

Emergency Department

Discharge Information to Restrict Means of Suicide

Reducing a suicidal person's access to guns and lethal medications can save a life. Whether a patient is discharged to the community or transferred to an inpatient unit, the family can begin protecting the vulnerable patient right away with your guidance. Provide information to families verbally and in writing about what they can do to remove firearms and medicines from the environment before or as soon as possible after a patient vulnerable returns home.

Firearms:

USE LAW ENFORCEMENT

1. Family members should remove firearms ensures they are not accessible.
 - Families may ask local law enforcement to temporarily store or dispose of firearms by calling the police or sheriff's office and identifying themselves and explaining their concerns. Some law enforcement offices will not hold guns.*
 - Family members can ask for an officer on duty and arrange a time and location for firearms pick up.
 - Family members should unload the gun or tell the officer it will be loaded before they arrive to pick it up.
 - Do *not* bring the firearm to the police department unless told to by the officer. If a person is asked to bring the firearm to the department, tell the Officer who will be bringing it, what they look like and the time they will arrive.

**For extra assistance, call ahead for the family and see which law enforcement offices will hold guns.*

USE FAMILY OR FRIENDS

2. Not all police departments hold guns. A family can temporarily store the firearm at the home of a trusted friend or relative. Be sure the person at risk can't get the firearm before or after it is removed.
 - Not all people can hold guns. People with felony convictions, domestic violence misdemeanors or restraining orders, or substance abuse problems cannot.

LOCK THE FIREARM

3. If it is impossible to remove them, a family may lock the unloaded firearm in a gun safe or tamper-proof storage unit.
 - A trigger lock may be used in addition to the gun safe.
 - Keys and safe combinations should be kept away from the person at risk. This step does not guarantee safety – hiding places may be known.
 - Storing the gun in a bank safe deposit box may be illegal.

STORE OCCUPATIONAL FIREARMS AT WORK

4. Firearms that must be carried as part of a job should be stored at work if possible.
 - If it is not possible to store guns at work, lock guns securely and keep ammunition locked separately.

Medicines:

Most suicide attempts are with pills, and most are not fatal. Certain medications or combination are more deadly. Help the family member "suicide-proof" their medicine cabinet by making sure lethal quantities are or combinations aren't available to the patient. If prescribing medications for the patient, avoid prescribing quantities that could be lethal if taken at once.

Destroy all medicines that are unused, expired or unneeded.

- Place medication in a plastic bag and crush it or add water.
- Mix in coffee grounds, cat litter or sawdust.
- Place in the trash. Do *not* flush or pour down a drain.

