

Firearm Safety and Your Children

Firearm Safety is Always an Adult Responsibility

Whether you are a person who has never held a firearm, or a firearm enthusiast, it is extremely important to educate yourself and your children about firearms and firearm safety. Firearms are a reality in our community and children **will** encounter firearms at some point in their lives. Children are curious and often impulsive and we must assume they will pick up and investigate any unsecured firearm even if they have been told not to do so. It is better to talk about it now, rather than let silence lead to tragedy.

If You Have Firearms in Your House

The only safe way to store a firearm is unloaded in a locked container or with a disabling device installed, like a cable or trigger lock, and separate from ammunition.

Not only is safe and secure storage a good idea, it is also the law in Colorado. As per Colorado Revised Statute § 18-12-114(1), it is a crime to store a firearm in a manner that allows a child to have unsupervised access to a firearm.



Safe methods of storage include: (most to least effective)

- Safes
- Lockboxes/Lockers
- Locked, hard sided gun cases
- Cable locks
- Trigger locks



Unsafe methods of storage include: (never acceptable)

- In a nightstand drawer
- Under the bed
- In a closet
- In a gun display case
- Hanging on the wall
- Loaded or stored with ammunition

For Everyone - Regardless if You Own Guns or Not

Talking to your children about firearms and firearm safety is essential. Children are naturally curious about firearms and have regular exposure to firearms in movies, video games, toys, and innate play instincts. As a result, they may be curious and tempted to “play” with any firearm they find.

Make sure your children and their friends are aware of and understand these safety guidelines:

- **STOP!** - If you find a gun in your house, or anywhere else, STOP!
- **DON'T TOUCH!** - Even if a gun looks like a toy, or a gun in a video game, DON'T TOUCH IT!
- **LEAVE THE AREA!** - If you see a gun, LEAVE THE AREA!
- **TELL AN ADULT!** - The only safe way to deal with a gun is to TELL AN ADULT!

It is essential to have firearm safety conversations with your children. Having monthly conversations about what to do if they find a gun is not too often, especially for younger children.

"What if" games can be a good way to reinforce the firearm safety message and ensure your child understands. No matter what, it is always the adults' responsibility to make sure kids are safe from unsupervised interactions with firearms.

For a video on how to talk to kids about guns: <https://projectchildsafe.org/talking-to-kids/>



How to Talk About Guns with Other Parents

Before sending your children to friends' houses, be sure to include gun safety in your other safety conversations with your child's friend's parents, such as body safety rules or access to adult recreational substances. These can be awkward conversations, but they are extremely important. Everyone's comfort level with firearms is different, and a choice to relocate a playdate should not be taken personally. Some ideas to make the conversation easier are below:

- Straightforward approach ideas:

- ◆ “We have safety rules for our kids in our home which include the requirement that all firearms must be locked up. Do you have a similar rule?”
- ◆ “I always like to be sure that our kids are as safe as possible. If you own guns, are they securely locked away in a gun safe and/or with a proper locking mechanism and stored separately from ammunition?”

- Conversational approach ideas:







- ◆ “I was reading an article about firearm safety. It made me very interested in the kinds of safety methods people use. Since I read it, I have talked to my kids about guns and how to be safe if they see guns. Have you ever thought about gun storage and safety rules to teach your kids? I would love to share ideas.”

- If you own guns, it is important to share this with parents and explain your safe storage method.

- ◆ “Since you are bringing your child over for a playdate, I wanted to let you know that we own guns. At no point will the children have access to our guns because we store them securely in a locked safe in a part of the home that is not where the children play.”
- ◆ “We are gun owners and safety is our number one priority for your kids and ours. I wanted to let you know that we store our guns in locked storage separate from any ammunition. The children will not have access to them at any point.”

Ask about firearms before a playdate. If you feel it's potentially not safe, invite their child over to your home instead. **Open and honest conversations about safety concerns will make our kids safer!**

For More Information and Resources

 Project ChildSafe https://projectchildsafesafe.org/parents-and-gun-owners/	
 COLORADO Department of Public Health & Environment Colorado Office of Gun Violence Prevention https://cdphe.colorado.gov/about-cdphe/office-of-gun-violence-prevention	
 Safe firearm storage locations outside of your home: https://coloradofirearmsafetycoalition.org/gun-storage-map/	



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