

Today's youth are navigating social and emotional development, the complexities of the digital world, discrimination, and challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. For many young people, these issues can contribute to mental and emotional distress. Access to unsecured firearms for youth at risk can result in suicide, serious injury, or violence towards others.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Firearm sales

**22%**

From 2021 to 2022, firearm sales in Maryland rose by 22%.

[NICS Firearm Checks \(2021-2022\)](#)

### Youth Rates

**29%**

In Maryland, from 2017 to 2021, firearms were used in 29% of suicides among youth ages 10-19.

[CDC \(2023\)](#)

### Nonfatal Shootings

**4x**

The number of Marylanders under 18 wounded in nonfatal shootings quadrupled from 2013 to 2022.

[Maryland Department of Juvenile Services \(2023\)](#)

### Mass Shootings

**63%**

According to the Gun Violence Archive, mass shootings increased from 2018 to 2022 by 63%.

[Gun Violence Archive \(2023\)](#)

An unsecured firearm can put everyone in a household at risk, not just the firearm owner. The decision to harm oneself or others can happen in a matter of minutes. Review your firearm storage practices, learn the signs of a crisis, and educate members of your household and community.

## SAFELY STORE YOUR FIREARMS

- Store and lock firearms **unloaded**.
- Store and lock ammunition **separately from every firearm, every time**.
- Make sure **keys and combinations are not accessible** to minors or anyone at risk of violence against themselves or others.
- If someone is in crisis in the household, **temporarily remove firearms** from your home
- **Avoid storing firearms unattended in vehicles** to prevent theft.

## GUIDELINES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Adults should be aware that minors could discover a firearm when a parent or another adult is not present. Youth should know the following rules:

1. **Stop:** If you find or see a firearm, stop what you are doing.
2. **Don't Touch:** NEVER touch a firearm you may find or see. Resist curiosity and do not take the firearm to an adult.
3. **Leave the Area:** Immediately leave the area, never taking a firearm or trying to stop someone from using a firearm.
4. **Tell an Adult:** Tell an adult about encountering a firearm, including if other kids are shooting or playing with firearms.

## SAFE STORAGE OPTIONS

There are many safe storage choices available. Explore options and find one that's right for you!

### Locking Devices



- Cable Lock (Free-\$50)
  - Device that blocks chamber to prevent firing. Typically requires key or combination to unlock, usable on most firearms. Good to prevent children from access.
- Trigger Lock (\$5-\$50)
  - Two-piece lock, fits over trigger guard. Blocks trigger but does not prevent loading. Typically requires key or combination to unlock. Should not be used on loaded firearm (can still be fired). Not usable on lever-action firearms.

### Locking Boxes



- Lock Box (\$25-\$350)
  - Small safe to store handguns/small firearms. Typically requires key, combination, or fingerprint to unlock. Lock boxes can be permanently mounted to prevent theft.
- Safe (\$100-\$2,500)
  - Stores variety of firearms/other valuables. Typically requires key, combination, or fingerprint to unlock. Most secure option for multiple firearms, and for theft prevention.

According to the Maryland Vital Statistics Administration, between 2003 and 2020, 35% of suicides among Marylanders under the age of 25 were by firearm. Suicide rates have been rising for decades, particularly among youth. Suicide is complex but often preventable. Along with safely storing firearms, knowing the warning signs can save a life.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Rising Rates

In the US, the firearm suicide rate among persons aged  $\geq 10$  years increased 8.3% from 2020 to 2021.

[CDC Notes from the Field \(2022\)](#)

### Leading Cause

In 2020, suicide was the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-14, and the 3rd leading cause of death for ages 15-24.

[National Institute of Mental Health \(2023\)](#)

### Firearm Involvement

In Maryland, from 2017 to 2021, firearms were used in 29% of suicides among youth ages 10-19.

[CDC \(2023\)](#)

### Mental Health

Since 2014, there has been a steady increase in the rate of Maryland students reporting feeling hopeless or sad.

[Youth Risk Behavior Survey \(2014-2022\)](#)

## WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE



### Talking about

- Wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Researching ways to kill oneself
- Feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Feeling like a burden to others

### Behavior Change

- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Losing interest in activities
- Acting anxious or agitated
- Behaving recklessly and irrationally
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or isolating from others
- Mood swings, including showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Sharp drop in academic performance
- Giving away possessions
- Deleting social media accounts

**If you are ever in a conversation about suicide with a young person, remember your ABCDEs.**

- A. Asked directly about suicide
- B. Be an active listener
- C. Continue to keep them safe
- D. Discuss options and connect to help
- E. Encourage, support and follow up

## VOLUNTARY FIREARM STORAGE



If someone is feeling suicidal, has recently attempted suicide, or is experiencing a crisis, **remove firearms until the situation improves**. Consider storing firearms at a temporary, voluntary external safe storage site.

For more information, visit [mdpgv.org/safestoragemap](https://mdpgv.org/safestoragemap)

## YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES



If you or a young person you know is feeling suicidal, has recently attempted suicide, or is experiencing a crisis, **reach out for help**.

For more resources, visit the [Integrated Wellness and Prevention Youth Resource Page](#).



**MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE USE CRISIS?**

**CALL OR TEXT 988**



**CONFIDENTIAL AND AVAILABLE 24/7**