



## 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, students 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 secure gun storage in every home.

### Facts About Gun Violence in Schools

- Unsecured firearms are often used in school gun violence. The majority of shooters on school grounds under the age of 18—up to 80 percent—**obtained the gun(s) they used from their home** or the homes of their relatives or friends.<sup>1</sup>
- Shooters were also likely to have a connection to the school; **58 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 mass shooters, the number is even higher; according to another examination of gun violence in schools, **91 percent of mass school shooters and attempted mass school shooters 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 5.4 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>

Secure 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. Secure 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 secure 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 schools.

1. Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, American Federation of Teachers, and National Education Association, "Keeping Our Schools Safe: A Plan for Preventing Mass Shootings and Ending All Gun Violence in American Schools," February 2020, <https://everytownresearch.org/school-safety-plan>.
2. Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, American Federation of Teachers, and National Education Association, "Keeping Our Schools Safe: A Plan for Preventing Mass Shootings and Ending All Gun Violence in American Schools," February 2020, <https://everytownresearch.org/school-safety-plan>.
3. Jillian Peterson and James Densley, "School Shooters Usually Show These Signs of Distress Long before They Open Fire, Our Database Shows," *The Conversation*, February 8, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2vBTA3J>.
4. Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, American Federation of Teachers, and National Education Association, "Keeping Our Schools Safe: A Plan for Preventing Mass Shootings and Ending All Gun Violence in American Schools," February 2020, <https://everytownresearch.org/school-safety-plan>.
5. Deborah Azrael et al., "Firearm Storage in Gun-Ownning Households with Children: Results of a 2015 National Survey," *Journal of Urban Health* 95, no. 3 (2018): 295-304.
6. Frances Baxley and Matthew Miller, "Parental Misperceptions About Children and Firearms," *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* 160, no. 5 (2006): 542-547.
7. Personal communication from Deborah Azrael and Matthew Miller to Everytown based on 2021 National Firearms Survey, August 11, 2021..
8. National Threat Assessment Center, "Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence," (US Secret Service, US Department of Homeland Security, July 2008), <https://bit.ly/2NKlwqD>.
9. David C. Grossman et al., "Gun Storage Practices and Risk of Youth Suicide and Unintentional Injuries," *JAMA* 293, no. 6 (2005): 707-14.
10. Michael C. Monuteaux et al., "Association of Increased Safe Household Firearm Storage with Firearm Suicide and Unintentional Death among US Youths," *JAMA Pediatrics* 173, no. 7 (2019): 657-62.