

VAntage Point

Official Blog of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA releases safe firearm storage toolkit in suicide prevention effort



Suicide Prevention is Everyone's Business: A Toolkit for Safe Firearm Storage in Your Community

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention



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🕒 Sunday, April 12, 2020 4:00 pm (<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/date/2020/04/12/>)

📁 Health (<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/category/health/>), Mental Health (<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/category/mental-health/>)

👤 VAntage Point Contributor (<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/author/vantage-point-contributor/>)

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VA has released the Safe Firearm Storage Toolkit

(https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/docs/Toolkit_Safe_Firearm_Storage_CLEARED_508_2-24-20.pdf), which was developed in partnership with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (<https://afsp.org/>) (AFSP) and the National Shooting Sports Foundation (<https://www.nssf.org/>) (NSSF), the trade association for the firearms industry. The toolkit guides communities through the process of building coalitions to raise awareness about safe storage practices.

VA respects the important role firearms play in many Veterans' lives and is dedicated to educating Veterans, their families, and communities about how safe storage can prevent suicide. In 2017, firearms were used in nearly half of all U.S. suicide deaths and nearly 70% of suicides among U.S. Veterans. Safe storage can put time and space between an individual and a firearm and help keep Veterans and their loved ones safe during a suicidal crisis.

While service members and Veterans are well-versed in handling and securing firearms, other members of their households may not be. In periods of crisis or heightened emotions, unsafe firearm storage can increase risk for injury. By practicing safe storage before challenging times arise, you can reduce the risk for suicide or injury for everyone in your home.

VA, AFSP, and NSSF invite everyone to download the toolkit, which can help you foster community collaboration to promote safe firearm storage and prevent suicide. You can get started by sharing this with others in your community who you believe would make great coalition leaders. You can also share this on your social media to start a conversation about these issues. By talking about safe storage with others, you can help prevent suicide.

*If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive free, confidential support and crisis intervention available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Call **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**, text to 838255, or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](http://veteranscrisisline.net/Chat) (<http://veteranscrisisline.net/Chat>).*

Reporters covering this issue can download VA's Safe Messaging Best Practices (https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/docs/OMH-086-VA-OMHSP-Safe-Messaging-Factsheet-4-9-2019.pdf) fact sheet or visit [www.ReportingOnSuicide.org](http://www.reportingonsuicide.org) (<http://www.reportingonsuicide.org/>) for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.


Aimee Johnson is the Acting Associate Director of Policy and Planning in VA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.

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