

Time to Discuss Safe Gun Storage at Home

Keep our Kids Safe

By: Linda Parrish

Parent of an IS Student

Board President at the Alliance for Gun Responsibility Foundation

About the Alliance for Gun Responsibility Foundation

The Alliance Foundation collaborates with experts, civic leaders, and community members to find evidenced-based solutions to the crisis of gun violence in our community. We create innovative policy and provide community education.

foundation.gunresponsibility.org

Why I Am Here Tonight

There was a recent article in the Bellevue Reporter about the increase in student suicide interventions this school year. It made me realize that it's time to talk to each other about safe gun storage in our homes. Suicide is preventable.

Because the National PTA advocates and supports efforts to protect youth from gun violence, I contacted our PTSA President and Advocacy Chair and asked to speak at this meeting.

How Guns Relate to Teen Suicide

In Washington State, between 2013 and 2015, 118 youths died by suicide. Nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ of those deaths were due to firearms.¹

Here in the Bellevue School District in just the first month of the 2017 school year, there have been 56 student suicide interventions, 9 students hospitalized, and one student who died by suicide. This is a significant increase and mirrors what is happening nationally.²

Why I am Talking Specifically about Firearms

According to Seattle/King County Public Health, about 34% of Washington adults reported having a gun in their home in 2015. Almost half of those adults reported not locking up their guns.³

75% of the guns used by kids in a suicide attempt were obtained from their own home or the home of a relative or friend.⁴

The Method Matters

Guns are the most effective means in completing suicide. Adolescents with access to firearms are 2.6 times as likely to die in a suicide attempt.⁵

Teens are impulsive. So is suicide. Almost 50% of suicide attempts are made within 20 minutes of the decision to attempt suicide.⁶

If a teenager can't get to a gun during those 20 minutes, they are far more likely to survive and get the support they need.

Steps to Keep Your Family Safe

Choose not to have a gun in your home.

Many people say that they own firearms for self protection. However, according to a study done in King County, you are 43 times more likely to have a family member killed by a firearm in the home than to use a firearm successfully for self protection.⁷

Having a gun in your home does not make you or your family safer.

Lock Up Your Guns

If you do decide to keep a gun in your home, store it safely:

- 1. The gun should be unloaded and locked in a lock box or gun safe.**
- 2. Ammunition should be locked up in a separate location.⁸**
 - It's easy to find a gun safe.
 - There are periodic lock box give-away events funded by Seattle Children's Hospital, King County Public Health, and the Alliance Foundation.
 - You can purchase a lock box or gun safe at almost all commercial federally licensed gun dealers; also at Costco.
 - Safe storage options are not expensive, many can be purchased for less than \$30.
 - Lock boxes are exempt from state sales tax in Washington.

Ask About Safe Gun Storage

Ask the parents of your kids' friends and your extended family members if they own a gun.

If they do own firearms, ask how they store their guns.

If you aren't reassured by their response, invite the kids to hang out at your house.

Added Benefits of Safe Gun Storage

Your guns won't get stolen if someone breaks into your house.

Your kids won't be at risk for unintentionally shooting themselves, their siblings, their friends, or even you.

Your teens won't be able to carry your guns to school.

- During the past 25 years, over 68% of school shooters used a firearm from their home or a relative's home.⁹

We Can Prevent Youth Suicide

Thank you for your time.

Questions?

Please feel free to email me at time4love2win@gmail.com if you want more information.

Bibliography

¹WA State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics Death Certificate data, June 2017 (Public Health, Seattle & King County/Firearms in our community)

²First month of school shows uptick in youth suicide interventions at Bellevue schools,” Bellevue Reporter, Raechel Dawson, November 2, 2017

³WA State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2015, 2013 (Public Health, Seattle & King County/Firearms in our community)

⁴Arch Pediatric Adolescent Med. 1999; Journal of Adolescent Health 2008 (Public Health, Seattle & King County/Firearms in our community)

⁵Annals of Internal Medicine 2014 (Public Health, Seattle & King County/Firearms in our community)

⁶Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Means Matter: Duration of Suicidal Crises

⁷Kellermann & Reay 1986; “Do guns make us safer? Science suggests no,” Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

⁸Public Health, Seattle & King County/Firearms in our community

⁹The Final Report and Findings of the *Safe School Initiative*: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States, U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, July 2004, p. 27