

RESEARCH BRIEF

No. 8: April 2024



ASSOCIATION OF CLIENT AND PROVIDER RACE WITH APPROACHES SOCIAL WORKERS PURSUE TO REDUCE FIREARM ACCESS

Kelsey M. Conrick, Olivia McCollum, Sarah F. Porter, Christopher St. Vil, Kalei Kanuha, Ali Rowhani-Rahbar, Megan Moore

Brief prepared by: Kelsey Conrick and Erika Marts

BACKGROUND

Limiting access to firearms during a crisis is an important strategy to reduce firearm injuries and deaths. When someone is going through a tough time, like feeling suicidal, not being able to quickly access a firearm can give them time to get help. This can be done by making sure firearms at home are stored locked and unloaded, asking a friend or family member to hold onto them for a while, or through laws like Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs).

Social workers, who help people in clinics and community settings, are in a good place to notice if someone might hurt themselves or others with a firearm. It's important to consider how the **race of both the client and the social worker** might influence the decision on how best to keep firearms out of reach during these crisis moments. This information can help us be sure **all clients are being treated equitably**.

STUDY GOAL

Researchers wanted to understand:

1. How social workers currently talk to clients about firearms
2. How social workers' and clients' race play into what strategies social workers recommend to reduce firearm access while clients are in crisis

APPROACH

Researchers sent a survey to all social workers in Washington State in May 2023. The survey asked them when and why they ask clients about firearms, whether they were aware of resources, and if they had received any training about this. It also gave them two example cases of clients in crisis: one at risk of harm to themselves and one at risk of harm to others. Then the survey asked them what they would do to help each client. Half of social workers saw the client's race as white and the other half as Black. **1306 social workers responded**.

RESULTS

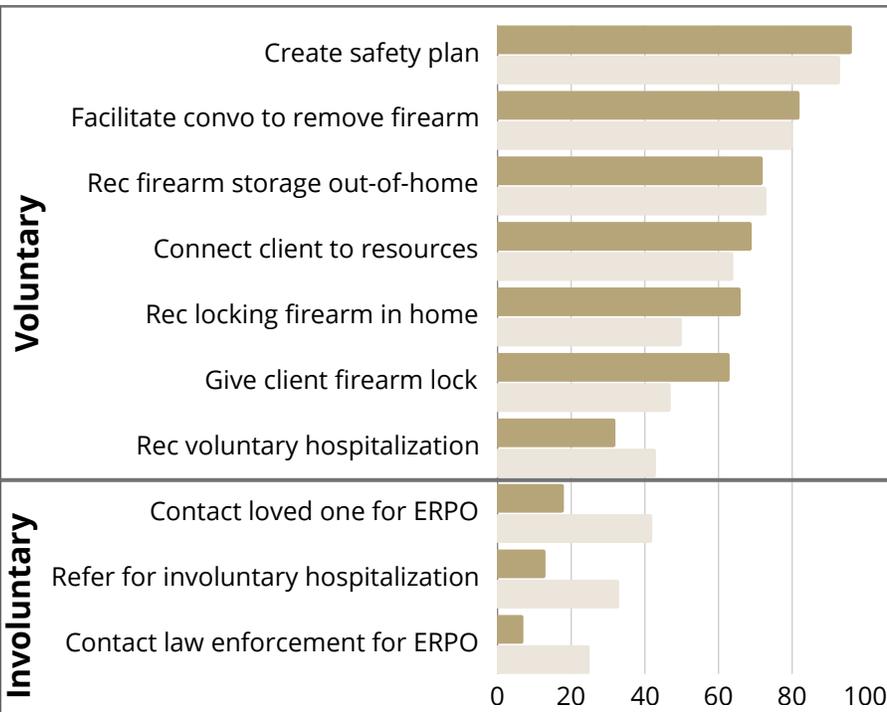
87%

Of social workers asked at least one client about access to firearms in the past year.

64%

Believed their workplace should have a policy about asking clients about firearm access.

Approaches social workers recommended for example clients



Harm to self client

26% Pursued at least one **involuntary** option

Social workers were **less** likely to offer an involuntary care plan option to the **Black client** compared to the **white client**

Harm to others client

56% Pursued at least one **involuntary** option

Social workers were **more** likely to offer an involuntary care plan option to the **Black client** compared to the **white client**

Social worker race

Social workers' race did not affect the association between client race and pursuing an involuntary care plan

IMPLICATIONS

01 There are disparities in the plans social workers make for clients based on clients' race

02 Social workers need more training on how to support clients equitably and with sensitivity

03 Social workers need to learn more about resources and policies about firearm access

04 We more research to understand how social workers' social identities play into their choices

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, REFER TO:

Conrick KM, McCollum O, Porter SF, et al. Association of Client and Provider Race with Approaches Pursued by Social Workers for Reducing Firearm Access. *J Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*. 2024; doi.org/10.1007/s40615-024-01934-0

FUNDING INFORMATION

This project was supported by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number TL1TR002318.