

Pain Isn't Always Obvious



Suicide Is Preventable.org

# Restricting Access to Lethal Means

April 10, 2013

Webinar for small counties



# Welcome!

- Please mute your line
- If you have a question, please type it into the “Questions” box or “raise your hand” by clicking the hand logo on your control panel



The screenshot displays the GoToWebinar interface. On the left, a chat window shows a message in a red box: "conference anything, test your the link below. ers ect Telephone to see :45 PM S. :46 PM panel that the attendees always come into the webinar s already on) here: 1. 3:47 PM trophone and speakers nar." A red arrow points from this message to the right. The main interface is titled "Attendee List (2 | Max 101)" and includes sections for "Attendees (1)" (listing "you know who (Me)"), "Audio" (with "Mic & Speakers" selected and a "MUTED" indicator), and "Questions" (with a text input field containing "[Enter a question for staff]" and a "Send" button). A red arrow points to the "Send" button. At the bottom, the text "practice Webinar ID: 158-173-683" and the "GoToWebinar" logo are visible.

Know the Signs >> Find the Words >> Reach Out

# Today we'll hear from:

- Anara Guard, Know the Signs campaign
- Kory Honea, Butte County Sheriff's Office
- Katie Cassidy, Shasta County
- Christa Thompson, Amador County
- and *YOU!*

# Poll

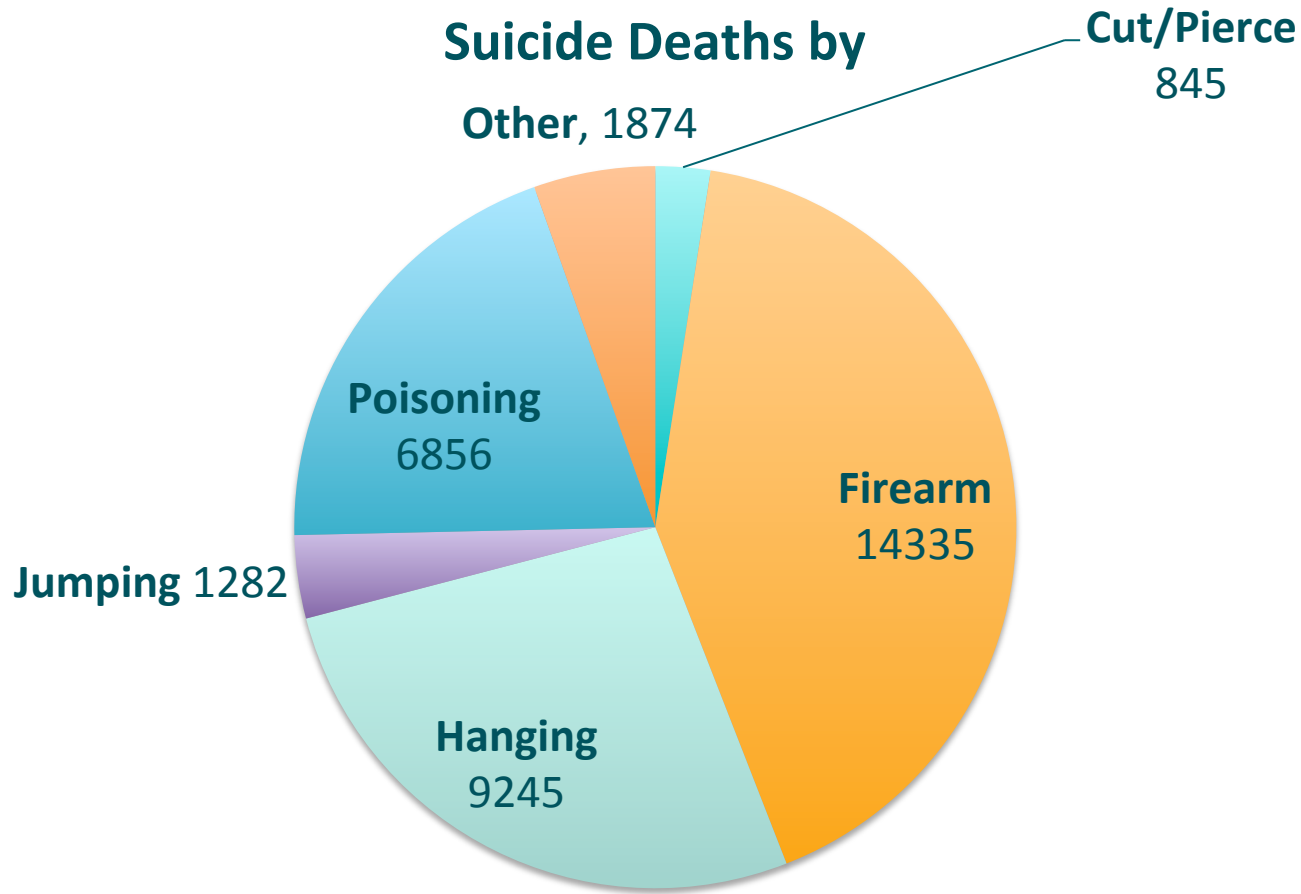
Is your county engaged in any efforts to restrict access to lethal means?

Yes

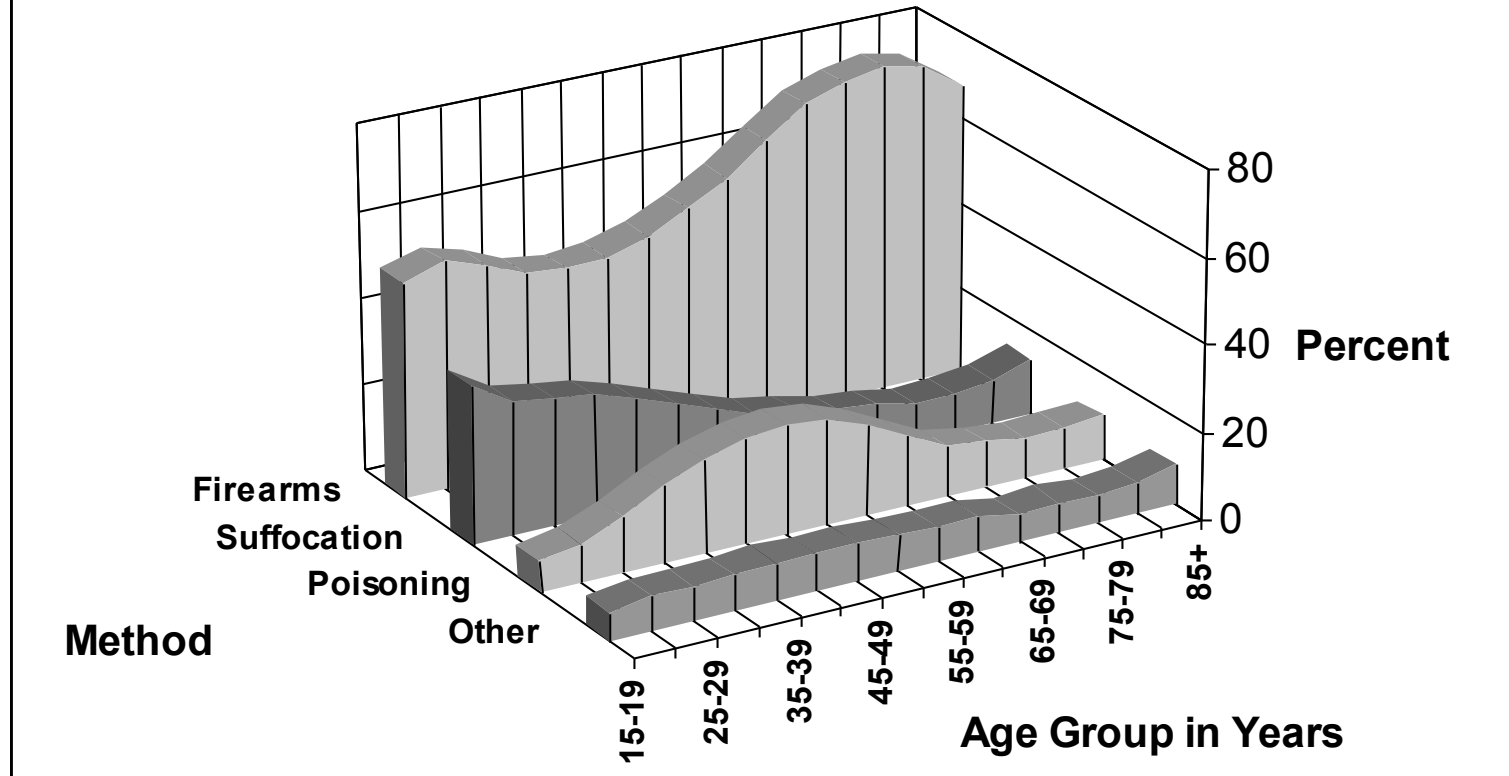
No

Not sure

# Suicide methods 2001-2010, Calif.



## Suicide Method by Age Group: 2000-2005



Know the Signs >> Find the Words >> Reach Out

Source: CDC, National Center for Injury Control and Prevention, 2008

# What do we mean by “restricting access”?

Temporarily removing the person from the means OR removing the means from the person

- Bridge, roof, subway platform barriers
- “Bubble” packaging pills
- Prescribing small amounts of pills
- Trigger locks and gun safes
- Removal of belts and bedsheets in jails
- Medication collection programs



# Restricting access is not a new idea!



Know the Signs >> Find the Words >> Reach Out

# “Won’t they just die some other way?”

- Bern, Switzerland (Reisch & Michel, 2005)
- Augusta, Maine (Pelletier, 2007)
- New Zealand (Beautrais, 2001)
- Bristol, England (Bennewith, 2007)
- United Kingdom (Kreitman, 1976)
- Sri Lanka (Gunnell, 2007)

# Know the Signs webinar



## **REDUCING ACCESS TO LETHAL MEANS**

**KORY HONEA, UNDERSHERIFF  
BUTTE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

# Means Matters



- Many suicide attempts occur with little planning during short term crisis
  - A study involving suicide attempt survivors revealed:
    - ✦ 25% deliberated for less than 5 minutes
    - ✦ 24% deliberated 5-19 minutes
    - ✦ 23% deliberated 20 minutes to 1 hour
- When the means to commit suicide are less available or less deadly, suicide rates decline
  - More time for crisis to pass
  - More time for intervention to occur

# Means Matter



- 90% of suicide attempt survivors don't later die by suicide
- Suicidal acts with firearms are fatal 85% of the time
  - 69% - Hanging - 2% - Overdose
- Firearms - most lethal & most common method of suicide
  - In 2010 - 20,000 of 30,000 gun deaths in U.S. were suicides
- Immediate access to firearms is a risk factor for effectual suicidal acts
- Firearms used in youth suicides usually belong to parents
  - Study showed 66% of the time the guns were not locked up

# Means Matter



- Reducing access to lethal means saves lives
  - Government Imposed Restriction on Firearms
    - ✦ Constitutional rights must be respected & taken into account
    - ✦ There needs to be respect for cultural identity
    - ✦ Advocating “Gun Control” politicizes the issue is counterproductive
  - Responsible gun ownership is key
    - ✦ Gun Storage – Locks, Safes, Ammo Separation
  - Protecting people during suicidal crisis
    - ✦ Plan of action to reduce suicidal person’s access to firearms
  - Identifying at-risk individual and limiting access to firearms
    - ✦ Family members, friends, community members and clinicians

# Means Matter



- **Programs & Strategies**
  - Firearms Storage & Gun lock Giveaway Programs
    - ✦ Help reduce access by young people
  - “Lethal Means Counseling”
    - ✦ assessing whether a person at risk for suicide has access to a firearm or other lethal means, &
    - ✦ working with them and their family and support system to limit their access until they are no longer feeling suicidal
  - Gun Shops, Range Owners & Hunter Safety Instructors
    - ✦ Disseminate materials aimed at reducing suicides involving firearms



# CONCERNED ABOUT A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND?

## ARE THEY SUICIDAL?

- Depressed, angry, impulsive?
- Going through a relationship break-up, legal trouble, or other setback?
- Using drugs or alcohol more?
- Withdrawing from things they used to enjoy?
- Talking about being better off dead?
- Losing hope?
- Acting reckless?
- Feeling trapped?

**SUICIDES IN NH** |  
far outnumber homicides

**FIREARMS ARE THE  
LEADING METHOD** |

**ATTEMPTS WITH A GUN  
ARE MORE DEADLY** |  
than attempts with other methods



[www.nhpsc.org](http://www.nhpsc.org)

## HOLD ON TO THEIR GUNS

—Putting time and distance between a suicidal person and a gun may save a life.

—For other ways to help, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK [8255].



# Legal Aspects



- CA law requires guns in homes with minor children to be locked up
  - Liability if child gets the gun and injury or death occurs
- CA law prohibits people detained pursuant to 5150 W&I from possessing a firearm for 5 years
  - May be relieved of prohibition by the court
- CA law requires law enforcement officers to seize any firearm owned or possessed by someone who has been detained to facilitate an examination of mental condition
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment protections apply & safekeeping required

# Questions - Discussion



**KORY HONEA**  
**UNDERSHERIFF**  
**BUTTE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

**Restricting Access to Lethal Means  
Or  
Increasing Access to Vital  
Knowledge**

**Shasta County Suicide Prevention**



## Challenges:

Anything resembling gun control

Assuming that firearms owners are not safe

Telling people what to do with their guns in their own homes

Recommendations that were not feasible, legal or responsible

# Solutions:

- Be clear about the purpose/intent of the project
- Include the experts



# Purpose



1. Communicate suicide prevention information and resources to the community
2. Engage firearms owners in suicide awareness and prevention efforts



# Who are the Experts?

- Shasta County Suicide Prevention Workgroup
- Shasta County Firearms Experts:

Law Enforcement  
Firearms Retailers  
Firearms Safety  
Instructors  
Shooting Clubs  
Gun Ranges



# Additional Support and Expertise:

- New Hampshire Firearms Safety Coalition
- NAMI New Hampshire
- Means Matter Campaign
  - Poster/Flyer and Brochure from these efforts were adapted with permission for Shasta County project





# Next Steps

- Materials were created/ adapted
  - Letter
  - Flyer
  - Brochure
  - Materials Survey
- Packets were distributed to law enforcement; feedback was obtained ensuring the materials were not encouraging taking irresponsible or illegal steps.



# February 2012

- 26 packets were mailed to Shasta County Firearms experts
- Initial follow up contact via phone, email



# March 2012

- Additional follow up via phone, email and in person visit
  - 5 Key Informant interviews completed
- Survey tool (possibly too formal)
- Good feedback was obtained



## What did work:

Reinforcing  
positive practices

Highlighting  
safety successes

## PROGRESS IN SAFETY

Over the past 20 years, unintentional gun deaths in Shasta County have averaged less than one per year, thanks largely to increased awareness of gun safety. Unfortunately, the county still has a tragically high number of suicide deaths by firearms - more than 400 in the same 20 years.

The first step to reduce this number is to follow the 11 commandments of gun safety. The latest addition addresses suicide prevention. Firearms are the leading method of suicide in Shasta County. Suicides far outnumber homicides in Shasta County (in 2009 there were 22 firearm suicide deaths and 1 firearm homicide).

If a family member is going through a rough time, make sure he or she can't get to your guns. To learn ways to get help for your loved one, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**.



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SUICIDES IN SHASTA COUNTY  
FAR OUTNUMBER HOMICIDES

FIREARMS ARE THE  
LEADING METHOD

ATTEMPTS WITH A GUN  
ARE MORE DEADLY  
THAN ATTEMPTS WITH OTHER  
METHODS

## HOLD ON TO THEIR GUNS

- Putting time and distance between a suicidal person and a gun may save a life.
- For other ways to help, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)



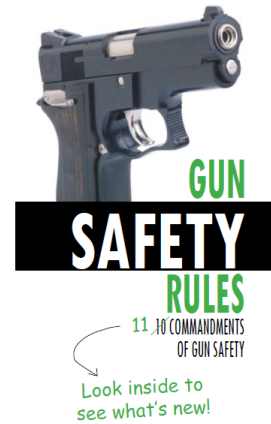
Sponsored by Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency  
in conjunction with our many community partners and advisory  
boards. Funding for this project is provided through the Mental  
Health Services Act.

## Initial Impressions:

- Good information, there is nothing wrong with either material
- Education on safe handling of firearms is always of first importance
- Advising locked containers is the preferred method of storage
- Provide more specific information on who is allowed to take custody of firearms for someone
- Let people know California approved locks are free and where to obtain

# Initial Impressions:

- These look fine, normal information. #1 and #2 are most important.
- Most important issue for anyone around guns is safety, safety, safety.
- Core focus on safety rules is good.
- #1 and #2 cover it all.
- *Everyone* needs to be aware of gun safety.
- It might be prudent to emphasize storing OTHER weapons in safes or with locks.
- This is great info. Safety should always be reinforced.



## 11 COMMANDMENTS OF GUN SAFETY

- 1. Treat every firearm as if it were loaded.**  
It might be, even if you think it isn't.
- 2. Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.**  
Keep control of the direction of the muzzle at all times.
- 3. Be sure of your target and beyond.**  
Be aware of the target and what surrounds it. Know the identifying features of the game you hunt. Make sure you have an adequate backstop—don't shoot at a flat, hard surface or water.
- 4. Keep your finger outside the trigger guard until you're ready to shoot.**  
This is the best way to prevent an accidental discharge.
- 5. Check your barrel and ammunition.**  
Make sure the barrel and action are clear of obstructions, and carry only the proper ammunition for your firearm.
- 6. Unload firearm when it is not in use.**  
Leave action open; carry firearm in a case and unloaded to and from the shooting area.
- 7. Point a firearm only at something you intend to shoot.**  
Avoid all horseplay with a gun.
- 8. Don't run, jump, or climb with a loaded firearm.**  
Unload a firearm before you climb a fence or tree, or jump a ditch. Pull a firearm toward you by the butt, not the muzzle.

- 9. Store firearms and ammunition separately and safely.**  
Store each in secured locations beyond the reach of children and careless adults.

- 10. Don't drink alcoholic beverages before or during shooting.**  
Also do not use mind- or behavior-altering medicines or drugs.

- 11. Consider additional safety precautions if a family member may be suicidal.**

When an emotional crisis (such as a breakup, job loss, legal trouble) or a major change in someone's behavior (depression, violence or heavy drinking) causes concern, storing guns outside the home for a while may save a life. Friends as well as some shooting clubs, police departments or gun shops may be able to store them until the situation improves.

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## **Additional feedback:**

“Any information that helps identify and get help before the 5150 call is good for gun owners.”

“Information on EARLY warning signs, drug use and who to call (phone numbers) for options would be good.”

“This information will be most productive if included with other methods.”

“Universal suicide prevention education would be good, for example what to do with someone before they get to the point of choosing the method.”



**Advice for  
the project:**

- If there is ever a suicide prevention summit, several instructors would like to teach a seminar on firearm safety 101 for the general public, especially non firearm owners.
- Put this info with other information about suicide prevention, it is better than trying to make it stand alone.
- Keep this advice in the context of overall safety, not emergency information. This will help keep someone from trying to grab a gun out of someone's hand.
- Warning signs are key.
- Reinforce safety information including proper storage with locking devices.



# Summary

1. Suicide prevention info should not only be about firearms.
2. Safety is a huge priority to firearm owners; safety messages are good to reinforce.
3. Suicide prevention information is important to everyone, when talking specifically to firearm owners it is most relevant to reinforce early warning signs and resources for help.
4. Include information and resources on how/where to help.



# Hearing from other counties

- Christa Thompson on the KidSafe Gun Locks program

# Questions & Discussion

If you have a question, please type it into the “Questions” box or “raise your hand” by clicking the hand logo on your control panel



# Resources

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- Means Matter at [www.meansmatter.org](http://www.meansmatter.org) to download materials and use them in your work
- Free online workshop CALM: Counseling on Access to Lethal Means <http://training.sprc.org/course/description.php#course3>
- Find programs in the Best Practices Registry at [www.sprc.org/bpr](http://www.sprc.org/bpr)

# Thank you!

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**Next small county webinar:**  
Wednesday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1:30-2:30pm

Please fill out  
the  
Evaluation!

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[www.yourvoicecounts.org](http://www.yourvoicecounts.org)