - a. Example question: What do you see as the goal of 4-H Shooting Sports?
 - b. Example question: Tell me about your role in 4-H.
 - c. Example question: How did you first get involved?

- d. Example question: Tell me a little about what your experiences with leading the curriculum. e. Example question: Tell me about areas that you wish that 4-H Shooting Sports could change; are there areas of the curriculum that you'd like more support, or less support, or a change in curriculum?
- 2. Honing in on firearms: As you know, we're working with 4-H on firearm injury prevention. To help us understand a little more about your own experiences, we'd love to learn about your history and heritage of firearm use. Remember, these questions are confidential.
 - a. Example question: Did you grow up with firearms in your home?
 - b. Example question: What are firearms primarily used for in your community (e.g. sport, hunting, protection)?

Part 2: Situations and strategies (15 minutes)

Intent:

The intent of this section is to collect information about different situations where the participant may have intervened to address firearm safety, and the strategies that they used in that situation. We are trying to understand when it will be easy to help and when it will be difficult to help.

We know that 4H focuses strongly on firearm safety. One of the topics we're interested in, is recognizing when someone who's normally safe develops risk for getting hurt themselves, or risk for hurting others with a firearm. (Examples: They were depressed and at risk of suicide; they were being violent; they were just 'off'.)

- 1. Main question: Tell me about a situation when someone in your community was engaging in risky behavior with a firearm. What happened? Does that reflect what typically happens? Why or why not?
 - a. Probe: Who might intervene?
 - b. Probe: How might they intervene?
 - c. Probe: What would help someone feel ready to intervene?
- 2. Example question: What are some obvious indicators that you need to help someone else relating to risk of firearm injury? What are the times they were not so obvious? (e.g., elicit the indicators, writing them on white board or screen, then ask participant to rank these indicators from obvious to not so obvious)
 - a. Probe: What are some of the more serious situations you can think of? What are some that maybe people don't think are that serious?
 - b. Probe: Have you ever talked to your friends or community members about these kinds of situations?

3. Example question: Have you ever seen someone say something or do something, if they felt that a friend or family member was at risk of hurting themselves or someone else?
 - a. Probe: Did you/someone else do/say something in the moment or the day after?
 - b. Probe: Are the interveners likely to be those who are also firearm users?
4. Example question: We know that at 4-H Shooting Sports, an important goal is to teach youth how to be safe handlers of firearms. Have you ever had a situation where you have felt that one of the youth was at risk to be unsafe with a firearm?
 - a. Have you ever talked to youth in 4H about these kinds of situations?
 - b. Confidentially, have you ever heard of this happening within 4H?
5. Example question: Many of us know someone who has been hurt or killed by a firearm, accidentally or on purpose. Many of us know someone who has died of firearm suicide. Do you know anyone who has been hurt or killed?
 - a. Do you think there's anything that could have been done to prevent that?
 - b. Do you wish someone had done something different?
 - c. If you could go back, is there something you wish you or someone else could have seen, said, or done?

Part 3: Perceived barriers and facilitators to intervening (10 minutes)

Intent:

The intent of this section is to obtain information about what kinds of things prevent someone from helping another person when they are at risk of harm relating to a firearm, and what kinds of things facilitate helping.

1. Main question: Tell me about things that keep you or others from doing something, if someone is engaging in risky firearm behavior.
 - a. Probe: What else might stop people from helping?
 - b. Probe: Do you know what happened to the person who needed help?
 - c. Probe: What do you think could have happened to the person?
 - d. Probe: What was the person who didn't intervene, thinking at the time?
 - e. Probe: How did you feel?
 - f. Probe: If you were worried and hesitant to intervene because of something you thought might happen, were you right?
 - g. Probe: What stopped people from helping?

- h. Probe: What might have helped them feel ready to help? What resources or knowledge would have made a difference?
- 2. Main question: Tell me about facilitators to intervening if someone is engaging in risky firearm behavior.
 - a. Probe: What are the best ways to intervene?
 - b. Probe: What resources have been helpful?
 - c. Probe: If you have intervened before, what would you do differently?
 - d. Probe: What motivates you or others to do something?
- 3. Example question: How do you/others decide when you need to do something?
- 4. Example question: What do you think gets in the way of people doing something when they know someone needs help?

Part 4: Consequences of intervening (10 minutes)

Intent:

The intent of this section is to obtain information about the issues that arise when a person intervenes. Now we are interested in figuring out what happens when you step in. You can tell us about your own experiences or the experiences of someone you know.

- 1. Main question: What are some positive effects when you did something to help someone else when there is a concern relating to firearm safety?
 - a. Probe: What are the positive effects for the person needing help?
 - b. Probe: What are the positive effects for the intervener?
 - c. Probe: Are there positive effects for others involved?
- 2. Main question: What are some negative effects when you did something to help someone else when there is a concern relating to firearms?
 - a. Probe: What are the on negative effects on the person needing help?
 - b. Probe: What are the negative effects on the intervener?
 - c. Probe: Are there negative effects for others involved?
- 3. Example question: What kinds of things happened in the moment? What about after?
- 4. Example question: How have your friends responded?
- 5. Example question: Based on your own experiences, what influences your decision to take an action?
 - a. Probe: How likely are you to do something like this in the future?

Part 5: Integrating into the 4-H Curriculum (10 minutes)

Intent:

The intent of this section is to get an overall understanding of the 4-H Curriculum on reducing firearm injury risk and ask opinions on how best to structure our intervention to address 4-H notions of acceptability, feasibility, and appropriateness.

I would like to finish by knowing more about the types of training you've received for 4-H and how we can best create our intervention to best align with the 4-H mission.

1. Main question: Our team wants to find ways to safely encourage people to help one another out when someone is in trouble relating to a firearm, and build this into 4-H curriculum. What advice do you have for doing this?
2. Example question: What type of language should we use when discussing bystander intervention and reducing firearm injury risk?
 - a. Probe: What do you consider inclusive language when discussing firearms?
 - b. Probe: What do you consider polarizing/attacking language?
3. Example question: What do you think is the most important thing to include in our intervention for reducing firearm injury risk?
 - a. Probe: Is there anything we haven't mentioned that should be included?
4. Magic Wand question: If you had a magic wand and could pick something to change so this problem was solved, what would that be? What do you think it would look like to make this change?

Conclusion

1. Other thoughts. Is there anything else we need to know?
2. Thank you! We really appreciate your help.

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Table 1:

Study demographics

	Teen N (%)	Adult N (%)	Total N (%)
Number of Participants	11 (46%)	13 (54%)	24 (100%)
Age [Mean, SD]	17 (1.2) *	57 (9.4)	40 (20.3)
Gender: Female	5 (45%)	5 (38%)	10 (42%)
Ethnicity: Hispanic	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Race: White	10 (91%)	10 (77%)	20 (83%)
Marital Status: Married	Not asked	10 (77%)	
Veteran: Yes	Not asked	1 (8%)	
Education: College Graduate	Not asked	7 (54%)	
Parental Status: Yes, parent	Not asked	11 (85%)	
Region:			
New England	2 (18%)	2 (15%)	4 (17%)
Mid-Atlantic	1 (9%)	2 (15%)	3 (8%)
South	2 (18%)	5 (38%)	7 (33%)
West	6 (55%)	4 (31%)	10 (42%)
Firearm Exposure: (* 1 adult did not answer any of these questions and is excluded from the denominator)			
I was frequently exposed to guns in my youth	9 (82%)	10 (83%)	19 (79%)
I participated in shooting guns on many occasions as a child	8 (73%)	10 (83%)	18 (78%)
I regularly use guns for recreational purposes	7 (64%)	10 (83%)	17 (23%)
Most of my friends own a gun	7 (64%)	10 (83%)	17 (74%)
My friends frequently use guns for recreational purposes	9 (82%)	9 (75%)	18 (78%)
I am around guns frequently	8 (73%)	11 (92%)	19 (79%)
On many occasions I have been around someone using a firearm	9 (82%)	12 (100%)	21 (93%)
I grew up in an environment where guns were readily available	8 (73%)	10 (83%)	18 (78%)
I am familiar with how to operate different types of guns	11 (100%)	12 (100%)	23 (100%)
I have been in multiple gun stores or shops	10 (91%)	11 (92%)	21 (93%)
I have taken a gun safety course (general knowledge of gun safety and use)	11 (100%)	12 (100%)	23 (100%)
I have taken a gun training course (self-defense and firearm tactics)	6 (55%)	6 (50%)	12 (52%)
I know a victim of a gun crime	3 (27%)	6 (50%)	9 (39%)

* Excludes missing responses (n=1)

Table 2:

Sample quotes from participants, by theme and age group

Theme	Teen Quotes	Adult Quotes
1. Unintentional Injury Feels More Salient	<i>My best friend told us he knew how to safely handle firearms, but we quickly realized that wasn't the case. He was spinning around with the gun in his hand. He wasn't shooting right, and he certainly wasn't handling it right. We were all pretty nervous. (13T)</i>	<i>We're all human, and we all make mistakes. We all have 400 things goin' on in our lives, and they might have mental—I don't know if mental lapse would be the right word, but just a loss of focus for a few minutes [puts you at risk]. (4A)</i>
2. Participants Easily Recognize Some Risks	<i>If they're being hostile or aggressive towards them in smaller ways, that can mean that they're going to do something bigger sometimes. (15T)</i> <i>I think when you start talking about actual firearms, you should definitely calculate and talk about mental health in that equation. (13T)</i> <i>I think probably just talking very depressed and saying bad things against themselves like, "Oh, I hate myself so much," and, "I wish I wasn't alive," or something along those lines... if you know that person does own a firearm, then that would bring more bells and whistles would start ringing. That would definitely be a red flag there. (5T)</i>	<i>The other example is we—when we teach hunter safety, we talk a lot—when we're talking about safety, one of the examples that we give about not hunting with anyone who's impaired. Impaired could be, they're so tired. They're on cold medicine. They've been drinking. They may have taken something illicit. (14A)</i>
3. Barriers to Bystander Intervention	<i>I think they wouldn't because either they feel that the gun would be turned on them and they have that fear of, "Well, I don't wanna lose my life, so I'm not gonna try and stop it." (5T)</i>	<i>What if I'm completely off base, here? What comes back to me is maybe I'm not right. Maybe I'm wrong, here. I think that's one of the things. That they're gonna be rejected. Person's gonna be, "Oh, no. No." Especially with younger kids, is, "Well, they're not gonna be my friend anymore." That feeling of rejection is that—is probably the biggest thing. (13A)</i>
4. Facilitators of intervention	<i>I think my dad probably would give me a high five. He's pretty yeah, he's chilled about it. My mom might've been a little bit more, not necessarily against what I did, but probably what—she's oh my gosh, this happened are you okay? Very much on edge. She actually she might've been upset that I didn't call the police or something. (7T)</i> <i>I guess it could make it easier for me than a random person to stop someone with a gun when out unsafe because I'm so comfortable with guns. 'Cause a random person that's afraid of guns or things are bad, probably gonna see that and just not really do anything. (2T)</i>	<i>Yeah, sometimes somebody might get upset if you call them out on the carpet. You know what? I'd rather have somebody mad at me about doing that than me walking away 'cause I've lived long enough to know that, "Hey, regrets suck." (13A)</i> <i>Somebody has to—I don't wanna be in charge. That's not the point. Somebody has to stand for something, right? It just makes perfect sense to me. I wouldn't hesitate. Yeah, I wouldn't even hesitate. (16A)</i>
5. Some interventions are easier than others	<i>If somebody is doing somethin' that is not safe and all that, it is my responsibility to go up and say, "Hey, you need to stop swingin' the gun around," or, "Hey, you need to keep it unloaded because that is dangerous when we are conducting our business here." That's the responsibility that we have when handling a gun or being around guns, for all gun owners. (8T)</i> <i>I definitely think the relationship I have with the person is important on how I would intervene. 'Cause if I'm really good friends with someone, I'd have an easy time to just sit down with them and talk to them. If it were someone that I didn't know very well, I'd probably try finding a mutual friend, or even just someone who they might listen to in a way. (14T)</i> <i>Probably on my position, I'd probably go to an adult 'cause I wouldn't really know how to handle that. I'd probably go to a trusted adult and ask them. (4T)</i>	<i>If we have a kid who would be depressed, I think we would work more toward trying to maybe talking to the parent about, "Hey, I've noticed this about your kid", rather than try to do something specifically about it. (14A)</i>
6. Implementing Injury Prevention Interventions in 4-H	<i>I think really the biggest thing would be making sure that those bystanders know that it's not gonna hurt you to say something. Like if you say something, that person might hate you for the moment. In the long run, the pros outweigh the cons. (4T)</i> <i>I don't know every 4H member, but I don't think every 4H member would know the connection between mental health and firearm abuse. Yeah. I definitely think that's something that would be beneficial to the program, in my opinion. (14T)</i>	<i>I would actually push for a training session in schools of some sort. I mean, familiarization or just a lot of things—a lot of things happen due to ignorance and lack of knowledge. (15A)</i>

Theme	Teen Quotes	Adult Quotes
	<i>I think one of the bigger problems is we have really young kids, especially, that come through our program BB who are still in elementary school. Talking to a fifth-grader about preventing firearm suicide or firearm homicide is not a topic that I think they're gonna really understand. (13T)</i>	

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