

# LETHAL MEANS SAFETY

SUICIDE PREVENTION-FOCUSED



**HOW CAN YOUR ORGANIZATION SUPPORT  
LETHAL MEANS SAFETY?**

**WHAT CAN FAMILIES, ORGANIZATIONS,  
COMMUNITIES, HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS, AND  
POLICYMAKERS DO?**

**ARE THERE TRAINING OPTIONS AVAILABLE?**

**WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?**

**WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE?**

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### HOW CAN YOUR ORGANIZATION SUPPORT LETHAL MEANS SAFETY?

**Lethal means** are objects (e.g., medications, firearms, sharp instruments) that can be used to inflict self-directed violence. Among suicide deaths, firearms are the most lethal method used.

**Lethal Means Safety** is an intentional, voluntary practice to reduce someone's suicide risk by using safe storage practices and limiting access to lethal means.

Reducing access to lethal means is an important part of comprehensive approach to suicide prevention.

### WHY LETHAL MEANS SAFETY IS IMPORTANT FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

The goals of suicide prevention are to help the person understand that you care, that there are alternatives to suicide, that they can get safely through the crisis, and that you can help them seek available resources.

Many suicide attempts take place during a short-term crisis, so it is important to consider a person's access to lethal means during these periods of increased risk.

Access to lethal means is a risk factor for suicide. Reducing access to lethal means saves lives. Firearms are the most lethal among suicide methods.



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### WHAT CAN FAMILIES, ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNITIES, HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS, AND POLICYMAKERS DO?

There are many actions to reduce access to lethal means of self-harm. Some of these are **general household health and safety precautions** that should be used regardless of suicide risk.



#### Examples include:

- Limiting access to medications.
- Storing medication in a lock box if someone in the home is at risk of suicide.
- Firearms should be stored unloaded.
- Storing ammunition separately from firearms, each in separate locked places.

### ARE THERE TRAINING OPTIONS AVAILABLE?

**Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM)** can help you feel prepared to talk with people about means safety. Reducing access to lethal means, such as firearms and medication, can determine whether a person at risk for suicide lives or dies.

This course is about reducing access to the methods individuals use to kill themselves. They cover who needs lethal means counseling and how to work with people at risk for suicide and their families to reduce access.



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### WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?

#### LETHAL MEANS SAFETY RESOURCES

##### FOR ANY ORGANIZATIONS/ SCHOOLS

###### **Gun Safe Vermont**

Locate free gun locks within Vermont and other resources.

###### **Firearm Industry Trade Association Safety**

This site contains literature, videos and various materials on promoting firearm safety.

###### **Be Smart for Kids**

This site shares information on keeping families and children safe through secure firearm storage.

##### FOR MEDICAL SETTINGS

###### **Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM) Pediatrics**

A resource on ways to educate families about firearm safety.

###### **VCHIP Firearm Safe Storage Primary Care**

Vermont Child Health Improvement Program's video modeling ways for providers to counsel on safe firearm storage.

###### **Northern New England Poison Control Center**

Northern New England Poison Control Center's and Safe Kids Vermont's youth self-poisoning and medication safety toolkit for medical providers.

###### **UVM Medical Center Safe Storage**

A University of Vermont site provides safe storage counseling in healthcare settings.

###### **Put your medications Up and Away**

This site focuses on keeping families and children safe through the promotion of keeping medications stored safely and out of reach.

##### FOR SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS, AND THEIR FAMILIES (SMVF)

###### **TRAIN**

This is a lethal means safety training sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

###### **WORRIED ABOUT A VETERAN**

This is a site for those concerned about a service member, a veteran or their family and offers education on how to support keeping the home safe with the promotion of safe storage of firearms and medications.

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### WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE?

#### Promote Lethal Means Safety for Suicide Prevention

**Ten Action Steps** organizations, families, communities, healthcare providers, and policymakers can take, include:

1. Educate family members and others about ways to limit access to lethal means during a crisis.
2. Train mental health professionals and other health care professionals in lethal means counseling: **Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM)**.
3. Train non-traditional providers in lethal means counseling, for example, divorce and defense attorneys, probation/parole officers, and first responders.
4. Educate the community about options for temporarily storing firearms outside the home during a crisis.
5. Collaborate with others in your community to increase safety. Join the **Vermont Suicide Prevention Coalition (VTSP Coalition)**.
6. Institute lethal means counseling policies in health and behavioral health care settings.
7. Ask about the presence of firearms in the home and storage practices.
8. Work collaboratively with gun retailers and gun owner groups on suicide prevention efforts.
9. Distribute free or low-cost gun locks or gun safes in VT.
10. Share resources, including this document!

# FacingSuicide

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