



## Facts and Resources on Child Firearm Suicide

Gun violence has a devastating impact on children in America. **In fact, more than one-third of child gun deaths are suicides**—more than 700 child gun suicides each year.<sup>1</sup> One study showed that over 80 percent of children under the age of 18 who died by gun suicide used a gun belonging to a parent or relative.<sup>2</sup> For people of all ages, access to a gun increases the risk of death by suicide by three times.<sup>3</sup>

Most people who attempt suicide do not die—unless they use a gun.<sup>4</sup> In fact, 90 percent of suicide attempts with a gun result in death—a much higher fatality rate than any other means of self-harm.<sup>5</sup> This contributes to the fact that 42 percent of child suicides involve a gun.<sup>6</sup>

A national survey of high school students found that 22 percent had seriously considered attempting suicide within the last year.<sup>7</sup> And one study showed that 41 percent of adolescents in gun-owning households report having “easy access” to the guns in their home.<sup>8</sup>

Signs to look out for when concerned that a loved one may be suicidal:<sup>9</sup>

- Prolonged sadness and depression
- Changes in mood or behavior
- Hopelessness
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Withdrawing/Isolation
- Aggression or agitation
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Talking about killing themselves

Research shows that secure firearm storage is associated with a decreased risk of child firearm suicide. One study showed that households that locked both firearms and ammunition had a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries among children and teenagers.<sup>10</sup> The risk of gun violence and self-harm have grown during the COVID-19 pandemic, with kids experiencing increased levels of stress and isolation, and more guns being purchased. These factors make it even more important that firearms are stored securely.

Some additional key steps you can take to support your loved one include: inviting an honest conversation, listening and supporting your loved one, and encouraging them to see a mental health professional or a primary care physician.<sup>11</sup>

### Resources

#### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Call 1-800-273-8255. Available 24 hours a day.

#### Trevor Project, the LGBTQ youth suicide prevention line

Call TrevorLifeline at 1-866-488-7386.

**Text HOME to 741741** from anywhere in the United States, anytime, about any type of crisis.

**988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** can be reached by calling or texting 988 or chatting on <http://988lifeline.org>.



<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. A yearly average was developed using four years of most recent available data: 2018 to 2021. Children aged 0 to 17.

<sup>2</sup> Renee M. Johnson et al., "Who Are the Owners of Firearms Used in Adolescent Suicides?" *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 40, no. 6, (2010): 609–11.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Anglemyer, Tara Horvath, and George Rutherford, "The Accessibility of Firearms and Risk for Suicide and Homicide Victimization Among Household Members: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Annals of Internal Medicine* 160, no. 2 (2014): 101–10.

<sup>4</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, "Firearm Suicide in the United States," December 28, 2021, <https://everytownresearch.org/report/firearm-suicide-in-the-united-states/>.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Conner, Deborah Azrael, and Matthew Miller, "Suicide Case-Fatality Rates in the United States, 2007 to 2014: A Nationwide Population-Based Study," *Annals of Internal Medicine* 171, no. 2 (2019): 885–95.

<sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. A yearly average was developed using four years of most recent available data: 2018 to 2021. Analysis includes children aged 0 to 17.

<sup>7</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Data Summary & Trends Report, 2011–2021," 2023, <https://bit.ly/3TG6ncd>.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph A. Simonnet et al., "Psychiatric Comorbidity, Suicidality, and In-Home Firearm Access Among a Nationally Representative Sample of Adolescents," *JAMA Psychiatry*, 72, no. 2 (2015): 152–59.

<sup>9</sup> American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, "Risk Factors, Protective Factors, and Warning Signs," (2022), <https://afsp.org/risk-factors-protective-factors-and-warning-signs>.

<sup>10</sup> David C. Grossman et al., "Gun Storage Practices and Risk of Youth Suicide and Unintentional Injuries," *JAMA* 293, no. 6 (2005): 707–14.

<sup>11</sup> American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, "When Someone is at Risk," (2022), <https://afsp.org/when-someone-is-at-risk>.