

Creating and Using Partnerships to Reduce Access to Lethal Means: Part 1**June 17, 2020****Resources shared during webinar:**

- www.suicideproof.org (from Rhode Island)
 - [Webinar](#) hosted by the US Concealed Carry Association (featuring VA and AFSP).
 - <https://www.oregonsuicideprevention.org/zero-suicide/firearm-safety> (Password: Safety2020). For professional use only.
 - [Lethal Means & Suicide Prevention: A Guide for Community & Industry Leaders](#)
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- **Training series Overview**
 - **June 17**– Lethal means overview and building partnerships
 - Define means of suicide by population
 - Identify ways to collaborate with partners to begin access to lethal means work
 - Describe how to implement a shared vision with a broad range of partners
 - **July 15**– Focusing your partnership’s efforts
 - Explore opportunities to mobilize on current events such as COVID-19 and addressing systemic racism
 - Identify barriers to creating partnerships
 - Discuss strategies to advocate for lethal means reduction
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- **Group Norms:**
 - Be respectful and compassionate to each other
 - Be respectful of other’s views – we may disagree, but we have a shared vision of reducing deaths by suicide
 - Avoid/explain acronyms and jargon
 - Be mindful of the time
 - Be present

- **Overview of Survey Results:** *(see webinar slides)*

- **Poll #1: Why did you decide to participate in this webinar series? (write-in)**
 - Would like more information on lethal means (12)
 - Looking for new ideas for prevention strategies (4)
 - Better care for friends/family/my community (3)
 - Work with patients and suicide attempt survivors to prevent future attempts (3)
 - Develop collaborations around means restrictions (2)
 - Looking for ideas for my campus (2)
 - Want to learn from others in the field and what other communities are doing (2)
 - Applied for grant which will include firearm access
 - Be able to better communicate why lethal means matter
 - From rural area and there are many suicides there
 - Make sure lethal means is included in our zero suicide implementation
 - Need ideas for advocacy

- **Overview of Lethal Means**
 - Reduce access to lethal means is part of the [SPRC Comprehensive Approach](#).
 - Comprehensive approach requires combination of efforts that work together to address different aspects of the problem.
 - Each strategy is a broad goal with many ways to achieve the outcomes.
 - Pre-webinar reading [Lethal Means & Suicide Prevention: A Guide for Community & Industry Leaders](#) provides excellent overview of this topic.
 - Why do we want to focus on lethal means?
 - We know many suicide attempts are short-term crisis. So when you put time between a crisis and access to means can reduce our suicide rates.
 - States with high levels of firearm ownership have higher suicide rates than states with lower levels of firearm ownership.
 - The time between when someone decides to die by suicide and acts is very short.
 - For most folks it is within an hour of making a decision (71%).For 25% of people it is even within 5 minutes.
 - So we can reduce suicides by putting space between the time of the decision and the time of accessing means
 - Strategies--we have to consider what strategies fit best with which lethal means method. The methods being addressed require different strategies for prevention.

- Examples of strategies for lethal means reduction:
 - Poisoning--limit amount of medications in one package.
 - Firearms--distribute free or low-cost firearms locks.
 - Bridges/buildings--add protective barriers.
 - Ligatures--remove environmental features that are easily accessible.

- **Discussion: What strategies have you used in your suicide prevention efforts?**
 - What do you do to encourage gun owners to use gun locks/other safe firearm storage methods?
 - If a loved one is helping them choose life, taping a photo/reminder of loved one on the gun
 - Use approach of gun safe storage with RX lethal means so you are not isolating gun owners
 - In many cases, emphasizing that securing lethal means is a temporary measure. "Why keep cake in the house while you're on a diet?"
 - Rhode Island started the www.suicideproof.org campaign in 2011 and have allowed other states, tribes, and counties to use the campaign. We have partnered with our substance use prevention coalitions for medication lock bags, the VA for gunlock distribution. We are also working with our Turnpike and Bridge Authority on bridge barriers
 - There was a [webinar](#) hosted by the US Concealed Carry Association (featuring VA and AFSP). It emphasized the importance of storage and it was helpful to hear the way they talked about it.
 - Keeping in mind that the person's crisis may be temporary, and they may not always have to use the lock, but only in times of crisis or when that person is home.
 - What other strategies do you use?
 - We are using a local gun shop to distribute gun locks
 - In my area of Southern WV, guns are a part of the culture. However, in my experiences, most have had safety as a priority and have no issues using gun locks/safes. If someone is suicidal in the home, most are willing to reduce access by storing them at a family members' home.

- **Overview of Partnerships**
 - Partners can provide leadership support for activities, knowledge of how to address means through culturally appropriate methods, etc.
 - Working with partners who provide access to types of means is important (e.g. railroad agencies)
 - In partnerships, aligning your goals with your partners' goals and knowing how they help each other achieve mutual goals is important.
 - To build effective partnerships you want to be sure to articulate needs, create buy-in, and ensure that you sustain the partnerships long-term. Identify early-wins/short term goals that can build momentum and add onto these early wins over time for sustained progress and partnerships.

- **Speaker: Susan Keys, Public Health Program Development Consultant, Bend Oregon**
 - Please tell us about your long history of working in suicide prevention.
 - Susan began working in suicide prevention by working with schools around prevention and postvention programs in Maryland.
 - She then worked at the federal government level at SAMHSA and helped launch the first Garrett Lee Smith Grant Program
 - Susan then worked at Oregon State University-Cascades where they had received a Garrett Lee Smith Campus Grant to support suicide prevention work there.
 - Now, she is involved more locally in central Oregon and doing research.
 - What can you tell us about your research in preventing suicide deaths by firearms?
 - 65% of people who die by suicide have seen their PCP within a year of their death-- demonstrates the importance of addressing lethal means within the context of primary care.
 - Research process:
 - Reached out to colleagues at OSU—not just public health, also social psychology, anthropology, etc. and asked them to help her think through how the issue could be addressed more systematically. Reached out to PCPs as well.
 - Funded for a pilot grant to use a small amount of funds to talk with firearm owners and PCPs--wanted to get their perspective on firearms, lethal means, what was happening in the PCP setting, etc. Also hosted focus groups with firearm owners
 - Examined what factors influenced individuals’ likelihood of discussing firearms with PCPs
 - From research, developed messages based on this and tested their messaging impact
 - Also created communication tools based on the pilot test results of the messaging.
 - What partners did you need to bring in to begin this work and how did you approach them
 - Important to have relationships with people before you begin your work.
 - They really also partnered with firearm owners—and “rural” means something.
 - Rural individuals are very worried about their 2nd amendment rights.
 - They don’t like having data shared publicly or in databases. Data privacy was huge for rural community members.
 - They had to be very honest, forthright, and listen to what folks had to say as firearm owners, as these relationships were critical to their work.

- How did you build buy-in with these partners and create a common goal?
 - First met with partner PCP organizations and their medical team. During first meeting, medical director said “quite frankly, if I say something to my patients about lethal means, they would tell me to get the hell out of my business and I would agree with them.”
 - Susan realized that she was using public health language, which wouldn’t create buy-in. Changed her message to getting agreement that they wanted to save lives
 - Also realized that she wasn’t the expert here, and if she was going to learn about the different culture, she had to listen and she had to not be afraid to let them educate her.

- Because firearms research can be controversial, how did you handle occasions when public health and gun ownership weren’t aligned?
 - When you work with people you have to begin with where they are and not where you want them to be. Begin by asking about language such as asking firearm owners what firearm safety means to them.
 - When PCPs heard about the research behind the brochures, they were more likely to be willing to share those brochures in their practices

- How did you make sure the communications were relevant to the cultural context for both health care practitioners and firearm owners?
 - Researched what messaging would work and what strategies folks were interested in.
 - Summarized research on how PCPs needed to communicate information and what information they needed to share.
 - Switched from talking about “limiting access to means” to creating “firearm safety”.

- What was the result of this partnership? Where can we see what you created together?
 - Everything is at <https://www.oregonsuicideprevention.org/zero-suicide/firearm-safety!> Available on the Oregon Suicide Prevention website in collaboration with the Oregon Health Authority.
 - The video series is on communication skills training for PCPs on different situations they might face when asking about firearms. Each film is under 4 minutes each.
 - Password: Safety2020—for professional use only. This is not something they want to see distributed via social media.
 - There is a course, a brochure, videos, and a research brief folks can engage in and use.

- **Q&A with Susan Keys**
 - How do you respond to firearm owners who don't want to use gunlocks because they want to be able to quickly protect their family in the case of an emergency?
 - When there are children in the home, people are more open to this idea of storing firearms as locked to protect their kids.
 - There was also a willingness among gun owners to accept the fact that there are times when reducing access can make sense. But to be able to discuss these issues, the individuals have to trust the PCP or other person they are speaking with.
 - Another key reality is that discussing how many guns you own or where you store them is a cultural taboo among gun owners in rural areas.
 - Surveys where you ask folks how many guns they have, how they store them etc. is starting things off on the wrong foot.
 - Instead, begin conversations and messaging with “if there are guns in the home, this is a good time to discuss this”. Invites the opportunity for an open conversation.
 - What insight did you receive from gun owners in conversations that was most surprising or helpful to your endeavors?
 - The realization of how private this topic of gun ownership is, and how real the fear is of having firearms taken away.
 - This really stresses that in firearm work, you are entering into a culture. You need to be informed about that culture. You can't assume you can talk about these things if you don't know where folks are coming from.
- **Poll #2: What has been your biggest challenge in developing partnerships in lethal means prevention?**
 - Troubles in communication regarding purpose of project (i.e. fear of 2nd amendment restrictions, worry that talking about suicide will cause suicides to occur, etc.) **18.4%**
 - Lack of time/resources from partners **7.9%**
 - Stigma surrounding mental health/suicide in partner organizations **42.1%**
 - Lack of interest from partners **21%**
 - Lack of knowledge regarding dangers of lethal means **5.3%**

- **Discussion: What are some ways you overcame these partnership challenges?**
 - Partnered with active military/ veteran and law enforcement members to approach. Focusing on a change from restriction to reduction and the temporary nature.
 - Stressing the collaboration, asking what are you willing to do to keep yourself safe?
 - Dept. of Defense has used the term "lethal means safety"-- no reference to restriction/reduction.
 - Conversations, trainings, seminars like these all contribute to refining the way I talk about why lethal means matter. The more precise I am with my language, the easier it is to change minds.
 - Making frequent check ins for safety

- **Poll #3: How has your lethal means work changed because of COVID-19?**
 - Not at all **15.7%**
 - Slightly **21.05**
 - Somewhat **21.0%**
 - A lot **39.4%**
 - Completely **2.6%**

- **How has COVID-19 changed your work?**
 - No in person talks, zoom meetings...need face to face for better communication.
 - Dissemination of free gun locks in different areas on campus, training the shotgun sports club in Gatekeepers and supplying gun locks and rifle cases to team members. No students on campus, so dissemination of gun locks and any educational trainings have stopped.
 - Discharge or living situations have changed where lethal means are more available, as well as challenging and often dangerous living environments.
 - In Oklahoma, we are stepping up our distribution of lethal means safety devices because of COVID-19 and record gun sales
 - Medical means - like insulin. People who are homebound more and rely on insulin and other medications can't be monitored as easily.
 - Colorado Gun Shop Project relies heavily on in-person relationship-building. Being restricted to virtual communications at a time when firearm purchases (particularly first-time buyers) is at an all-time high is difficult. Promoting temporary safe storage and safety initiatives via social media can be polarizing.

- **Wrap-Up:**
 - Coming to you via email:
 - Follow-up resources and notes from this meeting
 - Homework assignment for next meeting: [Identify Synergy with Partner Priorities](#) worksheet-- 10-15 minutes to complete
 - Next meeting: Wednesday July 15, 2020, 2-3:30 pm ET