

LETHAL MEANS SAFETY

YOUTH-FOCUSED PREVENTION



**HOW CAN YOUR YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATION
SUPPORT LETHAL MEANS SAFETY?**

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

ARE THERE TRAINING OPTIONS AVAILABLE?

**WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR
SCHOOLS AND OTHER YOUTH-SERVING
ORGANIZATIONS?**

WHAT CAN WE DO?

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HOW CAN YOUR YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS 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.

Research shows it can take less than 10 minutes between the initial plan to attempt suicide and the action to take one's life.

Safe storage practices increase the time it takes for a person experiencing suicidal thoughts to access a lethal item. During this critical time, the person may be reminded of reasons to live, or someone else may be able to intervene, resulting in a life saved.

Reducing access to lethal means is an important part of a comprehensive approach to 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 safely get 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 essential to consider a person's access to lethal means during these periods of increased risk. Suicide attempts are often impulsive and difficult to predict, especially those that use firearms. It is important to ensure that young people do not have unsupervised access to firearms.

Because access to lethal means is a risk factor for suicide, **reducing access to lethal means and safe storage practices save lives.**



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WHAT CAN YOU 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:



- Limit access to medications.
- Store medication in a lock box if someone in the home is at risk of suicide.
- Firearms should be stored locked up and unloaded.
- Ammunition should be locked up and stored separately from firearm.

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.

These courses are 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. (<https://www.calmamerica.org/>)



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WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR SCHOOLS AND OTHER YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS?

LETHAL MEANS SAFETY RESOURCES

Gun Safe Vermont

Locate free gun locks within Vermont and other resources (<https://www.justice.gov/usao-vt/gunsafe-vt>).

VT State Police Firearms Storage Program

Learn where and how to safely store firearms away from the home, become a storage facility, or access support (<https://vsp.vermont.gov/licensing/firearmstorage>).

Take 5 to Save Lives

Take 5 encourages everyone to complete several action steps under five important themes: LEARN, KNOW, DO, TALK, and SHARE. The Take 5 campaign broadens recognition of these essential suicide prevention activities (<https://www.take5tosavelives.org/about>).

Firearm Industry Trade Association Safety

This site contains literature, videos and various materials on promoting firearm safety (<https://www.nssf.org/safety/>).

Be Smart for Kids

This site shares information on keeping families and children safe through secure firearm storage (<https://besmartforkids.org/>).

VCHIP Firearm Safe Storage Primary Care

Vermont Child Health Improvement Program's video modeling ways for providers to counsel on safe firearm storage (<https://www.uvm.edu/~rchawla/firearms/firearmsafestorage.html>).

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 (<https://www.nnepc.org/>).

UVM Medical Center Safe Storage

A University of Vermont site provides education on protecting a household through safe storage (<https://www.uvmhealth.org/medcenter/wellness-resources/injury-prevention/safe-storage>).

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 (<https://upandaway.org/en/>).

The Trevor Project for Serving LGBTQ+ Youth

A national, 24-hour, toll-free, confidential suicide prevention service for LGBTQIA+ youth (<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>).

Lock 2 Live

This tool can help you decide to temporarily reduce access to potentially dangerous things, like firearms, medicines, sharp objects, or other household items (<https://lock2live.org/>).

American Academy of Pediatrics

Safe firearm storage video series designed to support health professionals help families take steps toward safer storage (<https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/gun-safety-and-injury-prevention/safe-storage-of-firearms/>).

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WHAT CAN WE DO?

Promote Lethal Means Safety

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)** (<https://www.calmamerica.org/>).
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)** (<https://vtspc.org/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** (<https://vsp.vermont.gov/licensing/firearmstorage>).
10. Share resources, including this document!

FacingSuicideVT

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