



COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT FOR INJURY PREVENTION COORDINATORS

Firearm Injury Prevention

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Toolkit Overview

- **Purpose:** Provide coordinated messaging, outreach strategies, and customizable resources to raise awareness and promote safe firearm practices in Pennsylvania communities.
- **Target Audience:** Parents, caregivers, educators, youth, faith communities, and the general public.

Key Messages

1. Firearm injuries are preventable.
2. Safe storage saves lives.
3. Talking about firearm safety is a sign of care, not conflict.
4. You don't need to own a gun to be part of the solution.
5. Help is available: Mental health support and free gun locks exist in every community.

Messaging Framework

- Tone: Empathetic, nonjudgmental, family-centered
- Voice: Trusted, clear, community-minded
- Core Topics:
 - Safe storage at home
 - Child and teen safety
 - Firearms and suicide prevention
 - How to talk about guns without stigma
 - Resources and support services


All materials in this toolkit are developed by the American Trauma Society, Pennsylvania Division (ATSPA) and may be adapted with credit for local use.

Outreach Tools

Educational Handouts

The ATSPA offers free educational materials to our members and the public. Materials can be ordered on the ATSPA website, www.atspa.org, under “Resources”.

Firearm Safety - Lock It. Store It.

SAFETY FIRST

**LOCK IT.
STORE IT.**

Properly securing firearms when not in use is the #1 way to help prevent theft, misuse, and injury.

Safe Storage is employing precautions and multiple safeguards that provide an additional barrier against unauthorized use. Safe Storage is the responsibility of every firearm owner.

- **Unloaded** firearms should be stored in a **locked** cabinet, safe, gun vault or storage case.
- Be sure to place the locked storage case in a location **inaccessible to children**.
- Unloaded firearms can also be secured with a **gun locking device** that renders the firearm inoperable. (A *gun lock* should be used as an *additional safety precaution* and not as a *substitute for secure storage*.)
- If firearms are **disassembled**, parts should be securely stored in separate locations.
- Store ammunition in a locked location **separate from firearms**.
- Always **re-check** firearms carefully and completely to be sure that they are **unloaded**.

Keep Kids Safe!
Start the conversation in your home.
Use the conversation tips below to start this important conversation with children.

“Guns are not toys and should **never** be played with.”

“If you find a gun, **leave it alone** and tell an adult.”

“All rules for safe gun handling must be obeyed.”


“If your friend tells you about a gun he or she found, **tell an adult**.”

“Even if a gun looks like a toy - **don’t touch it!**”

“Never go **snooping** or **allow others to snoop** for guns in the home.”



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Information provided by Project ChildSafe.
For more information, visit www.projectchildsafe.org.

Firearm Safety - Learn to ASK

FIREARM SAFETY
More than a third of all unintentional shootings of children take place in the homes of their friends, neighbors, or relatives.
HOW TO PREVENT A TRAGEDY
There are a few simple ways that you can prevent a tragedy in your home and community:
LEARN about safe storage and policy options, which help reduce the risk of gun violence.
ACT responsibly and always store your firearms locked, unloaded, and out of the reach of children and those who may be a danger to themselves or others.
TALK with your family, friends, and community about responsible gun ownership. Having regular conversations about gun safety with those close to you reduces the chance of family fire incidents.
ASK family, friends, and community members about access to unlocked and/or loaded guns in the home.
FIREARM STORAGE
Modeling responsible behavior promotes safe behaviors of those around you. If you are acting safely, your children, family and friends will follow.
Start by properly storing your firearms:


- **Unloaded**
- **Locked**
- **Out of Reach**

LEARN TO ASK
Routinely making safe storage questions part of the conversation keeps people informed and alive.
Normalize the question:
“I heard a story on the news that made me decide I should always ask this—do you have any firearms, and how are they stored?”
Include it with other safety questions:
“Before I drop my son off, I just wanted to check if you have pets? And also ask if you have firearms in your house and confirm how they are stored. I want to make sure he knows your safety rules.”
Focus it on the kids:
Kids are curious by nature, always going places and getting into things not necessarily meant for them. Ask:
“You know kids are always getting into things and my daughter is no different. Do you own firearms?” If yes - “How do you store them?”
Confirm secure storage practices:
Following their description, if you need to know more, then you can ask direct questions, like: “What kind of lock do you use?” or “How do you store ammunition?”
Remember that safety is the ultimate goal when inquiring about firearms.


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Suicide Prevention

ONE SUICIDE IS TOO MANY
How Can You Help?

1.
Ask them if they are okay and listen to them like a true friend.

2.
Tell them you are concerned about them and that they are not alone.

3.
Talk to a mental health professional about your concerns or visit: www.preventsuicidepa.org

Smash Suicide Myths → **Spread Truth:**

Those who talk about suicide don't do it.

Most of the people who either attempted or completed suicide have made their intentions known ahead of time by either talking about it or giving other clues. Talk of suicide should not be ignored or readily dismissed.

If a person is really intent on killing themselves, there is nothing anybody can do to stop them.

Even the most severely depressed person has mixed feelings or are ambivalent about dying and most likely just wants to end the pain they are in, not their lives. Often times, if a person in crisis gets the professional help they need, they will never be suicidal again. Suicide can be prevented in most cases and any act of kindness has the potential to save a life.

If you talk about suicide, you give people the idea to kill themselves.

Chances are, if you are worried about someone and you have noticed the warning signs and risk factors, they've probably thought about suicide themselves. Asking somebody directly about suicidal thoughts often brings a sense of relief to the suicidal person and helps them to live, not give them ideas to die.

Only experts or professionals can prevent suicide.

Suicide prevention is everybody's business, and anyone can help prevent the tragedy of suicide.

Preventing Suicide


Suicide claims the lives of almost 2,000 Pennsylvanians each year - an average of five lives each day. The American Trauma Society, Pennsylvania Division (ATSPA) wants to ensure you know the suicide warning signs and risk factors and how you can help.

Warning Signs:


- Talking about suicide, wanting to die, kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling worthless, hopeless, or having no reason to live
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Getting affairs in order, making arrangements
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Preoccupation with death
- Acting anxiously or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawal from or changing in social connection/ situation


Risk Factors:

- Diagnosis of Depression
- Previous suicide attempt
- Family history of suicide
- Loss of job, home, money
- Death or terminal illness of a loved one
- Divorce or loss of major, significant relationship
- Loss of health, either real or imagined
- Someone close to the person has completed suicide
- Recent disappointment or rejection
- Being expelled from school/fired from job
- Victim of assault or bullying
- Questioning gender



For Immediate Help:
Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)


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Information courtesy of Prevent Suicide PA. Ribbon courtesy of suicidepreventionlifeline.org/



Outreach Tools

Educational Presentations (Slide Decks)

The ATSPA offers free educational presentations to our members and the public. Each presentation is packaged to be delivered by anyone and is offered 100% FREE OF CHARGE.

Presentations can be requested on the ATSPA website, www.atspa.org, under “Resources”. They will be delivered by Dropbox.



This presentation shares the essential principles of responsible firearm storage with our comprehensive 29-slide presentation, featuring informative content and four engaging videos. This educational resource is designed to enlighten audiences on the proper methods of storing firearms and emphasizes the critical necessity of safe storage practices. This presentation serves as a valuable resource for individuals seeking to educate on responsible firearm storage, ensuring a safer and more secure community for everyone.

Outreach Tools

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

- **Sample radio script (30-60 seconds)**

30 Seconds

Every year, thousands of children and teens are injured or killed by firearms—often from guns that are left unlocked at home.

Safe storage is simple and it saves lives. Keep guns locked, unloaded, and stored separately from ammunition.

A safe home is a strong home. Learn more at [insert your website].

This message is brought to you by the [your organization]

60 Seconds

Did you know that firearms are now the leading cause of death for children and teens in the U.S.? Many of these tragedies happen in homes where guns are stored loaded and unsecured.

You can help prevent these injuries.

Always keep firearms locked, unloaded, and stored away from ammunition. Talk to your children about gun safety. And don't hesitate to ask if there's a secured firearm in any home your child visits.

Whether you own a gun or not, we all have a role to play in keeping families safe.

Visit [your website] to find safety tips, mental health resources, and community tools to prevent firearm injuries.

This message is brought to you by [insert your organization]—because safety starts at home.

Outreach Tools

Social Media Toolkit

• Sample posts for Facebook

Post 1:

 Lock It Up, Save a Life!

Firearms are now the leading cause of death among children and teens in the U.S. Safe storage saves lives — especially in homes with kids or teens. Keep guns locked, unloaded, and stored separately from ammunition.

 Learn more at www.atspa.org

#KeepPAFamiliesSafe #FirearmSafety #SafeStoragePA

Post 2:

 Firearms & Mental Health: A Life-Saving Conversation

Talking about mental health and firearm access can prevent suicides. If you or someone you love is struggling, secure firearms in your home and reach out for help.

 Call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

#EndTheSilence #FirearmInjuryPrevention
#SafeHomesPA

Post 3:


 Gun Safety Starts at Home

Even if you don't own a firearm, your child might visit a home that does. Ask about gun storage when your child visits friends or family — it's as normal as asking about allergies or seat belts.

#NormalizeTheAsk #ChildSafety #LockItUpPA


• Sample posts for X

Post 1:

 1 in 3 homes with kids has a gun. Safe storage = safe kids. Lock it up. Keep it separate. Save a life.

#FirearmSafety #KeepPAFamiliesSafe #LockItUpPA

Post 2:

 Suicide is often impulsive. Access to a gun makes it deadly. Store firearms safely & talk openly about mental health.

 Call 988 for help.

#FirearmInjuryPrevention #MentalHealthMatters
#SafeHomes

Post 3:

 Hosting a playdate? Visiting relatives?

Always ask: "Are any firearms in the home secured?"

A simple question can save lives.

#ChildSafety #GunSafety #NormalizeTheAsk



6 Mental Health Resources

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**
Call or text 988 for free, 24/7 support for anyone in emotional distress.
- PA Support & Referral Helpline**
1-855-284-2494 for mental health and substance use support across Pennsylvania.
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Pennsylvania**
www.namipa.org offers education, peer support, and local chapter resources.
- Veterans Crisis Line**
Call 988 and press 1, or text 838255 for 24/7 confidential support for veterans and their families.
- Safe2Say Something PA**
A youth-focused anonymous tip line for students concerned about safety threats, including self-harm. www.safe2saypa.org
- Local County Mental Health Services**
Each Pennsylvania county offers mental health crisis services; contact your local office for specific support and referrals.

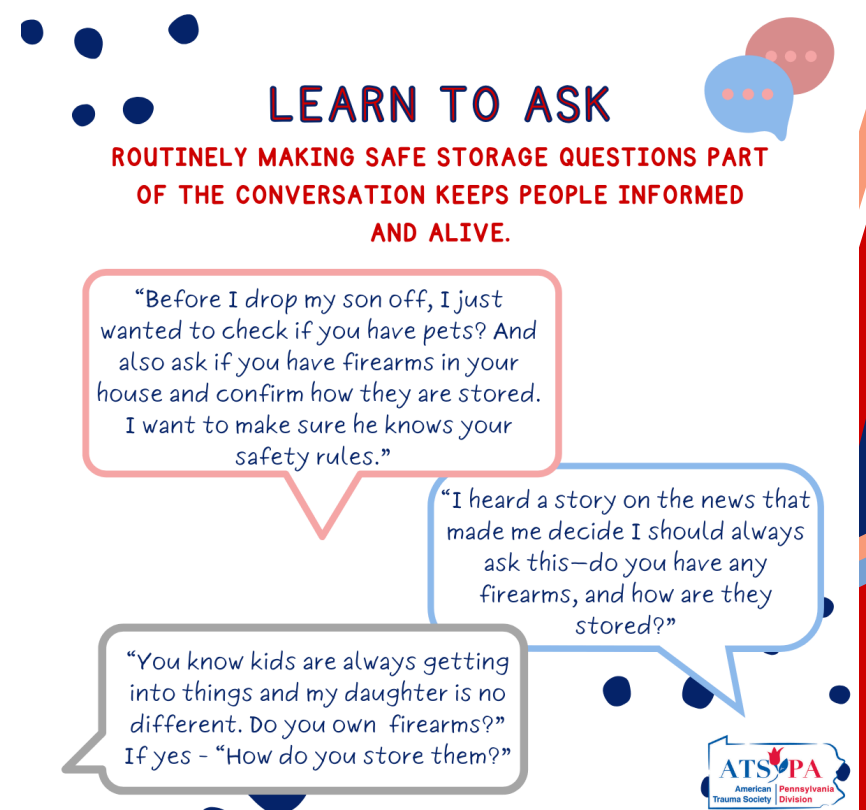
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SAFE STORAGE TIPS

- 1 Unloaded**
Store ammunition in a locked location separate from firearms.
- 2 Locked**
Unloaded firearms can also be secured with a gun locking device that renders the firearm inoperable.
- 3 Out of Reach**
Unloaded firearms should be stored in a locked cabinet, safe, gun vault or storage case.

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LEARN TO ASK

ROUTINELY MAKING SAFE STORAGE QUESTIONS PART OF THE CONVERSATION KEEPS PEOPLE INFORMED AND ALIVE.

"Before I drop my son off, I just wanted to check if you have pets? And also ask if you have firearms in your house and confirm how they are stored. I want to make sure he knows your safety rules."

"I heard a story on the news that made me decide I should always ask this—do you have any firearms, and how are they stored?"

"You know kids are always getting into things and my daughter is no different. Do you own firearms?" If yes - "How do you store them?"

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Outreach Tools

📺 Press & Promotion Materials - Sample press release for local media

Addressing Gun Violence as a Public Health Crisis in Pennsylvania

Mechanicsburg, Pa. – Over 1,600 Pennsylvanians die from gun violence every year, according to CeaseFirePA. While gun control remains a divisive issue, public health professionals believe that a broader, evidence-based approach can lead to real progress in reducing firearm-related injuries and deaths.

The American Trauma Society, Pennsylvania Division (ATSPA), has released a comprehensive Firearm Injury & Violence Prevention Toolkit for Healthcare Professionals to equip clinicians with tools and guidance to help address this epidemic.

Medical organizations have led firearm injury prevention efforts for more than 30 years. Yet, unlike other public health successes, firearm-related deaths are on the rise. In 2022, Pennsylvania had the 15th highest firearm homicide rate in the country. Between 2013 and 2022, the state's overall firearm death rate rose by 31%. In 2020 alone, firearms were involved in 79% of homicides and 53% of suicides.

“[Insert quote from your organization's leadership here—e.g., ‘Gun violence is not just a criminal justice issue—it's a public health crisis. Our goal is to give healthcare providers the tools they need to save lives before injuries happen.’ – [Name, Title]]”

The ATSPA Toolkit reflects updated recommendations to address today's challenges. It promotes a public health model rooted in prevention, data, and cross-sector collaboration—similar to successful efforts in trauma, EMS, and disaster response.

Key Recommendations Include:

- Promote collaboration among medical, government, law enforcement, and community partners
- Educate the public on gun safety, including safe storage practices
- Expand funding for mental health and behavioral health services
- Invest in violence prevention education and non-violent conflict resolution
- Support federal and nonprofit research into firearm injury prevention
- Promote the “Stop the Bleed” national training program for emergency response

“Firearm violence is an epidemic—and grief alone is not enough,” said [Leader's Name]. “By taking a proactive, united approach, we can protect our patients, our families, and our communities.”

The full toolkit is now available for download at www.atspa.org. Healthcare professionals, educators, and community leaders are encouraged to use and adapt the materials to support local prevention efforts.