

Lethal Means Safety Counseling with Youth and Families

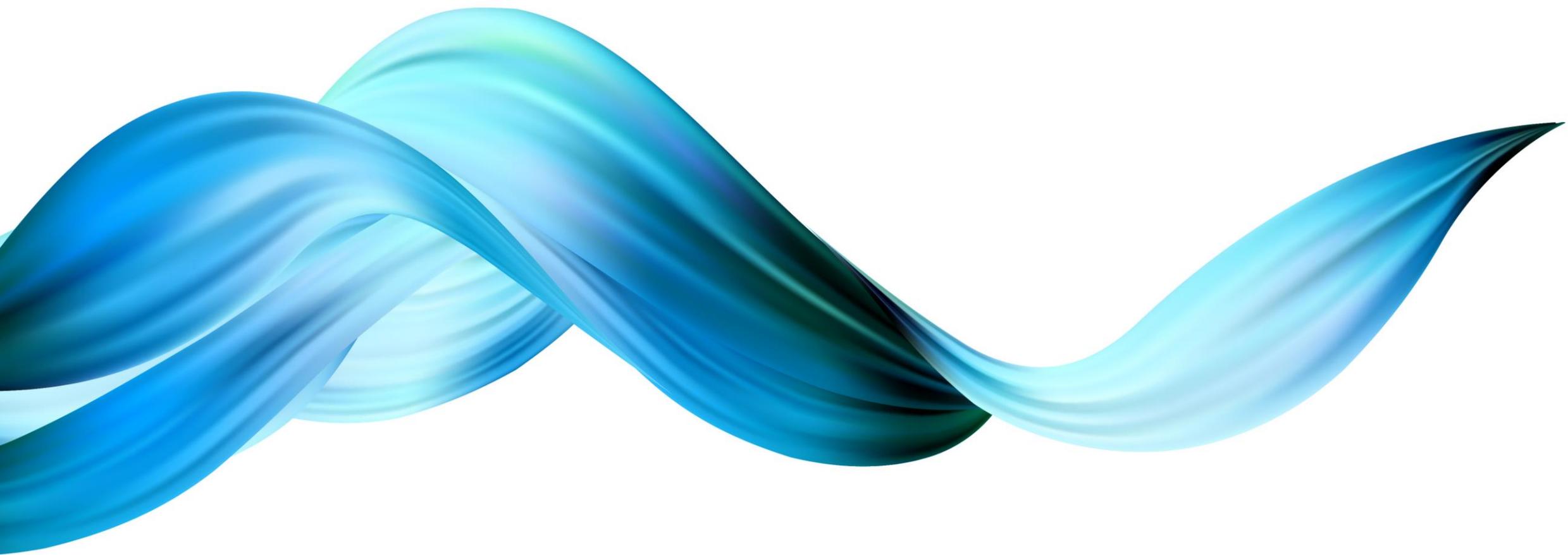
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ADOLESCENT HEALTH, INJURY, AND SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

THE MAINE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION

Overview of today's presentation

- Define *Lethal Means* & examine the data
- Introduce *Lethal Means Safety Counseling*
- Discuss considerations for providing *Lethal Means Safety Counseling*
- Discuss how to have conversations about *Lethal Means Safety* with youth & families
- Provide overview of related resources and materials





What is Lethal Means?



We often ask why, but HOW a person attempts suicide plays a crucial role in whether they live or die.

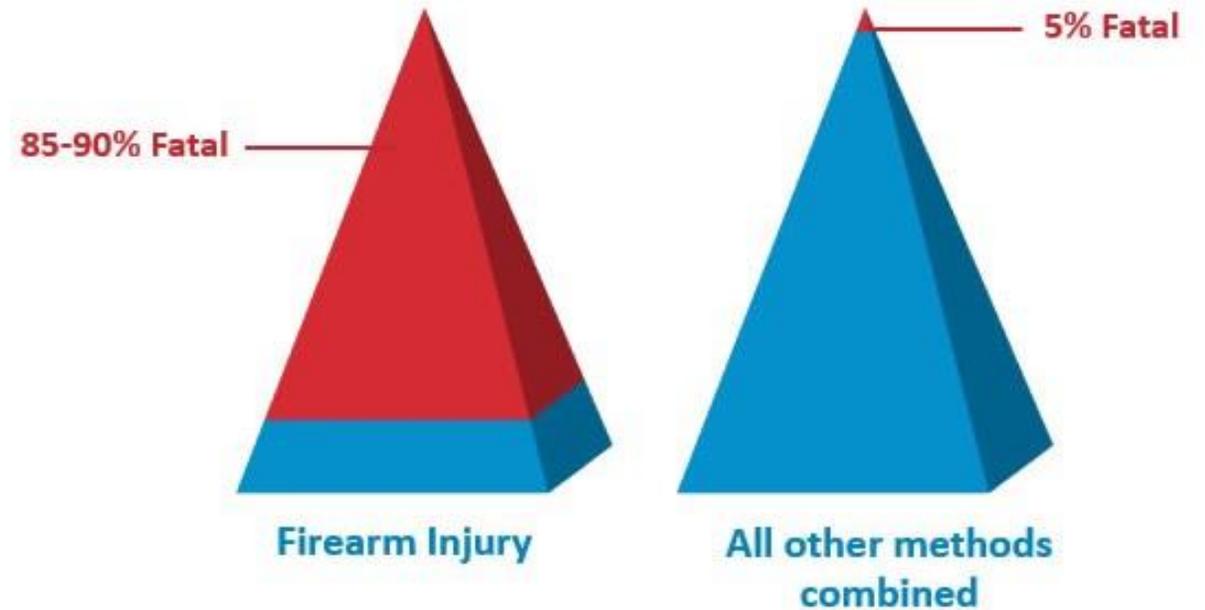
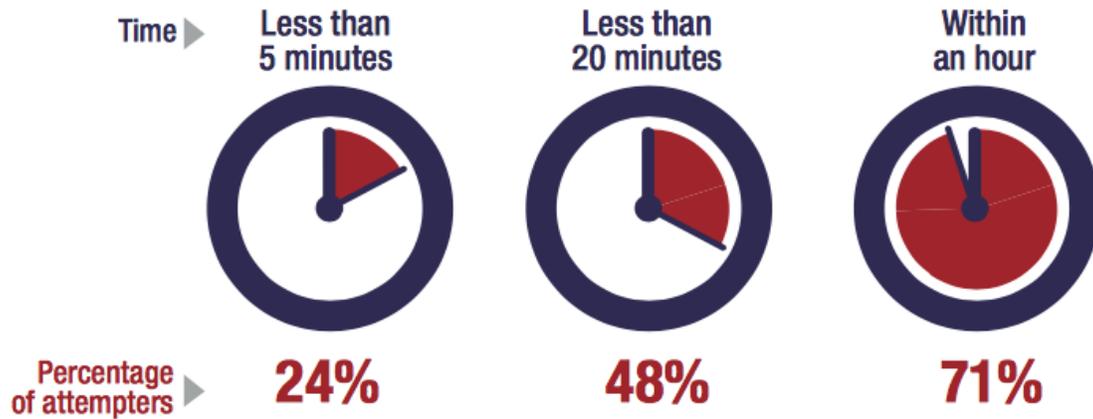
What is Lethal Means Safety?

- In the context of suicide prevention, safe storage of lethal means is any action that builds in TIME and SPACE between a suicidal impulse and the ability to harm oneself.
- Effective lethal means safety education and counseling is collaborative and youth & family-centered. It respects the important role that weapons, and medications may play in family's lives and is consistent with their values and priorities.



Most Suicidal Crises are Brief

Time from Decision to Action < 1 hour

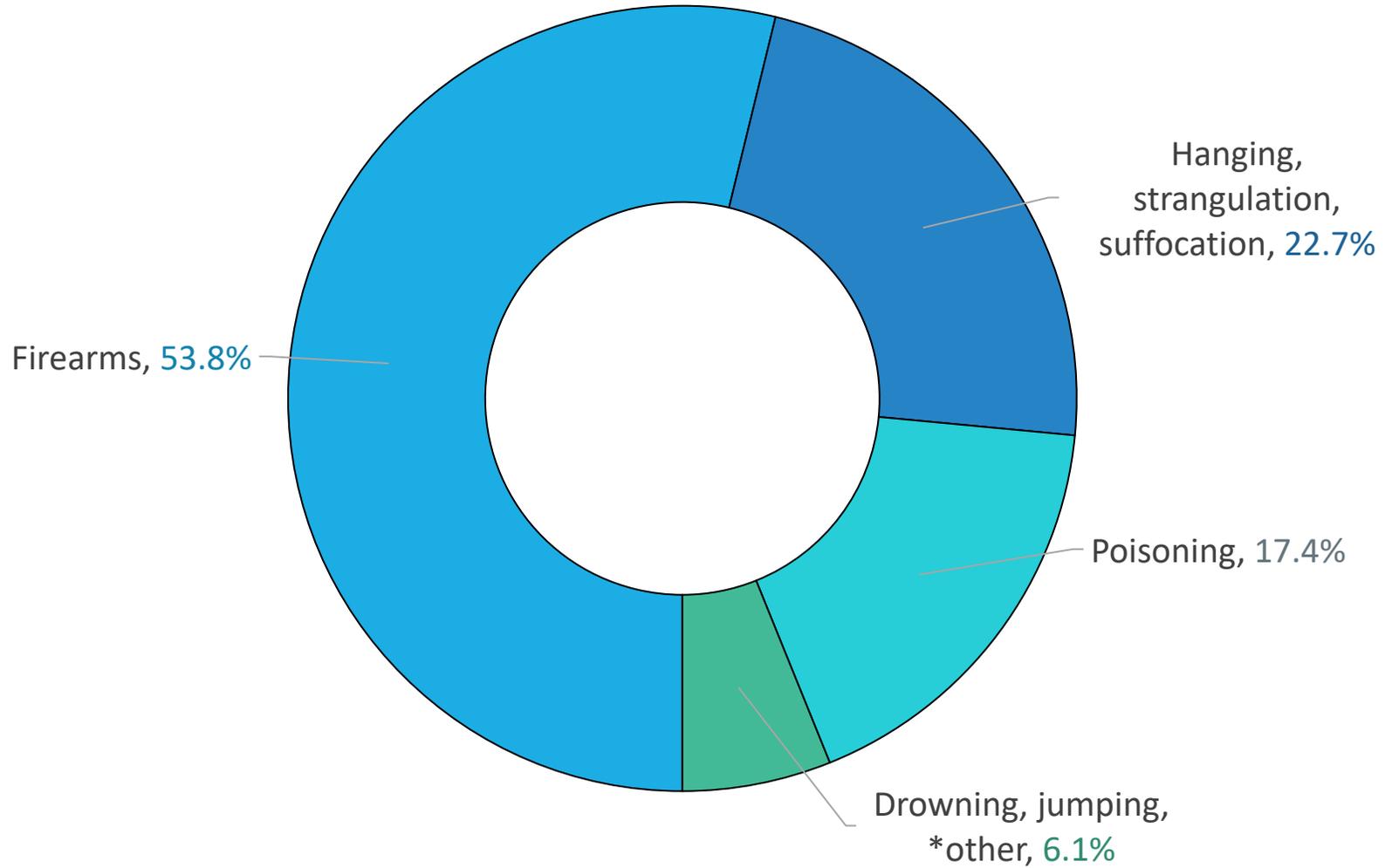


CDC WISQARS: Deaths from death certificate data; nonfatal incidents estimated from national sample of hospital emergency departments

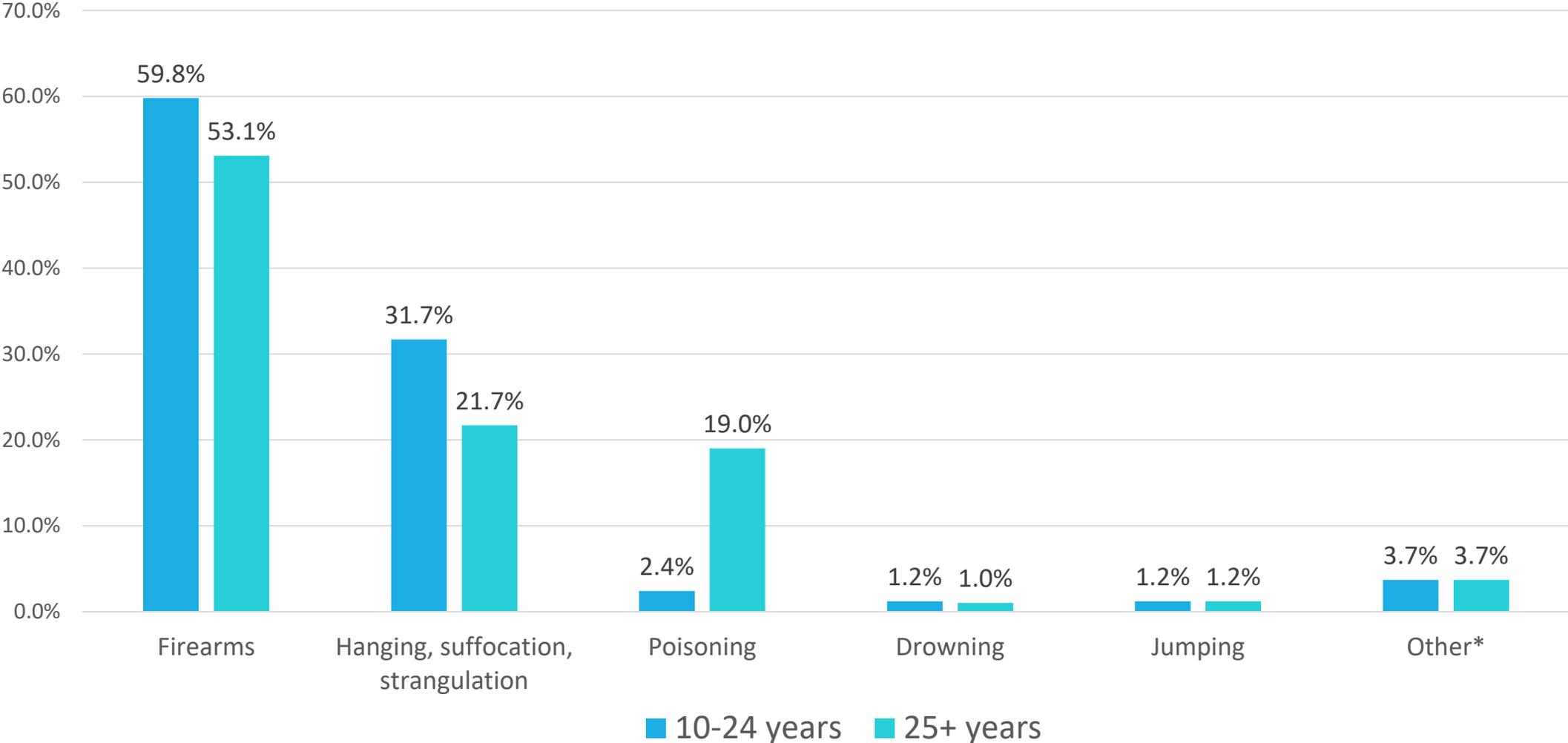
Source: Simon, T.R., Swann, A.C., Powell, K.E., Potter, L.B., Kresnow, M., and O'Carroll, P.W. Characteristics of Impulsive Suicide Attempts and Attempters. SLTB. 2001; 32(suppl):49-59.

Source: CDC WISQARS and US Dept. of Veterans Affairs
<https://www.mirecc.va.gov/lethalmeanssafety/facts/>

Maine Suicide Deaths by Method, Total, 2017-2019



Proportion of Suicide Deaths by Age and Method, Maine, 2017-2019



*Other includes suicide deaths caused by explosive material; smoke, fire and flames; steam, hot vapors and hot objects; sharp object; blunt object; lying before moving object; crashing of motor vehicle and intentional self-harm by other specified/unspecified means.

Suicides in the 15 U.S. States with the Highest vs. the 6 U.S. States with the Lowest Average Household Gun Ownership (2000-2002)

	High-Gun States	Low-Gun States
Population	39 million	40 million
Household Gun Ownership	47%	15%
Firearm Suicide	9,749	2,606
Non-Firearm Suicide	5,060	5,446
Total Suicide	14,809	8,052



What is Lethal Means Safety Counseling?



LMSC is patient-centered and individualized, rather than a one-size-fits-all intervention



You're already doing some of this if you're using safety plans



Effective LMSC involves careful consideration of the language and stance we use with clients



Temporary solution while in crisis



Whenever possible, LMSC involves **ongoing follow up**

Approaches to Lethal Means Safety Counseling (LMSC)

Factors impacting approach

Your relationship
with the **youth**
and
family/caregivers

Your knowledge
about their access
to weapons/lethal
means

Your knowledge of
and comfort with
weapons/lethal
means

Urgency of
situation

Reasons for
weapon ownership

Client's willingness
to consider
recommended
changes

Opportunity for
follow up

Example of starting the conversation:

“Lots of Mainers have guns or weapons at home. What some caregivers in your situation have done is store their guns/weapons away from home until their youth is feeling better, or they lock them and ask someone they trust to hold onto the keys. If you have guns/weapons at home, I’m wondering if you’ve thought about a strategy like that.”

“If temporarily storing them elsewhere is not an option, perhaps we can discuss some alternative ways to keep you safe until you’re feeling better.”

Conversations with
youth and families
about **Lethal Means
Safety Interventions**



Firearm/Weapon
Safety



Medication
Safety



Supervision

- Start from a common purpose
- Present a menu of options
- Take a harm reduction approach
- Provide problem-solving strategies in advance



Firearm/Weapon Safety

For youth at risk for suicide, ALWAYS ask about access to firearms

- Remove from the home and store offsite
- Store in a gun safe
- Use an appropriate trigger lock
- Remove ammunition and keep firearms and unloaded

Locking Options



Cable Lock



Lock Box



Trigger Lock



Lifejacket



Gun Safe/Cabinet



Firearm/Weapon Safety

I know that guns are important to you. Let's work on a plan that will keep you child safe and work well for you.

Sometimes when youth are struggling with their mental health, caregivers will lock their guns/ammunition at home and ask someone they trust to hold onto the keys. Is that a strategy you'd consider?



Medication Safety

- Remove unnecessary medications, dispose safely
- Use a medication lock box
- Work with pharmacists to keep small amounts of necessary medications
- Remember that any medication (prescribed or over-the-counter) can be dangerous

Practical Interventions for lethal means safety with medications

- Consider disposing of unneeded medications, using medication disposal boxes/sites, medication envelopes
 - Utilize DEA website to locate closest takeback receptacle, call local PD
- Medication lockboxes
- Quantity management: buy smaller size OTC medications, frequent smaller refills, blister packs



The use of substances such as alcohol or opiates can increase risk for people struggling with suicidality

- Increased substance use may be a sign of suicide risk
- Intoxication or impairment can increase the risk of a suicide attempt
- All individuals at risk of suicide should be screened for substance use disorder, and vice versa
- Consider including strategies for managing substances (such as removing or storing alcohol or other drugs) as part of lethal means safety planning



Medication Safety

I know that you have medications that are important to your health. Let's work on a plan that will keep you child safe and work well for you.

Sometimes when youth are struggling with their mental health, caregivers will lock their medicines in a cabinet at home or remove any non-necessary medications. Is that a strategy you'd consider?



Supervision

- Strongly consider having someone with “eyes on” a young person when they are a very high-risk period
- Reminding caregivers that actions taken to end life can happen in a matter of minutes
- Acknowledge that lack of privacy is developmentally inconsistent with the needs/wants of youth
- Critical to include youth in the plan, and strategize expected conflict

Developmentally Appropriate Conversations

- Adolescents are rapidly maturing in the “feeling” sections of the brain
- Have less “wiring” connecting the feeling brain with the planning/inhibitory brain
- May make it especially likely for youth to take actions based on heightened emotional states
- Provide context without minimizing or dismissing the lived experience of youth





Supervision

Sometimes when youth are struggling in the ways you've described, caregivers will make sure that someone is always with their child. Is that a strategy you'd consider?

If you're able to keep "eyes-on" your child during this crisis, it's likely there will be moments that are challenging for you or your child. What strategies could we brainstorm to help manage conflict?

Self-Awareness

- Talking about suicide and lethal means safety counseling can be a difficult topic for even the most experienced clinicians
- Self-awareness and ongoing self-exploration around personal biases and attitudes towards suicide and lethal means is vital
- Your experiences, beliefs, and attitudes about firearms will come into play

Follow-Up & Accountability

Check-in with families & youth regularly about safety plan

- Set time frames for check-ins

Prompts for families/caregivers:

- What worked?
- What didn't work?
 - Why didn't this plan work?
 - What adjustments can be made?

Acknowledge success



Resources



Maine Prevention Store

- Order materials to be delivered
- Digital downloads
- If you'd like to order more than the max number allowed, please reach out with the mailing address, # of items



IF YOU LOVE THEM, KEEP THEM SAFE

If someone you love is struggling with thoughts of suicide, there are some important steps you can take to keep them safe until they're feeling better. Make a plan based on the options below:



Temporarily remove firearms from your home to keep your loved ones safe until they are feeling better.

SAFEST CHOICE



Store all firearms in a locked safe, or use trigger locks. Remove access to combinations or keys.



Make sure all firearms are unloaded. Store ammunition safely in another location.



Remove any medications from your home to keep your loved ones safe until they are feeling better.

SAFEST CHOICE



Store any medications in a locked box or cabinet. Be sure keys and combinations are in a secure location.



Keep only small amounts of medications in your home. Talk to a pharmacist about what quantities of medication would be safest.



Until your loved one is feeling better, do not leave them alone. Make sure someone has "eyes on" them to ensure they are safe.

SAFEST CHOICE



Create a "safety plan" so your loved one knows how to get help at any time. Identify activities that help them feel better, and people they can reach out to for support.



Make sure your loved one knows how to access the 24-hour Maine Crisis Line at 1-888-568-1112.

STEPS I CAN TAKE

TO PROTECT A LOVED ONE WHO IS AT RISK FOR SUICIDE

It can feel overwhelming when someone you care about is struggling with their mental health. You can help by creating a plan to keep your loved one safe while they get the support they need. If possible, focus on the safest options – but it's most important that you take some kind of action to protect your loved one until they're feeling better.



Remove or store firearms safely.

My Plan:



Remove or store medication safely.

My Plan:



Stay connected and supervise.

My Plan:

 **1-888-568-1112**
MAINE CRISIS LINE
 CALL. TEXT. CHAT.



Suicide Prevention Safety Card



1-888-568-1112

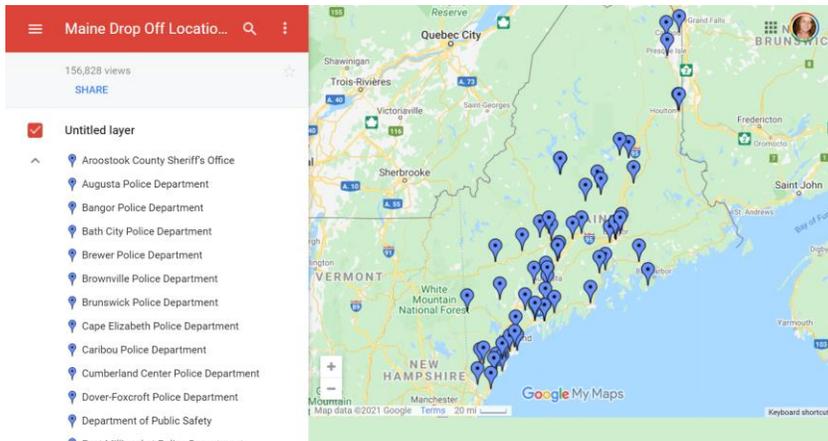
MAINE CRISIS LINE

CALL. TEXT. CHAT.

Medication Disposal

The best way to get rid of leftover prescription drugs is to drop them off at one of many drug take back locations in Maine. Prescriptions that contain narcotics can often be taken to your local police department—contact them to be sure. Also, certain pharmacies will take prescriptions that are unused.

Visit <https://eyesopenforme.org/drug-take-back/> for more information on Drug Take Back locations near you.



Questions?

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