

Questions about Removing or Storing Firearms

(Adapted from [Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Program](#))

A lethal weapon available to a person in the depths of despair can end a life in an instant! Firearms are used in five out of ten suicides in the U.S. Removing lethal means from a vulnerable person, especially a youth, can save a life. It's like keeping the car keys from a person who has had too much to drink.

Who Can Help Store or Dispose of a Firearm?

Some law enforcement departments (not all) will take firearms. Some offer temporary storage, some offer permanent disposal options, and some offer both.

- **First**, call your local police department, sheriff or state police.
- **Identify** yourself and explain your concern.
- **Ask** for the Officer on Duty; be sure to write down his/her name and the department's name.
- **Arrange** with the officer a time and location for him/her to pick up the firearm, if they offer that service.
- **Do not** bring the firearm to the police department unless told to by the Officer on Duty.

Does the Firearm Need to Be Ready to Go in a Certain Way?

- If you know how to safely unload the firearm, unload it.
- If you do not know how to unload the firearm, tell the Officer before he/she arrives to pick it up.
- If the Officer asks you to bring the firearm to the police station, name who will bring it, what the person looks like, and the time the person will arrive.

What Happens to the Firearm?

- The gun owner and the Officer will complete some paperwork.
- What happens next depends on the department. If the owner no longer wants it, some departments may have it melted down while others may sell it.
- Departments that offer temporary storage may have different policies regarding how to retrieve it (e.g., if applicable in your state, the gun owner may need to bring in a valid firearm owner ID card).

What if Law Enforcement Storage or Disposal Isn't an Option?

Other options:

- **Temporarily store** the firearm at the home of a trusted relative or friend. Be sure the person at risk cannot get the firearm before or after it is removed. NOTE: Not all people can hold the guns for you. Check the list of [prohibited persons](#)¹ under federal law.
- **Lock** the unloaded firearm in a gun safe or tamper-proof storage box with ammunition locked in a separate location. (BETTER YET, don't keep ammunition at home.) Trigger locks are sold in sporting goods stores and where firearms are sold. Some police departments offer free locks. Be sure the keys and storage box combinations are kept

away from the person at risk. **Remember:** This does not guarantee safety. Youths generally know their parents' hiding places.

- **Do not** place the firearm in a bank safe deposit box. Most states have laws that prohibit carrying a weapon into federally insured buildings such as banks.
- **Sell** the firearm following the appropriate legal guidelines.

What if a Family Member Carries a Firearm as Part of the Job?

- **Store** the gun at work if possible. If not, then...
- **Remove** all the firearms but the one required for work and lock it very securely. Lock ammunition separately.
- **Remember:** Using locking devices or locked storage does not guarantee absolute safety, but does present a barrier to an impulsive act.

¹ [Prohibited Persons](#)

Under federal law, [18 U.S.C. § 922\(d\)](#), no person may purchase or possess a firearm if they fall into the following categories, nor may any person knowingly sell, deliver, or otherwise transfer a firearm to any person falling into these categories:

- Is under indictment for or has been convicted in any court of a felony;
- Is a fugitive from justice;
- Is an unlawful user of a controlled substance (drug user);
- Has been adjudicated as a mental defective or committed to a mental institution;
- Is an illegal alien;
- Has been dishonorably discharged from the armed forces;
- Has renounced his or her citizenship;
- Is subject to a court order issued after a hearing which restrains him or her from intimate partner violence; or
- Has been convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence offense.