

Keeping Minnesotans Safe at Home

Key Facts:

- **When guns and children are in the same home, unintentional shootings increase.** During the four years (2015 to 2019) before the COVID-19 crisis, more than 1,600 children under the age of 18 unintentionally shot someone, and most of these shootings occurred in a home. Most of the victims, including more than 600 who died, were also under 18. Researchers estimate that 4.6 million children in the United States live in homes where guns are not stored in a gun safe or securely locked. In that same period, from 2015 to 2019, researchers who interviewed gun-owning parents and their children separately learned that 73 percent of children under the age of 10 knew where the guns were stored. *Journal of Urban Health, 2018.*
- **Keeping guns unloaded, locked and stored away from ammunition can prevent some accidental shootings.** During this time when children are spending more time at home, safe firearm storage becomes paramount. Firearm experts recommend the combination of unloading the ammunition, locking the gun and storing the firearm and ammunition in separate locations. Federal law requires new handguns to come with a gun lock that makes it inoperable until removed. Many Minnesota police departments will give gun owners free gun locks. *JAMA Pediatrics, 2019.*
- **Guns are the most fatal method of committing suicide.** In addition to preventing unintentional shootings, safe storage may also prevent suicides. In 2019, 355 Minnesotans, including 25 teenagers, killed themselves with a firearm. Using a gun in a suicide attempt ends in death 85 percent of the time, compared with a 3 percent death rate for other methods. In addition, more than 600 children die by gun suicide every year, and 80 percent of them use a gun owned by a relative. Two-thirds of all gun deaths in the United States are suicides. The COVID-19 crisis is creating feelings of anxiety, despair and helplessness in many Americans, which are risk factors for suicide. The Suicide Prevention Resource Center at <http://www.sprc.org/covid19> offers a number of resources to help people cope with stress and protect their mental health. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 2010.*
- **Spouses and disabled adults face an increased risk of domestic violence when there are guns in their homes.** FBI data show that 1

in every 2 women murdered in the United States is killed by an intimate partner and half of those murders are committed with a gun. Domestic abusers often use guns to threaten and intimidate spouses and disabled family members. The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms Research cites loss of employment as one of the most critical factors in intimate partner homicide and warns that adding close-quarters containment of households and generalized anxiety from the current contagion-containment measures will likely increase incidents of domestic violence, including intimate partner homicide.

- **Unsecured guns are more likely to be stolen.** During this nerve-racking time, some Americans are buying guns for self-defense, but those guns may end up being used by the criminals they fear. In 2016, more than 237,000 guns were reported stolen in the United States, a more than 68 percent increase from 2005, an investigation from *NBC News* and *The Trace* website found.
- **Guns don't keep Minnesotans safe.** Research has repeatedly confirmed that higher levels of household gun ownership correspond with higher suicide rates for the population as a whole, and for every age group and both men and women. At the individual level, research shows that having a gun in the home triples the risk of suicide death for all household members.
- **Universal background checks and extreme risk protection orders will protect Minnesotans.** The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will affect America for months, probably years, to come. Now is the time to pass and implement state laws that help prevent firearm suicides and domestic violence.

Verified Resources:

Everytown. <https://everytown.org/>. An American nonprofit organization that advocates for gun control and against gun violence, Everytown for Gun Safety was created in 2013 when Mayors Against Illegal Guns and Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America merged.

GVPedia. <https://www.gvpedia.org/>. GVPedia is a comprehensive resource that includes a Gun Study Database and the GVP University, which contains fact sheets and white papers on gun violence topics.

Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/guns-crime/view/>. An independent nonpartisan policy institute that is dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans, the Center for American Progress is an independent nonpartisan educational institute under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code.

The Trace. <https://www.thetrace.org/>
The Trace, an independent non-profit journalism website devoted to gun-related news in the United States, was established in 2015 by Everytown for Gun Safety. The Trace partners with other national and local media organizations.