

# Establish a Voluntary Firearm Do-Not-Sell List

Firearms are the most common and most lethal method of suicide. To reduce deaths by suicide, AFSP urges states to allow individuals to **voluntarily and reversibly suspend their own ability to purchase firearms** as a protection against future impulsive firearm suicide attempts.

## The Facts



Firearms account for **over half** of suicide deaths<sup>1</sup>



Suicide risk is exacerbated by **ready access to firearms** or other lethal means<sup>2,3</sup>



**46%** of psychiatric patients and **22%** of Veterans surveyed said they would sign up for a Do-Not-Sell list<sup>4,5</sup>

## AFSP Recommendations

- **Require a cooling-off period of at least 7 days between receipt and execution of a removal request**
- **Provide a mechanism for enrollees to relinquish personal firearms**
- **Promote simple ways to be added and removed, e.g., via an online portal, healthcare providers**

## Background

- Putting time and distance between a person at risk and lethal means can save lives; this allows time for the suicidal risk to subside and for someone to intervene with mental health support and resources<sup>6</sup>
- 85-90% of suicide attempts with a firearm are fatal; by reducing suicide attempts by firearms, lives can be saved<sup>7,8</sup>
- Most individuals who are prevented from making a suicide attempt via one method typically do not go on to attempt with another method; if they do substitute another method, it will likely be less lethal<sup>9</sup>
- Individuals with firearm access are no more likely to have suicidal thoughts than those without firearm access; however, at-risk individuals with access to firearms in the home are much more likely to use a firearm than those without<sup>10</sup>
- Like designating a medical power of attorney, waiving one's right to purchase a firearm offers a safe way to plan for possible impairments in future decision making<sup>11</sup>
- This concept has been successfully enacted in Delaware, Utah, Virginia, and Washington, and introduced as legislation in over half of states

**The Voluntary Firearm Do-Not-Sell List empowers individuals to make the personal decision to protect themselves in the event of a future suicidal crisis.**



<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics System, Mortality 2018-2022 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2024. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 2018-2022, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10-expanded.html>.

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<sup>2</sup> Miller, M.J., Barber, C.W., White, R.A., & Azrael, D. (2013). Firearms and Suicide in the United States: Is Risk Independent of Underlying Suicidal Behavior? *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 178(6), 946-55.

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<sup>3</sup> Houtsma, C., Butterworth, S. E., & Anestis, M. D. (2018). Firearm suicide: Pathways to risk and methods of prevention. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 22, 7-11.

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<sup>4</sup> Vars, F.E., McCullumsmith, C.B., Shelton, R.C., & Cropsey, K.L. (2017). Willingness of Mentally Ill Individuals to Sign Up for a Novel Proposal to Prevent Firearm Suicide. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 47(4), 483-492.

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<sup>5</sup> Ayres I. & Vars, F.E. (2020). *Weapon of Choice: Fighting Gun Violence While Protecting Gun Rights*, Harvard University Press.

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<sup>6</sup> Barber, C.W., & Miller, M.J. (2014). Reducing a Suicidal Person's Access to Lethal Means of Suicide: A Research Agenda. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 47(3), S264-S272.

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<sup>7</sup> American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. (2023). Understanding firearms and suicide prevention. <https://afsp.org/an-introduction-to-firearms-and-suicide-prevention>.

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<sup>8</sup> Conner, A., Azrael, D., & Miller, M. (2019). Suicide Case-Fatality Rates in the United States, 2007 to 2014. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 171(12), 885-895.

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<sup>9</sup> Daigle, M.S. (2005). Suicide prevention through means restriction: Assessing the risk of substitution: A critical review and synthesis. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 27(4), 625-632.

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<sup>10</sup> Houtsma, C., et al. (2018). Firearm suicide: Pathways to risk and methods of prevention.

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<sup>11</sup> Vars, F.E. (2024). *Donna's Law [The Voluntary Do-Not-Sell-List] Handbook*, 8. <https://www.donnaslaw.com/handbook-for-legislators>