

Firearms Means Safety Suggestions for Providers³



What are some options I can recommend to temporarily restrict access to firearms?

These options should be considered temporary. Patients should be reassured that the purpose of restriction is not to remove firearms permanently. Patients should be afforded the opportunity to get firearms back.

- Ask a relative or friend to take possession of firearms.
- Store firearms in a self-storage rental unit if permissible.
- Store firearms at a shooting range with available lockers.
- Store firearms at a gun shop or pawn shop for short period of time.
- Ask law enforcement to take possession of firearms.
- Personally owned firearms may be stored in military unit arms rooms.



Do

- Ask direct questions and let the patient know that other people have similar thoughts and feelings.
- Engage relevant parties, including family members and commanders, in the process of means restriction counseling when recommending firearms restriction.
- Assess access to both military-issued and privately-owned firearms as a core component of risk assessment and safety planning.
- Be aware of state-specific and federal laws regarding the temporary transfer of firearms between individuals.
- Collaborate with all involved parties in the process of firearms restriction and process of removing firearms from the home when patient is at risk of suicide.
- Be aware of the potential impact of firearms restriction on unit readiness, deployability, and sense of self, and take care to use the least-restrictive method to ensure safety.
- Forge relationships with local Veteran Service Organizations as a potential mechanism for voluntary, short-term transfer of firearms to a trusted peer.



Don't

- Take possession of firearms.
- Encourage patient to bring firearms to medical clinics.
- Tell patients to "give away" their firearms.
- Imply that a patient is incapable of carrying a firearm.
- Imply that a patient is "mentally unsound" from a legal perspective.

Resources



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Suicide Prevention

Contains resource links for free provider consultation regarding lethal means safety and counseling
mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/



Suicide Prevention Resource Center

A national site for suicide prevention resources, including training and tools for lethal means counseling
sprc.org



Center for Deployment Psychology

Online training course titled Lethal Means Safety Counseling to Reduce Suicide Risk
deploymentpsych.org/Lethal_Mean_Safety_Archive



National Shooting Sports Foundation Safety Resources

nssf.org/safety

References:

¹The Assessment and Management of Patients at Risk for Suicide Work Group, Department of Veterans Affairs & Department of Defense. (2019). VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for Assessment and Management of Patients at Risk for Suicide. Version 2.0.

²HIPAA Privacy Rule, 45 CFR § 164.512(k) (2002).

³Hoyt, T. & Duffy, V. (2015). Implementing firearms restriction for preventing U.S. Army suicide. *Military Psychology*, 27, 384–390.