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State-Level Advocacy Toolkit for Firearm Injury Prevention for Children and Youth

Introduction to the Toolkit

Protecting children and youth from firearm injuries is a shared goal of families, communities, and healthcare professionals. It is a complex issue with devastating consequences for individuals, families, and communities. Therefore, it will take a collaborative, multi-disciplinary and multi-pronged approach for healthcare clinicians and professionals to address firearm injury prevention at the patient, community, healthcare system, and policy levels. Focusing on the shared goals of injury prevention and safety is essential for communicating with patients as well as community members and policy makers. The purpose of this advocacy toolkit is to provide resources to address secure storage of firearms to prevent firearm injuries and deaths in children and youth.

This toolkit includes information and resources about the following:

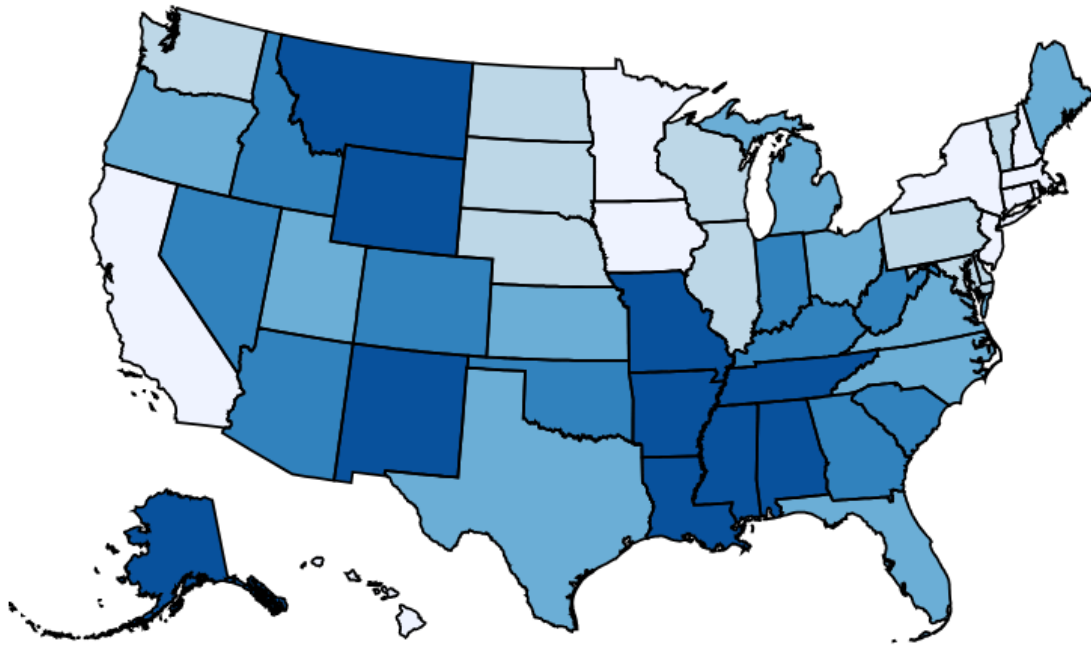
- 1) Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws (link to SUBPAGE 1)
 - a. Impact of CAP laws
 - b. Implementing and strengthening CAP laws
- 2) Public education campaigns (link to SUBPAGE 2)
 - a. School-based secure storage education for students and families

In the U.S. in 2023 there were 46,728 firearm deaths

- 27,000 Suicides
- 17,927 Homicides
- 604 Legal intervention shootings
- 463 Unintentional shootings

Secure storage of firearms is important to prevent:

- Theft of firearms from a home or car
- Suicide in individuals at risk
- Homicide by individuals at risk, including domestic violence
- Unintentional shootings by children and older individuals
- Unsupervised access to firearms by younger and older children



Age-Adjusted Rate

- 0 - 10.68
- 10.68 - 13.68
- 13.68 - 16.65
- 16.65 - 21.34
- 21.34+

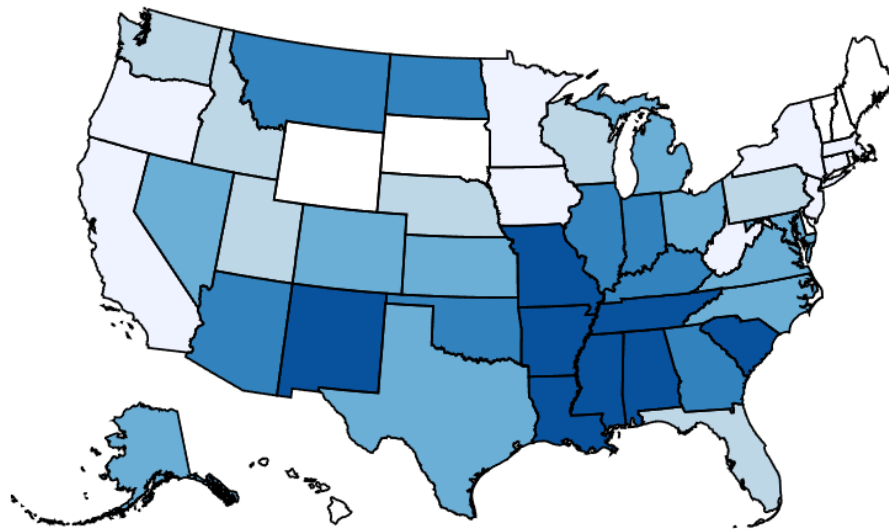
Source: [CDC WISQARS - Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System](#)

Child Access Prevention (CAP) Laws

Background for CAP Laws

Firearm deaths are the leading cause of death among children and adolescents in the United States. In 2023 there were 3,483 firearm deaths in children 0-18 years old. However, firearm death rates vary greatly by state.

- 2,264 Homicides
- 975 Suicides
- 133 Unintentional shootings

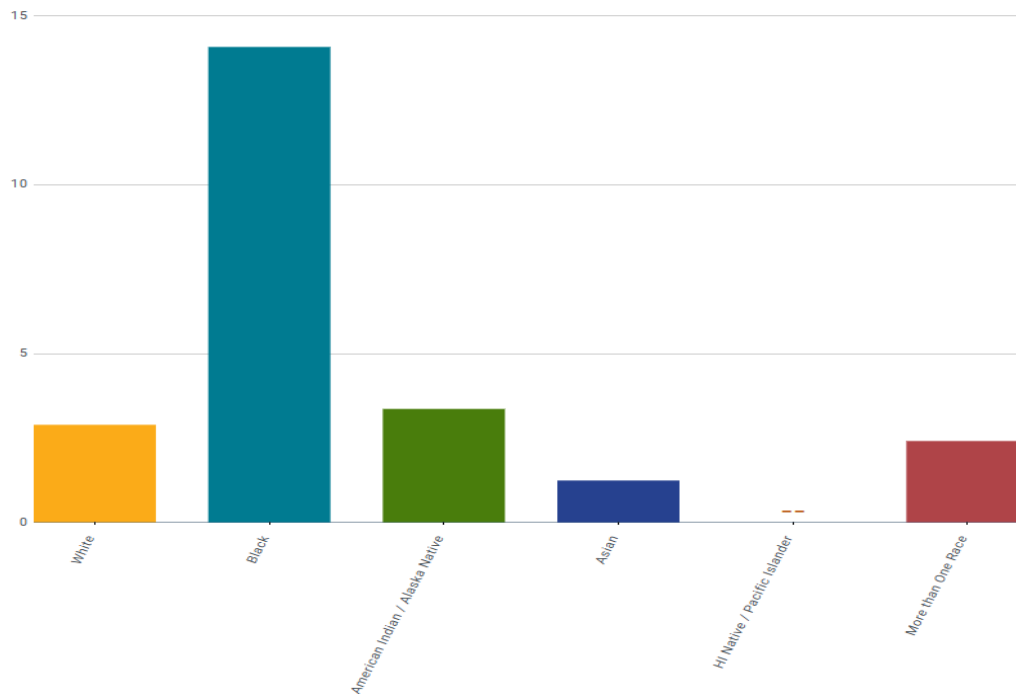


Crude Rate

- 0 - 3.39
- 3.39 - 4.46
- 4.46 - 5.55
- 5.55 - 6.58
- 6.58+

Source: [CDC WISQARS - Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System](#)

There are important disparities by race in pediatric firearm deaths.



Source: [CDC WISQARS - Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System](#)

Firearm Injury Prevention—why secure storage?

- Secure firearm storage is a responsible practice for all firearm owners for safety.
- Children as young as 2-3 years old can pull the trigger of a handgun.
- Preventing unauthorized access to firearms is important for injury prevention in kids
- Secure storage of firearms—as households do for medications and cleaning solutions—is essential to prevent unauthorized access.
- Increasing secure storage practices could [reduce youth firearm fatalities by up to 32%](#).
- This is important to prevent unintentional shootings as well as firearm suicide.
- Options include storing firearms unloaded in a locked safe or container, with ammunition stored separately.
- Healthcare professionals and public health advocates can advocate for policies and programs encouraging secure storage for firearms in households.

[Secure storage fact sheet](#) from Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions.

Practice **safer storage** in your household by storing your firearm:

Unloaded



**Separately from
ammunition**



**Locked up, away,
and out of sight**



#SaferStorage

T4CIP
TRAINEES FOR CHILD INJURY PREVENTION

Firearm Suicide and Youth Suicide Prevention

- Easy access to firearms significantly heightens the risk of suicide in children and adolescents.
- Adolescence is a period marked by impulsivity and the presence of a gun can transform fleeting suicidal thoughts into tragic actions.
- Teenagers living in households with unsecured firearms are at a higher risk of suicide compared to those without access.
- For suicide, the [means used for suicide matter](#).
 - Firearm suicide results in death in >90% of the time.
 - Other methods, like medications, results in death < 5% of the time.
 - [Nine out of 10 people who attempt suicide and survive will not go on to die by suicide](#) so it is critical to reduce the lethality of the initial attempt.
 - [Clinician lethal means counseling](#) is important for suicide prevention.
- For more information about firearm suicide prevention:
<https://hsph.harvard.edu/research/means-matter/>

SUBPAGE 1-2

Child Access Prevention (CAP) Laws

Background

Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws aim to prevent children from accessing firearms. These laws hold adult firearm owners liable if a child does or has the potential to access a firearm. They fall into 2 categories:

- **Recklessness-based laws:**
 - These laws require proof that the firearm owner knowingly, recklessly, or intentionally provided a child with access to a firearm.
 - They have a higher threshold for prosecution.
- **Negligence-based laws:**
 - This is the most restrictive type of CAP laws.
 - These laws hold firearm owners responsible if a child could potentially access a firearm based on how it is stored (e.g. loaded in the nightstand drawer)
 - States with these laws are associated with lower pediatric firearm deaths compared to states with no laws or recklessness-based laws (see above).

Some states have additional provisions within their CAP laws:

- **Specific storage requirements:**
 - Mandates firearms are stored in locked containers or with trigger locks.
- **Age restrictions:**
 - Defines age below which this law applies to a child.
 - Age limit ranges from 14-18 years, depending on the state
- **Exemptions:**
 - Outlines specific situations where the law may not apply, such as during lawful hunting or self-defense.
- **Types of firearms**
 - Types of firearms covered can vary by state (e.g. only handguns included)

The Impact of Child Access Prevention (CAP) Laws

States with stronger CAP laws are associated with:

- Reducing firearm suicide and unintentional gun deaths among children and teens [up to 54%](#).
- Lower rates of unintentional firearm deaths among children
 - [78% lower](#)

- Reduced youth suicides by firearm.
- Lower rates of firearm homicides and assaults
- **Decreased rates of school shootings.**

SUBPAGE 1-3

Implementing and Strengthening CAP Laws

Key considerations for strengthening CAP laws and maximizing their impact:

1. Advocating for Stronger Legislation in states with CAP laws

Though half of states have CAP laws, many could be strengthened. Advocacy efforts should focus on:

- **Pass negligence-based laws:**
 - These laws provide the most comprehensive protection for children.
- **Eliminate loopholes:**
 - Laws should clearly define responsible storage and minimize exemptions.
- **Increase penalties:**
 - Stronger penalties for violations can increase compliance and deter negligence (i.e. misdemeanor vs felony)

Here is a [secure storage policy guide](#) from the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions.

2. Raising Public Awareness

Education is crucial to ensure that gun owners understand their responsibilities under CAP laws. Public awareness campaigns should:

- **Promote safe storage practices:**
 - Emphasize the importance of securing firearms in locked containers or with trigger locks with the ammunition stored separately.
 - You can obtain social media graphics here: <https://www.t4cip.org/safer-storage>
- **Disseminate information about CAP laws:**
 - Understand the specifics of your state law
 - Ensure that firearm owners are aware of their state laws
- **Address common misconceptions:**
 - Hiding a loaded firearm is insufficient to prevent child access

3. Collaboration and Partnerships

Effective implementation of CAP laws requires collaboration among various stakeholders:

- **Healthcare professionals:**
 - Can educate patients and families about secure storage
 - <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/safe-storage-saves-lives#for-clinicians>
 - Can provide resources for obtaining lock boxes and locks
- **Law enforcement:**
 - Can enforce CAP laws
 - Can promote responsible firearm ownership.
- **Community organizations:**
 - Can conduct outreach and education programs in high-risk communities.
- **Firearm retailers:**
 - Can provide information about secure storage options
 - Can distribute gun locks during firearm sales.

For more information on CAP laws:

- <https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/child-access-prevention.html#state-implementation-of-childa->
- <https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/law/secure-storage-or-child-access-prevention-required/>