In 2010 in the United States, 31,672 people died by guns through homicides, suicides, legal interventions, unintentional shootings and undetermined motivations.\[1\] These deaths are preventable through comprehensive prevention strategies. The Children’s Safety Network (CSN) has compiled this resource guide on firearm safety and firearm injury prevention to provide state Maternal and Child Health and Injury and Violence Prevention programs with a summary of what is available in the area of firearm safety and prevention. This guide contains information on a broad range of evidence-informed interventions, firearms data, state legislation about firearms, and organizations to contact for additional information.

Best and promising practices for the improved safety of firearms and reduction of firearm-related injuries include a variety of strategies from legislation and policies to technological innovations, criminal justice interventions, and education. The past several years have seen concerted effort to compile and make available best and promising practices for the prevention and reduction of firearm mortality and morbidity.

This CSN resource guide draws heavily from the following publications and other resources available online:


\[1\] [http://www.childrenssafetynetwork.org/publications/cost-firearm-violence](http://www.childrenssafetynetwork.org/publications/cost-firearm-violence)
Armed violence is the intentional use of physical force, threatened or actual, with arms, against oneself, another person, group, community, or State that results in loss, injury, death and/or psychosocial harm to an individual or individuals that can undermine a community’s, country’s or region’s security or development achievements. (Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence)

The Centre for Public Health at Liverpool John Moores University, The World Health Organization, and the United Nations Development Programme created the publication "Preventing & Reducing Armed Violence: What Works?" to analyze past and ongoing efforts to decrease armed violence, determine the effectiveness of these violence prevention interventions, and identify gaps in the evidence. Based on their findings, they produced the following table classifying the different approaches to violence prevention and the evidence that exists to support the effectiveness of these approaches.

### Table 1: Overview of armed violence prevention approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Type of violence</th>
<th>Section</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Armed violence</td>
<td>Violence</td>
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<td>Direct approaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measures to reduce access to firearms</td>
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<td>Legislation and regulation</td>
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<td>Disarmament programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gun-free zones</td>
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<td>Law enforcement and criminal justice interventions</td>
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<td>Policing strategies</td>
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<td>Community policing</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Problem orientated policing</td>
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<td>Sentence enhancement laws</td>
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<td>Juvenile gun courts</td>
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<td>Criminal justice system reforms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Firearm injury prevention programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>School-based safety education</td>
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<td>Community-based gun safety programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospital-based violence prevention programmes</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public education and awareness campaigns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehensive community based programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public safety and community security programmes</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addressing gang violence through community orientated, multi-strategy interventions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indirect approaches</td>
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<td>Parenting programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life skills and social development</td>
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<td>Academic enrichment programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentoring programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reducing access to and harmful use of alcohol</td>
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<td>Environmental and urban design</td>
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<td>Disrupting illegal drug markets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programmes to reduce inequalities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Key to symbols:**

- ○: Supported by evidence from high-income countries
- ○: Emerging evidence from middle- and low-income countries
- X: Emerging evidence from high-income countries
- ▲: Impact unclear or yet to be evaluated

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(2) Armed violence is the intentional use of physical force, threatened or actual, with arms, against oneself, another person, group, community, or State that results in loss, injury, death and/or psychosocial harm to an individual or individuals that can undermine a community’s, country’s or region’s security or development achievements. (Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence)
Best Practices Registries

Three main best practices registries which contain detailed information about programs with proven capacity to reduce firearm injuries are available on-line.

- **Blueprints for Violence Prevention**, a national violence prevention initiative, identifies effective violence prevention programs. It has found 11 “Model” prevention programs and 20 “Promising” programs that have been evaluated and demonstrated to be effective. “Model” programs have been evaluated more than once while “Promising” Blueprints programs have only received one evaluation.

- The **Violence Prevention Evidence Base** was developed by The Centre for Public Health at Liverpool John Moores University and provides access to published study abstracts which measure the effectiveness of violence prevention interventions. Studies included in the Violence Prevention Evidence Base measure the direct impact of interventions on violence.

- The **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Model Programs Database** lists over 200 scientifically-proven programs that address a range of issues, including substance abuse, mental health, and education programs. Programs are rated as exemplary, effective and promising. For programs to prevent firearms violence, select “Availability of firearms” under community risk factors.

State Legislation

Firearm legislation in the U.S. is mostly determined by state government and varies greatly from one state to the next. To find out what firearms laws exist in your state, visit Findlaw’s **State Gun Control Laws** page. The American Academy of Pediatrics also provides **this overview of Firearms Safety Laws by state**.

Legislation connected to decreased incidents of firearm deaths includes: Licensing and registration for owners and suppliers; minimum age for purchasing; bans on certain types of firearms; background checks and psychological testing of firearms purchasers; limits on the number of firearms that can be purchased or owned and safe storage requirements (**Preventing and Reducing Armed Violence: What Works 2010**). Many states can strengthen their gun laws as a means of reducing firearm-related injuries and deaths. For more information about current state laws and ways to strengthen them, see the American Academy of Pediatrics **“Strengthening State Gun Laws- Strategies to Protect Children from Firearms”** webinar.

The following examples of promising practices in state legislation are excerpted from: **Violence Prevention, The Evidence: Guns, Knives and Pesticides: Reducing access to lethal means**.

**Bans on certain types of firearms:**

Maryland’s ban on small, low-quality, inexpensive handguns, called “Saturday night specials” was associated with an increase in gun purchases prior to implementation and an increase in firearms homicides immediately after the ban, followed by a decrease in homicides suggesting a delayed effect from the ban.

One-gun-a-month:

Laws that limit the purchase of firearms to one per individual per month aim to reduce access to weapons among potential traffickers. The use of such legislation in Virginia was found to reduce interstate trafficking of firearms purchased in the state.


Keeping guns out of reach of children:

Child-access prevention (CAP) legislation requires owners to store firearms safely away from children (e.g., under lock and key) and makes the failure to do so a criminal offence. Studies have associated CAP laws with modest reductions in firearms and in suicides among adolescents. In states in which the violation of CAP laws is a felony, reductions in unintentional firearms fatalities among children have also been found.


Gun show regulation:

In California, where gun shows are regulated, promoters must be licensed, and private firearms sales are restricted. These restrictions are associated with a lower incidence of anonymous, undocumented firearms sales and illegal straw purchases than in states with weaker regulation of private sales and gun shows. (A straw purchase is one undertaken by a proxy on behalf of somebody who is not permitted by law to purchase or own the item.)


Keeping guns away from violent offenders:

Federal law prohibits possession of firearms by offenders who are subject to a restraining order protecting an intimate partner or their children, but not all offenders subject to these restraining orders are covered by this law. To close this gap, several states have enacted additional legislation. This allows for background checks of buyers to prevent those who have used violence against an intimate partner from possessing or purchasing firearms. These laws may also allow police to confiscate firearms at the scene of acts of violence against intimate partners. Research on the impact of such
legislation has found that restraining order laws have reduced intimate partner homicide in states where authorities have a strong ability to conduct background checks and prevent offenders from purchasing firearms.


**Additional Resources:**


**Storage**

Storage is a central component of being a responsible gun owner. Best practices include locking up an unloaded gun separately from ammunition and out of the reach of children. Safe storage practices prevent theft as well as firearm injuries. Several strategies and programs have been found effective in encouraging the use of safe storage practices, such as the “Love Our Kids, Lock Your Guns” community-based firearm safety and gun lock distribution program. Trigger locks are generally less accepted by gun owners, and trigger lock programs have had no effect on gun ownership levels.


**Technology**

Experience from the public health sector has taught us that changing product design can be much more effective than trying to change human behavior. For example, while motor vehicle injuries re-
main a pronounced problem, were it not for the invention of, and subsequent legislation around seat-
belts, airbags, collapsible steering columns, and so on, the fatality rate from these injuries would
be much higher than it is. Current technologies for safer firearms include guns that recognize the
owner’s palm print, guns that cannot be fired when aimed at an individual wearing a specific device,
bimetric lock boxes, guns that cannot discharge when the clip is removed, grip and drop safety de-
vices, and trigger locks. These technologies are currently both underdeveloped and underexplored
in terms of research on effectiveness. They also face many barriers to success, such as limited de-
mand, and the wide availability of guns which lack such safety features. (Violence Prevention — The
Evidence: Guns, knives and pesticides, reducing access to lethal means)

Future of Children. 12(2):118-131 Published by: Princeton University.

New England Journal of Medicine, DOI: 10.1056/NEJMs1302631.

Active Shooter and Emergency Preparedness
Planning and training are core components of preparing to deal with an active shooter situation. Law
enforcement personnel, school staff, students, and business owners and staff should all have emer-
geney plans and be trained to implement those plans.

has developed the 45-minute training, Active Shooter: What You Can Do, for individuals, includ-
ing managers and employees, so that they can be prepared to act when confronted with an active
shooter. The course includes information about recognizing violence indicators and managing the
consequences. EMI awards 0.1 CEU for completion of this course.

Firearm Safety Education
Educating youth, and even adults, about firearm safety can be difficult. Baxley & Miller in 2006, as
well as prior studies, found that parents’ predictions about their children’s interactions with guns
were often incorrect based on child self-reporting. A parent with guns who had locked the guns away
and spoken to his/her children about firearm safety was equally likely to have been contradicted by
the children’s self-reports. Some school-based curricula result in improved short-term knowledge
about guns, but if designed or implemented incorrectly, these curricula can inadvertently “enhanc[e]
the allure of guns” or cause adolescents to over-estimate how frequently their peers carry guns, thus
normalizing this behavior. (OCAM Bellis et al.) The National Rifle Association’s “Eddie Eagle” program
has been shown to improve children’s ability to correctly state safety behaviors. However, in a con-
trolled experiment, most children who participated in the program did not demonstrate correct safety
behavior when faced with real life situations involv-
ing firearms. Behavioral Skills Training (BST) has
been found to be more effective in eliciting the ap-
propriate safety behavior from children when they
are faced with a firearm.

Gun Safety for Kids and Youth (a webpage of the
University of Michigan Health System)

- American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on In-
Related Injuries Affecting the Pediatric Population. Pediatrics, 130 (5), e1416 -e1423


Early Intervention and Mentoring

Early education and mentoring are important protective factors against perpetration of and victimization by armed violence. Evaluations of several initiatives have shown positive impacts on rates of violence, including initiatives by Early Head Start, the Chicago Child-Parent Center, and the Big Brother/Big Sister Association.

Early Head Start:


Chicago Child-Parent Center:

Big Brother Big Sister Association:


Nurse home visitations have also been shown to positively impact rates of criminal and antisocial behavior among youth.


Parenting and Youth Development

Strong family connections and life skills development through programs such as the Triple P-Positive Parenting Program have also been linked to reductions in armed and youth violence.


Exposure to violence is an identified risk factor for perpetration of violence. The following articles provide an in-depth discussion of this issue.


Collaborative Community Interventions

Collaborations between community residents, law-enforcement officials, and other actors, such as public health officials and local business owners, have proven effective in reducing armed violence and crime. These programs include the following:

- Project Safe Neighborhood: This program is the result of a collaboration between federal, state, and local agencies, which focuses on deterring and punishing crimes committed with guns. The Boston Ceasefire program, a problem-oriented policing strategy, was the precursor of Project Safe Neighborhoods and led to the National Network for Safe Communities. This program has been
implemented and adapted in several other cities and states under different names, such as: *The Longevity Program in Connecticut*; High Point Drug Market Intervention in High Point, North Carolina; Project Exile in Richmond, Virginia; and CIRV in Cincinnati, Ohio.


- Project Safe Neighborhoods - *A national program to reduce gun crime: final project report*. East Lansing MI, School of Criminal Justice, Michigan State University.

**Cure Violence**: Begun as Ceasefire Chicago, *Cure Violence* is a public health approach to violence that does not involve police as a central element. Instead, the model prevents violence through a three-pronged approach: 1. detect and interrupt transmission using trained mediators; 2. Identify and change the thinking of the highest potential transmitters using outreach workers; 3. Change community norms. Together, local stakeholders define the parameters of the violence problem, focusing on the actors and tools, and then design the interventions. This model has been implemented in other cities under various names, such as and *Safe Streets Program in Baltimore, Maryland*.


**Cradle to the Grave**: This two-hour hospital-based intervention provides at-risk youth with a graphic account of the life and death of Lamont Adams, a criminal-involved youth who died from firearm injuries at the age of 16.


**Environmental Design**

The *Broken Windows* criminological theory states that well-ordered urban environments contribute to residents' feelings of security and may stop the escalation of vandalism and crime. This theory has
influenced violence prevention programs and urban design, especially in relation to parks, open spaces, and crowded urban centers. The way a park, street, or city is designed can improve feelings of security while making it easier for police to patrol and harder for criminals to gather and act.

These design considerations can also be useful to establishments or events where alcohol is served. Alcohol use and violence are closely linked; providing training to employees and managers of alcohol-serving establishments can increase their skills in deescalating and handling violent incidents. Similarly, designing the spaces where individuals imbibe in a way that improves flow can reduce the risk of a conflict. For more information, see the Cardiff Model for violence prevention.

**Health Care Providers**

Health care providers have an important role to play in firearm safety. These professionals can encourage patients to use safe store practices and raise awareness about the potential dangers of firearm ownership. The American Academy of Pediatrics provides steps pediatricians can take in their practice to make changes related to firearms.


Additional publications related to health care providers and firearms include:


**Means Reduction**

Emergency Department (ED) Means Restriction Education is geared towards caregivers of youth (ages 6-19) who bring a youth to the Emergency Department as a result of a suicide attempt. While a mental health assessment is standard practice, this approach requires service providers to talk to the caregiver about the increased risk of having a firearm in the house when a youth or family member is suicidal.

“Means reduction” is part of a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention which involves reducing a suicidal person’s access to lethal means. Firearms are the most lethal of the commonly used suicide means in the U.S.; reducing access to firearms by storing them safety or removing them from the home can help prevent suicide. To learn more, visit the Harvard School of Public Health’s Means Matter webpages.


Data and Information about Firearms

Databases that collect information on mortality and morbidity often include information on instruments. There is no centralized gun registry in the U.S., and often firearms numbers are estimates. Thirdway, an advocacy organization, provides a Guns by the Numbers one-pager, which pulls together statistics from the National Rifle Association, Mayors Against Illegal Guns, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and several other organizations. Gallup, an international polling agency, conducts regular surveys related to firearm ownership and perceptions about firearm legislation in the U.S. dating back as far as the 1950’s. The following sources also include facts about firearms and related injuries:

- **National Electronic Injury Surveillance System-All Injury Program (NEISS-AIP)** NEISS-AIP provides nationally representative data about all types and causes of nonfatal injuries treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) uses NEISS-AIP data to generate national estimates of nonfatal injuries, including those related to youth violence.

How Do You Safely and Legally Dispose of a Firearm?

If you decide you do not want a gun that is in your possession, you should call your local police. While there is currently no federal policy regarding this matter, the police should be able to advise you on next steps, including surrendering the firearm at a police station. Occasionally, a location near you may host a “gun buy-back” campaign, where a nominal financial reward is given in return for a firearm. The collected firearms are normally destroyed in public or turned into art. Goods For Guns is one such campaign, which is located in Worcester, Massachusetts.

- **National Violent Death Reporting System** The CDC established the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) and has funded 18 states to gather, share, and link state-level data on violent deaths. NVDRS provides the CDC and the states with a more accurate understanding of violent deaths. This enables policy makers and community leaders to make informed decisions about violence prevention programs, including those that address youth violence. Select NVDRS data are available for online analysis at: [http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/nvdrs.html](http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/nvdrs.html)

- **WISQARS** (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System, pronounced “whiskers”) is an interactive database that provides national injury-related morbidity and mortality data used for research and for making informed public health decisions.

The following resources provide further information on firearms and violence, particularly from a public health perspective.

- **Children’s Defense Fund** [Protecting Children, Not Guns](#) 2012.
- **Firearm Injury in the U.S.**, Firearm & Injury Center at Penn (FICAP) (2011) is a Resource Book which helps readers understand the nature and problem of firearms injuries, review current data, understand how to access and use available data, understand the magnitude of firearm injury in the U.S., understand the benefit of and how to address firearm injury from a public health approach.
- **Guns, Grief and Grace in America** is a three-part film series that aims to refocus the debate about firearms from “gun rights versus gun control” to a broader, logical, non-polarized focus on public health and prevention. The website also provides tools for using the films and other resources.
- **Global burden of armed violence**. (2008 & 2011) from the Geneva Declaration Secretariat provides facts and figures about the impact of firearm-related violence globally, as well as prevention strategies and information about specific populations.

**Organizations**

**Research Centers**

- **Action on Armed Violence (AOAV)**: Based in London, England, AOAV works locally, nationally, regionally, and globally to reduce and prevent armed violence by removing the threat of weapons, reducing risks that provoke violence and conflict, and supporting the recovery of victims of violence.
- **Harvard Injury Control Research Center**: The center aims “to reduce the societal burden of injury and violence - through surveillance, research, intervention, evaluation, outreach, dissemination, and training.”
- **Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research**: Based at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, the Center examines the public health effects of guns in society and serves as an objective resource for policy makers, the media, advocacy groups, and the general public.
- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**: The Violence Prevention Division of the CDC’s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control is committed to stopping violence before it begins. Its work involves monitoring violence-related injuries, researching risk and protective factors for violence, creating and evaluating violence prevention programs, helping state and local
organizations implement and evaluate prevention programs, and researching the adoption and dissemination of prevention strategies.

- **The Prevention Institute**: The Institute focuses on primary prevention of violence and injury, in addition to mental health and other health concerns, and it promotes policies, organizational practices, and collaborative efforts that improve health and quality of life.

- **The Small Arms Survey**: Located at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland, this organization provides resources and research for governments, policy-makers, and researchers on all aspects of small arms and armed violence.

- **The Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research (SAVIR)** acts as a resource for researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to promote research, evaluation, and collaboration related to the study and prevention of injuries and violence. [SAVIR: The Role of Research in Addressing the Public Health Problem of Gun Violence](#).

- **The World Health Organization**: The WHO’s Violence and Injury Prevention Division provides global monitoring of violence and injuries and research into best and promising practices for violence prevention and risk and protective factors for violence.

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*The findings and conclusions in this resource guide are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the Children’s Safety Network. Photographs included in this guide to not depict safe usage and are not endorsed by the Children’s Safety Network.*