



# FIREARMS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION



AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR  
Suicide Prevention



# WHAT LEADS TO SUICIDE?

There's no single cause. Suicide most often occurs when several stressors and health issues converge to create an experience of hopelessness and despair. Depression is the most common health condition associated with suicide, and is often undiagnosed or untreated. Most people who actively manage their mental health conditions lead fulfilling lives. Conditions like depression, anxiety and substance use problems, especially when unaddressed, increase risk for suicide.



# Some People are More at Risk for Suicide than Others



## HEALTH FACTORS

### **Mental health conditions**

- Depression
- Substance use disorders
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia and psychosis
- Personality traits of aggression, mood changes and poor relationships
- Conduct disorder
- Anxiety disorders (PTSD)

### **Serious or chronic health condition and/or pain**

### **Traumatic brain injury**

## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

**Prolonged stress**, such as harassment, bullying, relationship problems, and unemployment

**Stressful life events** like divorce, financial instability, or other losses

**Exposure to another person's suicide**, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide

**Access to lethal means** including firearms and drugs

## HISTORICAL FACTORS

**Previous suicide attempts**

**Family history of suicide**

**Abuse as a child**

Risk factors are characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take their life.

# Take Suicide Warning Signs Seriously



## TALK

### If a person talks about:

- Killing themselves
- Feeling hopeless
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain



## BEHAVIOR

### Behaviors that may signal risk, especially if related to a painful event, loss, or change:

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for materials or means
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Aggression
- Fatigue



## MOOD

### People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of interest
- Irritability
- Humiliation
- Agitation
- Rage

Most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say or what they do.

# Reaching Out Can Help Save a Life

## **SUICIDE IS A LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH, AND IT'S PREVENTABLE**

By keeping secure firearm storage in mind, you can help reduce the number of suicides involving firearms.

## **LEARN THE RISKS AND WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE**

If you are worried about a friend or family member, don't wait for them to reach out.

## **LET THEM KNOW YOU CARE**

Ask them directly about suicide and encourage them to seek help. Asking about suicidal thoughts and showing concern will not put someone at greater risk.

## **IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT A LOVED ONE**

Always store firearms securely and consider temporary off-site storage for firearms when not in use.

## **IF YOU'RE GOING THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME**

If lawful where you live, consider giving the firearm and gun lock keys to a trusted family member or friend.

# DID YOU KNOW?

Firearms are used in nearly 50% of all suicides in the United States.

# Firearms Storage For Your Lifestyle

**As a gun owner, you can choose from multiple options for safely storing and protecting your firearms when they're not in use.**

## **CABLE LOCK**

Starting at \$10

Requiring either a key or combination to unlock, an inexpensive cable lock runs through the barrel or action of most firearms to prevent it from being loaded and fired.

## **GUN CASE**

Starting at \$20

A gun case is an affordable storage solution for those looking to secure, conceal, protect or legally transport a firearm. Be sure to lock the case with an external device for added security.

## **LOCK BOX**

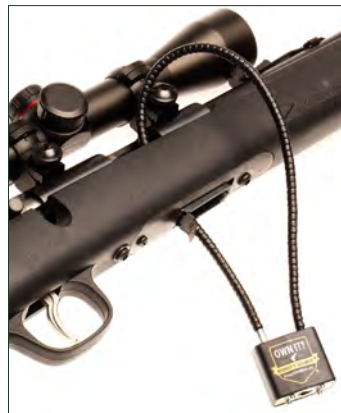
Starting at \$25

With an integrated lock, storage boxes provide reliable protection for firearms. Electronic boxes can be accessed only by using a special code or biometrics.

## **FULL SIZE GUN SAFE**

Starting at \$200

A gun safe allows you to safely store multiple firearms in one place.



Additional firearm safety resources are available at [ProjectChildSafe.org](https://ProjectChildSafe.org).

# RESOURCES



## Visit

Your Primary Care Provider  
Psychiatric Hospital  
Walk-in Clinic  
Emergency Department  
Urgent Care Center



## Find a mental health provider

[findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov)  
[mentalhealthamerica.net/finding-help](http://mentalhealthamerica.net/finding-help)



## Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
Veterans: Press 1



## Crisis Text Line

Text HELLO to 741-741



## CrisisChat.org



## 911 Call 911 for emergencies



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[afsp.org](http://afsp.org)