

S.A.F.E. Firearm Clinician Guide

Research shows that even **small improvements in safe firearm storage can prevent firearm injuries and deaths among youth**—including suicides.

Program Goals



Normalize universal counseling about firearm safety and offer **free cable gun locks** as a routine part of well-child visits.



Increase the number of families using safe firearm storage practices.



Reduce firearm injuries and deaths by promoting safer home environments.

What are we doing?

1. **A brief 1-2 minutes, harm-reduction-focused, firearm safety conversation** during all pediatric well-child visits for children and teens ages 5-17.
2. **Offering a free cable gun lock** to any family interested.
3. **Exam room signage** to help normalize the conversation and **patient educational handouts**

IMPORTANT: Counseling and locks should be offered at **every** pediatric well-child visit for ages **5-17**, **regardless of firearm access** screening or whether a family reports having firearms at home.

How does it work?

Step 1: Know where locks are stored at your clinic.

Make sure you know where cable gun locks are stored in your clinic and how/who will make sure the member receives one if desired.

Step 2: Having the Conversation.

Position the conversation as a normal part of your anticipatory guidance (e.g., helmets, car seats, pool fences). Develop your own advice "script." An example is below **using the CARE acronym!**

C



Concern for safety

"Because firearms are the number one cause of child deaths, I bring up safe storage with every family."

A



Access prevention

"Kids can access firearms in their own homes or other homes—friends, neighbors, relatives."

R



Recommend Safe Storage

"Locked and inaccessible to the child is the key. Unloaded is ideal, but preventing access is what matters most."

E



Equip and Empower

"We have a handout and free cable locks if you'd like one. Any questions?"

Step 3: Answer Questions

Physicians that have conducted S.A.F.E. Firearm report that they usually do not make it through their advice without getting interrupted for one of the following 5 reasons:

Member says...	Suggested clinician response...
 "We don't have any firearms."	"Unfortunately, children can encounter firearms in other places they spend time, like grandparents, neighbors, or friend's homes. There are conversation starters in this handout to help ask other caregivers about whether firearm is stored safely in their homes."
 "Don't worry, we keep our firearms locked up in a safe."	"That's great you have a safe to keep your firearms secured. If you have a safe, make sure kids can't guess the combination or get to the keys. Feel free to take a cable lock just in case you ever needed to transport your weapons or somebody else you know might need one (grandparents' house)."
 <i>Dismissive or silence response: "sounds good, thanks."</i>	Respect their non-verbal language that they don't want to talk about this and just move on.
 <i>Defensive response: "I don't think it appropriate to discuss firearms in this visit."</i>	"I respect your point of view, and we don't have to spend any more time talking about firearms today. I want you to know that intent is to offer support with any questions around safe firearm storage and this is a routine part of all my well visit conversations. *Goal is to keep door open so this person may be more open in a future visit."
 "My kids know not to touch my guns."	"It is good that you already talked to your kids about firearm safety. Unfortunately, kids are naturally curious and don't always follow the rules. There are quick access safes available that would ensure your kids can't access the firearm and allow fast access in case you needed it."

Important Reminders

- **Tailor to the family:** Adjust the conversation based on how well you know the family, who lives in the home, the children's ages, and risk factors such as depression, suicide risk, or violence risk. *The SAFE Firearm training slides have tips on how to tailor!*
- **Respect and emphasize privacy:** Some families may not want to discuss firearm ownership. You can offer general safety guidance or talk more specifically about storage—use your judgment. If families worry about documentation, reassure them you can focus on safety without recording ownership details. See *training slides regarding respectful language.*
- **Use a harm reduction approach:** Triple Safe Storage (locked, unloaded, ammunition locked separately) is ideal, but many families—especially those keeping a handgun for protection—may not be open to this.

Keep the conversation non-judgmental and focus on ways to make the firearm inaccessible to the child using small steps that make the home safer.

- **Use Motivational Interviewing:**

- Ask open-ended questions.
- Reflect back what you hear to show understanding and support problem solving, e.g., "It sounds like quick access to a loaded firearm is really important to you."

Resources

Full training, program materials, and more Information: [S.A.F.E. Firearm Program Playbook](#)

- Clinician Guide
- KP Training Recordings
- Evidence-based research
- Patient Handouts
- Exam Room Flyers
- Contact for support: Jesse Gelwicks, 503-348-0867, jesse.m.gelwicks@kp.org