



School Safety and Responsible Firearm Storage

Bottom Line: School officials can pass resolutions to ensure parents know about how responsible gun storage can prevent school shootings. In the vast majority of school gun violence incidents, the shooters are students, and they obtain their guns from home, the homes of friends or relatives. This is unsurprising, as nearly 4.6 million American children live in homes with at least one gun that is loaded and unlocked. By taking proactive steps to promote a culture of responsible firearm storage, schools can prevent school gun violence and keep school communities safe.

INTRODUCTION

Unauthorized access to firearms is a major source of today's gun violence. This is particularly true when it comes to school gun violence and gun violence among children or teens.

An estimated 4.6 million American children live in households with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm.¹ Every year, hundreds of children in this country gain access to firearms and unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else.² There is also strong evidence that in school gun violence incidents, shooters are exploiting unsecured and easily accessible firearms.

Everytown for Gun Safety, the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers has released a comprehensive set of proven effective solutions to intervene and prevent school gun violence³, and responsible firearm storage is an essential component to any effective strategy to keep schools safe.

KEY FINDINGS

The perpetrators of school gun violence are students or recent graduates.

The New York Police Department compiled information on active shooter incidents from 1966 – 2016, and analysis finds that 79% of active shootings in schools involved shooters who were school-aged and were a current student or recent graduate of the school.⁴

The overwhelming majority of firearms used in school gun violence incidents are obtained from the shooter's home, the homes of relatives, or the homes of friends.

In incidents of gun violence on school grounds, 78 percent of shooters under the age of 18 obtained their guns from their own home, a relative's home, or from friends.⁵

Access to unsecured firearms also contributes to unintentional gun violence among children and teens.

Every year, nearly 350 children under the age of 18 unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else. That's roughly one unintentional shooting per day, and approximately 77 percent of these



incidents take place inside a home. Nearly 600 more children die by gun suicide each year, most often using guns belonging to a family member.⁶

Responsible firearm storage can help prevent school gun violence and gun violence among children and teens.

Research shows that responsible firearm storage practices are associated with reductions in the risk of self-inflicted and unintentional firearm injuries among children and teens—up to 85 percent depending on the type of storage practice.⁷

Across the country, lawmakers, community members, and local leaders are working together to implement public awareness campaigns—such as Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America’s Be SMART program—that encourage secure gun storage practices and highlight the public safety risks of unsecured guns.⁸

Just this year, the Los Angeles, California Unified School District passed a resolution to require that information be sent home with students to educate parents on their responsibility under existing state and local laws that require gun owners to responsibly store any firearms they own. Under this new policy, parents or guardians would need to sign and return a letter acknowledging that they have read the information. This type of action is a simple yet effective step that others can and should take to protect our students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Local school districts should take proactive steps to address the safety of students and the school community by building awareness of the need for responsible firearm storage practices.

1. Nineteen states, D.C., and several localities have some form of responsible firearm storage law.⁹ In these places, schools can notify parents of these laws and the importance of responsible gun storage.
2. In localities without a responsible firearm storage law, schools can bridge the gap and provide families with information about responsible firearm storage and its importance in keeping schools safe.

¹ Azrael D, Cohen J, Salhi C, Miller M. Firearm storage in gun-owning households with children: Results of a 2015 national survey. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2018; 95(3): 295-304. Study defined children as age under the age of 18.

² For more information on unintentional shootings by children, see: everytownresearch.org/notanaccident.

³ For more information on effective solutions to keep schools safe from gun violence see: Everytown for Gun Safety. Keeping our kids safe at school: a plan to stop mass shootings and end gun violence in American schools. everytownresearch.org/schoolsafety. February 2019.

⁴ New York City Police Department. Active shooters: Recommendation and analysis for risk mitigation. 2016. <https://on.nyc.gov/2GIEbl1>.

⁵ Everytown was able to identify the gun source in 51 percent of the incidents that involved shooters under 18 years old (a total of 100 shooters). Most of these shooters — 78 percent — obtained the gun(s) from their home or the homes of relatives or friends. Other analysis of school shootings consistently find that a clear majority of school shooters - between 68% and 80% - obtain their guns from family members, friends, or relatives. See United States Secret Service and United States Department of Education. The final report and findings of the safe school initiative: Implications for the prevention of school attacks in the United States. <https://bit.ly/2oFplwa>. Published May 2002. The study analyzed targeted school violence from 1974 through June 2000 finding that 68 percent of attackers acquired the gun(s) used in the incidents from their home or that of a relative. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Source of firearms used by students in school-associated violent deaths, United States, 1992-1999. *MMWR Weekly*. 2003; 52(09): 169-172. The study analyzed school-associated violent deaths between 1992 and 1999 finding that 79 percent of guns used were obtained from the shooter’s home or that of a friend or



relative. Woodrow Cox J, Rich S. 'The gun's not in the closet.' The Washington Post. August 1, 2018. <https://wapo.st/2TyDnTW>. The study analyzed acts of gun violence at primary and secondary schools involving shooters under the age of 18 since 1999 finding that of the 105 cases in which the gun's source was identified, 80 percent were acquired from the child's home or those of relatives or friends.

⁶ For more information on unintentional shootings by children, see: everytownresearch.org/notanaccident.

⁷ Grossman DC, Mueller BA, Riedy C, et al. Gun storage practices and risk of youth suicide and unintentional injuries. *JAMA*. 2005; 293(6): 707-714. Study found households that locked both firearms and ammunition had an 85 percent lower risk of unintentional firearm deaths than those that locked neither.

⁸ <http://besmartforkids.org/about/>

⁹ CA, CT, DC, DE, FL, IL, IA, HI, MA, MN, MD, NV, NH, NJ, NC, RI, TX, VA, WA, WI. In addition, localities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York City have responsible firearm storage ordinances.

UNLOAD, LOCK, AND SEPARATE: SECURE STORAGE PRACTICES TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE

Three-year-old Brayden Heath found his mother's handgun in the living room of their home in Anchorage, Alaska. Brayden was playing with the gun when it discharged, shooting him in the head. He was taken to a local hospital and pronounced dead later that day.¹

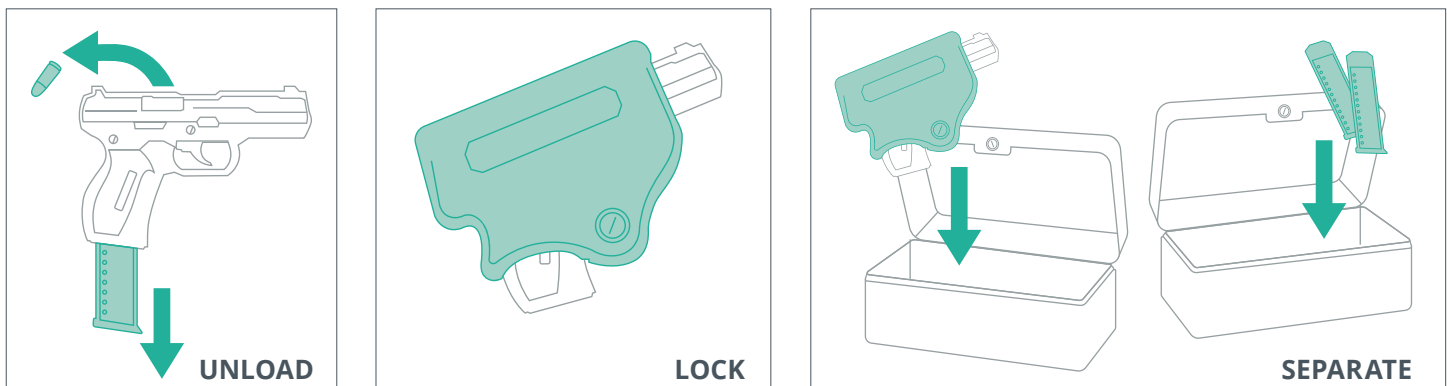
Introduction

There are an estimated 265 million civilian-owned firearms in the United States,² and more than one-third of homes contain at least one gun.³ Gun owners can make our homes and communities safer by storing their firearms unloaded and locked, with ammunition kept in a separate place, to prevent access by children and other people who are at risk of harming themselves or others. Research shows that these storage practices can play a vital role in reducing the risk of gun violence, particularly among children, due to unintentional shootings and gun suicides.⁴

The bottom line is this: Storing firearms unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition prevents access and saves lives.

What is secure firearm storage?

Experts agree: In order to prevent access, firearm storage practices should include three methods employed in combination—unloading the ammunition, locking the firearm, and storing the firearm and ammunition in separate locations.⁵



Unload: Gun owners should remove all ammunition from the firearm, including removing any chambered rounds.

Lock: Unloaded firearms should be secured with a firearm locking device, such as a jacket lock, or in a locked location, like a safe or lock box. Locking devices, safes, and lock boxes are equipped with keys, combinations, or biometric technology that limit access. *Remember: Firearm locks do not prevent gun theft.*

Separate: Ammunition should be stored separately from the firearm in a secure location.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) concludes that the absence of guns from homes is the most reliable and effective measure to prevent suicide, homicide, and unintentional firearm-related injuries to children and adolescents. But if there are guns in the home, AAP notes that storing guns unloaded and locked, with ammunition kept in a separate place, can mitigate the risk of child firearm injury.⁶

Key Findings

Access to unsecured firearms contributes to gun violence among children and teens. Brayden's tragic story is all too common. Every year, nearly 350 children under the age of 18 unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else.⁷ That's roughly one unintentional shooting per day, and nearly 77 percent of these incidents take place inside a home.⁸ Another 590 children die by gun suicide each year,⁹ most often using guns belonging to a family member.¹⁰ Unsecured firearms also fuel gun violence outside the home. In incidents of gun violence on school grounds, 78 percent of shooters under the age of 18 obtained their guns from their own home, a relative's home, or from friends.¹¹

We are all safer when guns are stored unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition. One study found that households that locked both firearms and ammunition were associated with a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries, and an 85 percent lower risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children, compared to those that locked neither.¹² Another study estimated that if half of households with children that contain at least one unlocked gun switched to locking all their guns, one-third of youth gun suicides and unintentional deaths could be prevented, saving an estimated 251 lives in a single year.¹³

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OF YOUTH SUICIDES
AND UNINTENTIONAL
DEATHS ARE PREVENTED
BY SECURING GUNS.

Despite the risks to safety, the majority of gun owners do not secure their firearms. While millions of responsible gun owners follow recommended storage practices, an estimated 54 percent do not lock all of their guns, let alone store them unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition.¹⁴ Gun owners with children in the home are slightly more likely to lock all of their guns,¹⁵ but an estimated 4.6 million American children live in households with at least one unlocked and loaded firearm.¹⁶

Contrary to popular belief, storage devices do not prevent owners from readily accessing their guns. There is a common myth that storage devices negate the self-defense purpose of owning a gun by putting time-consuming barriers between the gun owner and their means of defense.¹⁷ The reality is that there are many affordable options for firearm storage that provide owners with access to guns in a matter of seconds while still preventing access by children and people at increased risk of harming themselves or others.¹⁸ Further, it is possible that unsecured guns may actually *increase* the likelihood of crime and violence through an increased risk of gun theft.¹⁹ Each year, an estimated 200,000 to 500,000 guns are stolen,²⁰ and many are funneled into the underground market, where once-legally-owned firearms can be transferred to people with dangerous histories.²¹

Recommendations

Gun owners understand that with rights comes responsibility, and promoting secure firearm storage is integral to public safety. Community members should work together to encourage recommended firearm storage practices.

Community members and local leaders should encourage secure firearm storage through outreach to gun owners and general public awareness campaigns. Researchers, clinicians, and gun owners should work together to develop messaging and recommend storage options that are relevant to local values and context.²²

Evidence suggests that clinicians who counsel patients can effectively promote recommended storage practices, particularly if storage devices are given away for free.²³

For a full list of citations please visit: bit.ly/35YMIAE

DESCARGAR, BLOQUEAR Y SEPARAR: PRÁCTICAS DE ALMACENAMIENTO SEGURAS PARA REDUCIR LA VIOLENCIA CON ARMAS DE FUEGO

Brayden Heath, de tres años, encontró la pistola de su madre en la sala de su casa en Anchorage, Alaska. Brayden estaba jugando con el arma cuando se disparó, hiriéndolo en la cabeza. Fue llevado a un hospital local y declarado muerto más tarde ese día.¹

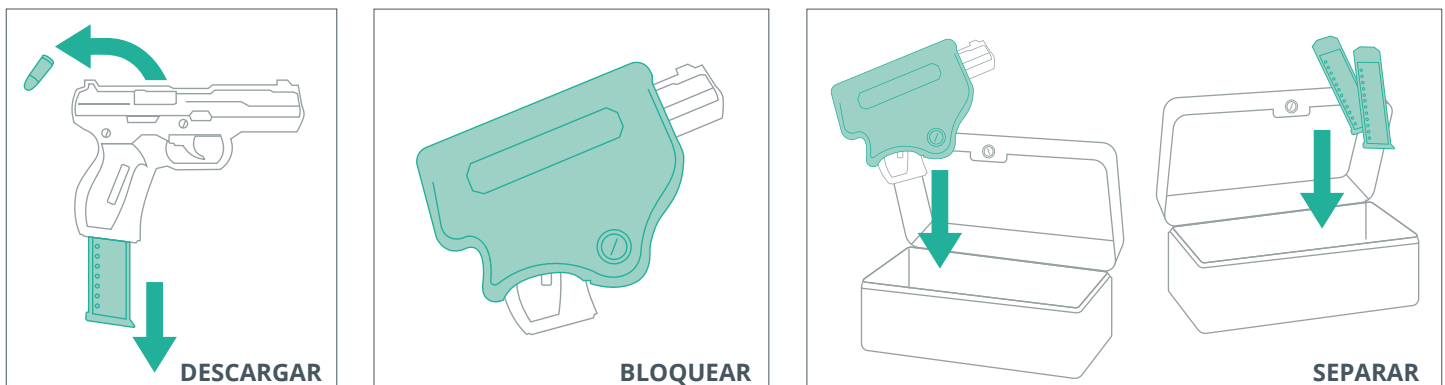
Introducción

Se estima que hay 265 millones de armas de fuego de propiedad civil en los Estados Unidos,² y más de un tercio de los hogares contienen al menos un arma.³ Los propietarios de armas de fuego pueden hacer que sus hogares y comunidades sean más seguros al almacenar sus armas de fuego descargadas y bloqueadas, con las municiones en un lugar separado, para evitar el acceso de los niños y otras personas que están en riesgo de lesionarse a sí mismas o lesionar a otras personas. Las investigaciones muestran que estas prácticas de almacenamiento pueden desempeñar un papel vital en reducir el riesgo de violencia armada, particularmente entre los niños, debido a disparos involuntarios y suicidios con armas.⁴

La conclusión es la siguiente: Almacenar armas de fuego descargadas, bloqueadas y separadas de municiones impide el acceso y salva vidas.

¿Qué es el almacenamiento seguro de armas de fuego?

Los expertos concuerdan: A fin de evitar el acceso, las prácticas de almacenamiento de armas de fuego deben incluir tres métodos empleados en combinación, descargar las municiones, bloquear el arma y almacenar el arma de fuego y las municiones en lugares separados.⁵



Descargar: Los propietarios de armas de fuego deben retirar todas las municiones del arma, incluidas las balas en la recámara.

Bloquear: Las armas de fuego descargadas deben asegurarse con un dispositivo de bloqueo de armas de fuego, como un traba de gatillo, o en recipientes con cerraduras, como una caja fuerte o caja de seguridad. Los dispositivos de bloqueo, cajas de seguridad y cajas con candado están equipados con llaves, combinaciones o tecnología biométrica que limita el acceso. *Recuerde: Los bloqueos de armas de fuego no evitan el robo del arma.*

Separar: Las municiones deben almacenarse de forma separada del arma de fuego en un lugar seguro.

La Academia Estadounidense de Pediatría (American Academy of Pediatrics, AAP) concluye que la ausencia de armas de fuego en los hogares es la medida más confiable y efectiva para evitar suicidios, homicidios y lesiones accidentales relacionadas con armas de fuego en niños y adolescentes. Sin embargo, si hay armas de fuego en el hogar, la AAP nota que almacenar las armas descargadas y bloqueadas, con las municiones guardadas en un lugar separado, puede mitigar el riesgo de lesiones por armas de fuego en niños.⁶

Hallazgos clave

El acceso a armas de fuego no protegidas contribuye con la violencia con armas de fuego entre niños y adolescentes. La trágica historia de Brayden es demasiado común. Cada año, casi 350 niños menores de 18 años disparan de manera accidental a sí mismos o a alguien más.⁷ Eso representa un disparo accidental por día, y casi 77 por ciento de estos incidentes se desarrolla en el interior de un hogar.⁸ Otros 590 niños mueren por suicidio con arma de fuego cada año,⁹ en general usando armas pertenecientes a un miembro de la familia.¹⁰ Las armas de fuego no protegidas también alimentan la violencia con armas fuera del hogar. En incidentes de violencia con armas de fuego en instalaciones escolares, 78 por ciento de los tiradores menores de 18 años obtuvieron sus armas de su propio hogar, el hogar de un familiar o de amigos.¹¹

Todos estamos más seguros cuando las armas se almacenan descargadas, bloqueadas y separadas de las municiones. Un estudio descubrió que los hogares que encerraban las armas de fuego y municiones se asociaron con un 78 por ciento menos de riesgo de lesiones con armas de fuego autoinfligidas, y un 85 por ciento menos de riesgo de lesiones accidentales con armas de fuego entre niños, en comparación con los que no las encierran.¹² Otro estudio estimó que si la mitad de los hogares con niños que poseen al menos un arma no encerrada comenzaran a guardar todas las armas, un tercio de los suicidios de jóvenes con arma de fuego y muertes accidentales podrían evitarse, esto salvaría aproximadamente 251 vidas en un solo año.¹³

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DE SUICIDIOS DE JÓVENES Y MUERTES ACCIDENTALES SE PREVIENEN CON LA PROTECCIÓN DE ARMAS DE FUEGO.

A pesar de los riesgos de seguridad, la mayoría de los propietarios de armas de fuego no protege sus armas. Aunque millones de propietarios responsables de armas de fuego siguen las prácticas recomendadas de almacenamiento, aproximadamente 54 por ciento no bloquea todas sus armas, tampoco las guarda descargadas, bloqueadas y separadas de las municiones.¹⁴ Los propietarios de armas con niños en el hogar tienen levemente más probabilidad de bloquear todas las armas,¹⁵ pero aproximadamente 4.6 millones de niños estadounidenses viven en hogares con al menos un arma de fuego no bloqueada y cargada.¹⁶

Contrariamente a la creencia popular, los dispositivos de almacenamiento no evitan que los propietarios puedan acceder rápidamente a sus armas. Existe un mito común acerca de que los dispositivos de almacenamiento anulan el propósito de autodefensa de poseer un arma al poner obstáculos que llevan tiempo entre el propietario del arma y su medio de defensa.¹⁷ La realidad es que existen muchas opciones asequibles para el almacenamiento de armas de fuego que ofrecen a los propietarios acceso a las armas en solo segundos mientras siguen evitando el acceso de niños y personas con mayor riesgo de lesionarse a sí mismas o lesionar a otras personas.¹⁸ Además, es posible que las armas de fuego no protegidas en realidad puedan *incrementar* la probabilidad de delitos y violencia mediante un riesgo mayor de robo de armas de fuego.¹⁹ Cada año, aproximadamente entre 200,000 y 500,000 armas son robadas,²⁰ y muchas son canalizadas en el mercado negro, donde las armas de fuego legales pueden transferirse a personas con historiales peligrosos.²¹

Recomendaciones

Los propietarios de armas de fuego comprenden que los derechos también implican responsabilidad y promover el almacenamiento seguro de las armas es integral para la seguridad pública. Los miembros de la comunidad deben trabajar en conjunto para alentar las prácticas recomendadas de almacenamiento de armas de fuego.

Los miembros de la comunidad y líderes locales deben alentar el almacenamiento seguro de armas de fuego mediante la divulgación entre propietarios de armas y campañas generales de concientización pública. Los investigadores, médicos y propietarios de armas de fuego deben trabajar juntos para desarrollar mensajes y opciones recomendadas de almacenamiento que sean relevantes para los valores y el contexto locales.²²

La evidencia sugiere que los médicos que asesoran a pacientes pueden promover efectivamente prácticas recomendadas de almacenamiento, en especial si los dispositivos de almacenamiento se entregan de manera gratuita.²³

Para obtener una lista completa de citas, visite: bit.ly/35YMIAE

School Boards Secure Storage Notification Resolution for States with Safe Storage or Child Access Prevention Laws

Whereas, Evidence strongly suggests that secure firearm storage is an essential component to any effective strategy to keep schools and students safe;

Whereas, An estimated 4.6 million American children live in households with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm;

Whereas, Every year, nearly 350 children under the age of 18 unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else. That's roughly one unintentional shooting per day, and 77 percent of these incidents take place inside a home;

Whereas, Another 590 children die by gun suicide each year, most often using guns belonging to a family member;

Whereas, In incidents of gun violence on school grounds, 79 percent of active shooters are current students or recent graduates, and 78 percent of shooters under the age of 18 obtained their guns from their own home, a relative's home, or from friends;

Whereas, Research shows that secure firearm storage practices are associated with up to an 85 percent reduction in the risk of self-inflicted and unintentional firearm injuries among children and teens;

Whereas, The U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center recommends the importance of appropriate storage of weapons because many school attackers used firearms acquired from their homes;

Whereas, Across the country, lawmakers, community members, and local leaders are working together to implement public awareness campaigns, such as Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America's Be SMART program, which is endorsed by the National PTA and which encourages secure gun storage practices and highlights the public safety risks of unsecured guns;

Whereas, Keeping students, teachers and staff safe from the threat of gun violence should be the responsibility of all adult stakeholders at each of our school sites;

Whereas, State law imposes criminal penalties on adults when a child gains unsupervised access to unsecurely stored firearms;

Whereas, In order to continue with preventative measures to increase student and school safety we must act now; now therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Board directs the Superintendent and staff to update the Student Handbook to include information about parents' legal obligations regarding the secure storage of firearms; and, be it finally

Resolved, That the Board directs the Superintendent to create an appropriate letter (template attached), in English and Spanish, to parents and guardians that explains the importance of secure gun storage and the legal obligations to protect minors from accessing irresponsibly stored guns, at the beginning of each school year.

Parent/Guardian:

Providing our students and staff in the Geneva School District 304 with a safe educational environment remains one of our top priorities. We are all aware of incidents of gun violence in our surrounding communities, and across the nation. A recent survey found that 57 percent of U.S. teens are concerned that there will be a shooting in their school.

Studies of all types of school based gun violence across decades all point to the same significant point of intervention -- **addressing students unauthorized access to guns in the home**. For example, a recent Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center study of targeted school violence incidents from 2008 to 2017, found that 78 percent of the firearms were obtained from the home of a parent or close relative.

Unsecured guns in the home pose a risk to students beyond gun violence in schools. Every year, nearly 350 children under the age of 18 [unintentionally shoot](#) themselves or someone else. That's roughly one unintentional shooting per day. Almost 600 children die by gun suicide each year. In the overwhelming majority of these incidents, the gun used was one that belonged to someone in their home.

One study found that 87 percent of kids know where their parents' guns are kept and 60 percent have handled them. Research shows that secure firearm storage practices are associated with up to an 85 percent reduction in the risk of self-inflicted and unintentional firearm injuries among children and teens. [Storing firearms securely](#) protects any child in the home as well as students throughout the school district and community.

Illinois State law imposes criminal penalties on adults when a child gains unsupervised access to unsecurely stored firearms.

You can [learn more](#) and download helpful resources; including a secure storage fact sheet, talking to your children about guns, and facts and resources on child firearm suicide, at BeSMARTforKids.org/resources.

In addition to storing your own guns safely, it's important to ask about safe storage in homes your children may visit.