

National Suicide Prevention Month | *Article*

Hidden Victims of Firearms



As of 2021, more than half of all deaths by firearms are suicides. They are also the method for more than half of completed suicide attempts. National Suicide Prevention Month in September is an appropriate time to examine the dangerous relationship between suicidal ideation and access to firearms.

Youth suicide and access to firearms

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young Americans (ages 10–14), and the third among those ages 15–24. Young men are at a higher risk, representing nine out of 10 firearm suicide victims. Among youth, the highest suicide by firearm rate is among Native American/Alaska Native, white and Black populations.

Understanding firearms and prevention

Much of what makes firearms so dangerous is the speed at which they cause harm. In fact, most suicide attempts are not completed unless a firearm is used. They leave little time to reconsider and a low chance for survival.

The simplest method of suicide prevention is recognizing red flags and acting swiftly to get the individual to crisis resources. Loved ones should know that any drastic change in demeanor can point to underlying issues in those with existing mental illness and should be acutely aware of comments regarding firearms or the individual's access to weapons in their state.

[#StopSuicide](#)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline — Dial 9-8-8 or 800-273-8255



“It’s not that gun owners are more suicidal. It’s that they are more likely to complete an attempt in the event that they become suicidal...”

-Catherine Barber, director of Harvard Injury Control Research Center (HICRC) suicide prevention campaign