

# RESEARCH BRIEF

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## CLINICIANS' OPINIONS ON EXTREME RISK PROTECTION ORDERS IN WASHINGTON STATE

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### EXTREME RISK PROTECTION ORDERS AS A PREVENTION TOOL

Firearm-related injury is a leading cause of death in the United States among all age groups. Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs) seek to decrease risk of injury or death by limiting access to firearms for those demonstrating behavior showing that they may be a risk to themselves or others. ERPOs allow a petitioner, such as family members or law enforcement, to file a civil order temporarily restricting firearm access. Although they are unable to initiate the ERPO filing process in most states, clinicians, like physicians, nurse practitioners, and social workers, may still play a critical role in ERPOs as they frequently assess those experiencing a behavioral crisis and intervene to reduce risk of harm. Researchers at the University of Washington's Center for Firearm Injury Prevention (C-FIP) sought to describe the perspectives of clinicians in Washington state about ERPOs to understand their knowledge.

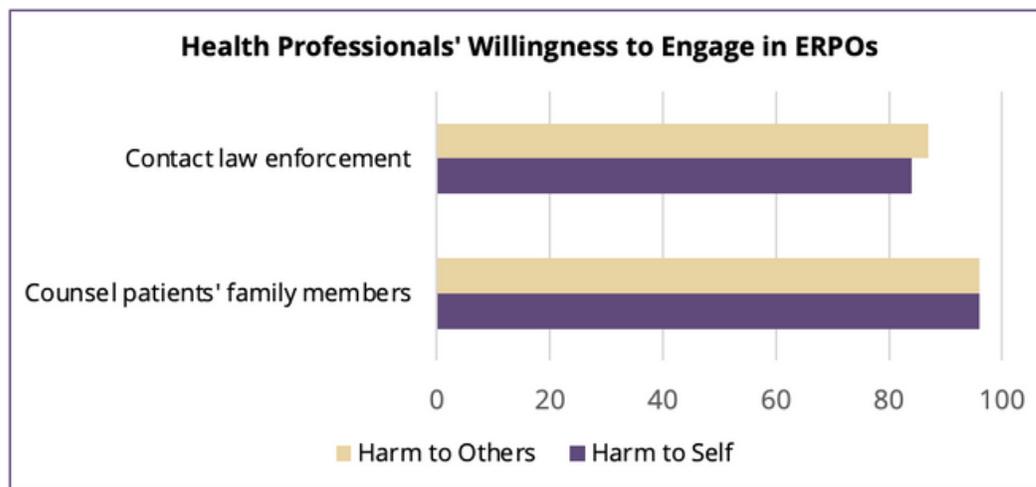
### STUDY 1: CLINICIANS' PERSPECTIVES ON ERPOS IN WASHINGTON

In 2016, Washington State passed their ERPO law, which does not allow health professionals to file; however, they may contact an eligible petitioner, such as a family member or law enforcement officer, to suggest filing an ERPO. C-FIP researchers analyzed 24 ERPO court documents where clinicians contacted law enforcement or a family member that led to filing. Findings from this study highlight the benefits of using a multidisciplinary approach involving clinicians in the ERPO filing process, as providers have access to their patients' risk and protective factors for harm.

### STUDY 2: SURVEY OF WASHINGTON STATE CLINICIANS' DESIRED ROLES IN THE ERPO PROCESS

Understanding of clinicians' knowledge, attitudes, and willingness to be involved in the ERPO process when they cannot independently file an ERPO has been limited. C-FIP researchers conducted a survey of physicians, nurse practitioners, and social workers in Washington State to better understand their desired involvement in the ERPO process. Survey responses indicated that although clinicians were largely unfamiliar with ERPOs, the majority were willing to counsel a patient or their family about ERPOs or work with law enforcement (Figure 1). Physicians and nurses preferred to work alongside social workers, a liaison to guide working with law enforcement, or an ERPO coordinator to assist with filing.

**Figure 1.** Clinicians' willingness to engage with ERPOs by method and patient risk.



The largest barriers identified by clinicians who took the survey included a lack of knowledge about ERPOs and the filing process and concerns about negatively affecting their relationship with their patient, particularly when involving the legal system due to concerns about implicit bias and systemic racism.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR CLINICIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE ERPO PROCESS

Results suggest that clinicians in Washington state are interested in being involved in the ERPO filing process and would prefer working with an interdisciplinary team. Findings from these studies suggest that healthcare and social work agencies should develop policies and procedures related to ERPOs, with considerations about discrimination and equity.

## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC PLEASE REFER TO:

- Conrick, K. M., Davis, A., Rooney, L., Bellenger, M. A., Rivara, F. P., Rowhani-Rahbar, A., & Moore, M. (2023). Extreme risk protection orders in Washington state: Understanding the role of health professionals. *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1086/714635>
- Conrick, K.M., Gause, E., Rowhani-Rahbar, A., Rivara, F.P., Moore, M. (2023). Social workers' perspectives on extreme risk protection orders. *Social Work*. [doi.org/10.1093/sw/swad012](https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swad012)
- Gause, E. L., Conrick, K., Moore, M., Rowhani-Rahbar, A., & Rivara, F. P. (2022). Survey of Washington clinicians' willingness to use and preferences related to extreme risk protection orders. *Preventive Medicine Reports*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2022.101883>

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