



Public Health
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Suicide Prevention Awareness Month 2020

A Focus on Firearm Suicide

Suicide remains a public health crisis across the nation. In Humboldt County, our rates of suicide death are 2 ½ times that of the State of California¹. Firearms are the most lethal means of suicide². Preventing firearm suicide is a public health and safety issue.

More Guns in 2020

Firearm sales have skyrocketed across the nation since March. From March to July, national estimates indicate that almost three million more firearms were sold than would have ordinarily been sold during these months. Half of that increase occurred in June alone. During this same time, firearm sales have exceeded 700,000 in California³.

Humboldt County has more than double the rate of firearm-related death compared to the rest of the state⁴. When we think of the dangers of firearms, we think about accidental shootings or homicide. A closer look at local data shows the majority of our firearm deaths are suicides. There were 285 firearm deaths between 2005 and 2018 in Humboldt County, 76 percent of those deaths were due to a self-inflicted gunshot

wound⁵. Firearms owners are not inherently at greater risk of suicide; however, the risk of death increases when someone who is having thoughts of suicide or is experiencing a crisis, has easy access to a firearm⁶.

Keep It Safe

DHHS's Public Health Branch has expanded its Lockbox Distribution Program, a component of the Keep It Safe Campaign, to provide firearm owners and their families with safe storage options, education and resources.

Partnering For Safety

The Suicide Prevention Program has embarked on a new partnership with several local firearms retailers, range owners and safety instructors. Together, these partnerships, along with Humboldt County Sheriff's Office, have effectively amplified the reach of the Keep It Safe campaign and Lockbox Program through distribution of suicide prevention materials and resources, gun safety education and more than 900 gun safe lockboxes. These lockboxes can hold up to two pistols, medications or other potentially lethal means. For someone in



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crisis, a locked firearm can mean the difference between a tragic outcome and a saved life⁷.

Public Health Prevention Programming

Through the Lockbox Program, Public Health equips local firearm owners with the tools to resist or lower a suicidal impulse during a time of crisis that can reduce their risk of suicide and gives people tools to understand suicide risk and increase safety for themselves and their loved ones.

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

Public Health, in collaboration with the Suicide Prevention Network, has developed a social media toolkit. The toolkit is for easy use on social media pages that speaks to how to help get the word out about the importance of suicide prevention and the importance of safe firearm storage in our community.

We Do More Together

A big thanks goes out to our partners in the firearms community, Pacific Outfitters-Eureka, Ballistic Precision, RMI Outdoors and Humboldt County Sheriff's Office, that continue to prioritize firearm safety and have taken a stand on preventing firearm suicide in Humboldt County.

We Need You!

Your voice matters! Please take this opportunity to share content from the [Suicide Prevention Social Media Toolkit](#).

Please also consider sharing content from an additional toolkit: [Suicide Prevention Social Media Toolkit, Firearms Edition](#).

By doing this, you increase awareness about suicide prevention, help get resources out to the community and encourage people to seek help.

Community Resources

1. [Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 1-800-273-8255, press 1 for Veterans
2. [Ayuda en Español](#): 1-888-628-9454
3. [Crisis Text Line](#): Text HOME to 741741
4. [Humboldt County DHHS Behavioral Health](#): 24-hr Behavioral Health Crisis Line 707-445-7715 or Toll-Free 888-849-5728
5. [DHHS Community COVID Support](#): 707-268-2999 Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
6. [UIHS Behavioral Health Warmline](#): 707-825-4080 Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
7. [Two Feathers Crisis Line](#): 707-382-0629 Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Contact Us

For more information, email: publichealthssvp@co.humboldt.ca.us



Sources

1. National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Database, 2020
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics
3. NICS Database, 2020
4. California Department of Public Health (CDPH), County Health Profiles, 2020
5. Humboldt County DHHS Public Health Suicide Mortality Data Report 2005-2018
6. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Means Matter Campaign
7. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020