

The TALK Project

A Guide to
Keeping Kids Safe

Talk with your kids about guns

Ask family, friends, and neighbors if their
guns are locked up

Lock your guns up safely and securely

Keep our children and communities safe



In 2013, in the United States, more than 5 children a month under the age of 12 - more than 1 a week - were killed at a family member's home or at a friend's home by guns that were improperly stored and secured.

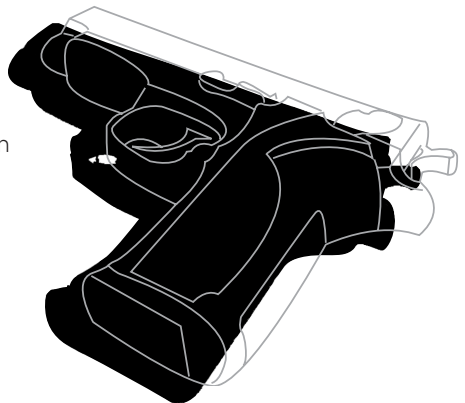
All of these deaths were avoidable!

Trinity, 4 years old, was unintentionally shot and killed on January 10, 2013 when a 6-year old boy found a loaded gun left sitting on a living room chair.

Elyssia, 6 years old, was unintentionally shot and killed on June 30, 2013 when her 4-year old brother found their grandfather's loaded handgun.

Brandon, 6 years old, was unintentionally shot and killed on April 8, 2013 when his 4-year old neighbor found a loaded rifle in his home.

And Ella, 3 years old, was unintentionally shot and killed on September 7, 2013, after shooting herself with a handgun left loaded and unsecured by her father.



Talk with your kids about guns!

As a parent or caretaker, you alone are responsible for ensuring the safety of your children and the children in your care.

Kids see the power that comes from shooting guns in movies, on television and in video games. What these programs do not show are the real consequences of using a gun — the injuries, the deaths, and the pain of losing a loved one. Explain to your children the difference between guns in the media and the ways guns affect real people in real life.

It is up to you to help children understand that guns are real and can seriously harm or kill people.

Talking about guns is not just a one-time conversation.

As children mature, their opinions about guns may change — be sure to talk with them regularly about the dangers of guns. Discussing news stories in which children or young people have been affected by gun violence is one way to bring up the subject. And be honest with your children, regardless of their age. Be sure they know that guns can kill.

Questions you may want to explore with your children:

- **Do they know or have they heard about anyone who has been shot?**
- **Do they know about kids at school having guns or being involved in violent activities?**
- **What do they think about guns? Have they ever seen a real gun?**
- **Some guns look like toys and some toy guns look real. Do they think they can tell the difference, because research has shown that before the age of eight, few children can.**

It is essential that you speak with your children about guns, regardless of where you live, the schools your children attend, or who their friends are. Gun violence affects nearly every community in the United States each year.



For young children, here's what you might say:

If you see a gun at a friend's house:

- Get away from the gun — DO NOT TOUCH IT.
- Tell an adult.
- Call your parent and/or go home.

If you're in a house and hear gunshots:

Duck and cover.

- Stay away from windows.
- Wait until help comes.
- If help does not arrive, call 911.

You may want to teach young children this pledge:

“If I see a gun or anything that looks like a gun I will go get an adult, because guns can hurt or kill me, my friends, and my family.”

Listen to your children!

It is often difficult to talk with youth about any subject, especially one as sensitive as gun violence. Here are some tips that may help you:

- **Be patient.**
- **Listen!** Even if you are uncomfortable, resist the urge to do all the talking.
- **Let them know that you are always there** to listen and that they will not get into trouble if they come to you with questions or problems.
- **Keep track of what interests them** on television, in movies, in video games and on the Internet. If it concerns you, bring it up with them.
- **Talk with them about the value of human life.**
Explain how you would feel if anything happened to them.



**Ask family,
friends, and
neighbors if
their guns are
locked up.**

Before you allow your child to play at a friend's house, ask the parents if there is a gun in the home and if it's stored safely — the same way you would ask about a fence around a swimming pool or an untrained dog. A gun in the home, hidden in a closet, under the bed, in a nightstand, or anywhere else is not enough to keep children safe.

Guns must be stored:

- Unloaded. Guns may look unloaded but may still have one bullet left in the chamber!
- Locked with a trigger lock or gun lock or kept in a lockbox where children cannot access it.
- Stored separately from the ammunition.

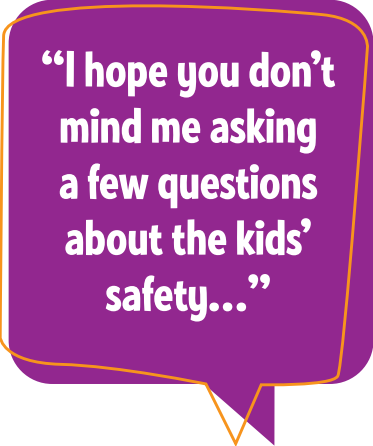


Approximately 29% of households with children younger than 12 fail to lock up their guns.

— *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* (2006)

If there are any doubts about the safety of another home, do not allow your children to play there. Instead, invite the children to your home to play.

Here are some ideas from AskingSavesKids.org on how to start the conversation with your neighbors, friends and family **BEFORE** you let your children visit or play in their homes:



“I hope you don’t mind me asking a few questions about the kids’ safety...”

“Do you remember that tragic story about the kids who found a gun...”

“We all know how curious kids can be...”

Lock your guns up safely and securely.

Guns fascinate kids!

There is no such thing as a safe, loaded gun, especially if children are around. Think back to when you were a child. You always found hidden gifts and presents. And if your family had a gun, you knew where it was too! Guns are so easy to use, even two-year-olds have accidentally shot and killed playmates.

REMEMBER: In many states gun owners are liable for children's use of their guns if the guns were not stored properly.

- As of 2014, California makes someone criminally liable if they negligently store or leave any loaded firearm on their premises where a child is likely to gain access to it – regardless of whether or not the child brings the gun to a public space.
- A parent or guardian can also be civilly liable for damages resulting from the discharge of a firearm by that person's child or ward. These damages can be up to \$30,000 per victim, and \$60,000 total.

For a free gun lock, email your request to: wagv@wagv.org

Research shows that storing guns locked and unloaded reduces the risk of both injuries and suicide by about 70%.

– Journal of the American Medical Association (2005)

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that the safest home for a family is a home without guns. If there is a gun in the home, the gun should be stored unloaded and locked, with ammunition stored separately.

– *American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement: Firearm-Related Injuries in the Pediatric Population* (October 2012)

One public health study found that 1/3 of 8-to 12-year old boys who came across an unlocked handgun picked it up and pulled the trigger.

– *Dr. Arthur Kelleman Study, published in Pediatrics*, (June 1, 2001)

22% of children who live in a house with a gun handled a gun without their parents' knowledge.

– *Misperceptions about Children and Firearms, Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine* (2006)

Keep our children and communities safe.

Remember:

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Half of all unintentional shooting deaths among children occur at home, and almost half occur in the home of a friend or relative.

– *Unintentional firearm deaths: a comparison of other-inflicted and self-inflicted shootings. Accident Analysis and Prevention* (2010).

The TALK Project



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Revised edition, 2017
Brochure design by Asylum Design & Marketing, Inc.