

## **Gun Violence ToolKit**

### *Kitchen Conversations*

The purpose of having a *Kitchen Conversations* event is to connect with friends and neighbors who may feel similarly to you regarding issues but do not find associating with political parties as appealing. The toolkits are a resource to make this event as easy and effective as possible. Ideally each session features an action item that is easy to do for the participants.

Each toolkit has the following components:

- A. General overview of the issue
- B. Legislative efforts regarding the issue
- C. Activities to facilitate a discussion
- D. Action items to advocate for the issue

#### Planning your event

Tailor the event as you see fit. This is a large topic so you may want to choose just 1 aspect of it. You could present the material yourself or ask others to take turns presenting different aspects. To make it more engaging you could lead a discussion based on a podcast episode (see below) or play the trivia game (below). Find ways to be interactive and opportunities for everyone to participate. If possible, end your session with an action item. Post card writing is an easy activity - you can ask your participants to bring their own blank cards or provide enough for each participant to write ~ 5 cards each.

## **A. Gun Violence: Overview**

As of Dec. 7, at least 40,167 people have died from gun violence in the U.S. in 2023, according to the Gun Violence Archive – which is an average of almost 118 deaths each day. Of those who died, 1,306 were teens and 276 were children. Deaths by suicide have made up the vast majority of gun violence deaths this year. There's been 22,506 deaths by gun suicide this year, an average of about 66 deaths by suicide per day in 2023. The majority of these deaths have occurred in Texas, California, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Illinois and Louisiana.

The grim tally of gun violence deaths includes 1,344 people killed in police officer-involved shootings. Forty-six police officers have been fatally shot in the line of duty this year. There also have been 1,472 "unintentional" shootings, the Gun Violence Archive shows. There have been more than 632 mass shootings in 2023 so far, which is defined by the Gun Violence Archive as an incident in which four or more victims are shot or killed. These mass shootings have led to 597 deaths and 2,380 injuries. The Oct. 25 mass shooting in Lewiston, Maine, is the deadliest shooting of the year and one of the deadliest in recent decades. It left at least 18 people dead and 13 more injured.

The U.S. has surpassed 39,000 deaths from gun violence every year since 2014, according to data from Gun Violence Archive. Still, gun deaths are down from 2016, 2017 and 2018, when the total number of deaths each year surpassed 50,000. There were 44,310 such deaths in 2022. [Gun Violence 2023](#)

### Parents Underestimate Ease of Access to Firearms in the Home

4.6 million minors in the US live in homes with at least one loaded, unlocked firearm.<sup>[1]</sup> Many children know where their parents keep their guns and have accessed household guns — even if their parents think otherwise.

Many of these children handled guns without their parents' knowledge. Nearly a quarter of parents did not know that their children had handled a gun in their house.<sup>[3]</sup>

### Access to Guns at Home Linked to School Shootings, Suicides & Unintentional deaths

Studies show that 70 - 90% of guns used in youth suicides, unintentional shootings among children, and school shootings perpetrated by shooters under the age of 18 are acquired from the home or the homes of relatives or friends.<sup>[4]</sup>

Several studies have shown that the risk of suicide and unintentional shootings among youth increases in homes where guns are kept loaded and/or unlocked.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Impact of Safe Storage

Estimates suggest that even modest increases in the number of American homes safely storing firearms could prevent almost a third of youth gun deaths due to suicide and unintentional firearm injury.<sup>[6]</sup>

Numerous studies over the past 20 years have found that Child Access Protection laws can reduce suicide and unintentional gun deaths and injuries among children and teens by up to 54%, with the greatest reductions occurring in states which require safe storage of firearms.<sup>[7]</sup>

Even among adults, compared with people who stored their firearms unlocked and/or loaded, those who stored their firearms safely were less likely to die by firearm suicide.<sup>[8]</sup>

One study found that states with a law in place that required handguns to be locked at least in certain circumstances experienced reduced rates of firearm suicide.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Safe Storage Decreases Gun Thefts

Unsecured weapons in homes and vehicles are also fueling an epidemic of gun thefts across the country. These guns may be diverted to the underground market, where they are used in crime.

Nationally—representative survey data suggests that approximately 380,000 guns are stolen from individual gun owners each year.<sup>[10]</sup>

From 2006 to 2016, the number of guns reported stolen from individuals increased by approximately 60%.<sup>[11]</sup> Similarly, many cities have reported alarming spikes in the number of firearms stolen from cars.<sup>[12]</sup>

An analysis of more than 23,000 stolen firearms recovered by police between 2010 and 2016 found that the majority of these weapons were recovered in connection with crimes, including more than 1,500 violent acts such as murder, kidnapping, and armed robbery.<sup>[13]</sup>

Gun owners who do not safely store their firearms are significantly more likely to have their guns stolen.<sup>[14]</sup>

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Deborah Azrael, Joanna Cohen, Carmel Salhi, and Matthew Miller, “Firearm Storage in Gun-owning Households with Children: Results of a 2015 National Survey,” *Journal of Urban Health* 95, no. 3 (2018): 295–304.

[2] Carmel Salhi, Deborah Azrael, Matthew Miller, “Parent and Adolescent Reports of Adolescent Access to Household Firearms in the United States,” *JAMA Network Open*, (2021).

[3] Frances Baxley and Matthew Miller, “Parental Misperceptions About Children and Firearms,” *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* 160, no. 5 (2006): 542-547.

[4] Renee M. Johnson, et al., “Who Are the Owners of Firearms Used in Adolescent Suicides?,” *Suicide and Life-threatening Behavior* 40, no. 6 (2010): 609-611; Guohua Li, et al., “Factors Associated with the Intent of Firearm-related Injuries in Pediatric Trauma Patients,” *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* 150, no. 11 (1996): 1160-1165; John Woodrow Cox and Steven Rich, “The Gun is Not in the Closet,” *The Washington Post*, August 1, 2018, <https://wapo.st/2M2HSH6>. See also, Bryan Vossekuil, et al., “The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States,” US Secret Service and US Department of Education, July 2004, <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/preventingattacksreport.pdf>; Tawnell D. Hobbs, “Most Guns Used in School Shootings Come From Home,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 5, 2018, <https://on.wsj.com/2Eydv2f>.

[5] David C. Grossman, et al., “Gun Storage Practices and Risk of Youth Suicide and Unintentional Firearm Injuries,” *JAMA* 293, no. 6 (2005): 707-714. See also, Matthew Miller and David Hemenway, “The Relationship Between Firearms and Suicide: a Review of the Literature,” *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 4, no. 1 (1999): 59-75; Daniel W. Webster, Jon S. Vernick, April M. Zeoli, and Jennifer A. Manganello, “Association Between Youth-focused Firearm Laws and Youth Suicides,” *JAMA* 292, no. 5 (2004): 594-601.

[6] Michael C. Monuteaux, Deborah Azrael, and Matthew Miller, “Association of Increased Safe Household Firearm Storage With Firearm Suicide and Unintentional Death Among US Youths,” *JAMA Pediatrics* (2019).

[7] Emma C. Hamilton, et al., “Variability of Child Access Prevention Laws and Pediatric Firearm Injuries,” *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery* 84, no. 4 (2018): 613-619. See also, Peter Cummings, David C. Grossman, Frederick P. Rivara, and Thomas D. Koepsell, “State Gun Safe Storage Laws and Child Mortality Due to Firearms,” *JAMA* 278, no. 13 (1997): 1084-1086; Daniel W. Webster, Jon S. Vernick, April M. Zeoli, and Jennifer A. Manganello, “Association Between Youth-focused Firearm Laws and Youth Suicides,” *JAMA* 292, no. 5 (2004): 594-601; Jeffrey DeSimone, Sara Markowitz, and Jing Xu,

## B. Gun Violence Legislative Efforts

Most legislation has centered on the following aspects of gun violence

- **Universal Background Checks** - to prohibit gun sales to those guilty of violent crimes or diagnosed with mental illness
- **Safe Storage** - to require that guns are kept locked in a way that restricts access from children and others who are not intended to use the firearm. (These are sometimes referred to as “CAP laws” or Child Access Prevention Laws)
- **Restricting military style weapons** - to reduce the likelihood that these weapons might be used in a mass shooting
- **Extreme risk protection** (aka Red Flag Laws) - to prohibit gun purchases for those threatening violence to others

### National legislation:

In 2022 the [Safer Communities Act](#) became the first piece of federal gun violence legislation to pass since 1994. The package includes \$750 million to help states implement and run crisis intervention programs, which can be used to manage red flag programs, as well as for other crisis intervention programs such as mental health, drug and veteran courts. The legislation encourages states to include juvenile records in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, which would provide a more comprehensive background check for people between 18 and 21 who want to buy guns. It also requires more individuals who sell guns as primary sources of income to register as Federally Licensed Firearm Dealers, which are required to administer background checks before they sell a gun to someone. The law bars guns from anyone convicted of a domestic violence crime who has a “continuing serious relationship of a romantic or intimate nature.” The law, however, allows those convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence crimes to restore their gun rights after five years if they haven’t committed other crimes.

*Some of the recent federal bills that have yet to get a vote:*

[HR 748 Ethan's Law \(Safe Storage\)](#)

[HR 1446 Enhanced Background Checks](#)

[HR 1236 Extreme Risk Protection](#)

[Gun Violence Prevention Research Act](#)

[Assault Weapons Ban](#)

State legislative:

2017: GA legislature repealed law prohibiting carrying concealed guns on [college campuses](#)

2022: Gov Kemp signed the [Constitutional Carry law](#) (aka “Guns Everywhere”) law removing the requirement to have a permit to carry a concealed firearm in most public places in Georgia.

HB 161 - [Pediatric Health Safe Storage Act](#) sponsored by Rep Au, Oliver, Holcomb, Gilliard, Neal and Crawford, would make it a criminal offense (negligence) if a gun owner’s dischargeable firearm was accessed by a child. The bill is currently assigned to a committee whose chair has refused to allow it to move forward. The sponsors hope to have the bill reassigned (“recommitted”) to the Public Health committee whose chair has agreed to allow it to get a hearing.

### C. Activities to facilitate the kitchen conversation:

1. Have a Podcast Club discussion: Reviewing statistics is not the most engaging way to have a discussion for most people. Listening and reflecting on a well constructed story or article provides a more engaging way to cover the material. There are several excellent podcast series covering various aspects of gun violence. Choose an episode - share it and then use it to discuss the issue:
  - [Revisionist History](#) Season 8, episodes 1-6 cover a variety of engaging perspectives on the history of guns in society linking current controversies with past events.
  - [The Gun Machine podcast](#) covers how the business of gun manufacturing has driven the proliferation of firearms.
  - [The No Compromise podcast](#) describes the intersection of “gun rights” proponents, social media and right wing politics with a focus on 3 men (the Dorr brothers) who have made a significant impact on these battles in Georgia and across the country.

2. Role Play common arguments: Many people may have strong feelings about a topic but feel anxious about being confronted with arguments that lead to a confrontational experience. Disagreement is unavoidable if you want to affect others' opinions - but it doesn't require being disagreeable. Most "arguments" on a given issue are predictable. Preparing for those arguments not only builds confidence but also help ingrain some of the data.

For this exercise you simply copy and paste the following points and counter points on index cards. Participants pair up and use the cards as supplements with the following tactics in mind:

- a. **How to find common ground**: The best place to start in any disagreement is someplace you agree. This may be a factual agreement and/or could be a core belief basis. *We agree we don't want children to die from a shooting, right?*

Most opinions are based on intuition rather than a well thought-out rationale. This intuition is based on core values held by each individual. When responding to arguments use the following values that form most opinions (*The Righteous Mind* by J Haidt) - kind of like taste receptors on your tongue:

- Care/Harm
- Fairness
- Loyalty
- Authority
- Sanctity
- Liberty

Usually a few (but not all!) of these values are relevant to an issue.

When responding to a point remember that Empathy (appeal based on common experience) is more powerful than Sympathy (appeal based on altruism). Make the issue real for the individual.



b. **10 Common Gun Violence arguments and counter points:**

i. ***I don't agree with limiting (my) 2nd amendment rights.***

Prior to the Heller decision (2010) gun regulation arguments often centered on the meaning of the 2nd Amendment. The 5-4 decision on Heller clarified that the 2nd Amendment applies to individual rights for self protection. While legal scholars still debate this issue - for most of us it is not a fruitful path to take.

Counter point: Agreed. We are talking about the recent epidemic of death and injury due to firearms in the US. I am not advocating for taking away the right to own a gun. With rights come responsibilities. I think we can probably agree that anyone who chooses to purchase a lethal weapon should also be responsible in taking care that it is kept secure so that it cannot be easily taken by others such as children. That's what we are talking about.

ii. ***This gun violence problem is due to mental illness, not guns***

This argument is commonly made after a mass shooting and is intended to deflect attention to the proliferation of guns in society with another issue that is real, but not the driver of the gun violence issue.

Counterpoint: I agree that the US struggles to adequately diagnose and treat those with mental illness. However, this is not a new problem - we have had inadequately treated mental illness for decades. The truth is that mental illness is a broad category and most forms of mental illness do not increase the risk of committing acts of violence. In fact, people with mental illness are at increased risk of being victimized by acts of violence.

1 out of 3 unintentional shootings is committed by a preschooler. Mental illness does not explain why a preschooler shoots another child after finding their parent's gun. Most intentional shootings are an impulsive act of rage. The majority of those responsible for mass shootings were not diagnosed with a psychiatric condition prior to their crime. So yes, let's work on improving mental health care in this country. Meanwhile let's also use common sense firearm legislation to prevent the needless loss of life that plagues our country.

**iii. *Americans are different, we value our independence more and guns are essential to maintain that independence***

Counterpoint: It's true that the US has the highest per capita rate of gun ownership in the world ([Ranking Gun Ownership by Country](#)) Australia, now ranked 49th in per capita gun ownership, serves as a useful example of what a country can accomplish. In 1996, following a tragic mass shooting, the Australian government passed new firearm legislation that banned assault weapons and better regulated others. ([Australian experience](#)). After implementation homicide and suicide rates plummeted. For over the past 3 decades national polls in the US consistently show that most Americans favor increasing firearm regulation ([Gallup polls on Firearm restrictions 1990-2020](#).) The notion that US citizens need to be better armed is a fringe idea that in recent years has gained traction among the anti-gun regulation movement ([government tyranny argument](#)). The consequences of this argument are frightening. The premise of our form of government is based on the idea that we can settle our differences in a non-violent manner through debate and a willingness to pursue compromise when views differ. The increased fear mongering rhetoric of government tyranny is a driver of violence in our society rather than a reflection of it.

**iv. *The guns are already out there so there is nothing we can do***

Counterpoint:

It's true that the US has more guns than people. We also have one of the highest rates of gun violence of any country. However, we've also proven that reducing gun violence through legislation is possible in the states that have acted. 26 states have passed safe storage legislation of some kind. A recent meta analysis of the relationship of gun violence and legislation published by the Rand Company demonstrated that "child-access prevention laws, or safe storage laws, reduce self-inflicted fatal or nonfatal firearm injuries among youth, as well as unintentional firearm injuries or deaths among children." [Rand](#). Evidence for other forms of gun violence reduction also exists despite the restrictions on Gun Violence research enacted by the 1996 *Dickey Amendment* which had a chilling effect on Gun Violence research in the US for decades. This law was reinterpreted in 2018 and in 2020 the US budget finally included funds allocated to the CDC and NIH for research into gun violence for the first time in 24 years.

- v. [There isn't any evidence that laws reduce gun violence.](#)

Counterpoint: Similar to the prior argument. Growing research in our country shows both that states that adopts gun violence legislation such as safe storage laws experience a decrease in accidental firearm injury and suicide by gun. Moreover 75% gun owners in the US support legislation such as safe storage (CAP) and Universal Background Check laws. The irony is that the argument that guns are needed to combat gun violence has been shown in country after country to be backwards. Proliferation of guns in society is shown to result in increased gun violence, not the other way around

- vi. [The problem is crime - so we should focus on the "bad guys" with guns.](#)

This is a common first response in discussing the issue with a "gun rights" proponent. There is a notion that this is a dangerous world and if you don't own multiple guns you will become a victim.

Counterpoint: While violent crime is certainly an issue, overall these numbers are trending down in the US. The number 1 cause of death from guns is suicide, not homicide. ([Pew research](#)). Georgia is in the top 10 states for unintentional childhood firearm injuries. Last year an average of 2 children sustained a firearm injury each day. The death rate for childhood firearm injuries in GA has been 1 every other day. Finally, the highest per capita rates for gun injuries are seen not in metro Atlanta but rather in more rural areas of the state. This is not an either/or issue. Even if we somehow eliminated all homicides we are still left with an epidemic of gun injuries due to unintentional shootings and suicides. In addition, Georgia is one of the most popular states to traffic guns as our laws are so permissive regarding carrying guns in public. One of the most common reasons for car break ins in GA is that this is an easy way to steal an unsecured gun. Common sense gun laws can reduce unintentional firearm injury and theft.

- vii. [We already have enough laws, we just need to enforce those.](#) This is a common refrain, especially from conservative lawmakers. It rejects legislative action in general and deflects the responsibility to address the problem to law enforcement and the judicial branch. It also raises the concern about how such laws would be enforced.

Counterpoint: There are certainly lots of laws on the books - but specific laws on gun violence have a proven track record. We've seen states achieve reduced gun violence rates after enacting specific legislation while states like Georgia which have only made it easier to carry firearms have seen a continued rise in gun violence. Consider this: In 1998 the US banned a toy, lawn darts, after 3 children died accidentally while playing the game ([Lawn Darts ban.](#)). We've applied regulation to other obviously dangerous things such as medicine bottles and passenger safety for those riding in cars. Fortunately it is not necessary to examine every car or medicine bottle to enforce this law. Getting fined once or even learning about others getting fined is effective at getting most people to comply with most laws. We are asking for laws that work.

- viii. [Simple measures today will lead to taking away our guns tomorrow](#) (slippery slope argument). At the heart of this argument is a belief that even the most modest, common sense regulation of firearms should be opposed because they will eventually lead to taking guns away from everyone.

Counterpoint: If the slippery slope argument were applied to every piece of legislation then no law should ever be enacted as there is always a more extreme version. This would undermine all aspects of how our country functions. Laws are the product of debate and compromise. They can change as the people choose to elect leaders with different viewpoints. On the gun issue there are people who support the extreme arguments of no guns anywhere to any weapon everywhere. As in most debates, most people are more in the middle. Most Americans support the right of law abiding, non violent citizens to own firearms for recreation or protection. We also support common sense regulation to reduce the risk of unintentional injury, suicide and the criminal use of weapons such as mass shootings.

- ix. [We need more people to have guns to deter crime](#). This argument is based on a fantasy of the Wild West where, according to the TV shows, everyone needed to carry a gun in public to deter crime. Research shows that the truth is quite different

Counterpoint: The Rand studies and others have demonstrated a clear correlation - permissive gun carry laws (e.g. Georgia) are associated with higher rates of gun violence while implementation of gun regulation lowers gun violence rates. This is not surprising as most incidents of gun violence are not from planned homicides. Research in the use of a gun at home shows that your firearm will more likely be used against someone living at home than any home invader. Like suicide, random acts of violence in society (e.g. road rage") are now more likely to result in death when a gun is easily accessible. Finally, this "Wild West" vision of society where people don't shoot each other because they know everyone else has a gun is based on a TV myth. In truth, small towns developing in the western US in the 19th century had low rates of gun violence and very strict laws about who was allowed to carry a gun in town: [Gun Control Wild West](#). Instead of deterring violence, guns tend to make it more lethal

- x. [Restricting "high capacity" or rapid fire weapons would affect just about every modern gun](#). The basis of this argument is that since most guns made today are semi-automatic and replacing magazines takes little time, then any effort to ban weapons that can kill lots of people will ban all guns

Counterpoint: First, we need to agree with the premise that our society supports the ability for individuals to protect themselves but that there is a limit to what kind of lethality that entails. If you feel that there should be no limits (e.g. Your neighbor has the right to have a tank, hand grenades or nuclear weapons) then we really have no common ground to discuss this issue. Most people would agree that appropriate (e.g. excludes those convicted of violent crimes, certain mental illnesses) individuals have a right to lethal defensive weapons - those required to protect their home or person. So what exactly are those weapons?

This definition does require an understanding of current weapons but also of what is required to defend yourself. If most alterations using guns end with < 5 rounds fired why is it necessary to have 50? This argument runs the risk of an infinite “what if” scenarios e.g. “What if my house is surrendered by 20 people with guns?”. The end result is that if you imagine an army is out to get you - you can justify an unlimited # of weapons and lethality. But if an army is out to get you, perhaps you have a unique situation that should not determine laws for society.

This goes back to common sense. Australia responded to a mass shooting (35 dead in 1996) by outlawing military style assault weapons. Since then the overall gun violence has plummeted and the largest death toll from a mass shooting has been 4. It's no surprise. Violence is still a problem in Australia but the toll of gun violence is reduced simply because the weapons available have reduced capacity = lives saved.

**D. Action Items:**

Have a post card writing session urging House leadership to recommit HB161 to the Public Health Committee:

**Speaker of the House, Jon Burns**

*Email:* [jon.burns@house.ga.gov](mailto:jon.burns@house.ga.gov)

*District Address:* P.O. Box 1000, Springfield, GA 31329

*Capitol Address:* 332 State Capitol, Atlanta, GA 30334

*Office phone:* (404) 656-5020

(Kailyn Duesler - Executive Assistant)

**Speaker Pro Tem, Jan Jones**

*Email:* [jan.jones@house.ga.gov](mailto:jan.jones@house.ga.gov)

*District Address:* 12850 Highway 9, Suite 600-356, Milton, GA 30004

*Capitol Address:* 340 State Capitol, Atlanta, GA 30334

*Office phone:* (404) 656-5072

(Sheena D. Wright - Executive Assistant)

**Republican Caucus Leader, Chuck Efstration**

*Email:* [chuck.efstration@house.ga.gov](mailto:chuck.efstration@house.ga.gov)

*District Address:* P.O. Box 1656, Dacula, GA 30019

*Capitol Address:* 338 State Capitol, Atlanta, GA 30334

*Office phone:* (404) 656-5052

(Talmadge James - Executive Assistant)

**Republican Caucus Whip, James Burchett**

*Email:* [james.burchett@house.ga.gov](mailto:james.burchett@house.ga.gov)

*District Address:* 215 Pendleton St., Waycross, GA 31501

*Capitol Address:* 415 State Capitol, Atlanta, GA 30334

*Office phone:* (404) 656-5024

(Deborah Baselj - Executive Assistant)

**Republican Caucus Chair, Bruce Williamson**

*Email:* [bruce.williamson@house.ga.gov](mailto:bruce.williamson@house.ga.gov)

*District Address:* PO Box 430, Monroe, GA 30655

*Capitol Address:* 415-B State Capitol, Atlanta, GA 30334

*Office phone:* (404) 656-5025

(Peyton Puckett - Executive Assistant)

**Republican Caucus Vice-Chairman, Houston Gaines**

*Email:* [houston.gaines@house.ga.gov](mailto:houston.gaines@house.ga.gov)

*District Address:* P.O. Box 1203, Athens, GA 30603

*Capitol Address:* 415 State Capitol, Atlanta, GA 30334

*Office phone: (404) 656-5025*  
(Peyton Puckett - Executive Assistant)

**Republican Caucus Vice-Chairman, Ginny Ehrhart**

*Email: [ginny.ehrhart@house.ga.gov](mailto:ginny.ehrhart@house.ga.gov)*

*District Address: P.O. Box 1206, Marietta, GA 30061*

*Capitol Address: 415 State Capitol, Atlanta, GA 30334*

*Office phone: (404) 656-5024*  
(Deborah Baselj - Executive Assistant)

Resources/Advocacy Groups:

[Brady](#)

[Everytown](#)

[GA Moms For Change](#)

[Giffords](#)

[Moms Demand Action](#)

[Gun Violence By State](#)

[Mass Shootings 1982-2023](#)

[Firearm Deaths in US](#)

[Firearm Deaths per State - CDC](#)

[Gun Violence Data - Pew Research](#)

[Blue State/Red State Comparison](#)