



FIREARM INJURY & POLICY
RESEARCH PROGRAM

UW Medicine

Secure Storage Program Evaluation Report

July 2023-
June 2025

**In partnership
with:**

Public Health
Seattle & King County 

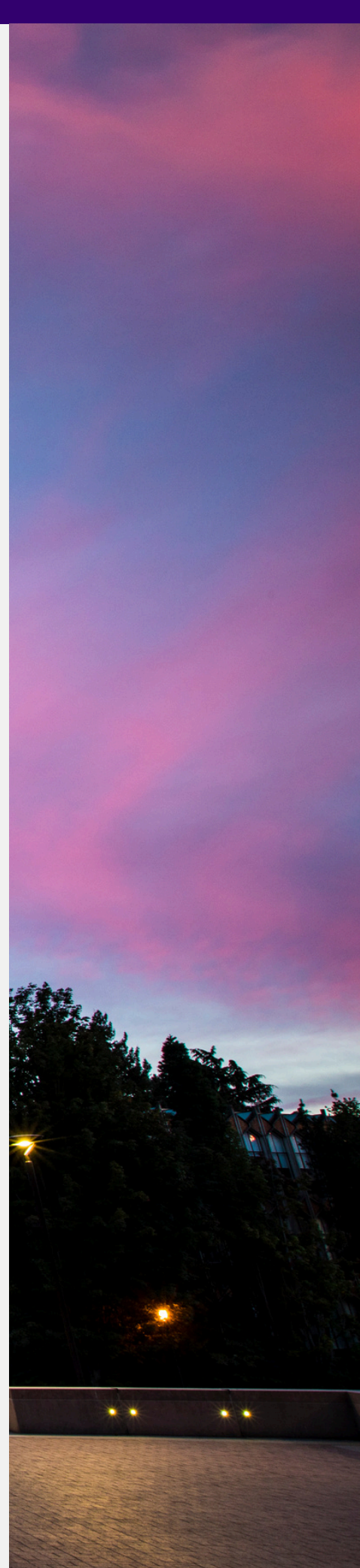
 **Seattle Children's**
HOSPITAL · RESEARCH · FOUNDATION

 Washington State
Department of
Commerce

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Executive Summary

In 2023, the Washington State Legislature allocated \$1 million towards the promotion of secure firearm storage efforts. The Department of Commerce provided a one-time allocation of funds to Public Health--Seattle & King County (PHSKC) and Seattle Children's Hospital (SCH), as well as the Firearm Injury & Policy Research Program (FIPRP) to evaluate their efforts. Over the last biennium, PHSKC and Seattle Children's have increased access to secure firearm storage devices and supported safety conversations in community and clinical settings across Washington. This evaluation describes program activities (device distribution events and toolkits), documents early implementation, and offers actionable recommendations to strengthen delivery and reach.

Program & partners. PHSKC and Seattle Children's partnered with local health jurisdictions, Tribal and community organizations, and clinical sites to plan and host events, distribute devices (lockboxes, cable and trigger locks), and provide training and educational materials between January 2024 and June 2025.

Activities at a glance.

- *Distribution events.* Hosted statewide in high-traffic, trusted venues (e.g., fairs, schools, retailers, parks). PHSKC and Seattle Children's supplied devices, signage, training, messaging on the value of secure storage, and a short survey to characterize reach and reasons for device uptake. Hosts selected locations, promoted events, and staffed distribution tables. More than 15,600 devices were distributed directly to individuals and community and healthcare organizations.
- *Toolkits.* Clinical and community versions included demo kits, short how-to videos, printable materials, an explanation of relevant policies, and free device allotment (lockboxes, trigger locks, combo and/or key cable locks, and vaults), provided in conjunction with an in-person, virtual, or hybrid training (60-90 mins in duration).

Methods. Mixed-methods evaluation:

- Surveys at distribution events to capture device type, reasons for interest, ZIP code of residence, and current storage practices; follow-up attempted but under-responded.
- Semi-structured interviews with event hosts and toolkit users analyzed with Rapid Qualitative Analysis to summarize site experiences, compare across contexts, and identify common facilitators and barriers.

Executive Summary

Lessons Learned

- *Access & engagement.* Events drew strong community interest, particularly for lockboxes. Trusted hosts and straightforward, safety-forward framing (child safety, theft prevention, suicide prevention) supported positive engagement.
- *Operations.* Logistics for heavy devices and variable staffing capacity were challenges; survey completion was highest when invitations were brief, privacy was explicit, and paper surveys were available.
- *Toolkit use.* Hands-on elements (demo kits, short videos) were reported to be useful. Many clinical sites asked for concise conversation guides and quick references that fit into busy workflows. Screening practices varied across settings, with interest in low-effort ways to track adoption and fidelity.

Recommendations

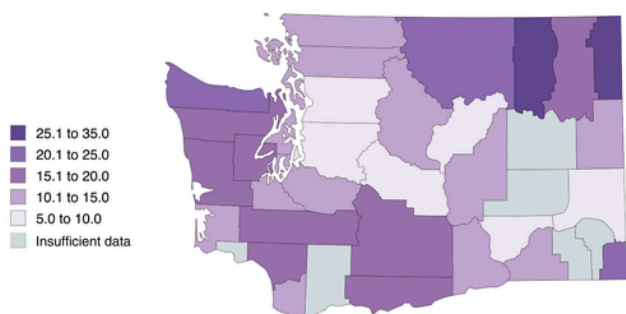
- *Add quick conversation guides.* Include pocket scripts and adaptable talking points for hesitant audiences.
- *Keep the hands-on emphasis.* Maintain demo kits (with less realistic models where appropriate) and short how-to videos; ensure all videos and slides have captions.
- *Accessible evaluation tools.* Add a one-page tracking form and a simple dashboard template so sites can monitor device distribution, conversation counts, and common barriers without heavy lift.
- *Use implementation science to improve uptake.* Apply an implementation-science approach to systematically strengthen toolkit delivery. Across partner sites, track adoption, reach, and fidelity; document contextual factors; and test low-burden strategies (e.g., a site champion or brief audit-and-feedback) in short cycles, iterating based on what works.

Conclusion. The efforts of PHSKC and Seattle Children's reached diverse communities statewide by creating approachable entry points for secure storage conversations and building capacity in partner sites. The recommendations above formalize what worked on the ground and provide a pragmatic path to scale and sustain more secure storage practices statewide.

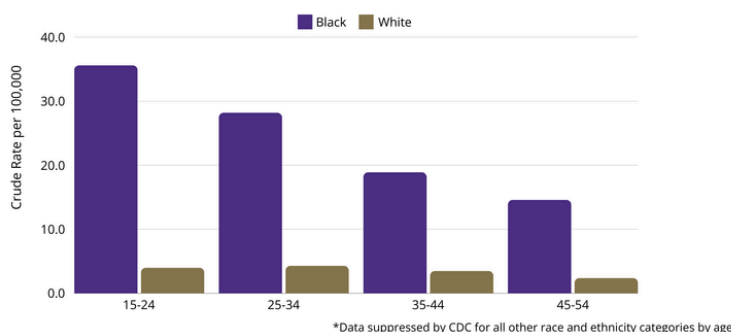
Firearms in Washington

Approximately 900 Washingtonians are killed by firearms every year - one death every 10 hours [1]. The majority of firearm-related deaths in the state are due to suicide (70%) [1]. However, the burden of firearm injury and violence is felt differently across communities in our state.

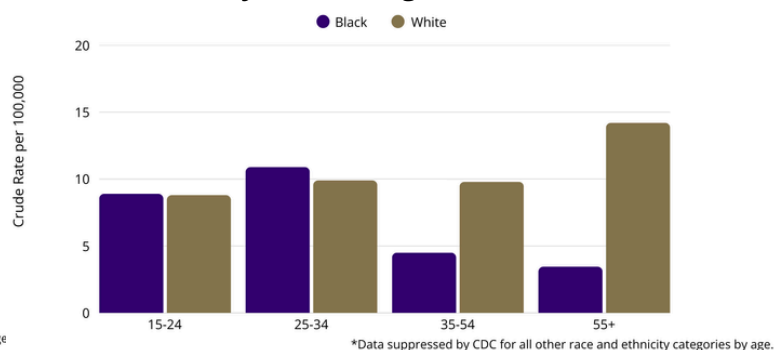
Firearm deaths in WA counties, 2018-2022



Firearm homicide deaths per 100,000 in WA State by race and age*, 2018-2022



Firearm suicide deaths per 100,000 in WA State by race and age*, 2018-2022

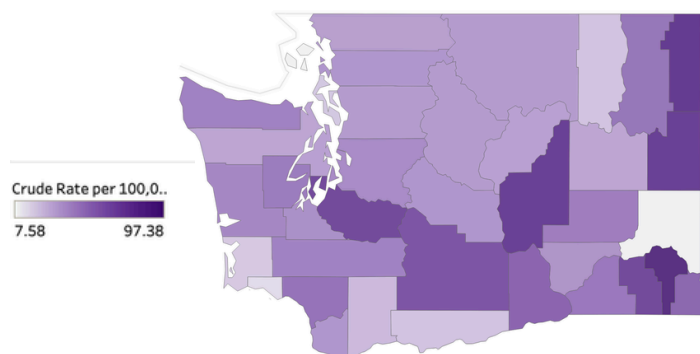


➤ In Washington, Black individuals are more likely to die from firearm homicide than White individuals. This disparity is greatest among young men and boys.

➤ Firearm suicide rates are highest among Black Washingtonians aged 15-34 and White Washingtonians aged 55 and older.

➤ Annually, Washington sees about 4,000 incidents where one or more firearms are stolen. Most firearms are stolen from a residence or home (53.4%) or a vehicle (16.7%).

Stolen firearm incidents in WA counties, 2019-2024



For more information, see Washington Department of Commerce. Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention Data Dashboard. [cited 2025 Sep 3]. 2025 Injury Dashboard. Available from: https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/ofsvp.community.safety/viz/2025InjuryDashboard_Final_Aug25/InjuryDashboard

Secure Firearm Storage

Secure firearm storage prevents firearm injuries and deaths by preventing unauthorized access to firearms.

Person in crisis



Creates time and space between an individual in crisis and their ability to harm themselves and/or others

Theft



Prevents theft and therefore illegal use of firearms to harm self and/or others

Minors (crisis or not)



Prevent minors from accessing firearms, including young children and minors in crisis

Premise of Secure Firearm Storage

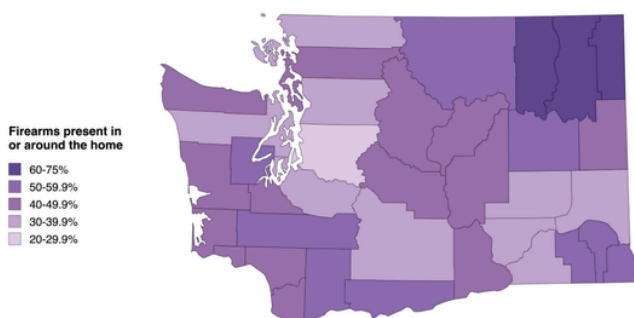
- 75% of firearms used in youth suicides in the US were stored unsecured [2]
- Youth perceived firearm access is a known risk factor for violence perpetration and suicide [3], and an estimated 4.6 million children live in a home with unsecured firearms [4]
- Stolen or lost firearms are more likely to be recovered in connection with violent crimes [5,6]

Firearm Access and Storage in WA

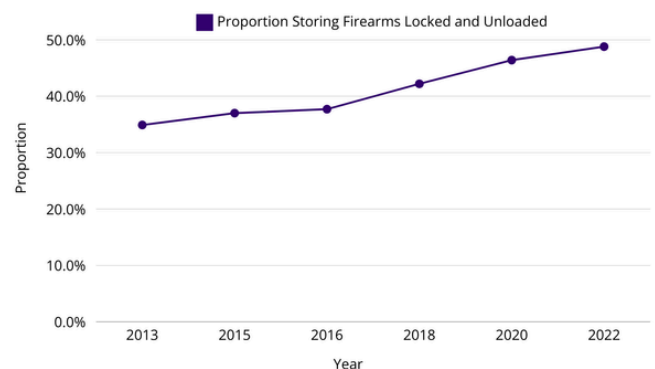
In 2022, about one-third of households in WA reported the presence of at least one firearm in the home [7].

Secure storage of firearms (i.e. storing them locked and unloaded) is increasing in WA over the last decade. But in 2022, less than half (49%) of these firearms were stored locked and unloaded [7].

Household Firearm Access in Washington Counties, 2013-2022⁹



Household Firearm Storage Practices in WA State, 2013-2022⁹



Secure Firearm Storage Program Funding

In recognition of a need to increase secure firearm storage in WA, the legislature allocated \$1M to these efforts in the 2023-2025 biennium.

Public Health Seattle & King County

- Host lockbox, trigger lock, and cable lock* distribution events
- Partner with local health jurisdictions to design their own secure storage programs, including an implementation guide and technical assistance
- Design materials and outreach strategies to collaborate with community violence prevention and intervention programs
- Support community organizations in hosting their own distribution events
- Work with Tribal and community-led partners to foster racial and geographic equity
- Created an implementation guide for safe storage for Community Violence Intervention programs
- Develop Secure Storage Advisory Group to strengthen planning

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- Host lockbox, trigger lock, and cable lock distribution events
- Develop two training programs, tailored to support implementation and sustainability, including device allotment, a demo kit, print/virtual toolkits, customizable education materials, and a copy of the slide deck for two audiences:
 - Clinical
 - Community organization
- Provide ongoing technical assistance
- Working with Tribal partners to foster racial and geographic equity
- Developed financial stipends to support program implementation

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- Conduct evaluations of:
 - Distribution event processes
 - Lock recipients
 - Clinical and community toolkit recipients, including financial stipends

*Cable locks were provided by partners

Distribution Events

Event Partners

Local organizations interested in hosting events were identified through existing public health networks, community coalitions, and outreach by PHSKC or Seattle Children's Hospital. Partners included local health jurisdictions, nonprofit organizations, Tribal health programs, military/service members and their families, and community-based groups working in violence prevention, youth services, and public safety.

Support Provided to Event Hosts

PHSKC and SCH provided:

- Lockboxes, trigger locks, and cable locks for free distribution
- Educational materials on secure firearm storage practices and suicide prevention
- Event signage and outreach templates
- Surveys to gather feedback from recipients and track reach
- Technical assistance for planning and promotion

Event Settings

Hosts incorporated distribution into:

- Health fairs and wellness events
- Community celebrations and gatherings
- School and youth-oriented events
- Gun shows
- Sporting goods stores



Partners from Safe and Sane Skagit distributing devices (PHSKC and Seattle Children's partner)



Distribution event volunteers at Sportco in Fife (Seattle Children's partner)

Toolkits

The overarching goal of the Seattle Children's clinical toolkit was to train and support healthcare organizations to implement secure firearm storage counseling and to provide secure firearm storage devices in clinical settings in Washington state.

The goal of the community-based toolkit was to train and support organizations that serve children, youth and families to implement secure firearm storage education and to provide secure firearm storage devices for diverse settings across Washington state.

The toolkit was paired with a 60-90 minute training (in-person, virtual, or hybrid), and provided educational materials including:

Toolkit materials



Relevant data on firearm violence and safety



Evidence-based recommendations on secure storage practices



Anticipatory guidance on proactive counseling



Safety planning & home safety checklists



Overview of secure storage devices and demonstrations

Seattle Children's toolkits:

Safe Firearm Storage Device Program

Healthcare Provider Toolkit



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Safe Firearm Storage Device Program

Community Organization Toolkit



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Methods

Data Sources

Program reach and firearm storage: Quantitative data were gathered through surveys administered to individuals who received locking devices during program events. Some surveys were obtained digitally through the use of QR codes at safe storage device distribution events, while others were obtained through physical copies of the survey that were handed out at events. These surveys captured device preferences, current firearm storage practices, reason for wanting the locking devices provided, and demographic information. To assess the reach of the program, ZIP code of residence or device distribution location was collected for nearly all individuals who received a firearm locking device, regardless of whether they completed a survey to allow for a broader understanding of the geographic distribution of the intervention. In addition to geographic data, we tracked the number of devices distributed directly to individuals and to partner organizations for further distribution.

In addition to the survey distributed at the event, a follow-up survey was attempted to assess changes over time and the short-term impact of the secure storage device on an individual level. However, results are not reported due to low response rate. All survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize participant responses.

Event coordination: We additionally conducted semi-structured interviews with program event coordinators and recipients of firearm safety toolkits. Program event coordinators were connected to the evaluation team by PHSKC and interviewed to gain a deeper understanding of how these events were organized and received by local communities. The interview guide questioned about the organization's reason for participating in the program, the location of the event, and their observations of how the event was received by community members. Coordinators were also asked about the number and types of devices distributed, what aspects of the event went well, and any challenges or barriers they encountered during planning or implementation. Additionally, the interviews explored coordinators' openness to future evaluation efforts, including event attendees' receptiveness to completing surveys at these events.

Clinical and community-based toolkits: Seattle Children's provided clinical and community toolkits to healthcare providers and community-based organizations serving children, youth, and families. The goals of this evaluation were to understand how organizations perceived the usefulness of both toolkits, the value of firearm storage devices and financial stipends, and to identify any challenges clinicians and community organizations faced in establishing, expanding, or sustaining secure firearm storage efforts within their communities. Volunteers for these interviews were recruited by Seattle Children's after receiving the toolkit training conducted by the team. The interview guides for recipients of both toolkits explored the perceived usefulness and implementation of the toolkits in various settings.

For clinical participants, the domains focused on identifying which components of the toolkit were most helpful, what guidance or content was missing, and the challenges and facilitators to implementing the toolkit in clinical workflows. Additional questions addressed the types and quantity of devices distributed, providers' comfort with conducting firearm storage screening and education, the presence of firearm screening questions in existing protocols, and whether and how secure firearm storage education was being discussed with patients.

For community participants, the interview domains similarly explored helpful aspects of the toolkit, areas where guidance was lacking, and challenges and facilitators to implementation in community-based settings. Interviews also asked about the distribution of devices, any changes that organizations made to the toolkit's protocol to better suit their local context, and how secure firearm storage was framed when engaging with the community.

Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Survey data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics in RStudio Version 2024.12.1+563. Descriptive statistics were calculated to show the distribution of demographic variables including: race, age, gender, and veteran status. Additional summary tables were coded to describe the distribution of the reason that participants wanted a gun safety device, as well as current storage practices. This included calculating the proportion of participants who reported practicing triple secure storage. Among those who did not report practicing triple secure storage, we further examined which of the three core secure storage behaviors (storing guns locked, storing guns unloaded, and storing ammunition separately from firearms) were not being followed.

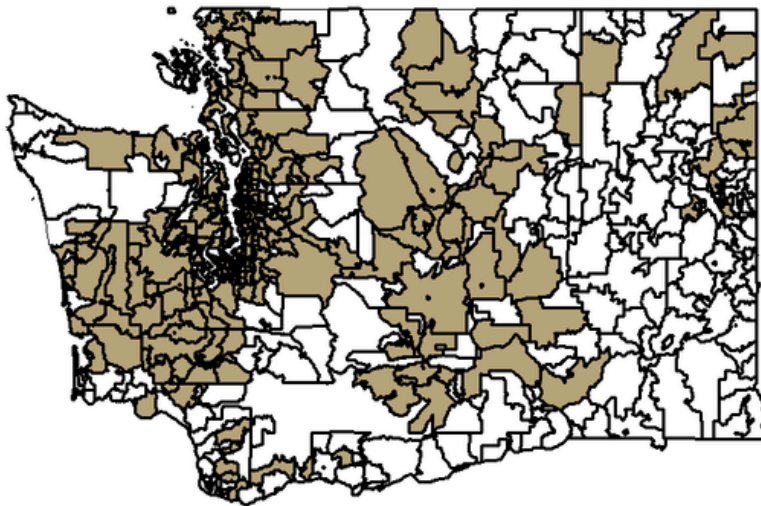
Qualitative Analysis

We used Rapid Qualitative Analysis [5] to review the interview data. For each interview, the evaluation team summarized key points in a matrix, which allowed for quick comparisons across participants. As each interview was analyzed, new themes and patterns were identified and compared to all other individual interviews, helping us identify common facilitators and barriers to implementing the secure storage device program.

Findings

Lock Distribution Program Reach

Figure 1. Individual recipients of firearm locks by ZIP Code of residence



The locks distributed directly to individuals reached residents in 301 of Washington's 605 ZIP Codes (49.8%).

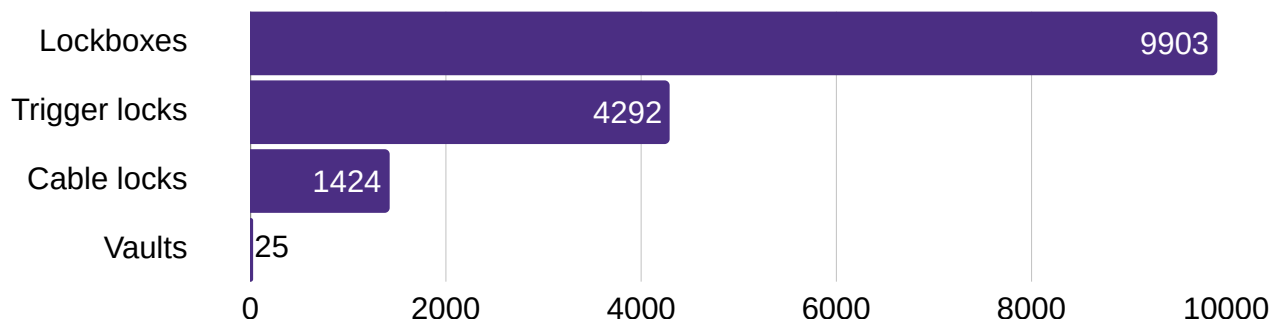
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Events held throughout WA

15,644

Devices distributed

Figure 2. Trigger locks and lockboxes given to community organizations and distributed to individuals



Findings

About Device Recipients

Table 1. Race or ethnicity of lock recipients

Race or ethnicity	N	%
Asian	35	8.0
Black, African American, or Afro-Caribbean	46	10.5
Latin(x), Hispanic, or Indigenous Mexican, Central, or South American	49	11.2
Middle Eastern or North African	#	#
Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native	22	5.0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	6	1.4
White	203	46.3
Other	10	2.3

Suppressed due to small counts

Note: Participants could select more than one option

Table 2. Gender identity of lock recipients

Gender identity	N	%
Female or Woman	152	34.7
Male or Man	234	53.4

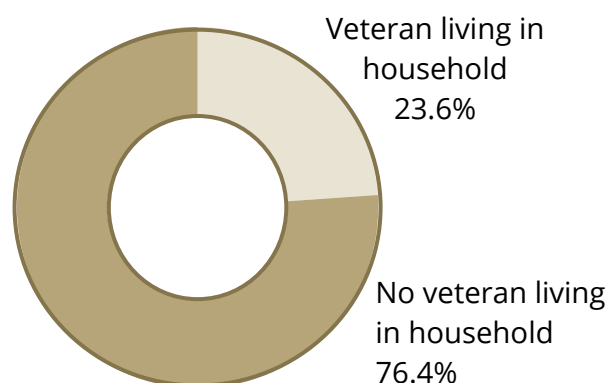
Note: Participants could also select Nonbinary, Trans, or Other. These rows were removed due to small counts.

Table 3. Household composition of lock recipients

Household composition	N	%
Spouse or significant other	208	47.5
Children 10 or younger	93	21.2
Children 11 to 18	76	17.4
Young adult(s) 19 to 24	38	8.7
Other adult	62	14.2
Live alone	42	9.6

Note: Participants could select more than one option

Figure 3. Veteran in household



Findings

Firearm Storage

32.2%

Of lock recipients
practiced triple secure
storage

Triple Secure Storage

All firearms in the home
(including cars and
garages) are stored:

- Locked
- Unloaded
- Separately from ammunition, which is also locked

Figure 4. Among those who did NOT store Triple Secure, some or all firearms were stored:

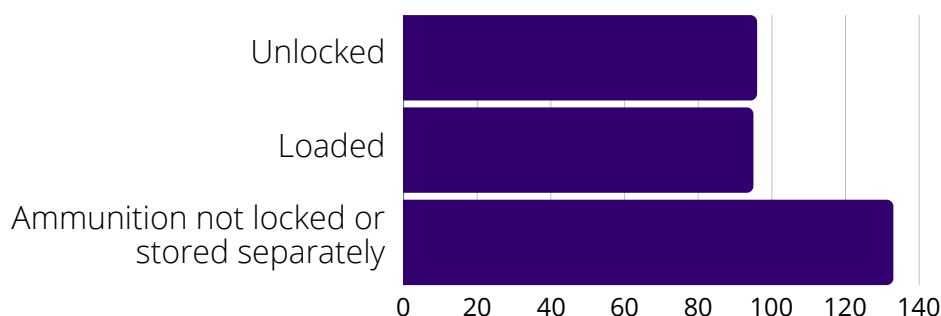


Table 4. Participant reasons for wanting a locking device

Why do you want a gun safety device?	N	%
To practice secure storage of guns and/or ammunition	230	73.0
To keep kids/others safe from firearm injury	173	54.9
To protect guns from being stolen	131	41.6
To store other valuables	40	12.7
Gift for someone	31	9.8
Other	11	3.5

Note: Participants could select more than one option

Findings

Event Operations

Interviews with event partners revealed several themes that highlight the strengths and challenges of implementing locking device distribution events in community settings.



Motivation for Participation

Many participants were drawn to the program due to existing professional relationships or outreach by PHSKC and Children's. Others cited high local firearm ownership rates or ongoing work in youth suicide prevention as motivation. Across responses, there was a shared sense that the program was low-barrier, easy to implement, and aligned with ongoing community or organizational priorities.



Event Locations and Logistics

Events were held in a variety of community settings, including parks, schools, firearm retailers, military bases, fairs, and local health or youth-centered venues. Common factors influencing location selection included high foot traffic, trusted community ties, familiarity to local residents, and ease of access. Some events were intentionally scheduled during busy times (e.g., Black Friday) or at popular venues (e.g., gun shows, stadiums, fairs) to increase turnout. A few mentioned logistical challenges like outdoor weather or complex entrances but worked to mitigate them with clear communication and partnerships.



Community Feedback

Overall, community feedback was highly positive across events. Participants were grateful for the opportunity to receive free lockboxes, appreciated the chance to have open, nonjudgmental conversations about firearm safety, and expressed enthusiasm about Public Health's involvement in this area. Several sites noted people were pleasantly surprised to see this programming in schools and at community events.

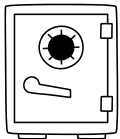


Framing and Messaging

Respondents highlighted that effective framing centered around safety, rather than control, with efforts made to remain non-judgmental and non-political: The primary emphasis was on preventing firearm theft, youth access, and suicide, with many sites linking messaging to child safety and accidental shootings. A few sites used data to support the importance of storage (e.g., on theft or suicide risk).

Findings

Event Operations (Continued)



Devices Distributed

Across events, more than 6,000 firearm safety devices were distributed, with some events giving away all available items in under an hour. Lockboxes were consistently preferred over trigger or cable locks, suggesting they may be perceived as more practical or secure by community members.



Survey Administration

Experiences with administering surveys varied across sites. Some programs reported high receptivity, especially when surveys were short, offered via QR codes, or administered in interactive environments that fostered one-on-one conversations. However, others noted barriers, including: low motivation to complete surveys, mistrust of government data collection, concerns over privacy, particularly when youth are involved, and staff burden and logistical limitations (e.g., limited staffing at smaller health departments). Receptivity was higher when surveys were framed positively by liaisons or when participants felt connected to the cause.



Event Successes

Across events, participant engagement and gratitude were consistently highlighted as major positives. Many sites emphasized the value of meaningful conversations and open dialogue about firearm safety, especially considering the sensitive nature of the topic.



Event Challenges

Most respondents reported no major negatives, but a few logistical and contextual challenges were noted:

- Logistical issues included difficulties transporting and storing heavy safes
- Coordinating event materials and survey security
- Limited staff capacity
- Supply-demand mismatch, particularly when lockboxes ran out early
- Environmental factors, such as weather during outdoor setups
- Coordination hiccups, such as unclear roles for survey follow-up or finding an appropriate venue



Future Improvements

Most respondents shared high satisfaction with the event and collaboration, offering few suggestions for improvement. Some suggestions focused on logistics, such as: more product/devices at events with unexpectedly high turnout, easier delivery of devices (e.g., drop-off instead of pick-up), and earlier receipt of promotional materials (e.g., flyers).

Findings

Toolkits

Interviews conducted with recipients of SCH's toolkit uncovered several insights that emphasize the impact of distributing locking devices during events in clinical and community environments.



Learning about the toolkit

Participants typically learned about the firearm safety toolkit through professional networks, outreach events, and existing collaborations. Conferences, community coalitions, and referrals from partner organizations were frequently mentioned as sources of information. In many cases, the opportunity aligned with ongoing efforts around injury prevention or community safety, making adoption of the toolkit feel timely and relevant.



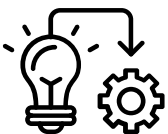
Valuable Elements of the Toolkit

Participants consistently emphasized the value of the toolkit's hands-on and accessible components. Physical demonstration tools like lockboxes and storage device samples, combined with user-friendly materials such as video tutorials and customizable print resources, made firearm safety education feel tangible and easy to share. The inclusion of relevant data helped frame the importance of secure storage.



Opportunities for Strengthening Guidance

While many participants felt confident using the toolkit, several expressed a need for more structured guidance on how to communicate secure storage practices, particularly with audiences who may be hesitant or unfamiliar with firearm safety norms. Suggested additions included short, adaptable talking points that could be referenced when initiating conversations about secure storage.



Toolkit Implementation

Participants described a wide range of implementation experiences, reflecting differences in organizational capacity, internal processes, and logistical factors. Some were able to integrate the toolkit quickly, especially when aligning it with existing programs like suicide prevention, while others encountered delays due to contract approvals, funding freezes, or institutional hesitancy around firearm-related topics. Internal collaboration, particularly with departments like psychiatry or social work, was key to successful uptake.

Findings

Toolkits (Continued)



Firearm Safety Screening Practices

Participants reported a wide spectrum of firearm safety screening practices, ranging from standardized questions integrated into routine care (particularly within suicide prevention frameworks) to more informal or situational approaches guided by individual discretion. The presence of firearm storage devices often helped facilitate these conversations by offering a tangible resource, which made discussions feel more supportive. However, several participants noted barriers to consistency, including challenges in updating screening protocols, lack of system-wide guidance, and variability across settings and providers.



Toolkit Adaptations and Planned Enhancements

While many participants reported minimal changes to the toolkit itself, several shared creative adaptations aimed at improving its visual appeal, accessibility, and contextual fit. These included swapping out demo tools (i.e., model firearms) to appear less intimidating, incorporating local branding or resources, and developing handouts to reinforce key messages. Some were also interested in incorporating follow-up measures to track the ongoing use and impact of the toolkit, but these changes were still in the early stages.



Framing and Messaging

Participants commonly framed secure firearm storage through the lens of child safety and suicide prevention, recognizing these as widely relatable and less politically charged entry points. Participants emphasized that effective framing involves respecting firearm ownership while connecting safety behaviors to the people and values individuals care about—like family, trauma recovery, or professional identity (e.g., veterans). The toolkit was seen as valuable not just for education but for offering tangible ways to guide personalized, nonjudgmental conversations.



Additional Observations

Participants expressed widespread appreciation for the toolkit's training and overall mission, highlighting its real-world relevance and potential for sustained impact. Many were eager to see the initiative continue and expand, particularly in communities facing heightened firearm-related risks. The training was described as empowering, helping staff feel more confident in navigating firearm safety conversations.

Recommendations

Device Distribution Events

- **Choose venues and timing strategically.** Prioritize trusted, high-foot-traffic sites (schools, fairs, retailers, parks, stadium events) and peak windows (e.g., fair days, Black Friday). Pair sites with local partners who draw the intended audience.
- **Optimize logistics for heavy items.** Pre-position lockboxes and offer drop-off delivery for hosts or ship directly from suppliers.
- **Keep framing safety-forward and nonjudgmental.** Lead with child safety, theft prevention, and suicide prevention; avoid political cues. Provide 3–4 sentence talking points and a small “FAQ” card.
- **Send marketing and materials early.** Send flyers and social templates to hosts ≥ 2 weeks ahead; offer bilingual/accessible versions; display simple device comparison signage at the table.
- **Right-size the survey burden.** Use paper surveys to minimize technological barriers. Keep to a minimal core (device type taken, reason, ZIP, and storage items). Provide a brief, 10-second invite for program staff to administer the survey, explicitly mentioning privacy.

Example Script for Program Event Staff

Before receiving your device, please complete this 1-minute survey. It tells us who we're reaching and what to improve. Your answers are confidential.

Toolkits

- **Add quick conversation guides.** Include pocket scripts and adaptable talking points for hesitant audiences.
- **Keep the hands-on emphasis.** Maintain demo kits (with less intimidating models where appropriate) and short how-to videos; ensure all videos and slides have captions.
- **Accessible evaluation tools.** Add a one-page tracking form and simple dashboard template so sites can monitor device distribution, conversation counts, and common barriers without heavy lift.
- **Use implementation science to improve uptake.** Apply an implementation-science approach to systematically strengthen toolkit delivery [6,7]. Across partner sites, track adoption, reach, and fidelity; document contextual factors; and test low-burden strategies (e.g., a site champion or brief audit-and-feedback) in short cycles, iterating based on what works.

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