



JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
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Creating an Online Map of Safe Gun Storage Sites in Maryland for Suicide Prevention: Feasibility and Future Considerations

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Agenda

- ▶ Background
- ▶ Project Aim
- ▶ Methods
- ▶ Results
- ▶ Conclusions
- ▶ Future Considerations

Background: Firearm-Related Suicides

- ▶ Suicide is the leading cause of firearm-related death in the United States
- ▶ Availability of guns in the home associated with increased risk of suicide
- ▶ Among youth, presence of guns in the home associated with increased odds of suicide, including after adjusting for rates of psychiatric conditions



- ▶ On average, over 250 firearm-related suicides occur in Maryland each year
- ▶ Rural areas of Maryland have higher suicide rates
 - Driven by higher rate firearm-related suicides

Background: Safe Gun Storage for Suicide Prevention

- ▶ Reducing access to lethal means of self-harm, such as firearms, is a cornerstone of suicide prevention
- ▶ In 2019, to facilitate safe gun storage and suicide prevention, the Colorado Firearm Safety Coalition created a map of Colorado gun shops and law enforcement agencies willing to offer temporary, voluntary gun storage on a case-by-case basis
- ▶ Similar map published for Washington State in February 2020
- ▶ Availability of temporary, voluntary gun storage in Maryland not known

Project Aim

To facilitate access to safe gun storage outside of the home and help prevent suicides in Maryland, we aim to replicate the Colorado Firearm Safety Coalition's project and publish a similar online map of safe gun storage sites in Maryland, in partnership with Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence

Methods: Gun Shops and Ranges

- ▶ Systematically searched Google Maps across Maryland to identify all businesses that might offer voluntary, temporary gun storage
 - Search terms: gun range, gun shop(s), firearm, firing range, shooting range, armory
- ▶ Contacted each business by phone between January and April 2020 to ask if they offer voluntary, temporary gun storage on a case-by-case basis
 - Called at least twice during business hours
 - Provided additional information by email when requested
 - Followed up via online form/email, when available, if unable to reach by phone

Methods: Telephone Script

“Hello, I’m calling to ask if [business name] offers offer voluntary, temporary gun storage.

My name is [name] and I am working on a suicide prevention project with the organization Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence to try and reduce suicides in Maryland. We are in the process of contacting every gun shop and law enforcement agency across the state to find locations that offer voluntary, temporary gun storage on a case-by-case basis.

Our ultimate goal is to create an online map that lists trusted gun shops that community members can contact about voluntarily storing their guns in times of personal crisis, such as feeling suicidal. Does this sound like something that [business name] would feel comfortable being listed on?”

Methods: Law Enforcement Agencies

- ▶ Purchased customized directory from the National Public Safety Information Bureau of relevant law enforcement agencies
 - Included contact information for all municipal law enforcement agencies, state police, and county sheriffs
- ▶ Contacted law enforcement agencies between January and April 2020 to ask if they offer temporary, voluntary gun storage on a case-by-case basis
 - Emailed Chief of Police, Sheriff, or Commander for each agency at least once
 - Called agency if e-mail not available in directory

Results: Participation in Map

- ▶ Identified 215 relevant gun shops and ranges
 - 32 agreed to be listed on map
 - Additional businesses interested but asked to be contacted after map published and would consider joining
 - Enthusiasm for the project even among shops that declined participation
- ▶ Contacted 133 relevant law enforcement agencies
 - 3 agreed to be listed on map
 - Maryland State Police branches (n=28) declined participation at this time

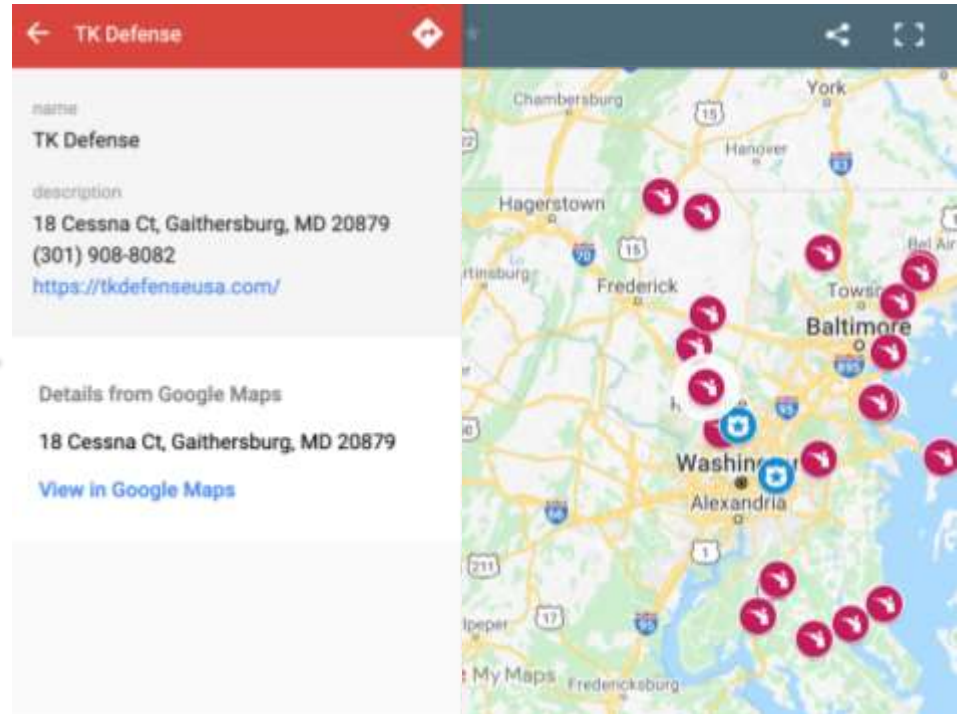
Results: Safe Gun Storage Map



Map available at:
mdsafegunstorage.org



Results: Safe Gun Storage Map



Results: Safe Gun Storage Map



Why do gun owners sometimes want to store firearms away from the home?

A large, empty rectangular box intended for handwritten or typed responses to the question: "Why do gun owners sometimes want to store firearms away from the home?"

When I'm looking for storage options, what questions should I ask?

A large, empty rectangular box intended for handwritten or typed responses to the question: "When I'm looking for storage options, what questions should I ask?"

Discussion Question

What are some reasons gun shops may have declined to participate in our safe gun storage map?

Results: Reasons Declined Participation

- ▶ Gun Shops that declined participation shared common concerns:
 - Logistics of returning firearm to owner after temporary storage
 - Concern about background check requirement
 - Responsibility for deciding if safe to return gun
 - Liability for gun during storage
 - Concern would not be covered by insurance
 - No space for storage

Conclusions

- ▶ We demonstrate the feasibility of creating an online map listing organizations in Maryland offering voluntary, temporary gun storage
- ▶ Many gun shops enthusiastic about this online map project as a way to achieve common goals, shared by firearm dealers and public health professionals, of suicide prevention and improved public safety
- ▶ Among shops that declined participation, perceived barriers to offering temporary gun storage were similar to those found in prior studies:
 - Logistics (e.g. background check requirements)
 - Liability for the gun
 - Responsibility for determining when safe to return gun

Discussion Question

What changes would you propose making to Maryland legislation to help make safe firearm storage more widely available?

Future Considerations

- ▶ Changes to Maryland legislation could help make safe gun storage options more widely available, including by:
 - Clearly defining the timing of “temporary” firearm transfers
 - Explicitly loosening background check requirements for temporary transfers
 - Releasing individual/organization temporarily storing the firearm from liability related to returning the firearm

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Questions?



Safe Gun Storage Map



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