



MARCH 8,

Preventing Firearm Injury and Death

KEY POINTS

- Firearm injuries and suicides are preventable—not inevitable—and everyone has a role to play in prevention.
- A comprehensive approach to prevention makes communities healthier and safer.
- Resources are available to help firearm owners consider the best options for securely storing firearms.

How can firearm violence and suicide be prevented?

CDC's [Prevention Resources for Action](#), [Suicide Prevention Resource for Action](#), and surveillance systems can help communities use the best available evidence to prevent violence and suicide. The resources emphasize the importance of a comprehensive approach to make communities healthier and safer. This page lists some examples of proven prevention activities communities have adopted.

Address the needs of people at greatest risk for experiencing firearm injury and deaths.

- For example, **street outreach programs** connect populations at highest risk for violence with community services and help to reduce conflict in the community. They have shown promising results for multiple outcomes. **Gatekeeper programs** train community members to identify people who may be at risk for suicide and to respond effectively with referrals to treatment or other support services, as appropriate.
- When people are injured from violence or experience suicidal ideation or attempts, there can be a window of opportunity to provide help. **Hospital-based violence and suicide intervention programs** can connect them and their families with services. Hospital-based programs have shown promise for reducing risk for future violence as well as reduced suicide and suicide attempts.
- **Therapeutic approaches** such as cognitive behavioral therapy have been shown to prevent suicide risk as well as lessen harms and future risks for people who have experienced violence.

Improve the physical conditions within communities.

- Multiple cities have had success with approaches like **cleaning and maintaining** vacant lots. These approaches increase opportunities for positive social interactions and reduce opportunities for violence. Urban green spaces have been associated with reduced firearm assaults, reduced stress and improved mental health, with particular benefits in areas with the highest poverty.
- Ensuring students have **safe routes** to and from school can keep kids out of harm's way. Programs that place trained community members along these routes to monitor and assist with students' safe travel have shown benefits on school attendance and reductions in overall crime including lower rates of violent crimes.

Address circumstances that contribute to risk.




- Strengthening **economic and household security** through approaches like housing assistance, childcare subsidies, unemployment insurance tax credits, and livable wages can help lift families out of poverty, reduce stress, and enhance positive outcomes, which in turn can help reduce the risk for violence and suicide. An analysis of state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) laws, for example, found that higher state EITCs were associated with lower rates of violence and suicide.
- **Secure storage of firearms**, such as in a safe or lock box, can help prevent unauthorized access and use of firearms, including by children and

those at risk for harming themselves or others.

How can you securely store your firearm?

It is important to store all firearms safely when not in use. Putting a firearm out of sight or out of reach is **not safe storage and not enough** to prevent use by children or unauthorized adults.

Resources are available to help firearm owners consider the best options for safely storing firearms:

- The Department of Veterans Affairs, in collaboration with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and the National Shooting Sport Foundation, has released [Suicide Prevention is Everyone's Business: A Toolkit for Safe Firearm Storage](#) PDF . This toolkit describes metho for safe storage and provides guidance to enhance safe storage practices in your community.
- The National Shooting Sports Foundation's [Project ChildSafe](#)  emphasizes the importance of storing firearms unloaded and locked, with ammunition secured separately. They provide [safety kits](#) , brochures, tip sheets, and other educational materials and resources.

Additional Safe Storage Resources

[American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) Safe Firearm Storage Video Series](#) 

AAP's website housing a library of videos designed to support health professionals help families take steps towards safer storage.

[American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) Safer: Storing Firearms Prevents Harm Online Training](#) 

This training describes universal firearm injury prevention guidance for pediatric providers in clinic-settings, offers pragmatic video counseling examples based on existing evidence, and provides resources.

[Defense Suicide Prevention Office \(DSPO\)](#) 

DSPO's library of safe storage-related toolkits, public service announcements, and other resources.

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