

Dear Washington Terrace Elementary Families, Guardians, and Caregivers:

All students and members of our school communities deserve to feel safe, welcomed, and included. It is on all of us to work together to prevent firearm violence and to avoid the harm and tragedy that shootings of any kind can cause in the spaces in which we live, learn, work, and play.

Safe firearm storage is one of many preventative actions that you can take in keeping our school community and school buildings and grounds safe. When firearms are stored safely, it can help prevent them from getting into the hands of children and teens, who may use them to, intentionally or unintentionally, harm themselves or others. Safe storage can go a long way in preventing lives from being lost or permanently altered. If you have firearms in your home or if your child spends time in a space where firearms are present, there are important steps that can be taken to keep firearms secured and out of reach of unintended users.

### **Firearm-Related Injuries and Deaths: A Problem We Must Solve Together**

Firearm-related injuries and deaths are a public health crisis that communities across the nation face every day:

- Since 2018, there have been more than 100 school shooting incidents per year in our country and those numbers have steadily increased.<sup>1</sup>
- Approximately three-quarters of perpetrators in school-based active shooter situations acquired their firearm from the home of a parent or close relative.<sup>2</sup> This illustrates the close connection between your role as families, caregivers, and guardians and the role of [INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL DISTRICT OR SCHOOL] in keeping students safe while on school grounds.
- However, this issue goes beyond school-based active shooter situations and includes a variety of firearm injury types, including interpersonal violence, suicide, and unintentional fatal and nonfatal firearm injuries.<sup>3</sup>
- More than 4 million children live in a household with at least one unlocked and loaded firearm.<sup>4</sup> Studies have found that households with both locked firearms and locked ammunition have significantly lower risks of self-inflicted firearm injuries and even lower risks of unintentional firearm injuries among children and teens compared to households that did not safely store firearms.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Riedman, D. (2023). K-12 School Shooting Database. <https://k12ssdb.org/all-shootings>

<sup>2</sup> National Threat Assessment Center. (2019). *Protecting America's Schools: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence*. U.S. Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security. <http://bit.ly/3SfmSgw>

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. (September 19, 2023). Fast Facts: Firearm Violence and Injury Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/fastfact.html>

<sup>4</sup> Miller, M., & Azrael, D. (2022). Firearm Storage in U.S. Households With Children: Findings From the 2021 National Firearm Survey, *JAMA Network Open*, 5(2): e2148823.

<sup>5</sup> Grossman, D.C., Mueller, B.A., Riedy, C., Dowd, M.D., Villaveces, A., Prodzinski, J., Nakagawara, J., Howard, J., Thiersch, N., & Harruff, R. (2005). *Gun Storage Practices and Risk of Youth Suicide and Unintentional Firearm Injuries*. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/200330>.

## Safe Firearm Storage: Actions to Take to Keep Our Communities Safe

Safe firearm storage can help prevent and minimize the risk of firearm-related deaths and injuries. Everyone, both firearm owners and non-owners, has a role to play in building awareness of safe, responsible firearm storage. Below are simple, highly effective practices that can help to reduce firearm-related incidents in our community and help protect our kids. In addition to these practices, it is important to also engage children and adolescents in conversations about the dangers associated with using firearms and what to do and not do in the event they access a firearm, to prevent fatal or non-fatal injuries.

- **Safely Store Firearms:** Store firearms—always unloaded—in a tamper proof locked cabinet, box, safe, firearm vault, or storage case that children or other unauthorized adults cannot access.
- **Safely Store Ammunition:** Store ammunition in a separate, tamper-proof locked cabinet, safe, firearm vault, or storage case that children or other unauthorized adults cannot access.
- **Secure Firearms:** Use trigger locks or cable locks to prevent a firearm from firing. (More information can be found on the [Safe Firearm Storage Fact Sheet](#), developed by the U.S. Department of Justice.)
  - Trigger locks use a mechanism that clamps down around the trigger or trigger housing to prevent it from being pressed (*Note: trigger locks should not be installed on loaded firearms*).
  - In a cable lock, a cable is threaded through the barrel or action of a firearm to prevent it from firing.

[INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL DISTRICT OR SCHOOL] remains committed to helping ensure the safety of our students and school community. We can all work together to promote awareness about how we can protect our children and our whole school communities by safely storing firearms and prevent tragedies from ever occurring. Thank you for being a partner in these efforts, and for helping reduce firearm-related injury and deaths in our community.

Sincerely,  
Tana Chipp

## Helpful Resources

More information about safe firearm storage and practices can be found below. Please feel free to read and share with family, friends, and neighbors.

This list below is included for the reader's convenience and contains examples of potentially useful products and resources. Inclusion of such information does not constitute an endorsement by the Department or the Federal government, nor a preference/support for these examples over others. The Department does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of any outside information. Customize this entire form field to only include the resources that you would like to feature in the final letter disseminated.

- [Safe Firearm Storage Fact Sheet](#), U.S. Department of Justice
- [Preventing Mass Attacks in Our Communities Webinar](#), U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center
- [Securing Your Firearm](#) and [Explaining Gun Safety to Kids](#), Project Childsafe
- [Be SMART. Guide to Secure Gun Storage Devices, Which States Have Child-Access and/or Secure Storage Laws?, Solutions: Secure Gun Storage](#), Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund
- [Secure Storage of Lethal Means: Keeping Children and Families Safe](#), Sandy Hook Promise
- [Understanding Firearm-Related Injury and School Violence Podcast Series](#), Institute for Firearm Injury Prevention
- [End Family Fire](#), Brady United Against Gun Violence

This letter was created by the REMS TA Center, which is operated by Synergy Enterprises, Inc. under Contract #GS-00F-115CA awarded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools. All materials created or disseminated by the REMS TA Center, including the contents of this letter, should not be presumed to reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or to imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education.