

# NH Gun Shop Project: Engaging Firearm Dealers in Suicide Prevention

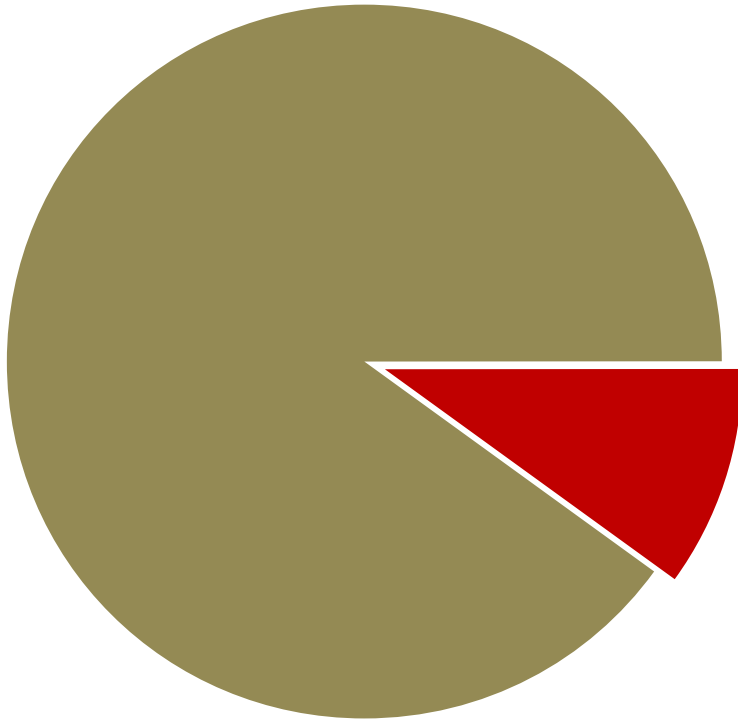


[www.nhfsc.org](http://www.nhfsc.org) or [elaine.frank@dartmouth.edu](mailto:elaine.frank@dartmouth.edu)

# Project Impetus

- Three suicide deaths in six days within hours of gun purchase from a single NH gun shop
- Gun shop owner, firing range instructor, suicide prevention and firearm advocates and public health researchers meet to determine if there is an effective way to respond
- Built on **previous collaborative** work of the NH Firearm Safety Coalition

# Recent-purchase Suicides



- About one in ten (8%) firearm suicides in NH are with recent-purchase guns
- “Recent purchase” = buying or renting firearm within one week of suicide (usually within hours)
- 8% is likely a slight underestimate; in two-thirds of cases interval between acquisition and death was not noted

Source: Medical examiner reports on all 144 firearm suicides in NH over two-year period ending 6/30/09

# Mission

Enlist gun shop owners in efforts to prevent suicides with either **recently-purchased** firearms or **existing** household firearms

- Educate gun shop owners about steps to avoid selling a firearm to a suicidal customer
- Educate their customers about making firearms less accessible if a friend or family member is suicidal
- **Promote National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to link with local crisis centers and other emergency services**

# Project Launch

- Gun Shop Packets mailed out to “all” independent gun shops (63) and firing ranges (2)
- They included:
  - Cover letter signed by recognized gun advocate
  - Tip Sheet on avoiding sales to suicidal customers
  - 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment Brochure
  - Suicide Prevention Poster and Lifeline Cards
  - DVD made for firearm retailers by firearm retailers

# Tip Sheet

Your vigilance could save a life!

- Signs that a buyer could be suicidal
- Options for responding to a potentially suicidal buyer
- What else can I do?





# GUN SAFETY RULES

11 10 COMMANDMENTS  
OF GUN SAFETY

Look inside  
to see  
what's new!

11. Consider temporary off-site storage if a family member may be suicidal. When an emotional crisis (like a break-up, job loss, legal trouble) or a major change in someone's behavior (like depression, violence, heavy drinking) causes concern, storing guns outside the home for a while may save a life. Friends as well as some shooting clubs, police departments, or gun shops may be able to store them for you until the situation improves.



# CONCERNED ABOUT A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND?

## ARE THEY SUICIDAL?

- Depressed, angry, impulsive?
- Going through a relationship break-up, legal trouble, or other setback?
- Using drugs or alcohol more?
- Withdrawing from things they used to enjoy?
- Talking about being better off dead?
- Losing hope?
- Acting reckless?
- Feeling trapped?

**SUICIDES IN NH**  
for outnumber homicides

**FIREARMS ARE THE  
LEADING METHOD**

**ATTEMPTS WITH A GUN  
ARE MORE DEADLY**  
than attempts with other methods



[www.nslifeline.org](http://www.nslifeline.org)

## HOLD ON TO THEIR GUNS

- Putting time and distance between a suicidal person and a gun may save a life.
- For other ways to help, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).



# Evaluation Results

- 60 gun shops visited
- 48% were using at least one of the items
- Beliefs about preventability predict material use.
  - Removing access to lethal means can save a life  
YES - 69% display vs NO - 41% display
  - Belief that suicides are planned in advance  
YES - 45% display vs NO - 86% display
- Little negative feedback from customers
- Good feedback from gun shop owners
- Many states are working on adapting the project

# Conclusions

- Suicide prevention is a good fit for gun owners who can be a powerful ally
- Most of us are neither strongly pro-gun or strongly anti-gun but almost everyone is

## **ANTI-SUICIDE**

- Getting across the idea that suicide is (mostly) preventable is essential!
- Work locally to get these messages out through gun shops, shooting clubs, firearm training, etc.

# Project Dissemination

- Las Vegas – gun show displays, gun safe raffles
- Tennessee – visiting gun shops individually
- Maryland – promoting materials through a statewide gun shop owners association
- New England – exploring including suicide prevention in firearm safety training