

Safe Storage

Model Policy Guide



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About This Report

About the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions

The Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions combines the expertise of respected gun violence researchers with the skills of experienced gun violence prevention advocates. We use a public health approach to conduct rigorous scientific research to identify a range of innovative solutions to gun violence. Using the best available science, our Center works toward expanding evidence-based advocacy and policy-making efforts grounded in principles of equity. This combination of expertise creates a unique opportunity to turn public health research into action that reduces deaths and injuries from gun violence.

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Safe Storage Model Policy Guide

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Model Policy Guide is designed to inform advocates and policymakers about important elements to include in evidence-informed public health policy. The guidance in this report is structured to be applied in any state across the country, regardless of jurisdictional differences. While some of the recommendations contained herein are necessary for the law to function properly, variations in the law are naturally going to occur due to local practice. Readers should ensure that the essential elements are in place and strive to incorporate other promising practices to improve the life-saving potential of this policy.

Safe Storage Laws

Safe Storage laws require that firearms be stored in certain ways that protect public health and safety. Safe Storage laws can save lives by preventing unauthorized access to firearms, especially for those who pose an increased risk of violence.

Over half of states have some form of Safe Storage law, though they vary in scope and effectiveness. This guide contains recommendations for states as they draft or amend Safe Storage laws grounded in implementation experience, existing practice, and public health research. Policymakers can, and should, use these recommendations to construct the best possible Safe Storage policies for their communities.

*This report contains **20 recommendations** across 11 subcategories:*



WHEN FIREARMS SHOULD BE STORED

General Safe Storage Requirement

Preventing Firearm Access by Prohibited Persons

Firearms in Vehicles



HOW FIREARMS SHOULD BE STORED

Home Storage Requirements

Vehicle Storage Requirements



LIABILITY AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Liability Standards

Gun Access Prevention Laws

Distributing Safe Storage Information in Gun Stores

Distributing Safe Storage Information in Schools



DATA AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Penalties

Data Collection

Introduction

The Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions compiled leading research, analysis, and expert guidance into this resource to inform the development of firearm Safe Storage laws.

This resource briefs readers on the nature of and evidence for Safe Storage policies. These policies play a key role in the prevention of firearm suicide, firearm homicide, unintentional shootings, and other firearm-related injuries that occur too frequently in the United States. It also describes promising elements of Safe Storage policies that are recommended for incorporation into law to maximize effectiveness and save more lives.

This guide begins with an overview of what Safe Storage laws are and the evidence base supporting the policy's value as a life-saving tool. It then breaks down the major issue areas within the policy, including a brief explanation of the policy component, recommendations relevant to that policy component, and the rationale behind the recommendations.

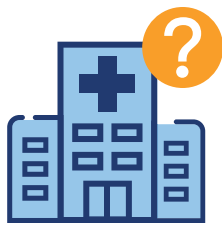
The following recommendations are promising practices supported by subject matter experts to shape the most effective version of a Safe Storage policy. While some of the recommendations are necessary for the law to function properly, variations in the law are naturally going to occur due to local practice. Policymakers should ensure that the essential elements are in place and strive to incorporate other promising practices suggested in this report to improve the life-saving potential of Safe Storage laws.

The list of policy recommendations below is not exhaustive. As new research and better practices emerge, so too should policies change to reflect newfound knowledge.

Policy Overview

Safe Storage Explained

Safe Storage laws are legal requirements that firearms be stored in certain ways to protect health and safety. **Firearm Safe Storage laws are based on a core tenet of injury prevention: Separating at-risk individuals from potential sources of injury can save lives.** Safe Storage and the laws that require it act by interrupting pathways from exposure to harm. By securely storing firearms, gun owners help prevent anyone from a toddler to a home invader from accessing deadly weapons. Storing firearms unloaded and in a locked device also places barriers between an individual's contemplation of suicide and their access to highly lethal means.



Gun deaths capture only one aspect of the toll gun violence takes on society. Far more Americans suffer physical and psychological injuries from gun violence that are difficult to quantify.

Gun violence takes a devastating toll on life in the United States. According to CDC mortality data, **at least 46,728 Americans died by firearm in 2023.** Firearms were also the **leading cause of death for children and teens ages 1-17** for the fourth year in a row.¹

Another key principle of Safe Storage practices is that the steps taken to store firearms must make them inaccessible to unauthorized or at-risk individuals. For different situations, this may require increasing protections such as changing passcodes on gun safes and implementing measures to keep keys to gun safes only with an authorized adult. In some situations, gun owners may want to give a designee control over access to their firearms for a certain period.

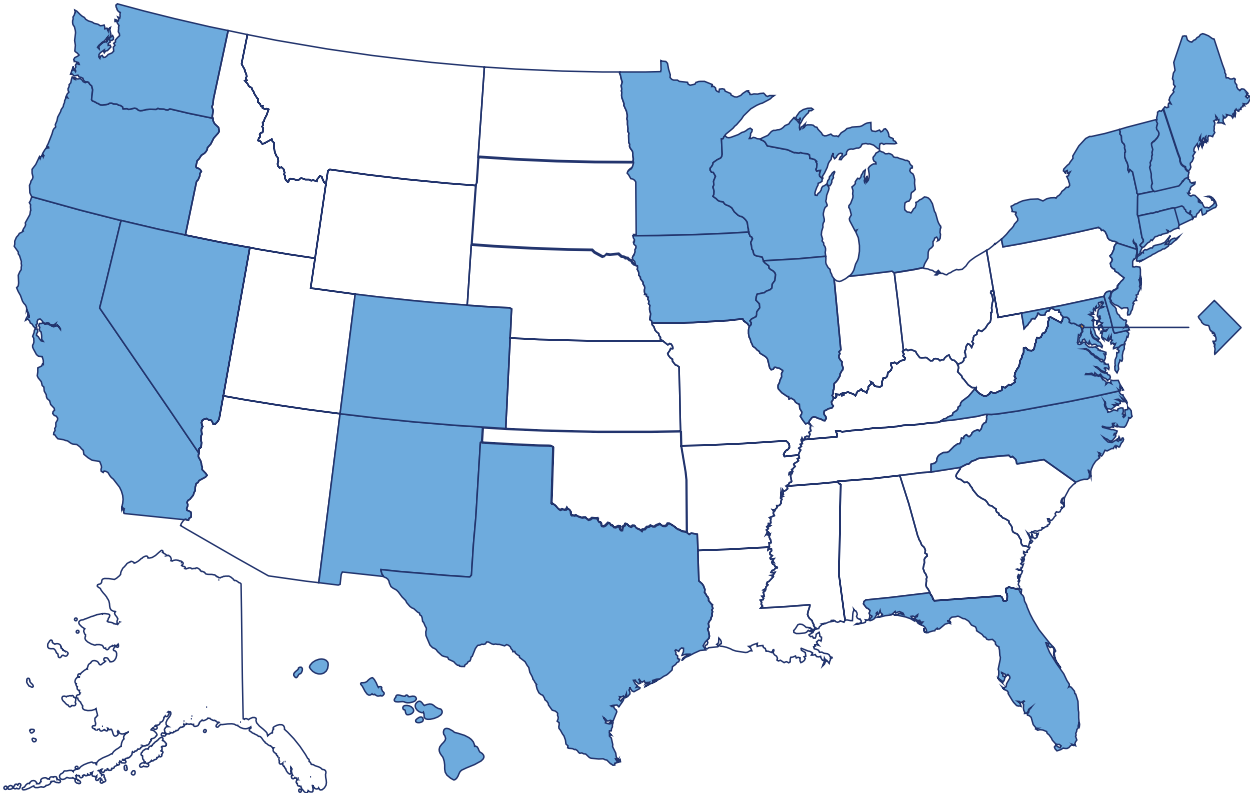


Interventions limiting access to firearms as a means of preventing suicide is especially important when one considers the comparative lethality of various suicide methods: **A suicide attempt using a firearm is fatal in 90% of cases while a suicide attempt by poisoning is fatal in less than 5% of cases.**²

Firearm Safe Storage is the foundation of a spectrum of interventions that restrict access to lethal means when people are at risk.

As of March 2025, 26 states and Washington, D.C., have some form of Safe Storage law.

States with Safe Storage Laws



CALIFORNIA	MAINE	NEW YORK
COLORADO	MARYLAND	NORTH CAROLINA
CONNECTICUT	MASSACHUSETTS	OREGON
DELAWARE	MICHIGAN	RHODE ISLAND
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	MINNESOTA	TEXAS
FLORIDA	NEVADA	VERMONT
HAWAII	NEW HAMPSHIRE	VIRGINIA
ILLINOIS	NEW JERSEY	WASHINGTON
IOWA	NEW MEXICO	WISCONSIN

For more detail on these laws, see the [Safe Storage State Law Comparison Table](#) on page 19

However, there is broad variance in the scope, effectiveness, and implementation of Safe Storage laws across the states that have them. Some states have general Safe Storage requirements for guns in homes and vehicles, while others require Safe Storage only if it can reasonably be expected that minors or people legally prohibited from possessing firearms may be on the premises.



States also vary with respect to liability for violating Safe Storage laws, with some states penalizing gun owners who recklessly store their guns and other states adopting more impactful laws that penalize gun owners who negligently allow access to their firearms.

Safe Storage laws often involve several pieces of legislation that work together to prevent unauthorized gun access in homes and vehicles, with special attention given to those who may pose an increased risk of harm with access to firearms, such as minors and persons legally prohibited from possessing firearms.

Evidence of Effectiveness

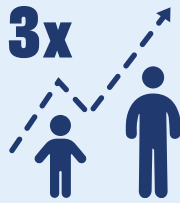
Strong public health data indicate that firearm Safe Storage policies reduce rates of firearm injuries and deaths when properly implemented. These laws seek to reduce unauthorized access to firearms by placing physical barriers between a person and highly lethal means. Safe Storage laws are associated with reductions in rates of suicide by firearm, firearm theft, unintentional shootings, and overall youth violence.^{3,4} Over more than two decades, researchers have repeatedly found that Safe Storage policies are associated with reduced rates of suicide by firearm, including among children.⁵

A Spectrum of Interventions



Safe Storage laws are one component of a spectrum of firearm injury prevention tools. For example, Safe Storage laws alone will be less effective at preventing injury if gun owners themselves are experiencing a heightened risk of harming themselves or others. Those are scenarios where Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs) may be of the most use. To learn more about creating and improving strong civil orders to temporarily remove firearms from those at immediate risk of harming themselves or others, refer to the [Center for Gun Violence Solutions' ERPO Model Policy Guide](#). For more information on the effective implementation of ERPO laws, see the [National Extreme Risk Protection Order Resource Center](#).

Racial Disparities



Black youth are currently experiencing **three times greater firearm suicide rates** than they did a decade ago, demonstrating further need to limit firearm access by children and teens.⁶

Research from 2020 found that states with strong Safe Storage policies have seen an estimated **12% reduction in youth firearm suicides** (among children ages 0–14) and a 13% reduction in deaths and injuries among the same population resulting from unintentional shootings.⁷

In one study, researchers posited that between **6% and 32% of all youth firearm deaths** could be prevented through the passage and implementation of strong Safe Storage laws.⁸

12% **REDUCTION IN YOUTH FIREARM SUICIDES**

6% TO 32%



OF ALL YOUTH FIREARM DEATHS COULD BE PREVENTED WITH STRONG SAFE STORAGE LAWS

Additionally, more stringent Safe Storage policies that penalize gun owners who negligently allow access to firearms have been shown to result in greater reductions in firearm injuries and deaths as compared to less stringent Safe Storage policies that penalize only gun owners who act recklessly.⁹ This is strong evidence that the more robust the Safe Storage policy, the more lives can be saved.

Negligence vs. Recklessness Standards

In legal terms, “negligence” and “recklessness” are both standards by which courts evaluate a person’s conduct.

NEGLIGENCE

Under law, someone acts negligently if they “should be aware of a substantial and unjustifiable risk that ... exists or will result from [their] conduct.”¹⁰

RECKLESSNESS

In contrast, someone acts recklessly if they “consciously [disregard] that ... exists or will result from [their] conduct.”¹¹

Reckless offenses are deemed more serious because a person has actual knowledge that their actions will likely result in harm. However, it is also more difficult for courts to prove whether someone actually knew something versus if they reasonably should have known their firearm could be accessed by unauthorized users or prohibited persons.

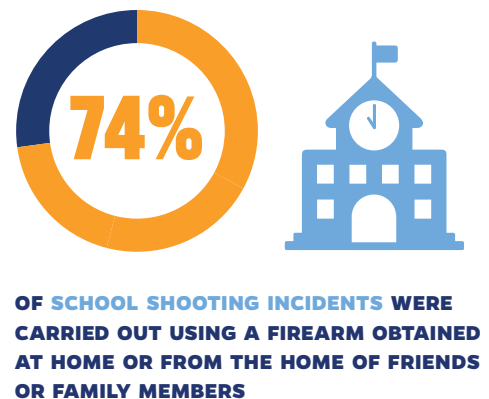
PREVALENCE OF FIREARMS IN HOMES WITH CHILDREN

Research has revealed that firearms are relatively common in households with children, and those firearms are not always stored safely. **An estimated 33% of American households with children have firearms in the home, and an estimated 54% of these gun owners fail to securely and safely store all their firearms.**^{12, 13} This combination of factors (firearm ownership and unsafe firearm storage practices) is associated with significantly higher rates of injury.¹⁴ Efforts to improve firearm storage practices may be an effective way to reduce risks of suicide and homicide by firearm for everyone living in or visiting the home, particularly children and teens.



UNSECURED FIREARMS USED IN MASS SHOOTINGS

There is also limited but promising evidence that Safe Storage laws can help reduce mass violence perpetrated by youth, particularly by reducing unauthorized access to firearms that could be used in acts of mass violence or targeted attacks. **In approximately 74% of school shooting incidents, the firearm used by the shooter was obtained from their own home or the home of a close friend or family member.**¹⁵ Safe Storage laws have the potential to reduce all forms of gun violence by preventing the unauthorized firearm access that precedes some shootings.



BURDEN OF GUN VIOLENCE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Though gun violence is often concentrated in urban areas, **rural areas experience higher rates of firearm ownership, suicide by firearm, unintentional shootings, and unsecured firearms in homes with children.** As a result, rural areas might experience significant benefits from the adoption of Safe Storage laws.¹⁶ Overall, properly implemented Safe Storage policies have the potential to meaningfully reduce gun-related injuries and deaths among populations with high or rising rates of firearm suicide, including rural populations.

REDUCTION OF GUN THEFT AND THE FLOW OF CRIME GUNS

Beyond reducing instances of suicide by firearm and unintentional shootings, Safe Storage laws can also help reduce gun theft, which poses a major public health and safety risk.

Data sourced from gun owners and law enforcement indicate that more than 350,000 firearms (across an estimated 250,000 incidents) are stolen annually.¹⁷

Gun owners who do not securely store one or more firearms while owning more than six firearms are twice as likely to experience firearm theft as compared to their peers who safely and securely store all their firearms.¹⁸

Stolen firearms are more than nine times as likely to be recovered at a crime scene as compared to non-stolen firearms. Stolen guns may be more attractive in illegal markets, where they can be sold to people who cannot legally purchase firearms, including those with histories of violent acts.¹⁹ Storing all firearms safely and securely would reduce the flow of guns to illegal firearms markets and further prevent people from acquiring firearms who cannot legally have them.

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ONGOING IMPLICATIONS OF ROBUST SAFE STORAGE

Overall, researchers have consistently found that Safe Storage policies are associated with reductions in multiple forms of gun violence. Though future research will continue to refine our understanding of these policies and the way they are implemented, **the body of existing evidence strongly suggests that these laws are an effective way to prevent firearm suicide, firearm injuries in youth, unintentional shootings, and other firearm-related injuries.**

Model Policy Recommendations

When Firearms Should Be Stored

GENERAL SAFE STORAGE REQUIREMENT

General Safe Storage laws outline how all guns should be stored in a home, regardless of who may be on the premises. Data suggest that less than half of American gun owners store their firearms in a safe and secure manner.²⁰

✔ **All firearms in the home must be securely stored if not in the possessor's direct control.**

Unless they are in use by or in the direct control of an authorized adult (i.e., an adult legally permitted to possess a firearm), all firearms should be stored unloaded in a locked safe. By requiring Safe Storage of all firearms in all homes and vehicles, the law removes the need to determine whether a prohibited person might be in the home at some point or predict if a certain age child might visit.

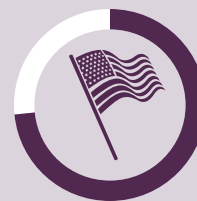
✔ **"Direct control" is defined as possessing a firearm on your person or within your immediate reach.**

Safe Storage laws should not cover firearms that are being carried or otherwise in use, but also should not allow for firearms to be left in places where people other than the owner could access them.

"Direct Control" Language

Many states use direct control language in their Safe Storage laws due to the variety of situations where someone may have control over a firearm without directly holding it. Sometimes, this language describes the firearm as being in "direct control"²² or "in close proximity" or "on the person."²³ For instance, someone carrying a firearm in a handbag could be considered to have direct control over the firearm, though they would not have direct control if they left the bag with the handgun in a different room than the one they are occupying.

Supported by the Public



A nationally representative survey found that **72% of U.S. adults**, including 58% of gun owners,

support requiring by law that people lock up their guns in their home when not in use to prevent handling by children or teenagers without adult supervision.²¹

PREVENTING FIREARM ACCESS BY PROHIBITED PERSONS

Laws recognize, and public health literature demonstrates, that certain populations may have an increased risk of harm due to firearms. Primary among these are minors and individuals that are affirmatively prohibited from accessing firearms.

- ✔ **Safe storage laws must include a child access prevention component, imposing additional penalties for gun owners who fail to securely store their firearms when minors are living in or may be present on the premises.**

Adding additional penalties for improper storage when there are children present or likely to be present provides further incentive for gun owners to be diligent about their firearm storage practices around this high-risk population. Additional penalties should apply whether or not the gun owner is living in the same place as a child. The intent of the penalties is to prevent firearm access wherever a child can reasonably be expected to spend time. This includes short periods of time, such as visits with friends or neighbors.

Affirmative Prohibitions

Affirmative prohibitions refer to instances where a ruling by a court prohibits someone from possessing firearms (such as a felony conviction, misdemeanor crime of domestic violence, an extreme risk protection order, and more). Affirmative prohibitions are distinguishable from passive prohibitions, such as states where people need a license to legally own a firearm but have not yet acquired that license.

- ✔ **Safe storage laws must include a provision that imposes additional penalties for gun owners who fail to securely store their firearms when persons affirmatively prohibited from accessing firearms are living in or may be present on the premises.**

Gun owners bear the responsibility of ensuring their firearms do not fall into the hands of people who have been adjudicated to be unfit for firearm access due to their past or current behavior, typically because they were or are in some way a danger to themselves or others. Similar to child access penalties, prohibited persons penalties make it clear to gun owners that they must take additional measures to ensure secure storage of their firearms around those who have been legally prohibited from buying or possessing them.

FIREARMS IN VEHICLES

Unsecured firearms left in vehicles are at significant risk of theft. On average, at least one gun is stolen from a car every nine minutes in the United States, and the rate of gun thefts from cars tripled from 2013–2023.²⁴ More than half (51%) of gun thefts in 2022 involved firearms stolen from vehicles.²⁵ Gun thefts from cars are now the largest source of stolen guns, increasing the risk that a gun is used in a violent crime.²⁶

- ✔ **Firearms in vehicles must be securely stored if not in the possessor's direct control.**

Safe and secure storage of firearms in vehicles can limit impulsive firearm use while driving. It can also reduce the likelihood that a gun could be stolen from a vehicle in which it is stored.

Road Rage Risks



Road rage shootings in the United States have **increased 400%** between 2014 and 2023.²⁷

How Firearms Should Be Stored

HOME STORAGE REQUIREMENTS

To prevent injury and death, it is necessary that firearms be stored safely and securely. The way firearms are stored is critical to yielding the protective effect of Safe Storage laws.

✔ **Firearms must be stored in locked, hard-sided containers.**

Secure gun storage means using a storage device that best limits access to a gun by someone who is not authorized to access it. Using a hard-sided container such as a gun case or safe is more effective than an external device such as a trigger lock or cable lock. Ensuring that a hard-sided container is locked and no one else has a key or the combination to the lock reduces the likelihood that a firearm will be accessed by a child or other prohibited individual or be stolen.

✔ **Firearms securely stored in the home must be unloaded.**

Storing firearms unloaded reduces the likelihood of an unintentional discharge during routine handling or if the gun is accessed by a child.

VEHICLE STORAGE REQUIREMENTS

Similar to storing firearms in the home, the way firearms are stored in vehicles is a significant factor in reducing the risk of firearm theft and misuse.

✔ **Firearms stored in vehicles must be kept in a locked, hard-sided container and out of plain sight.**

Storing a firearm in a locked, hard-sided container minimizes the likelihood that it could be accessed by an unauthorized user or stolen from a vehicle. Keeping the firearm and its storage container out of plain sight decreases crimes of opportunity in which an individual might break into a vehicle solely to obtain a visible firearm.

✔ **Firearms stored in vehicles must remain out of reach and sight of all passengers.**

Firearms that are within reach or sight of passengers or the driver might be used in impulsive situations. Storing firearms out of sight and reach of passengers can minimize the accessibility of firearms that might be used accidentally or to escalate a situation.

Liability and Public Awareness

LIABILITY STANDARDS

Liability standards determine legal responsibility in the context of different laws. Liability standards can vary depending on a law's intended purpose.

✔ **Strict liability should apply for general Safe Storage requirements.**

Strict liability violations hold the offender liable regardless of their intent or mental state. They are simple for courts to administer and the public to understand. In the context of Safe Storage, gun owners are strictly liable if they fail to securely store in their home the firearms that are not in their direct control.

✔ **Liability for child and prohibited persons access prevention laws should be negligence based.**

Research suggests that the most effective child and prohibited persons access prevention laws are negligence based. "Negligence based" means that the gun owner is held liable only if they knew or reasonably should have known that minors and other prohibited persons could be on the premises where a gun is kept. The negligence standard is shown to have more protective effects when used in Safe Storage policies.²⁸

GUN ACCESS PREVENTION LAWS

Gun Access Prevention Laws are a combination of two common Safe Storage component laws: preventing gun access by 1) minors, and 2) persons legally prohibited from possessing firearms. Some states have both, one, or neither of these laws aimed at preventing unauthorized gun access by two high-risk groups.

✔ **GAP (gun access prevention) laws should apply to anyone who cannot legally possess a firearm, including those who are too young or are temporarily or permanently prohibited from possessing firearms.**

GAP laws would help ensure that if someone cannot legally purchase or possess a firearm, they cannot access a firearm belonging to someone else. The gun owner whose weapons the minor or prohibited person may have access to always bears the responsibility of safely storing their firearms to prevent anyone who, under their state or federal law, is passively or affirmatively prohibited from purchasing firearms.

In states where the minimum purchasing age for firearms is 21, a specific strength of a GAP law would be to protect young adults ages 18–20 years old, a group that experiences very high levels of gun violence victimization and perpetration. A GAP law can also be applied to different classes of firearms and their respective legal age of purchase.

DISTRIBUTING SAFE STORAGE INFORMATION IN GUN STORES

Gun stores have a unique opportunity to engage with gun purchasers, including first-time purchasers, by providing information on life-saving laws at the point of sale.

✓ **Firearms dealers must distribute Safe Storage information to gun purchasers at the time of purchase.**

By distributing educational materials describing the state's Safe Storage law to gun purchasers, states can increase awareness about the law and how to comply with it. Gun retailers can also provide resources for gun owners to comply with the law by directing buyers to Safe Storage devices available for sale.

✓ **Firearms dealers must post conspicuous signs in their stores with information about state Safe Storage requirements.**

Conspicuous signage about Safe Storage laws creates another opportunity to place firearm purchasers on notice about legal responsibilities to keep themselves and others safe. For these purposes, "conspicuous signage" involves a prominent location and font size that is reasonably expected to be seen and understood by visitors to the firearm dealer.

Example of Signage



In Washington state, firearms dealers must post a sign in a conspicuous place at each point of sale

that states in block letters not less than 1 inch in height: "FAILURE TO KEEP FIREARMS IN SECURE GUN STORAGE, OR SECURED WITH A TRIGGER LOCK OR SIMILAR DEVICE THAT IS DESIGNED TO PREVENT THE UNAUTHORIZED USE OR DISCHARGE OF THE FIREARM MAY SUBJECT YOU TO CRIMINAL PENALTIES."²⁹

DISTRIBUTING SAFE STORAGE INFORMATION IN SCHOOLS

Schools are critical messengers for health and safety information for students and their families. They have unique relationships with families and children alike and are generally trusted disseminators of information. Informing caregivers about Safe Storage practices as a means of preventing firearm suicide, unintentional shootings, and firearm theft is a potentially lifesaving act of public education.

✓ **Require all K-12 schools to distribute Safe Storage information and instructions to students' caregivers.**

Similar to distribution of information about vaccination requirements or school-based health services, schools should provide information to families on Safe Storage as a means of addressing firearm injuries, the leading cause of death in youth ages 1-19 in the United States.³⁰

✓ **Safe Storage information and instructions provided by school systems must be created by the state department of health.**

State departments of health can partner with educators, school administrators, and other local stakeholders to leverage their public health expertise to provide information that is tailored to the needs of the specific community and to the state's specific legal requirements for gun owners. Joint resource development between the state department of health and other stakeholders helps ensure that the resources are accurate, helpful, high quality, and localized.

Data and Accountability

PENALTIES

Civil and criminal penalties are important mechanisms for motivating compliance with life-saving behaviors, including the Safe Storage of firearms.

- ✔ **There should be the option to impose civil and/or criminal penalties against gun owners who do not securely store their firearms.**

Safe Storage laws need penalties to have deterrent effect, but do not need to rise to the level of felony prohibitions that could implicate a person's civil rights and liberties.

- ✔ **There should be civil and/or criminal penalties for gun owners if their firearms are accessed by minors or other prohibited persons, with Safe Storage compliance as a defense to those offenses.**

If a firearm owner's guns are accessed by a minor or other legally prohibited person, they will not be guilty of allowing the access if they can prove they securely stored their gun as required by state law. Having Safe Storage compliance as a defense to unauthorized gun access by persons at an elevated risk of gun violence can raise public awareness and reinforce the significance of keeping firearms securely stored to reduce risk of harm.

- ✔ **Penalties for violation of Safe Storage laws should be capped at misdemeanor offenses that are not punishable by more than two years imprisonment.**

Misdemeanor and monetary civil penalties are sufficient penalties to deter risky behavior regarding improper gun storage without implicating the same civil rights and liberties as felony-level convictions. The purpose of Safe Storage laws is not to punish those who offend, but to proactively incentivize safe firearm storage practices as enumerated in law.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is crucial for evaluating any law's uptake and impact. Collecting specific information on Safe Storage implementation following law passage and sharing it with the public can help interested parties understand how effective the policy is at preventing violence in their state. This same data can help key stakeholders to identify opportunities to improve the uptake and functioning of the law.

- ✔ **States should ensure that data on the enforcement of Safe Storage laws is gathered and made available for research, policy, and public safety purposes.**

PROPOSED SAFE STORAGE DATA CATEGORIES

Arrest Data

- Number of arrests for Safe Storage violations
- Demographics (age, gender identity, racial or ethnic identity) of arrestee
- Charges
- Location data
- Description of guns involved (how many, what type)
- Description of storage practice that violated the Safe Storage law
- Description of offender's relationship (if any) to a person with a prohibiting condition who accessed the gun at issue
- Whether any other crime or violence was involved

Outcome Data

- Arrest outcomes (conviction, plea, charges dropped)
- Penalties imposed (fine, incarceration)
- Repeat offenses
- Gun thefts overall; gun thefts associated with Safe Storage violation

Education/Programmatic Data

- Share of schools/districts that distribute Safe Storage material
- Share of federal firearm licensees compliant with storage education requirements
- Share of training courses that cover Safe Storage laws and/or practices

Public policy is often most effective when it is informed by research and evidence. For Safe Storage laws to continue to be effective, researchers need to have access to robust data on the enforcement of these laws.






This data should include detailed information about arrests for suspected violations of Safe Storage laws, information about the ultimate outcomes of Safe Storage cases, and information about how Safe Storage educational materials are distributed. This data will allow researchers to assess the efficacy of Safe Storage laws, examine possible inequities in arrests and judicial outcomes, and identify the key policy elements associated with reductions in violence.

Conclusion

Safe Storage laws can save lives by preventing unauthorized access to firearms, especially for those who pose an increased risk of violence. Over half of U.S. states have some form of Safe Storage law, though they vary in scope and effectiveness. This guide contains recommendations for states as they draft or amend Safe Storage laws grounded in implementation experience, existing practice, and public health research. Policymakers can, and should, use these recommendations to construct the best possible Safe Storage policies for their communities.



Safe Storage State Law Comparison Table

					
	General Safe Storage Requirement	Negligence Standard	Vehicle Requirement	CAP Requirement	Prohibited Person Requirement
California	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colorado	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Connecticut	✓	Strict	✗	✗	✗
Delaware	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
District of Columbia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Florida	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Hawaii	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Illinois	✗	✓	✗	✓*	✗
Iowa	✗	✓	✗	✓*	✗
Maine	✗	✓	✗	✓*	✗
Maryland	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Massachusetts	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Michigan	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Minnesota	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Nevada	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
New Hampshire	✗	✓	✗	✓*	✗
New Jersey	✗	✓	✗	✓*	✗
New Mexico	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
New York	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
North Carolina	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Oregon	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Rhode Island	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Texas	✗	✓	✗	✓*	✗
Vermont	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Virginia	✗	✗	✗	✓*	✗
Washington	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Wisconsin	✗	✗	✗	✓*	✗

*These states have CAP requirements, but the ages of applicability are under recommended age (Under 17 in Texas; under 16 in Florida, Maine, New Hampshire, and New Jersey; under 14 in Iowa, Illinois, Virginia, and Wisconsin).

Recommendation Checklist



General Safe Storage Requirement

1. All firearms in the home must be securely stored if not in the possessor's direct control.
2. "Direct control" is defined as possessing a firearm on your person or within your immediate reach.

Preventing Firearm Access by Prohibited Persons

3. Safe Storage laws must include a child access prevention component, imposing additional penalties for gun owners who fail to securely store their firearms when minors are living in or may be present on the premises.
4. Safe Storage laws must include a provision that imposes additional penalties for gun owners who fail to securely store their firearms when persons affirmatively prohibited from accessing firearms are living in or may be present on the premises.

Firearms in Vehicles

5. Firearms in vehicles must be securely stored if not in the possessor's direct control.



Home Storage Requirements

6. Firearms must be stored in locked, hard-sided containers.
7. Firearms securely stored in the home must be unloaded.

Vehicle Storage Requirements

8. Firearms stored in vehicles must be kept in a locked, hard-sided container and out of plain sight.
9. Firearms stored in vehicles must remain out of reach and sight of all passengers.



Liability Standards

10. Strict liability should apply for general Safe Storage requirements.
11. Liability for child and prohibited persons access prevention laws should be negligence based.

Gun Access Prevention Laws

12. GAP (Gun Access Prevention) laws should apply to anyone who cannot legally possess a firearm, including those who are too young or are temporarily or permanently prohibited from possessing firearms.

Distributing Safe Storage Information in Gun Stores

13. Firearms dealers must distribute Safe Storage information to gun purchasers at the time of purchase.
14. Firearms dealers must post conspicuous signs in their stores with information about state Safe Storage requirements.

Distributing Safe Storage Information in Schools

15. Require all K–12 schools to distribute Safe Storage information and instructions to students' caregivers.
16. Safe Storage information and instructions provided by school systems must be created by the state department of health.



Penalties

17. There should be the option to impose civil and/or criminal penalties against gun owners who do not securely store their firearms.
18. There should be civil and criminal penalties for gun owners if their firearms were accessed by minors or other prohibited persons, with Safe Storage compliance as a defense to those offenses.
19. Penalties for violation of Safe Storage laws should be capped at misdemeanor offenses that are not punishable by more than two years imprisonment.

Data Collection

20. States should ensure that data on the enforcement of Safe Storage laws is gathered and made available for research, policy, and public safety purposes. [See report for recommended data categories]

Endnotes

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