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## Firearm Safety Education in Vermont

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## **Title: Firearm Safety Education in Vermont**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Each year in Vermont, approximately 75 people die from gunshot wounds and 65 are injured. The majority of these deaths are suicides, while the majority of injuries are caused by unintentional discharges ([VDOH 2021](#)).

### **METHODS**

A provider survey was pilot tested and sent to 25 providers for assessing their firearm safety discussions with patients and the need for a patient information pamphlet. Informed by that survey and literature/web search, a pamphlet directed at patients was drafted and reviewed. It details safe storage practices, recent Vermont legislation, tips to discuss firearm safety with loved ones, relevance of mental health to firearm safety, and prevalence of firearm injuries/deaths in Vermont. A provider-directed insert regarding initiating firearm safety conversations and an EPIC SmartText to prompt conversations and expedite note-taking were also created.

### **FINDINGS**

Ten providers responded to the survey (response rate 40%): 60% indicated a patient-directed educational pamphlet would help conduct conversations about firearm safety; 90% reported discussing firearm presence in the home; 70% inquire how firearms are stored; 100% indicated firearm safety/storage tips and resources would be useful; 70% agreed a list of online educational resources would be useful.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Creation of the patient/provider pamphlets and EPIC SmartText may increase firearm safety education by Vermont providers. Materials need to be vetted/branded for broad dissemination within healthcare organizations. Determination of providers' interest in this resource was limited by a small sample. Further research is needed to evaluate effectiveness of these materials in promoting firearm safety conversations by healthcare providers.

**KEYWORDS:** Firearm safety, patient education, Vermont, suicide