

BE SMART

Each year in the United States, nearly 300 children aged 17 and under gain access to a firearm and unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else. Nearly 500 more commit suicide with a gun. We have the power to prevent tragedies like these from happening.

Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America has developed the SMART framework to help parents and adults prevent child gun deaths and injuries. Together, we can protect kids.

Secure all guns in your home and vehicles

Model responsible behavior around guns

Ask about the presence of unsecured guns in other homes

Recognize the risks of teen suicide

Tell your peers to be SMART

SAFETY IS ALWAYS AN ADULT RESPONSIBILITY

Kids will be kids. They won't always make smart decisions about their own safety. Always assume that curious or impulsive kids may find and touch an unsecured gun, even if they've been told not to.

If a child handles a gun, a bad decision can quickly become a fatal one. SMART adults protect kids by storing guns locked, unloaded and separately from ammunition, and by making sure children are never in the presence of unsecured guns.

DID YOU KNOW

- 1.7 million American children live in homes with guns that are both loaded and unlocked.
- Every year, nearly 300 children 17 and under gain access to a firearm and unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else — often fatally
- Every year, nearly 500 children 17 and under die by suicide with a gun.
- SMART adults can protect vulnerable kids by storing guns locked, unloaded and separately from ammunition, and taking steps to make sure children never get unauthorized access to unsecured guns.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

It's simple. Spread the Be SMART message. Talk to your friends and family about the importance of responsible gun storage, and get the word out in your community. Volunteers all over the country are available to deliver a 20-minute presentation entitled "Be SMART: A conversation about kids, guns and safety" to local groups and organizations. Visit BeSMARTforKids.org to learn more and get involved.

When it comes to kids' safety, we're all in this together!



OUR STORY

The Be SMART Campaign

Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America launched the Be SMART campaign to take action to promote responsible gun ownership and reduce child gun deaths. The campaign focuses on education and awareness about child gun deaths and responsible gun storage. Moms encourage parents and caretakers to "Be SMART" and take these five simple steps to help prevent shootings by children: **S**ecure all guns in your home and vehicles; **M**odel responsible behavior around guns; **A**sk about the presence of unsecured guns in other homes; **R**ecognize the risks of teen suicide; **T**ell your peers to be SMART. For more information visit BeSMARTforKids.org.

Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America

Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America is a grassroots movement of American mothers fighting for public safety measures that respect the Second Amendment and protect people from gun violence. Moms Demand Action campaigns for new and stronger solutions to lax gun laws and loopholes that jeopardize the safety of our children and families. Since its inception after the tragedy at Sandy Hook School, Moms Demand Action has established a chapter in every state of the country and, along with Mayors Against Illegal Guns and the Everytown Survivor Network, it is part of Everytown for Gun Safety, the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country with more than three million supporters and more than 125,000 donors.

For more information or to get involved visit www.momsdemandaction.org. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/MomsDemandAction or on Twitter at @MomsDemand

MOMS 
DEMAND
ACTION
FOR GUN SENSE IN AMERICA


EVERYTOWN
FOR GUN SAFETY | SUPPORT FUND

PROGRAM MADE POSSIBLE WITH FUNDS FROM
EVERYTOWN FOR GUN SAFETY SUPPORT FUND



**JOIN THE CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE
CHILD GUN DEATHS**

THE IMPACT OF GUN VIOLENCE ON AMERICAN CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

Gun violence has a devastating impact on American children and teenagers. Over 2,700 children and teens (age 0-19 years) are shot and killed and over 14,000 more are shot and injured every year—that's an average of 47 American children and teens shot every day.¹ And the effects of gun violence extend far beyond those struck by a bullet: gun violence shapes the lives of the millions of children who witness it, know someone who was shot, or live in fear of the next shooting.

CHILD AND TEEN GUN DEATHS PER YEAR, BY INTENT²



THIS IS A UNIQUELY AMERICAN PROBLEM

Compared to other high-income countries, American children aged 5-14 are **14 times** more likely to be killed with guns. American adolescents and young adults aged 15-24 are **23 times** more likely to be killed with guns.

Gun-related deaths are now the third leading cause of death for American children.³

This is a uniquely American problem. Compared to other high-income countries, American children aged 5-14 are 14 times more likely to be killed with guns; and American adolescents and young adults aged 15-24 are 23 times more likely to be killed with guns.⁴

When American children and teens are killed with guns, 60 percent are homicides—about 1,600 per year.⁵ For children under the age of 13, these gun homicides most frequently occur in the home and are often connected to domestic or family violence.⁶

Another 35 percent of child and teen gun deaths are suicides—over 900 per year.⁷ When children under the age of 18 die by gun suicide, they are likely to have used a gun they found at home: over 80 percent of child gun suicides used a gun belonging to a parent or relative.⁸ For people of all ages, having access to a gun significantly increases the risk of death by suicide and homicide.⁹

Gun violence disproportionately impacts black children and teens, who are 4 times more likely than white children and teens to be killed with guns.¹⁰ This is driven by a substantial disparity in gun homicide rates: black children and teens are 14 times more likely than white children and teens to die by gun homicide.¹¹

An estimated 3 million American children per year are exposed to shootings.¹² Witnessing shootings can have a devastating impact. Children exposed to violence, crime, and abuse are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol; suffer from depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder; fail or have difficulties in school; and engage in criminal activity.¹³

In America, children and teenagers are victimized by gun violence every single day. No child should experience this—not in their schools, not in their homes, and not in their communities.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. WISQARS Injury Reports. Data reflects a 5 year average: 2012-2016 for fatalities, and 2011-2015 for injuries. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2CIMGxh>.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. WISQARS Injury Reports. Data reflects a 5 year average (2012-2016) of gun deaths by intent. Homicide intent includes gun deaths by homicide and legal intervention.
3. Fowler KA, Dahlberg LL, Haileyesus T, Gutierrez C, Bacon S. Childhood Firearm Injuries in the United States. *Pediatrics*. 2017; 140(1). Gun-related deaths are the third leading cause of death among US children aged 1 to 17.
4. Grinshteyn E, Hemenway D. Violent Death Rates: The US Compared with Other High-income OECD Countries, 2010. *American Journal of Medicine*. 2016; 129(3), 266-273.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. WISQARS Injury Reports. Data reflects a 5 year average (2012-2016) of gun deaths by homicide and legal intervention. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2CIMGxn>
6. Fowler KA, Dahlberg LL, Haileyesus T, Gutierrez C, Bacon S. Childhood Firearm Injuries in the United States. *Pediatrics*. 2017; 140(1).
7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. WISQARS Injury Reports. Data reflects a 5 year average: 2012-2016. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2CIMGxh>.
8. Johnson RM, Barber C, Azrael D, Clark DE, Hemenway D. Who are the owners of firearms used in adolescent suicides? *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*. 2010; 40(6): 609-611.
9. Anglemeyer A, Horvath T, Rutherford G. The Accessibility of Firearms and Risk for Suicide and Homicide Victimization Among Household Members: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *Ann. Internal Med*. 2014; 160(2), 101-110.
10. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. WISQARS Injury Reports. Data reflects a 5 year average: 2012-2016 for fatalities, and 2011-2015 for injuries. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2CIMGxh>.
11. *ibid*.
12. Fowler KA, Dahlberg LL, Haileyesus T, Gutierrez C, Bacon S. Childhood Firearm Injuries in the United States. *Pediatrics*. 2017; 140(1). Everytown analysis derives the 3 million number by multiplying the share of children (ages 0-17) who are exposed to shootings per year (4.2%) by the total child population of the US in 2016 (~73.5M).
13. Finkelhor D, Turner HA, Ormrod R, Hamby S, Kracke K. Children's Exposure to Violence: A Comprehensive National Survey. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; 2009.



Talking to Your Children About Guns

Every year, hundreds of children unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else when they find unlocked, loaded guns. And over 80 percent of the nearly 500 American children who die every year by gun suicide use a gun they found at home. The Be SMART program, designed to prevent these shootings, recognizes **that responsible storage by adult gun owners is essential to preventing unauthorized, unsupervised access to firearms by children.**

It is always an adult's responsibility to prevent unauthorized access to guns, not a curious child's responsibility to avoid guns. That means always keeping all firearms locked, unloaded, and stored separately from ammunition.

And yet research shows that nearly 1.7 million American children live in homes with guns that are not stored responsibly. We recognize that until every gun is responsibly stored, children are still at risk of finding unsecured guns, and parents need guidance on how to talk to their children about what to do if that happens. The suggestions below, developed in collaboration with Marjorie Sanfilippo, Ph.D., a professor and expert on children's behaviors around firearms, are a good place to start:

Tips For Talking to Young Children

- Make it part of the normal safety conversation you have with your children.
- Keep the language simple; for example: "If you see a gun, don't touch it. Tell an adult right away."
- Tell children not to touch a gun, even if it looks like a toy.
- Assure children they will not get in trouble if they tell an adult they've seen a gun.
- Repeat it on a regular basis.

Tips for Talking to Adolescents

- Include it in your general safety conversations about topics like drugs, alcohol, and drunk driving.
- Tell them to immediately leave any situation where an unsecured gun is present.
- Tell them not to listen to a friend who says a gun is unloaded or otherwise safe.
- Give your teen strategies to get out of a situation where a gun is present—or brainstorm them together. For example, you could agree that your teen would say: "Mom just texted me that I have to get home right now."
- Assure them that it's OK to ask about the presence of unsecured guns in other homes, but offer to do it for them if they don't feel comfortable.

For All Ages

- Don't have the conversation only once. Talk to them frequently, just as you would about other crucial safety issues.
- Make sure they understand that any situation where there's an unsecured gun is a dangerous situation.

It is important to remember that talking to children about guns is a precaution, not a guarantee of safety. One study found that young children who go through a week-long gun safety training are just as likely as children with no training to play with a handgun when they find one.¹

This is one reason we take issue with the National Rifle Association's program to reduce unintentional shootings by children, *Eddie Eagle*, as it focuses solely on educating children not to touch guns without permission and to alert an adult if they find a firearm. That alone is not nearly sufficient to reduce unauthorized access to guns by children.

1. Marjorie S. Hardy (Sanfilippo), Teaching Firearm Safety to Children: Failure of a Program. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, Vol. 23 No. 2, April 2002, 71-76.



SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS FOR TEENS

Here are five signs that may mean someone is in emotional pain and might need help. For more information go to: <http://www.changedirection.org/know-the-five-signs/>

1 PERSONALITY CHANGE

Their personality changes. You may notice sudden or gradual changes in the way that someone typically behaves. He or she may behave in ways that don't seem to fit the person's values, or the person may just seem different.

2 AGITATION

They seem uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated, or moody. You may notice the person has more frequent problems controlling his or her temper and seems irritable or unable to calm down. People in more extreme situations of this kind may be unable to sleep or may explode in anger at a minor problem.

3 WITHDRAWAL

They withdraw or isolate themselves from other people. Someone who used to be socially engaged may pull away from family and friends and stop taking part in activities he or she used to enjoy. In more severe cases the person may start failing to make it to work or school. Not to be confused with the behavior of someone who is more introverted, this sign is marked by a change in someone's typical sociability, as when someone pulls away from the social support he or she typically has.

4 POOR SELF-CARE

They stop taking care of themselves and may engage in risky behavior. You may notice a change in the person's level of personal care or an act of poor judgment on his or her part. For instance, someone may let his or her personal hygiene deteriorate, or the person may start abusing alcohol or illicit substances or engaging in other self-destructive behavior that may alienate loved ones.

5 HOPELESSNESS

They seem overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed by their circumstances. Have you noticed someone who used to be optimistic and now can't find anything to be hopeful about? That person may be suffering from extreme or prolonged grief, or feelings of worthlessness or guilt. People in this situation may say that the world would be better off without them, suggesting suicidal thinking.

People who attempt suicide may exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say or what they do. The more warning signs, the greater the risk. Find more information at www.afsp.org.

TALK

If a person talks about:

- Killing themselves
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others (Saying things like "No one will miss me" or "You'll be better off")
- Feeling trapped, hopeless or worthless
- Unbearable pain

BEHAVIOR

A person's suicide risk is greater if a behavior is new or has increased, especially if it's related to a painful event, loss, or change.

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online for materials or means
- Acting recklessly/taking risks
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Change in appetite
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Drop in grades
- Aggression
- Agitation

MOOD

People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods. Look for mood changes.

- Depression
- Loss of interest
- Rage
- Irritability
- Humiliation/Shame (as after a relationship break up or academic failure)
- Anxiety



SUICIDE RISK FACTORS

Risk factors are characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take his or her life. The more risk factors, the greater the risk.

Suicide can be difficult to predict and warning signs can go unrecognized.

The act of suicide is often impulsive and occurs during a short-term crisis. If lethal means are available, risk of suicide increases dramatically.

Firearms are the most lethal means of suicide.

Storing firearms locked and unloaded, separate from ammunition, can decrease the risk of a short-term crisis becoming a fatal tragedy. You can also remove the firearm from the location temporarily.

HEALTH FACTORS

- Mental health conditions (depression, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Borderline or Antisocial Personality Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Psychotic disorder or psychotic symptoms, anxiety disorders)
- Substance Use Disorders
- Serious or chronic health condition and/or pain

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

- Contagion (exposure to another person's suicide or to graphic/sensationalized accounts of suicide)
- Access to lethal means including firearms and drugs
- Prolonged stress factors (including harassment, bullying, relationship problems)
- Stressful life events (including death, a relationship break up, an academic failure, family discord)

HISTORICAL FACTORS

- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide attempts

BE

SMART

BeSMARTforKids.org

BE

A SMART HOME

Secure all guns in your home and vehicles

Model responsible behavior around guns

Ask about the presence of unsecured guns in other homes

Recognize the risks of teen suicide

Tell your peers to be SMART

 274C

For more information on what you can do to keep kids safe, visit BeSMARTforKids.org