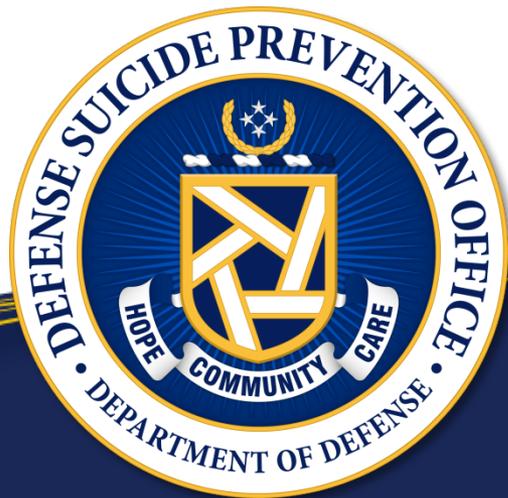


# Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO)

## Overview of Means Safety Initiatives

### Stop Texas Suicide Now

Dr. Keita Franklin, Director, DSPO  
August 2016





# Objectives

- Overview of the Means Safety Task Force
- Understanding the significance of suicide means
- Review of firearm use in the military
- Translating research into practice and policy



## Standing up a Means Safety Task Force

**Background** – The need for a collaborative public-private forum on Lethal Means Safety in suicide prevention was a key finding of the 2015 DoD Suicide Prevention Research Summit.

- Sec Wrights Memo
- White House interest

**Basis** – The Defense Lethal Means Safety Task Force directly supports Goal 6 of the 2015 Defense Strategy for Suicide Prevention – “Promote efforts within the Department of Defense to reduce access to lethal means of suicide among individuals with identified suicide risk.”

**Outcome** – The development of recommendations to advocate lethal means safety and restriction through military interventions (leadership, peers, family members).



## Task Force Members

- Keita Franklin, Working Group Chair, DSPO
- Wendy Lakso, DSPO
- Adam Walsh, DSPO
- Lt Col Charles Knapp, Joint Staff J1
- Mike Anestis, University of Southern Mississippi
- Shannon Frattaroli, Johns Hopkins SPH
- Joseph E. Logan, CDC
- Emma B. McGinty, Bloomberg SPH
- LTC Dennis McGurk, MOMRP
- Richard McKeon, SAMHSA
- Kate Nassauer, MOMRP
- Jane Pearson, NIMH
- Jerry Reed, SPRC
- Mike Schoenburg, University of South Florida
- Caitlin Thompson, VA

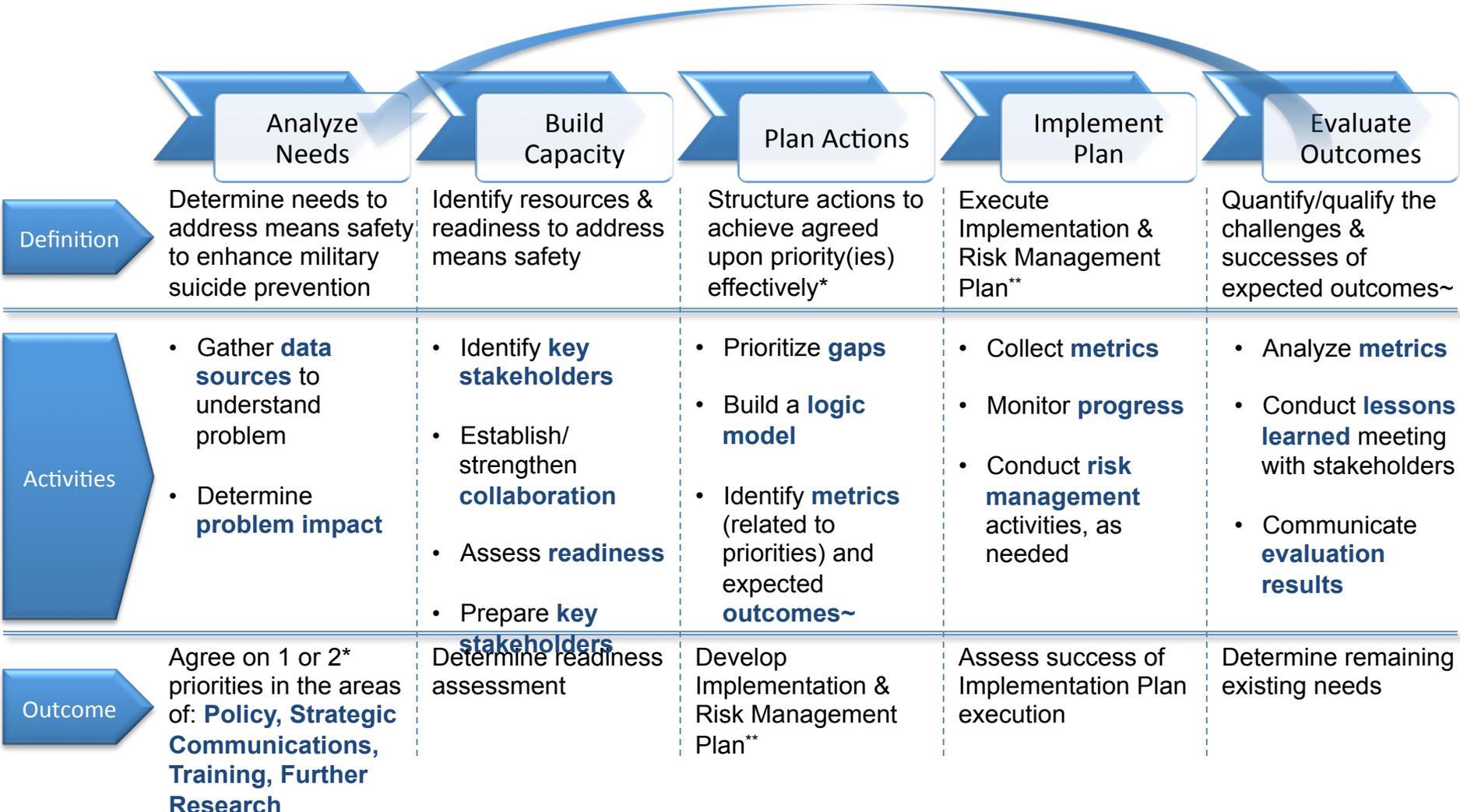


# Process Overview

**Objective:** Prevent suicide among military members

**Risk:** Access to lethal means

**Protective Factor:** Implementing means safety/restriction





# Task Force Mission and Objectives

## Mission

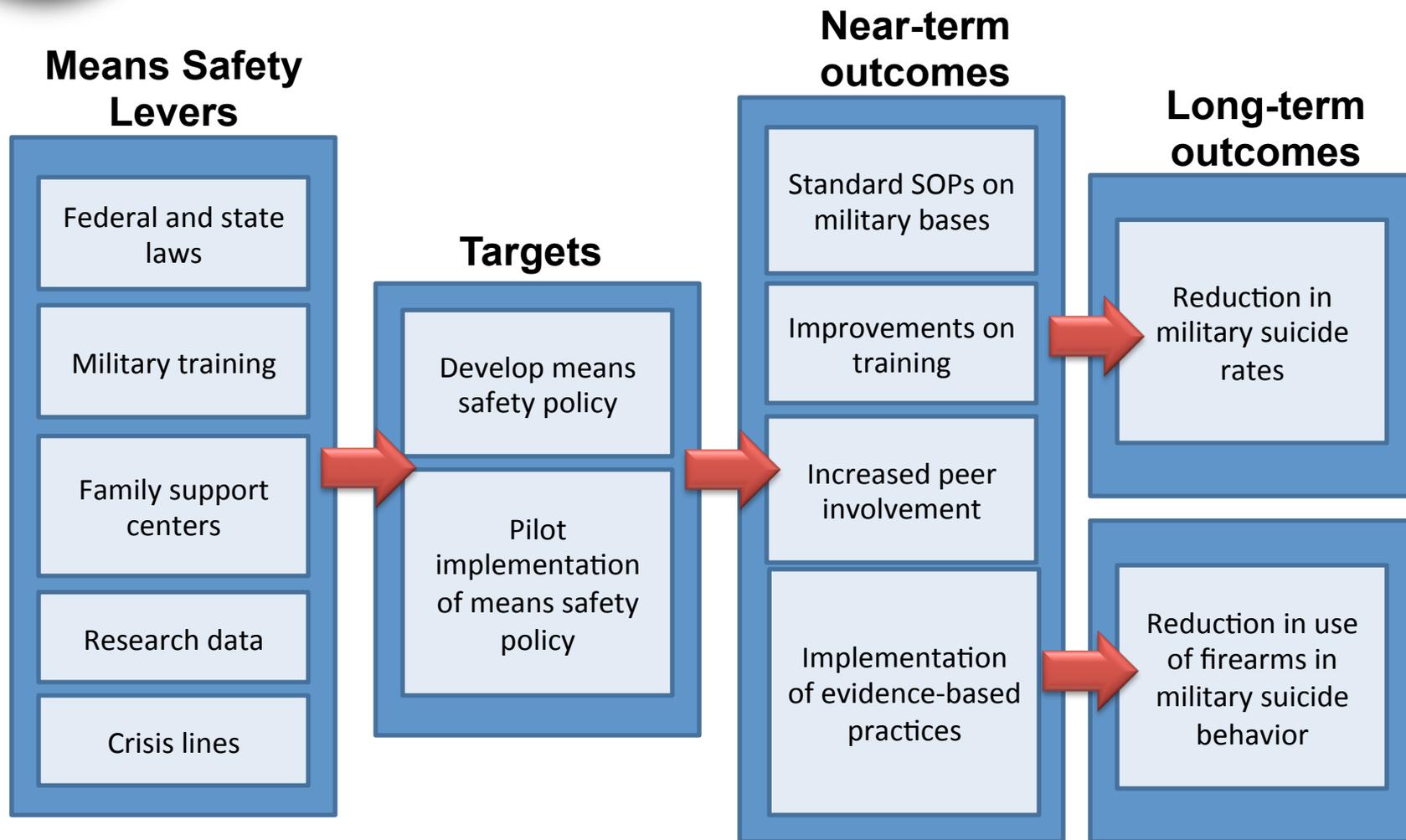
Provide targeted recommendations for policy, programs, and practices to improve the effectiveness of Lethal Means Safety towards reducing suicide.

## Objectives

1. Refine the DoD lethal means safety policy
2. Develop DoDI policy guidance on lethal means safety training programs
3. Synchronize DoD lethal means safety research and activities
4. Ensure update/creation of DoD lethal means safety policies, programs, and practices



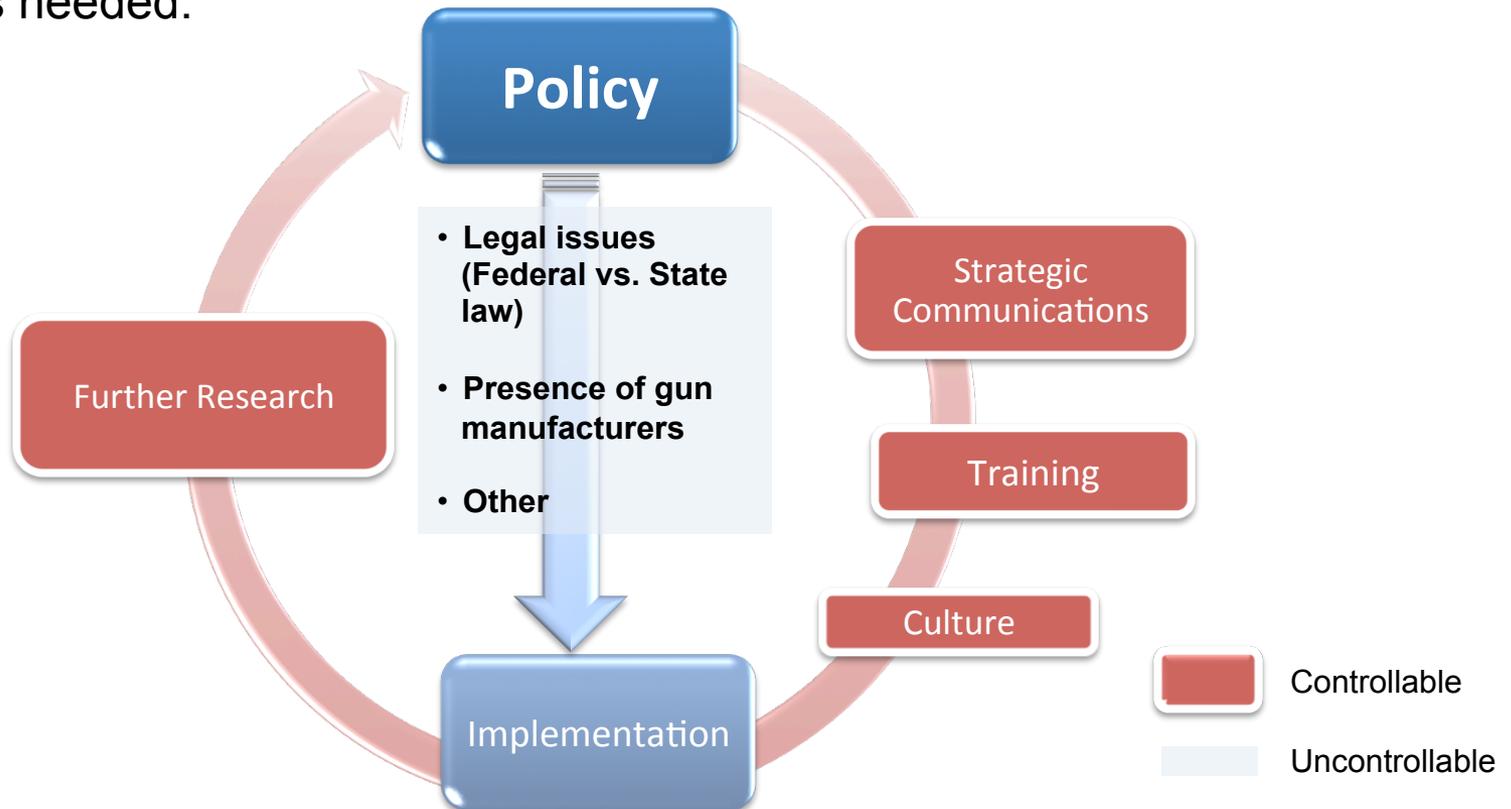
# Logic Model





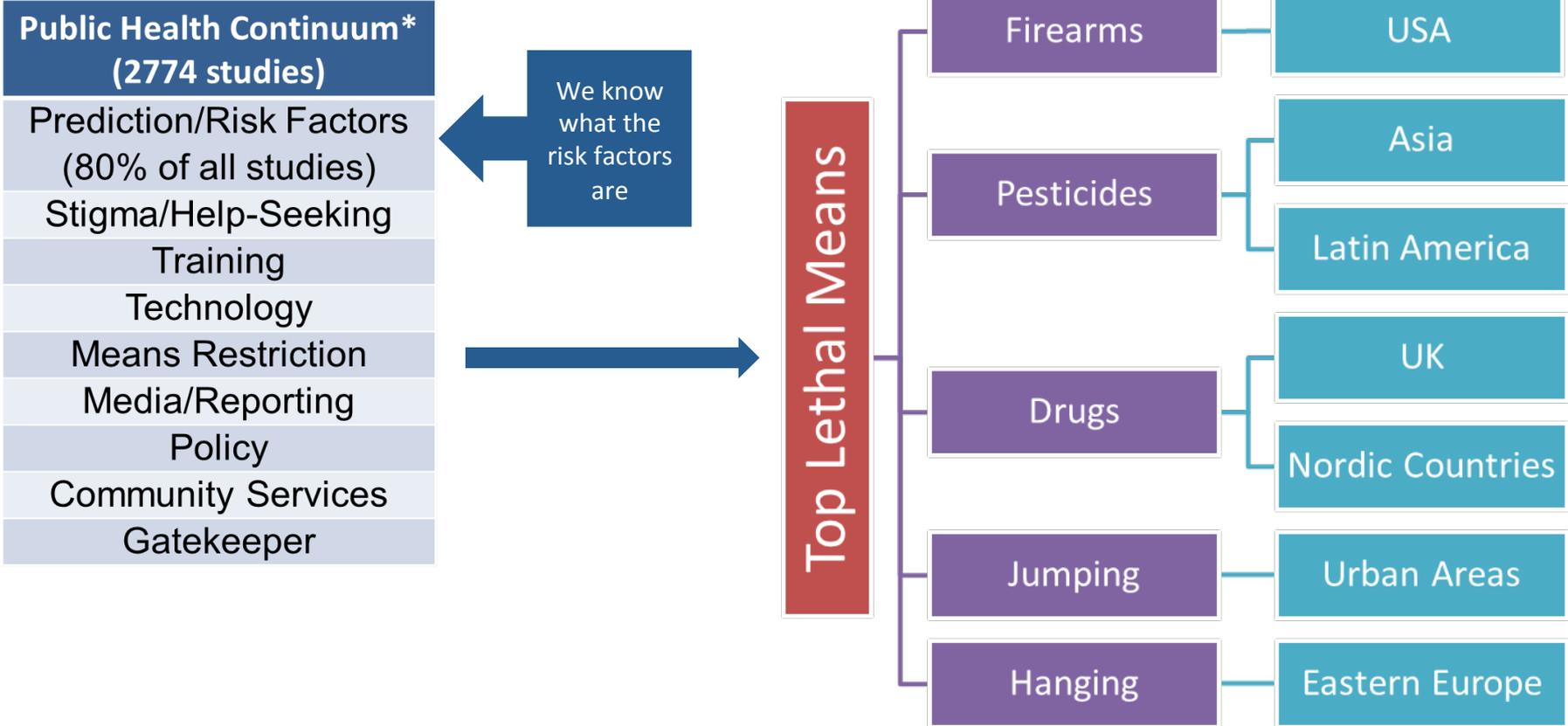
# From Policy to Implementation

- Strategic communications, training, and a change in culture will facilitate policy implementation.
- Further research will assess effectiveness of implementation and if further policy is needed.



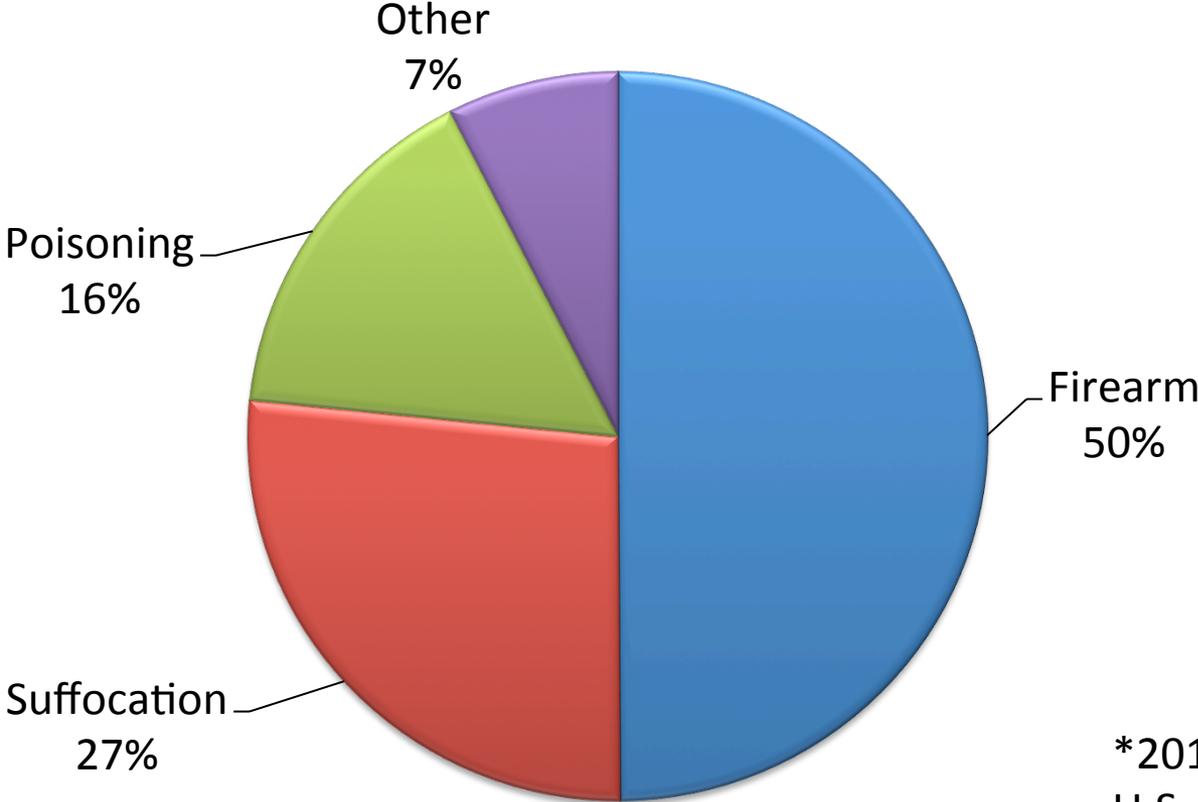


# Moving from “Why” to “How”





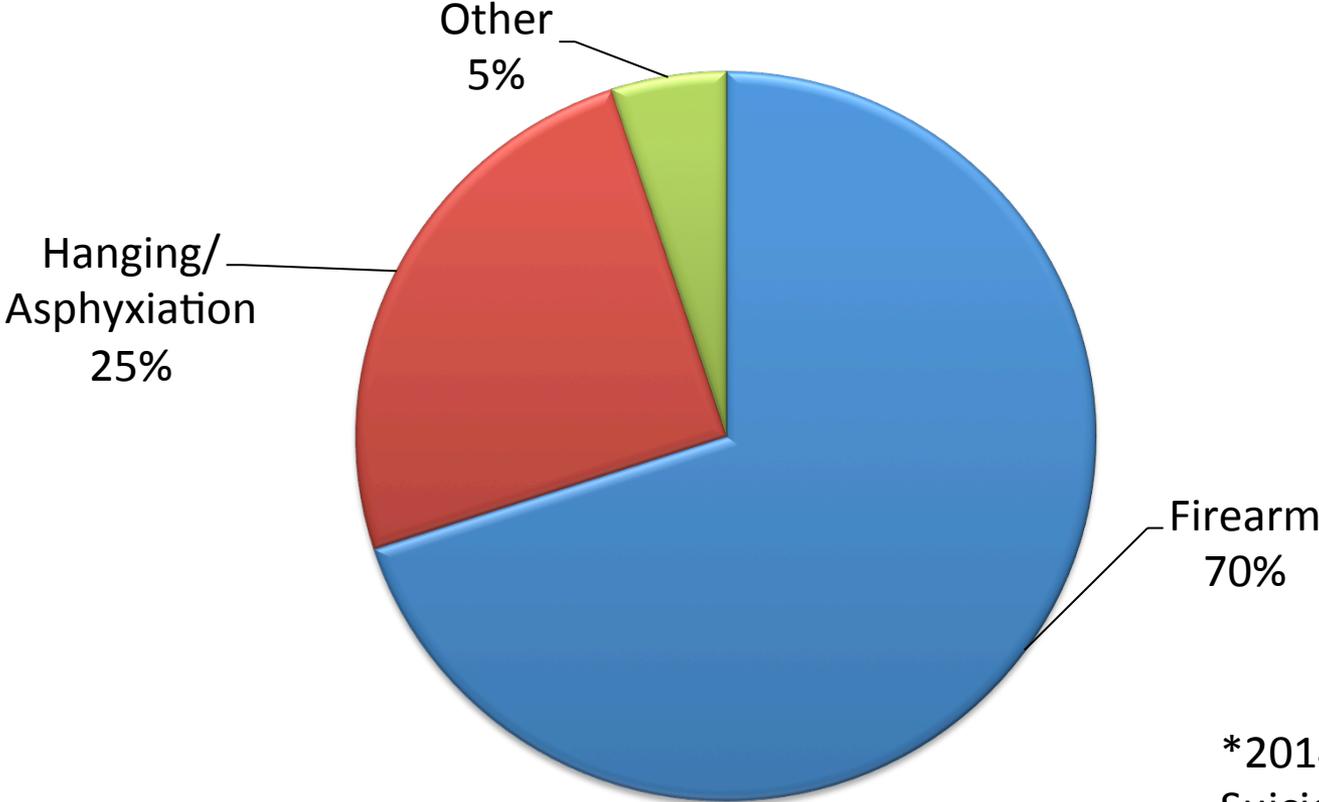
# “How” in the U.S. Suicide Deaths



\*2014 CDC  
U.S. Suicides by Method



# “How” in the Military Suicide Deaths



\*2014 DoDSER  
Suicide Event Methods  
All Services



## Access to Lethal Means

“Restricting access to the means for suicide works. An effective strategy for preventing suicides and suicide attempts is to restrict access to the most common means, including pesticides, firearms and certain medications. Implementation of effective policies coupled with community interventions has been instrumental in reducing suicide through means restriction.”

Preventing Suicide: A Global Imperative  
World Health Organization

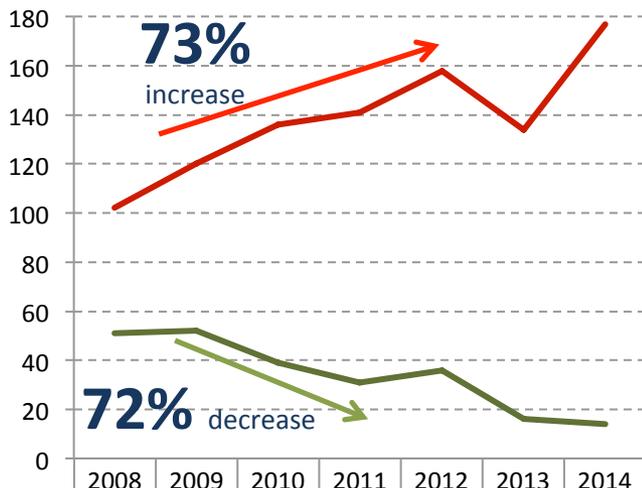
Despite fear that means restriction would cause a “substitution effect,” several research studies show no significant substitution effect after implementation of a means restriction policy. (Cox 2013; Law 2014; Leenaars 2007; Mann 2013)



## Non-military issued weapons: Specific area of concern

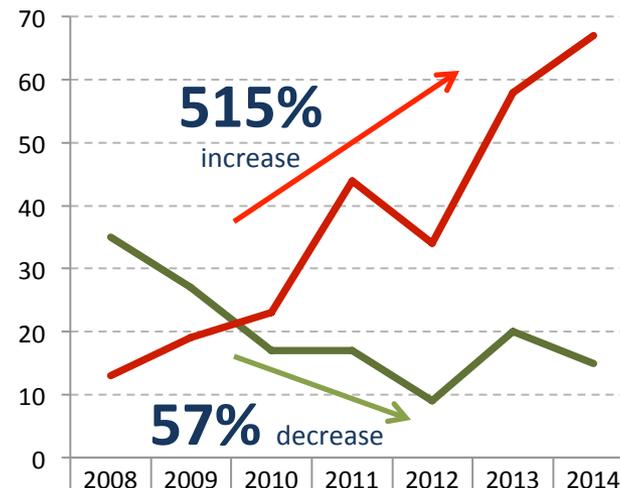
- Since 2008, the use of **non-military issued guns** in suicide deaths has **increased 73%** and in suicide attempts it has **increased 515%**.
- Since 2008, the use of military issued guns in suicide deaths has decreased 72% and in suicide attempts it has decreased 57%.

**Deaths by Suicide**



— Firearm/gun military issued	51	52	39	31	36	16	14
— Firearm/gun other than military	102	120	136	141	158	134	177

**Suicide Attempts**



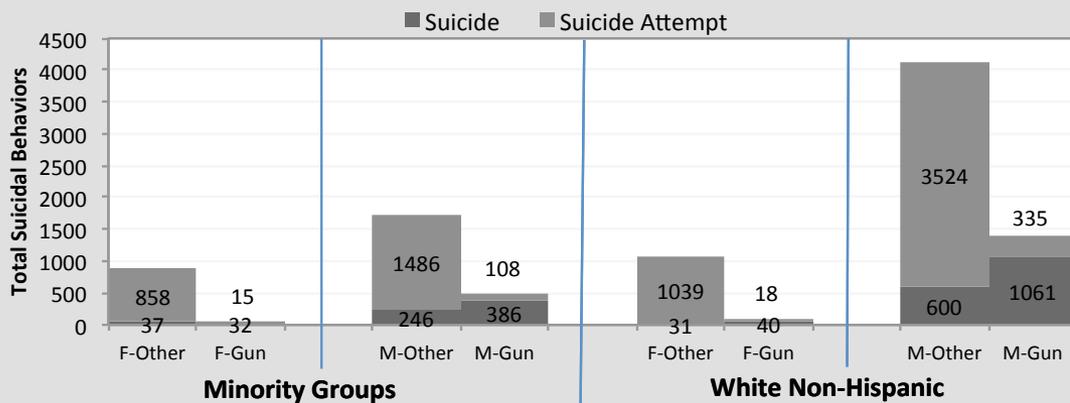
— Firearm/gun military issued	35	27	17	17	9	20	15
— Firearm/gun other than military	13	19	23	44	34	58	67

Source: DoDSER Data (February 2016).

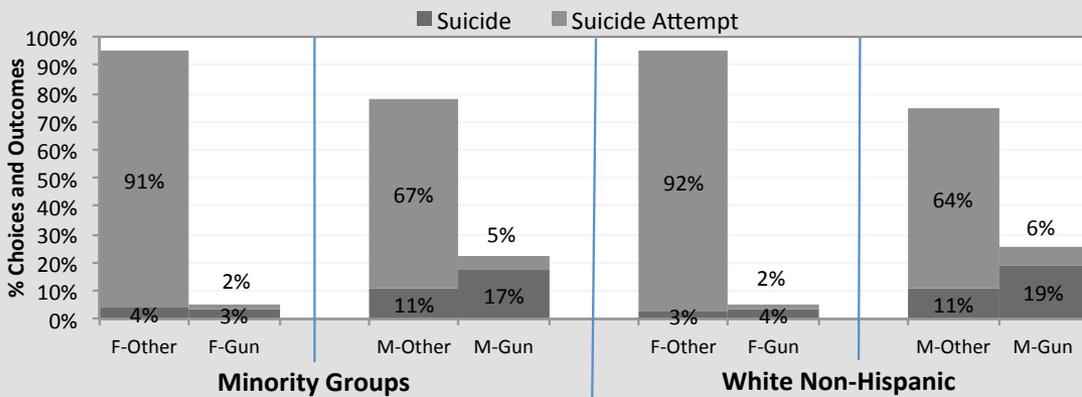


# Firearm Usage by Gender and Minority Status

Counts of Suicidal Behavior Outcomes by Choice of Method by Minority-Status Gender Groups



Proportion of Suicidal Behavior Outcomes by Choice of Method by Minority-Status Gender Groups

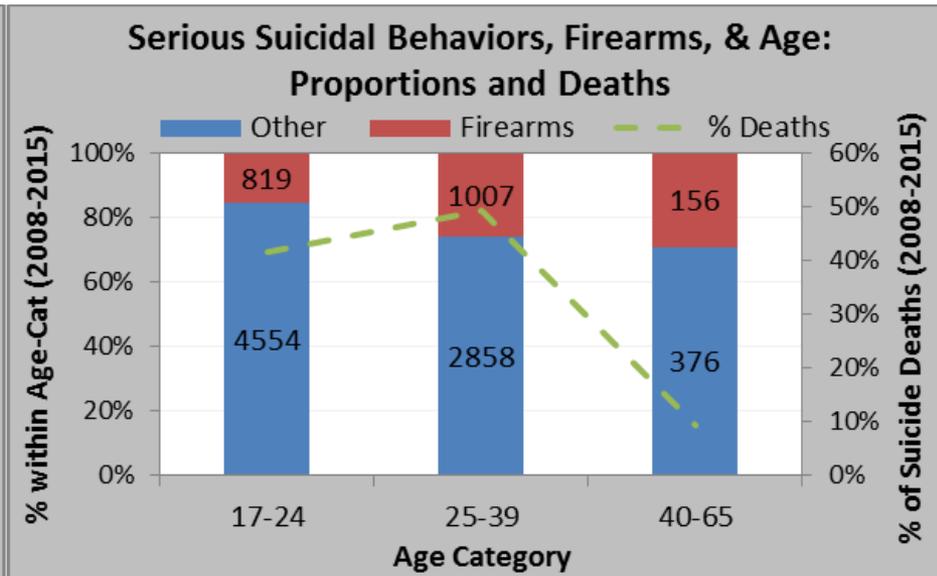
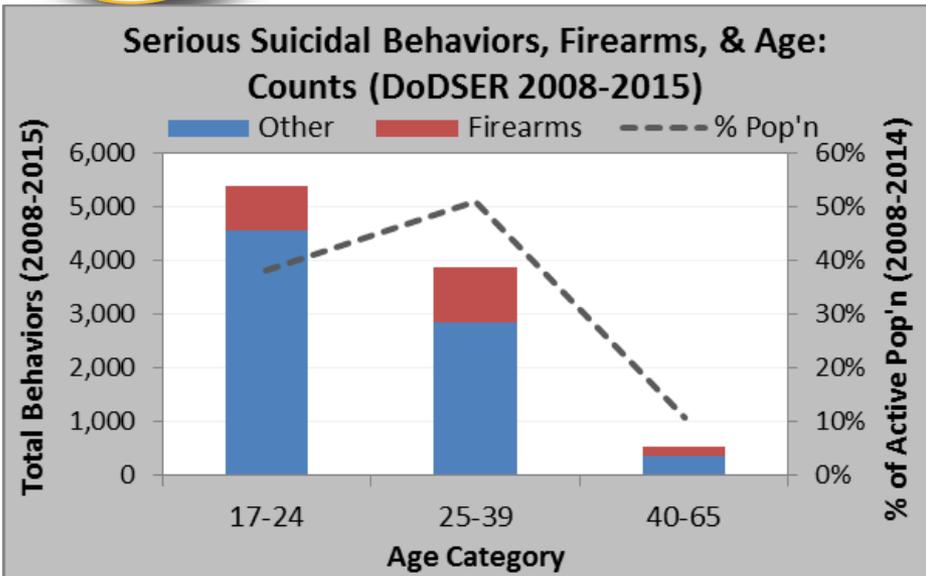


- DoD is largely made up of White Non-Hispanic males, a high risk group for suicidal behaviors.
- Firearms are a highly lethal method.
- Females in both Minority-Status groups are less likely to choose a firearm than males. Compared to females, **males are 5X more likely to choose a firearm than another method.**
- White Non-Hispanic males are slightly more likely to choose a firearm than Minority Groups.

Source: DoDSER, 2008-2015



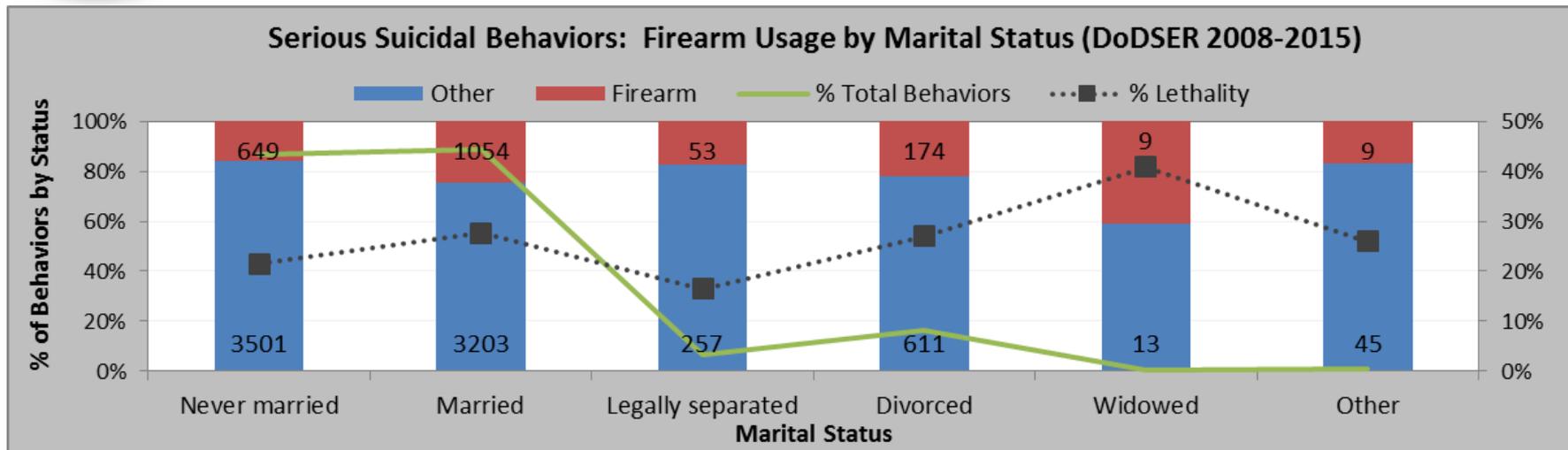
# Firearm Usage by Age Category



- From 2008-2015, 17-24 year olds were disproportionately involved in suicidal behaviors (see the bar above the % population line, the other groups are below it).
- Looking within groups (chart on right), **older groups are more likely to use a firearm.**
- Despite fewer suicidal behaviors, the older groups exhibit more *lethality* as there are disproportionate numbers of deaths given the number of suicidal behaviors.



# Firearm Usage by Marital Status



- Together, Never Married and Married statuses generate 88% of all suicidal behaviors.
- **Married individuals are more likely to use a firearm** (thus more lethal).
- Surprisingly, Legally Separated individuals are less likely to use a firearm than Divorced individuals.
- Widowed individuals are a small group but have a much higher tendency to use a firearm: 22 attempts resulted in 9 deaths (8 by firearm).



# States with Most Military Suicides

State	Deaths <sup>1</sup>	Population <sup>2</sup>	Suicide Rate	Chose Firearm <sup>3</sup>	Died by Firearm <sup>4</sup>	CONUS Suicide%	CONUS Pop'n%
KY	39	38,445	33.8	40%	63%	5.3%	3.3%
SC	34	36,723	30.9	22%	82%	4.7%	3.2%
KS	21	24,658	28.4	21%	87%	2.9%	2.1%
CO	30	35,872	27.9	26%	71%	4.1%	3.1%
NC	85	109,906	25.8	17%	63%	11.7%	9.5%
GA	52	68,280	25.4	19%	69%	7.1%	5.9%
<b>TX</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>132,505</b>	<b>24.2</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>
FL	37	54,486	22.6	26%	70%	5.1%	4.7%
VA	64	104,462	20.4	27%	67%	8.8%	9.0%
WA	32	57,616	18.5	15%	64%	4.4%	5.0%
HI	23	47,099	16.3	7%	24%	3.2%	4.1%
CA	69	151,970	15.1	9%	53%	9.5%	13.1%

- Notes
1. Military suicide data: 2013-2015, source: AFMES.
  2. Population Data: 2013-2015, source: DMDC.
  3. Chose Firearm: % all attempts (lethal & non-lethal) by firearm; 2013-2015, source: DoDSER.
  4. Died by Firearm: % suicides (lethal attempts) by firearm; 2013-2015, source: DoDSER.
  5. Highlighted states produced a disproportionate share of suicides.



## Recommended Bases for Pilot

**Based upon the state suicide rate and the installation size, the following installations are recommended for pilot studies:**

**TX- Fort Hood or Fort Bliss**

KY- Fort Campbell

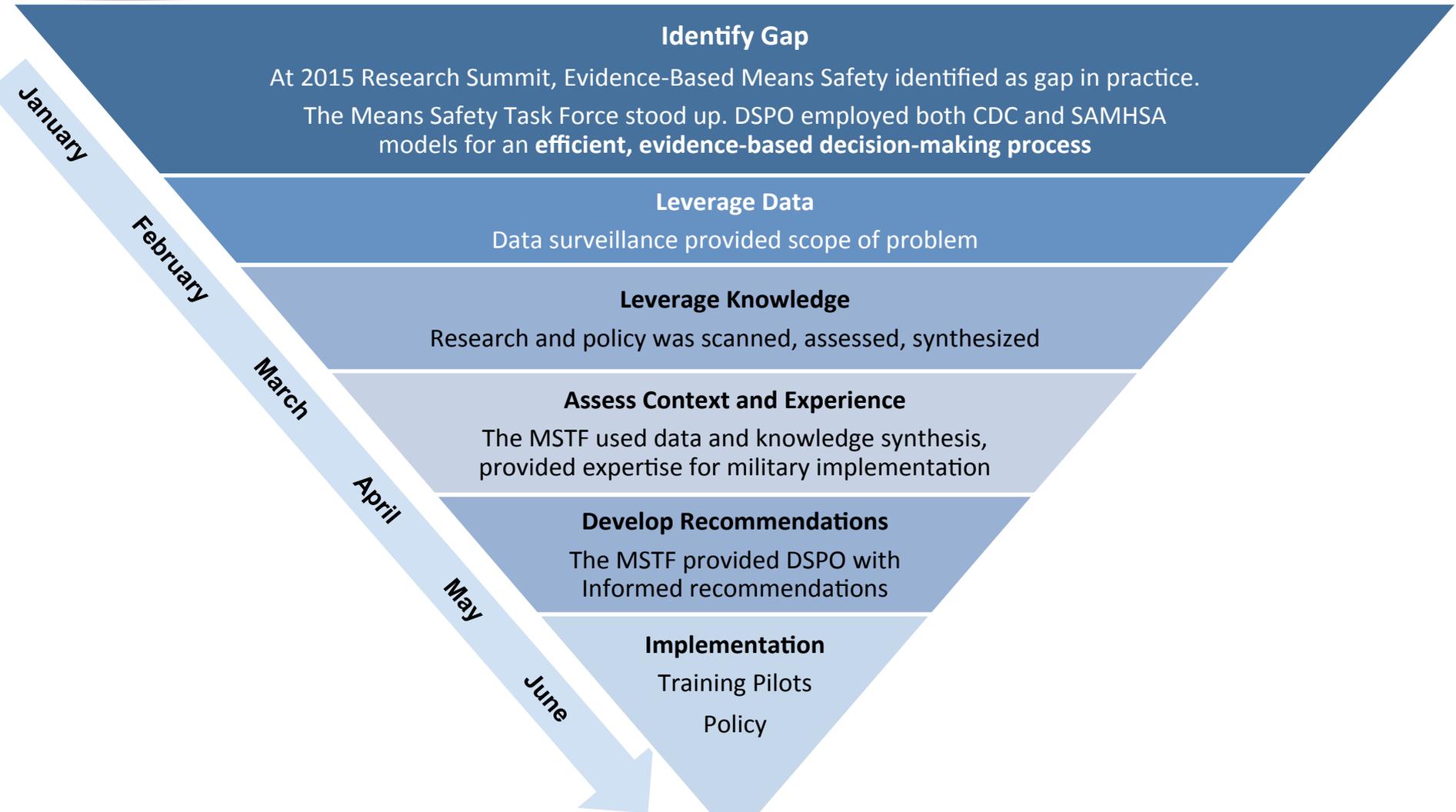
SC- Fort Jackson or MCRD Parris Island/MCAS Beaufort

NC- MCB Camp Lejeune or Fort Bragg

GA- Fort Stewart or Fort Benning



# Translation Success Story: Means Safety Task Force



**CLASSIFICATION (U)**



## Gun Shop Owner Pilot

- Implementation pilot to determine the effectiveness of education materials at gun shops near a military base
- Comparison of 3 groups
  1. Control (no intervention)
  2. Educational materials only (modeled on New Hampshire Gun Shop Owner Project)
  3. Educational materials plus safe storage devices (modeled on the Washington State Project)
- Determine the specific elements of an education program that are most effective



## Perceptions and Beliefs about Gun Lock Policies in Military Gun Culture

- Research study to:
  - Determine number of firearms used in suicide that were registered on base
  - Understand the perceptions and beliefs about gun lock policies in the military
- The results of this study will help shape means safety policy, education/training, and communication campaigns
  - Important to thoroughly understand the culture of the population for the successful implementation of any program or policy
  - Military perception about means safety is currently a gap in understanding—assumptions are not sufficient



## Embedding Means Safety into Current Training Programs

- Important to provide training specific to peers, command, family
- CALM (Counseling for Access to Lethal Means)
  - Free training program on SPRC website
- Peer-to-peer training webinar in August 2016 on San Francisco VA website
- Joint Knowledge Online: potential to embed means safety training for DoD



## Way Forward: Collaboration to Address All Means Safety

- Collaboration driven by the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention including:
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration
  - Suicide Prevention Resource Center
  - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
  - Veterans Affairs
  - Department of Transportation
  - Pharmaceutical Industry
  - Poison Control