Suicide risk factors

- Family history
- History of child maltreatment
- Previous attempts
- Untreated mental health disorders*
- Substance misuse*
- Isolation
- Local suicide epidemics
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Loss (jobs, relationships, financial, etc.)
- Physical illness
- Barriers to mental health treatment
- Violent/aggressive behavior
- Access to lethal means*

* Strong association with firearm suicide

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Suicide Risk and Protective Factors. Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/riskprotectivefactors.html

Suicide attempts: Largely impulsive acts

Reactive to interpersonal events in proceeding 24 hours including problems with:
- intimate partners
- physical health
- criminal legal system
- finances
- school


Impulsive suicide attempts

Crisis Mindset
- Characterized by compromised thinking—“Accident of the mind”

Occur in contexts with untreated or undiagnosed chronic conditions:
- Underlying mental health conditions (60-80%)
  - Most suicide victims not in treatment for mental health issues at time of suicide (60%)
  - Health problems/pain
  - Substance misuse


Suicide is a leading cause of death in Illinois

Each year in Illinois more people die from suicide than motor vehicle crashes or homicide


In 2016, more than a third (36%) of suicides in Illinois were by firearm

Firearm suicide in Illinois who is at risk?

Firearm suicide rate by sex: Illinois 2016

Firearm suicide rate by age group: Illinois 2016

Firearm suicide rate by urbanity: Illinois 2016

Firearm suicide rate by race: Illinois 2016

What makes firearms different? Lethality

Percent of deaths per attempt

Suicide prevention: Evidence base

Solid evidence of effectiveness in reducing suicide rates:

- Physician education in depression recognition and treatment
- Restricting access to lethal means

More study needed:

- Public education
- Screening
- Media education

Lethality of means→ Means Matter Campaign

- Harvard School of Public Health – Injury Control Research Center (https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/)

- Focus: Means reduction (reducing access to highly lethal means)

Firearm access and suicide risk

- Most firearm suicides involve handguns
- Suicide risk is greatly increased for handgun purchasers

Suicide risk: Handgun purchasers vs controls

Sources:


Firearm access and suicide risk

Increased risk of suicide in homes with guns¹

Suicide risk among adolescents is doubled when there is a gun at home²

Sources:

Limiting firearm access for suicide prevention: What works? Extreme risk protection order (ERPO)

Allows families, household members or law enforcement to petition a court for an order temporarily restricting a person’s access to guns

- Connecticut
  - 2016 study: for every 10 to 20 firearms seized one suicide was prevented¹
  - 2018 study: 1.6% reduction in suicides initially, 13.6% when enforcement was enhanced²
- Indiana
  - 2005-2015: found a 7.5% drop in suicides (law passed in 2005)²


Illinois Firearm Restraining Order Act (FRO)

Takes effect January 1, 2019

Provisions:
- Family member, household member or law enforcement official may petition a court for an FRO;
- Can petition emergency hearing (same day or next court day);
- If emergency order is issued, a full hearing must be held within 14 days;
- Non emergency FRO issued for six month periods. Renewable

Evidence considered:
- Recent threat or committed a recent act of violence directed at him- or herself or another;
- Violation of a protective order of any kind;
- Conviction for a violent offense; or engaged in a pattern or violent acts or threats within the past 12 months.

Illinois Firearm Restraining Order Act (FRO): How/why issued

Issued by circuit court

Why issued: substantial likelihood that a person will, in the near future, cause personal injury to him- or herself or others by owning or possessing a firearm.

Evidence considered:
- Recent threat or committed a recent act of violence directed at him- or herself or another;
- Violation of a protective order of any kind;
- Conviction for a violent offense; or engaged in a pattern or violent acts or threats within the past 12 months.

Illinois Firearm Restraining Order Act (FRO): How to file

Petition filed in the county where the subject resides

No fees

Office of the Clerk of the Court/States Attorney may provide help in writing and filing

Illinois Firearm Restraining Order Act (FRO): What happens when a FRO is issued

Court is authorized to issue a warrant for any firearms in the person’s possession;

Restricted person must immediately surrender all firearms in his or her possession. The law enforcement officer serving an FRO must also take custody of any firearm or other deadly weapon in plain sight;

Court must electronically notify state and local authorities within 1 court day of issuing an FRO;

FOID card is surrendered to law enforcement

Enforcement not affected by lack of summons service
Limiting firearm access for suicide prevention: What works? Safer storage

• Locked (trigger locks, lock boxes and gun safes)
• Unloaded
• Ammunition and firearms stored separately

Limiting firearm access for suicide prevention: What works? Safe storage

Storing guns safely can lower the risk of firearm-related injury/death by 70%.

Firearm owners who store their firearms locked and/or unloaded are 60% less likely to die from FA suicide than those who store their FA unlocked and/or loaded.

Safer firearm storage may be most effective in reducing impulsive suicide & least effective with those who are highly determined to die.

Sources:

Limiting firearm access for suicide prevention: Promising ideas: Gatekeeper education

The Gun Shop Project: Firearm retailers/range owners and sporting clubs
• Creates/distributes materials to help firearms retailers/range owners prevent suicide among their customers
• Materials include guidelines on how to avoid selling a firearm to someone who may be at risk for suicide
• Suicide prevention information tailored to customers
• Lead by Means Matter Campaign and the New Hampshire Firearms Safety Coalition (includes gun sellers, ranges, sporting clubs).
• Being replicated in 20 states

Limiting firearm access for suicide prevention: Promising ideas: Gatekeeper education

Targeting safe storage messaging to households with high risk populations:
• Elderly and their care givers
• Teens and adolescents with mental health and/or substance misuse

Training materials available: https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/firearm-instructors/

**Takeaways**

- Firearms are the most common means of suicide in Illinois.
- White men aged 70+ living in rural areas are at highest risk of firearm suicide in Illinois.
- Firearms pose a high risk for suicide due to:
  - Lethality
- Limiting access to lethal means is a proven suicide prevention strategy.
  - Safer storage
  - Emergency restraining Orders
- Gatekeeper education is a promising suicide prevention strategy:
  - Gun retailers, ranges
  - Firearm safety instructors
  - Parents of teens, young adults
  - Elderly and their caregivers

**Thank you!**

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