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Discussing Firearm Safety with New Parents: Utilizing major life events to positively impact a polarizing public health challenge

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Recommended Citation

Marassi, Caitlin E., "Discussing Firearm Safety with New Parents: Utilizing major life events to positively impact a polarizing public health challenge" (2023). *Family Medicine Clerkship Student Projects*. 1049. <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/fmclerk/1049>

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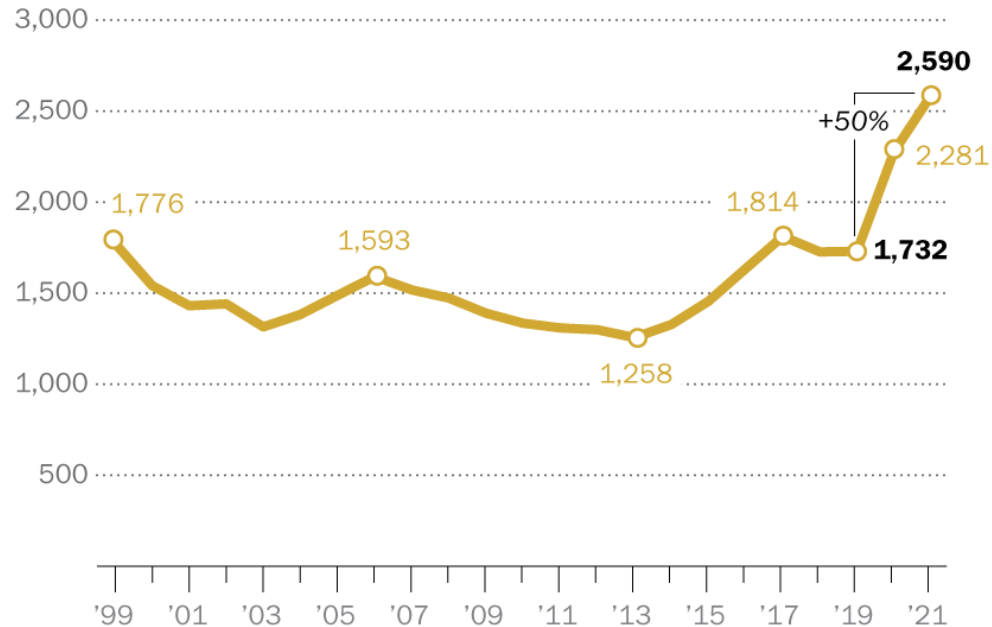
DISCUSSING FIREARM SAFETY WITH NEW PARENTS:

*Utilizing major life
events to positively
impact a polarizing
public health
challenge*

CAITLIN MARASSI, MS3
APRIL 2023

Gun deaths among U.S. kids increased 50% between 2019 and 2021

Gun deaths among U.S. children and teens under 18



Note: Includes homicides, suicides, accidents and all other categories of gun deaths.
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Problem Identification & Community Need: *a current & emerging health issue*

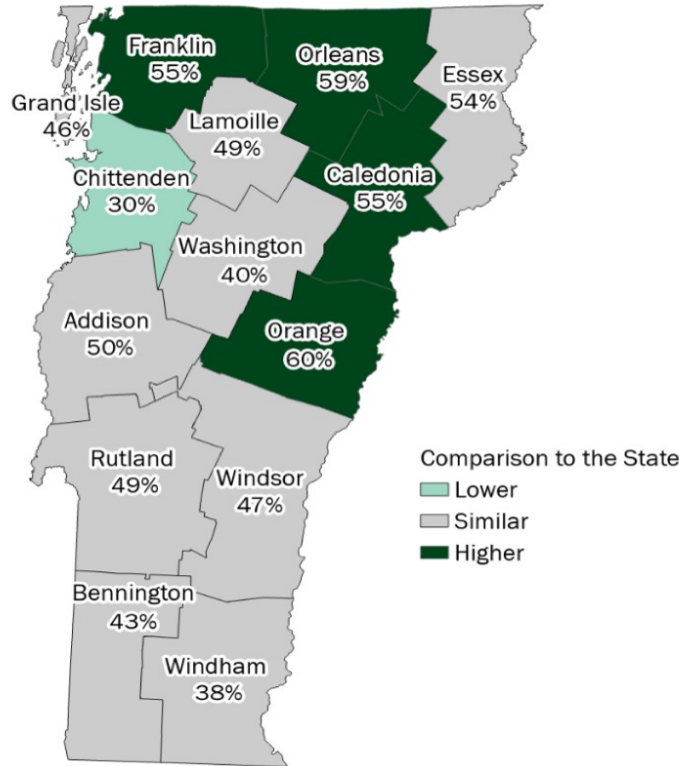
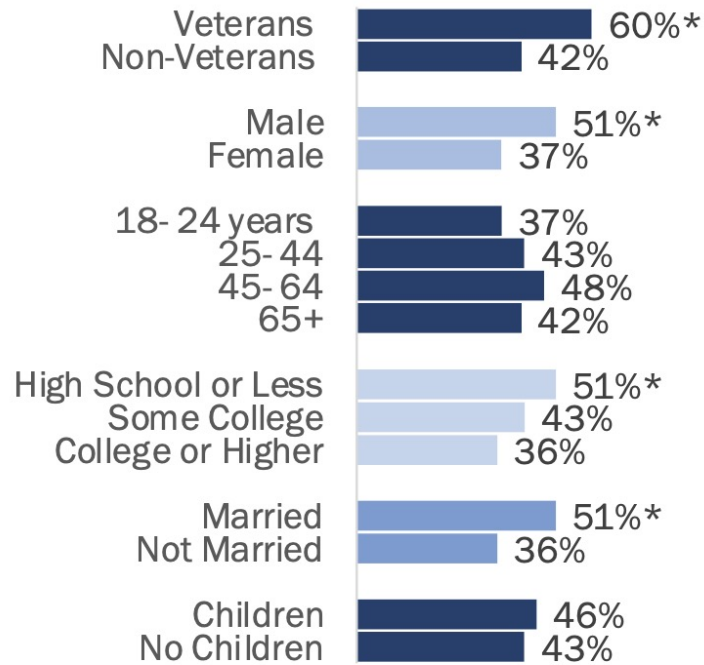
393 million civilian owned firearms exist in the US, roughly equivalent to 1.2 guns per person ¹

Childhood deaths due to firearms rose 50% between 2019 and 2021, the highest since the CDC began recording in 1999 ²

2023 Pew research shows: ³

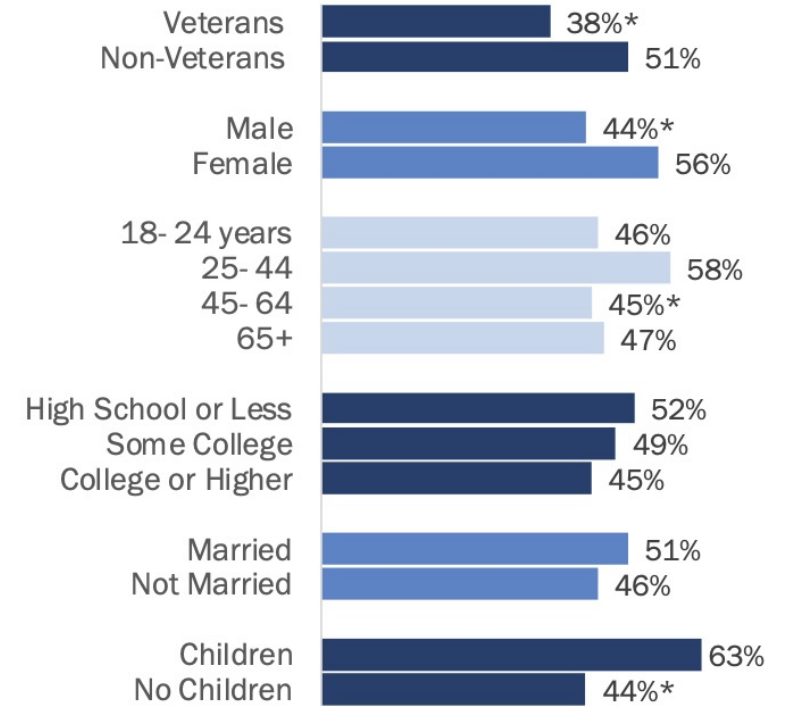
- 81% of firearm owners say they feel safer owning a gun
- Firearm ownership is higher in rural (47%) compared to urban (20%) areas
- Only 12% of firearm owners worry about having guns in their home

Prevalence of Firearms in or Around the Home



*Notes a statistical difference
 Source: (left) BRFSS, 2020; (right) BRFSS 2018-2020

Prevalence of Households with Firearms that Store them Locked and Unloaded.



*Notes a statistical difference
 Source: BRFSS, 2020

Spotlight on Vermont

- Roughly 50% of adults in Vermont live in a household with a firearm, 16th in the nation ⁴
- Firearm deaths in Vermont increased 45% between 2009 and 2018. 86% of firearm deaths in the state are suicides ⁵
- 49% of Vermont households store their firearms locked and unloaded ⁶
- In 2023, Vermont enacted a law holding individuals criminally liable for storing a firearm in a way that a child is likely to gain access to it ⁷

Community Perspectives

PEDIATRIC NURSE

13 YEARS EXPERIENCE

Current practice is to discuss firearm safety with parents at 2 year well child check.

“Providing information about firearm safety early and often would be beneficial. If families start hearing messages about how to stay safe with firearms right from the get-go, it may be something they pay more attention to and they may be more likely to heed the advice as their babies grow older.”

“I worry about people (mostly our patients' parents, but also young adults that we still see) who have very strong opinions on guns and are resistant to taking the steps to ensure safety within the home because they are certain that what they are already doing is ‘enough.’”

DAYCARE PROVIDER

14 YEARS EXPERIENCE

Does not routinely discuss firearm safety with all parents, however, has begun to casually bring the topic up as children become more mobile.

“While it may seem silly while their tiny infant is sleeping peacefully in their arms, it doesn't take long before that infant is a preschooler running through the house playing hide and seek and finds something hiding under the bed or until that infant is a teenager dealing with a mental health crisis and they guessed the code on the gun safe. It is something that should be addressed early, in a non-judgmental manner, and continue to be addressed as the child grows up.”

Interventions

Coordinate with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Vermont to make free firearm locks available (currently freely available across the state, Chittenden County locations include the Fletcher Free Library, New North End Library, Howard Center, Essex Free Library, and South Burlington Sheriff's Office through GunSafeVT ⁸⁾)

Hang *Gun Storage for Your Lifestyle* pamphlet (Appendix A, clip to the left) near the sign in desk along free firearm locks



Include important information on firearm safety and storage in the After Visit Summary (AVS):

- Location of the seven safe gun storage locations in Vermont (Green Mountain Sporting goods in Irasburg, Parros Gun Shop in Waterbury, R&L Archery in Barre, J Stone and Son Transport in Hancock, Hawk Hill Guns & Tackle in Brandon, AGC Arms in Shaftsbury, and Roland Hubbard in East Dummerston).
- *Gun Storage for Your Lifestyle* pamphlet (Appendix A)

GUN STORAGE FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

As a gun owner, you can choose from multiple options for safely storing and protecting your firearms when they're not in use. Use this guide to determine which mechanism best suits your lifestyle, priorities and environment.

A RANGE OF OPTIONS

 <p>CABLE LOCK Price Range: \$10–\$50</p> <p>A cable lock can be used on most firearms, allows for quick access in an emergency and offers security from theft. The cable runs through the barrel or action of a firearm to prevent it from being accidentally fired, requiring either a key or combination to unlock it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ AFFORDABLE✓ ACCESSIBLE✓ THEFT DETERRENT
 <p>GUN CASE Price Range: \$10–\$150</p> <p>For those looking to conceal, protect or legally transport a registered firearm, a gun case is an affordable solution available in a variety of materials including plastic, fabric or metal. Be sure to lock it with an external device for added security.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ AFFORDABLE✓ PORTABLE✓ PROTECTS FROM DAMAGE

PLEASE HELP PREVENT ACCIDENTS. STORE FIREARMS RESPONSIBLY.

Response

Community members indicated appreciation for the non-judgmental approach to the discussion of firearms given how common firearm ownership is among their patients

There was interest in working with the state to see if local clinics would be able to distribute free firearm locks, as availability in the clinic would remove the barrier of patients needing to travel to a separate location to acquire the locks

Community members noted that an official questionnaire during rooming inquiring about firearm safety may be met with resistance given the cultural and political sensitivity of the topic

Multiple community members noted that often major life changes can be an impetus for change in other areas of life, and that it makes sense that following the birth of a child families may be more open to discussions about firearm safety in addition to general child safety practices. It was also noted new parents are often inundated with safety information, so it is important to continue the conversation throughout the child's life.

Future Evaluation: Tracking Outcomes

Number of firearm locks distributed

- Limitation: the clinic is unable to know if the firearm locks were used appropriately
- Limitation: the clinic would not know if they were taken by families that previously had unsafe firearm storage practices or if they were taken as backups for those who already were practicing safe firearm storage
- Limitation: additional administrative tracking needed

Following implementation of the inclusion of the *Gun Storage for Your Lifestyle* pamphlet in the AVS, include a question during the next visit asking if the family felt the information was helpful

- Limitation: the follow up question may concern patients who worry about their firearms being tracked
- Limitation: additional administrative work needed to add this question to follow up templates, as well as analysis of the information at the end of the trial period

Future Interventions

Consider incorporating these strategies during mental health visits, in addition to early well child checks

Following pilot, analyze the results and adjust the strategies based on feedback

If successful, consider expanding program to other primary care offices in the state

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CABLE LOCK

Price Range: \$10–\$50

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- AFFORDABLE
- ACCESSIBLE
- THEFT DETERRENT



GUN CASE

Price Range: \$10–\$150

For those looking to conceal, protect or legally transport a registered firearm, a gun case is an affordable solution available in a variety of materials including plastic, fabric or metal. Be sure to lock it with an external device for added security.

- AFFORDABLE
- PORTABLE
- PROTECTS FROM DAMAGE



LOCK BOX

Price Range: \$25–\$350

With integrated locks, storage boxes provide reliable protection for firearms, and allow gun owners to legally transport them outside of their home.

- PORTABLE
- ACCESSIBLE
- PROTECTS FROM DAMAGE



ELECTRONIC LOCK BOX

Price Range: \$50–\$350

Electronic lock boxes are an effective way to store or legally transport firearms, and they also prevent theft since only the person with the code can access the contents. Some electronic lock boxes are specially designed for quick access to stored firearms.

- PORTABLE
- THEFT DETERRENT
- PROTECTS FROM DAMAGE



FULL SIZE AND BIOMETRIC GUN SAFES

Price Range: \$200–\$2,500

A gun safe protects its contents from the elements and allows owners to safely store multiple firearms in one place. Gun safes of all sizes are now available with biometric options to ensure only certain people have access.

- THEFT DETERRENT
- PROTECTS FROM DAMAGE

VEHICLE STORAGE



CONSOLE STORAGE

Price Range: \$250 - \$300

A solution for those who need a truly secure place to store their firearm in a vehicle. These custom-fitted devices provide concealment to deter prying eyes and would-be thieves. Various access options are available, including biometric.

- THEFT DETERRENT
- ACCESSIBLE
- PROTECTS FROM DAMAGE



CARGO AREA STORAGE

Price Range: \$500 - \$1,500

Effective for transporting firearms to the range or field, cargo area storage models are available for sedans, SUVs and trucks. These devices allow for locked storage, concealment and protection from bumps and jostling.

- THEFT DETERRENT
- ACCESSIBLE
- PROTECTS FROM DAMAGE

SECURE STORAGE ACCESSORIES



WIRELESS GUN SAFE MONITOR

Price Range: \$150 - \$200

An electronic monitor can provide awareness and alert you if anyone is accessing your storage device or handling your firearm without your authorization. Some sound an audible alarm, others can be connected to your smartphone.

- THEFT DETERRENT
- REMOTE MONITORING



ELECTRONIC HOLSTERS

Price Range: \$200 - \$300

Electronic holsters are a new type of secure storage device that enable fast access along with security to prevent unauthorized access. Holsters can be mounted or used independent of a mounting system and feature a programmable finger or thumbprint scan.

- PORTABLE
- ACCESSIBLE
- THEFT DETERRENT

PLEASE HELP PREVENT ACCIDENTS. STORE FIREARMS RESPONSIBLY.

These are just a few of the storage options available to firearms owners. For the greatest level of security, consider using a combination of safety mechanisms and educate family members about handling firearms properly.

To learn more about firearms safety, visit ProjectChildSafe.org



Project ChildSafe is a program of the National Shooting Sports Foundation®



Citations

1. Ingraham, C. (2018, June 19). There are more guns than people in the United States, according to a new study of global firearm ownership. *The Washington Post*
2. Pew Research Center, April 2023, “Gun deaths among U.S. children and teens rose 50% in two years”
3. Pew Research Center, August 2023, “For most U.S. gun owners, protection is the main reason they own a gun”
4. Schell, Terry L., Samuel Peterson, Brian G. Vegetabile, Adam Scherling, Rosanna Smart, and Andrew R. Morral, State-Level Estimates of Household Firearm Ownership. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020.
<https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TL354.html>
5. Everytown for Gun Safety, April 2020, “Gun violence in Vermont fact sheet”
6. Vermont Department of Health, January 2023, “Firearm Storage Safety”
7. Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 13, § 4024(a)
8. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-vt/gunsafe-vt>