



Dear Okemos Families,

Providing our Okemos Public Schools students and staff with a safe educational environment remains one of our top priorities. We have joined national efforts to educate our community about ways they can help us prevent gun violence in our schools.

The [Be SMART](#) program by [Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund](#) and endorsed by the national [PTA](#), encourages secure gun storage practices and highlights the public safety risks of unsecured guns. The program calls on families to:

S = Secure all guns in your homes and vehicles
M = Model responsible behavior around guns
A = Ask about unsecured guns in other homes
R = Recognize the role of guns in suicide
T = Tell your peers to Be SMART

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 Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center [study](#) of targeted school violence incidents found that 76 percent of the firearms were obtained from the homes of a parent or close relative.

Unsecured guns in the home pose a risk to students beyond gun violence in schools. Every year, 350 children under the age of 18 [unintentionally](#) shoot themselves or someone else. That's roughly one unintentional shooting per day. Gun suicide among children has reached the highest rate in more than 20 years. In the overwhelming majority of these incidents, the gun used was one that belonged to someone in their home.

One [study](#) found that 70 percent of parents believe their teen cannot access the gun(s) in their home. Yet, the study also found that half of teens said they could gain access to a loaded gun in their home in under an hour, including one-third who said they could do so in under five minutes. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 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.

In an effort to protect Michigan families from gun violence and unintentional firearms injuries, the "Secure Storage Law" requiring safe storage of firearms went into effect on February 13, 2024. [Public Act 17 of 2023](#) amended the Firearms Act by adding [MCL 28.429](#), making it a crime to improperly store or leave a firearm unattended on a premises under an individual's control when that individual knows or reasonably should know a minor is, or is likely to be, on premise. Unattended firearms must be unloaded and locked with a locking device or stored in a locked box or container.

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](#).