



# HOLISTIC WELLNESS CHALLENGE

## LETHAL MEANS SAFETY

**CHALLENGE** your Service members to adopt at least one of the recommended resources to safely store firearms and medications

### FACTS & FIGURES: DID YOU KNOW?

- **72%** of National Guard suicide deaths involved firearms<sup>1</sup>
- **69%** of National Guard suicides by firearm involved personally owned weapons<sup>2</sup>
- **63%** of National Guard suicide attempts involved poisoning<sup>1</sup>
- **60%** of military spouse suicide deaths involved firearms<sup>1</sup>
- **55%** of military dependent suicide deaths involved firearms<sup>1</sup>

### QUICK ACTION SAVES LIVES

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911. Confidential crisis support is available 24/7 by dialing:

**988** SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

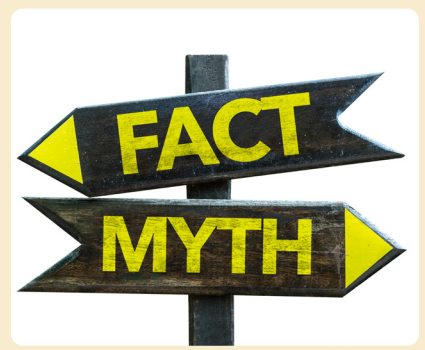
**Veterans Crisis Line**  
DIAL 988 then **PRESS 1**

**POISON Help**  
1-800-222-1222

**CONTACT US**

For more information on lethal means safety or other wellness topics, email us at: [ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil](mailto:ng.ncr.ngb.mbx.integrated-prevention-branch@army.mil)

### SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT



There are many misconceptions about suicide, suicide risk, and the potential impact of easily accessible firearms. Knowing the truth and taking the appropriate action can save lives.

**MYTH:** If you remove access to one lethal method, a person at risk for suicide will find an alternative method.

**FACT:** 90% of people who survive an attempt do not die by suicide at a later point.<sup>3</sup> That is because those in acute distress do not typically have a back-up plan.

**MYTH:** Suicide is always the result of long-term planning.

**FACT:** It can take less than **5-10 minutes** between thinking about suicide and acting.<sup>3</sup> Putting time and distance between a person in distress and a means for suicide gives them a moment to change their mind.

**MYTH:** An unlocked firearm in the home makes it safer and does not increase the risk of suicide.

**FACT:** Violent home break-ins are rare. Access to a firearm in the home increases suicide risk by **4 to 6 times** for everyone in the family.<sup>3</sup>



## ENCOURAGE SAFE STORAGE

### What does it mean?

- Lethal means safety involves securing firearms, medications, and other methods of self-harm.

### Why does it matter?

- The time between thinking about suicide and acting is often short; extending that time could save a life by allowing for intervention and reconsideration.
- More die by suicide via firearm than by combat, accident, homicide, and other means **combined**.
- Suicide attempts involving medications are the most common method of non-fatal suicide attempts.

### What can you do?

- Remind Service members that quick action saves lives and crisis support is available 24/7.
- Foster a culture that encourages safe storage of firearms and medications and promotes support seeking behaviors.
- Encourage Service members to contact their VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator (link below) for a free gun lock.
- Reach out to Resilience, Risk Reduction, and Suicide Prevention Coordinators (ARNG) or Directors of Psychological Health (ANG) if assistance is needed with obtaining gun locks.
- Recommend using medication lock boxes, which are available online and in many pharmacies.
- Urge Service members to safely dispose of unwanted, unused, or expired medications.
- Correct common misconceptions regarding lethal means safety.
- Talk about how Service members can protect themselves and their families from harm.

## GUN LOCKS FOR GUARD MEMBERS

NGB is expanding its partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs to make free gun locks more easily accessible. Since February 2023, 2,400 gun locks have been sent to Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia, Iowa, Montana, New York, Ohio, Virginia, and Wyoming with the intent to distribute to ARNG and ANG units. NGB's plan is to expand across all 54 States, Territories and District of Columbia.



## RESOURCES TO RECOMMEND



Watch a one-minute video on lethal means safety <https://www.dspo.mil/Portals/113/In%20Our%20Nature%20min%20%20COLORGRADE%20NOVEMBER%20EDIT.mp4>



Review lethal means safety resources for tips and conversation starters <https://www.dspo.mil/Tools/Download-Library/LethalMeansSafety>



Take the free Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM) Training <https://sprc.org/online-courses>



Locate the nearest Veterans Affairs (VA) Suicide Prevention Coordinator and request a free gun lock <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/find-resources/local-resources>



Search for year round medication disposal locations near you [https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug\\_disposal](https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal)



## SPOTLIGHT: PROJECT SAFEGUARD (PSG)

- Peer-to-peer intervention program that provides safe storage training, counseling, and gun locks for National Guard members to protect themselves, fellow Service members, and their families.
- Since January 2023, nearly 200 Service members have been trained in Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, and Nevada.
- Initial evaluation suggests that participants are 40% more likely to securely store personally owned firearms.
- For more information, email: [ng.ncr.ngb-arng.mbx.ngb-j1-partnerships@army.mil](mailto:ng.ncr.ngb-arng.mbx.ngb-j1-partnerships@army.mil)

## REFERENCES:

1. DoD Annual Report on Suicide in the Military 2021 <http://www.dspo.mil>
2. DoDSER Department of Defense Suicide Event Report 2020 <https://health.mil>
3. Prevention of Suicide by Firearm: A Communication Guide for Military Leaders and Support Providers <https://www.dspo.mil>