

Limiting Access to Lethal Means

A Construction Suicide Prevention Partnership Toolbox Talk

www.suicide-stops-here.org

In the United States, a majority, 60% of suicides are committed with a firearm, followed by suffocation, poisoning, and other means (1). Limiting access to lethal means is about removing weapons, prescriptions, poisons, or other means that someone might use during a moment of crisis to die by suicide. When someone is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, they may have a plan to obtain something to facilitate their intention to end their life. While suicide is preventable, it is also unpredictable. Suicides can be planned or impulsive, making it critical to disrupt, remove, or delay access to lethal means.

Lethal means can be put into 2 categories:

Violent Methods can include firearms, cutting or piercing with a sharp object, hanging, jumping from high places, or stepping in front of an oncoming train or other vehicles.

Nonviolent Methods include ingesting pesticides, poisoning by gases, suffocation, and overdose (2).

When we disrupt, remove, or delay access to lethal means, we provide hope and give the person time to get to the resources that can help them through the crisis and stay alive. Remember that if you are faced with someone in crisis, **it is important to stay with that person until help arrives.** You are not a counselor or a first responder, but you are an agent of hope.

Some Tips That May Help in a Time of Crisis:

Talk about it and have a plan. This should be part of everyone's home and job emergency planning. "If someone in our household or at our site is experiencing a mental health crisis or has expressed thoughts of suicide, we will..."

Create an environment where this conversation can happen. It is important that people feel comfortable saying that they are having an issue and that they are praised for their self-awareness.

Lock up guns, change the code to the gun safe, remove guns from the home. You may be able to turn them into an agency that will hold them for you temporarily. Find out what your local resources and option are and have conversations about gun safety.

Lock up or remove medications, chemicals, and fuel sources. These can cause harm if ingested. Make sure you have the poison control number posted.

Remove any tools or instruments that can be used for cutting. Take away car keys, cords, ropes, even plastic bags.

