



# Lethal Means Safety Counseling Suggestions for Providers<sup>3,4,5,6</sup>



## What are some options I can recommend to temporarily restrict access to firearms?

These options should be considered temporary. Patients should be reassured that the purpose of restriction is not to remove firearms permanently. Patients should be afforded the opportunity to get firearms back.

- Ask a relative or friend to take possession of firearms.
- Store firearms in a self-storage rental unit if permissible.
- Store firearms at a shooting range with available lockers.
- Store firearms at a gun shop for short period of time.
- Ask law enforcement to take possession of firearms.
- Personally owned firearms may be stored in military unit arms rooms.



### Do

- Ask direct questions about firearm access on a routine basis and explain rationale for asking (e.g. to ensure safety).
- To determine best safety measures discuss patient's reasons for firearm ownership (e.g. work, hobbies, personal safety, collecting mementos).
- Engage relevant parties, including family members and commanders, in the process of means restriction counseling when recommending firearms restriction.
- Assess access to both military-issued and privately-owned firearms as a core component of risk assessment and safety planning.
- Be aware of state-specific and federal laws regarding the temporary transfer of firearms between individuals.
- Collaborate with all involved parties in the process of firearms restriction and process of removing firearms from the home when patient is at risk of suicide.
- Be aware of the potential impact of firearms restriction on unit readiness, deployability, and sense of self, and take care to use the least-restrictive method to ensure safety.
- Forge relationships with local Veteran Service Organizations as a potential mechanism for voluntary, short-term transfer of firearms to a trusted peer.



### Don't

- Take possession of firearms.
- Encourage patient to bring firearms to medical clinics.
- Tell patients to "give away" their firearms.
- Ignore patient's values related to firearm ownership.
- Imply that a patient is incapable of carrying a firearm.
- Imply that a patient is "mentally unsound" from a legal perspective.

## Resources



### **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Suicide Prevention**

Contains resource links for free provider consultation regarding lethal means safety and counseling [mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/](https://mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/)



### **Real Warriors Campaign**

Resources to decrease stigma, increase psychological health literacy, and open doors to access to care [health.mil/RealWarriors](https://health.mil/RealWarriors)



### **Center for Deployment Psychology**

Online training course titled Lethal Means Safety Counseling to Reduce Suicide Risk [deploymentpsych.org/Lethal\\_Mean\\_Safety\\_Archive](https://deploymentpsych.org/Lethal_Mean_Safety_Archive)

## References:

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2. HIPAA Privacy Rule, 45 CFR § 164.512(k) (2002).
3. Hoyt, T., & Duffy, V. (2015). Implementing firearms restriction for preventing U.S. Army suicide. *Military Psychology*, 27, 384–390.
4. Hoyt, T., Holliday, R., Simonetti, J. A., & Monteith, L. L. (2021). Firearm lethal means safety with military personnel and veterans: Overcoming barriers using a collaborative approach. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 52(4), 387–395. doi: 10.1037/pro0000372.
5. Knapp, S. (2023). Lethal means counseling for suicidal firearm owners. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 53(4), 279–287.
6. Barber, C. W., & Miller, M. J. (2014). Reducing a suicidal person's access to lethal means of suicide: A research agenda. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 47(3, Suppl 2), S264–S272. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2014.05.028>