



Capitol Fund

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## **Colorado Ceasefire Urges Safe Storage of Firearms World Suicide Prevention Day is September 10**

Colorado ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation in number of suicides at 19.8 per 100,000 people, only exceeded by five other western states.<sup>1</sup> Firearms are the most common means for committing suicide; 49.8% of all suicides in Colorado in 2014 involved a firearm.<sup>1</sup> September 10 is World Suicide Prevention Day, and Colorado Ceasefire is urging gun owners to keep their firearms locked up as a precaution.

Data from the Colorado Department of Health and Environment (CDPHE) indicate that over 80% of firearms deaths in 2014 were by suicide. Although suicide rates are higher in Eastern Plains counties (27.6 deaths per 100,000), Front Range counties are not immune (18.5 deaths per 100,000). Use of a firearm in suicide is more common in rural areas than in urban, with 57% of Eastern Plains suicides by firearms, as opposed to 47% for Front Range counties.<sup>1</sup>

Although suicides are most common among males 45 to 64 years old, teen suicide is a serious concern. In 2014 teen suicide was the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for those ages 10-24.<sup>2</sup> That same year 63 Colorado youth between the ages of 10 and 19 died from suicide, 30 of these were deaths were with a firearm.<sup>1</sup>

“Families with children and youth should ensure that all firearms are unloaded and locked. This is especially true when parents notice depression or behavioral changes in their children,” stated Eileen McCarron of Colorado Ceasefire. The rate of teen suicides in Colorado has been rising, from 7.6 per 100,000 in 2008 to 8.8 in 2014. In comparison with adult suicides, CDPHE noted that adolescent suicides could be more “easily preventable with parental interaction and limiting access to lethal means.”<sup>4</sup> Suicides are usually impulsive acts and are fatal approximately 85% of the time when firearms are employed.<sup>5</sup>

“People largely have guns in their homes for protection, yet studies have shown that, in actuality, firearms can make the home less safe,” said Tom Mauser, spokesperson for Colorado Ceasefire. A classic study in King County, Washington found that for every self-defense homicide in the home, there were 1.3 accidental deaths, 4.6 criminal homicides, and 37 firearm suicides.<sup>6</sup>

The National Suicide Prevention Helpline offers the following tips to prevent suicide:

- Talk openly with those at risk of suicide.
- Listen in a nonjudgmental way
- Be available and supportive.
- Offer support and hope
- Get help from agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.
- Take action. Remove means, such as guns and stockpiled pills.

- 1 Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Colorado Vital Records, Colorado Health Information Dataset (CoHID) [online]. 2014.
- 2 Menier-Lott, M., Testimony at Colorado Capitol 8/27/2015.
- 3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS)[online]. 2014.
- 4 Health Watch, November 2014, Adolescent Suicide in Colorado, 2008-2012, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.
- 5 Guns and Suicide: The Hidden Toll, Harvard School of Public Health, [online], 2013.
- 6 Kellermann, A. J. and Reay, D. T., Protection or peril? An analysis of firearm-related death in the home. New England Journal of Medicine 314:1557-60.

Colorado Ceasefire Capitol Fund is a statewide organization that works to reduce gun violence through legislation and education.

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