



## Be SMART in Schools

More than ever, we've seen school shootings and incidents of gun violence in schools covered in the media, or experienced it in our communities. We are all too familiar with educators, students and schools grappling with the aftermath of a tragic incident. The issue of gun violence in schools has instilled fear in parents, educators and leaders in our community—but we *can* take action together to help keep our schools safer. One important place to start is by practicing and encouraging responsible gun storage in every home.

### Facts About Gun Violence in Schools

- Unsecured firearms are often used in school gun violence. The majority of school shooters under the age of 18—78 percent—**obtained the gun(s) from their home** or the homes of their relatives or friends.<sup>1</sup>
- School shooters were also likely to have a connection to the school; **56 percent of shooters were associated with the school** where the gunfire occurred, the majority of whom were current or former students.<sup>2</sup> For active shooters, the number is ever higher; according to another examination of gun violence in schools, **75 percent of active shooters in schools were current or former students of the school.**<sup>3</sup>
- Gun violence in schools includes not only mass shootings, homicides, and assaults, but also unintentional discharges, self-harm injuries, and suicide deaths using a firearm.<sup>4</sup>

### Safety Starts at Home

Throughout the US, an estimated 13 million households with children under the age of 18 contain at least one gun,<sup>5</sup> and one study found that the majority of children in gun-owning households knew where the gun was stored.<sup>6</sup> Not all of these firearms are stored securely: approximately 4.6 million children live in a household with at least one gun that is stored loaded and unlocked.<sup>7</sup>

**According to the US Secret Service, addressing student access to guns is a critical component of any school-based threat assessment intervention plan.**<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety. Keeping our schools safe: a plan to stop mass shootings and end gun violence in American schools. <https://every.tw/2HjK9cu>. February 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> New York City Police Department. Active shooters: Recommendation and analysis for risk mitigation. 2016. <https://on.nyc.gov/2GIeBl1>. Everytown's analysis doesn't require a definition of "active shooter," but as used in this report generally, we are referring to shooters actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people at a school.

<sup>4</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety. Keeping our schools safe: a plan to stop mass shootings and end gun violence in American schools. <https://every.tw/2HjK9cu>. February 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Azrael D, Cohen J, Salhi C, Miller M. Firearm storage in gun-owning households with children: results of a 2015 national survey. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2018;95(3): 295-304.

<sup>6</sup> Baxley F, Miller M. Parental misperceptions about children and firearms. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*. 2006;160(5): 542-547.

<sup>7</sup> Azrael D, Cohen J, Salhi C, Miller M. Firearm storage in gun-owning households with children: results of a 2015 national survey. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2018;95(3): 295-304.

<sup>8</sup> National Threat Assessment Center. Enhancing school safety using a threat assessment model: an operational guide for preventing targeted school violence. United States Secret Service and U.S. Department of Homeland Security. <https://bit.ly/2NKIwqD>. July, 2018.



Responsible storage—storing guns locked, unloaded, and separate from ammunition—can be an important way to keep schools safer from gun violence:

- One study found that households that locked both firearms and ammunition were associated with a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries and an 85 percent lower risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children and teenagers, compared to those that locked neither.<sup>9</sup>
- Another study estimated that if more adults locked up their guns, up to one-third of gun suicides and unintentional deaths among youth could be prevented—saving an estimated 251 lives in a single year.<sup>10</sup>

While these studies looked at gun violence in homes and not in schools, most kids under the age of 18 who bring guns to school obtain them from their homes or the homes of relatives or friends. Responsible storage is a way to prevent these incidents.

### **Be SMART: Promoting Responsible Gun Storage in Our Community**

The **Be SMART campaign**, a program of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, was developed to reduce the deaths, injuries and trauma that result when children gain access to unsecured firearms. The program emphasizes that responsible storage is always the adult's responsibility, and encourages individuals to take five simple steps to keep kids and families safer:

**S**ecure guns in homes and vehicles, **M**odel responsible behavior around guns, **A**sk about the presence of guns in other homes, **R**ecognize the role of guns in suicide, and **T**ell your peers to Be SMART.

Be SMART is neutral on the topic of gun ownership; it does not encourage or discourage individuals from owning guns. It also does not advocate for changes to gun laws. Rather, it emphasizes the power of each and every adult to take agency over the safety of children and teens.

### **Bring Be SMART to Your School Community**

- **Distribute Be SMART** materials to all parents in the school community
- Add **online Be SMART links** and resources for the school community
- Offer **Be SMART Presentations** to adult members of the community

As parents, educators and leaders in our community, we are all responsible for keeping our schools safe. By committing to Be SMART, we all can take an important step towards protecting our kids and our school.

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<sup>9</sup> Grossman DC, Mueller BA, Riedy C, et al. Gun storage practices and risk of youth suicide and unintentional injuries. *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association*. 2005;293(6): 707-714.

<sup>10</sup> Monuteaux MC, Azrael D, Miller M. Association of increased safe household firearm storage with firearm suicide and unintentional death among US youths. *JAMA Pediatrics*. 2019.1078.