



**VA** | U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# MINUTES **MATTER**

OPTIONS FOR SECURE FIREARM STORAGE



**Clinician Guide**



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# A Secure Storage Plan

## Reasons to Securely Store Firearms

Securing firearms is an important responsibility.

### Suicide

- Ninety percent of firearm suicide attempts are fatal.<sup>1</sup> Seventy percent of Veteran suicides are by firearm.<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly 25% of all suicide attempts occur in the first five minutes of a suicidal crisis. Roughly 70% occur within one hour.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Minutes matter.**

- Risk for suicide is higher when firearms are stored unlocked and loaded.<sup>4,5</sup>
- Increasing the time it takes to access a loaded firearm may save a life.

#### **Minutes matter.**



### Child Safety

- Three out of four children know where firearms are kept in their home.<sup>6</sup>
- Teaching children not to touch firearms does not stop them from doing so.<sup>7</sup>
- Firearms are the #1 cause of death among children. Firearms involved in youth deaths are often stored loaded, unlocked and in a bedroom.<sup>8</sup>
- Up to 30% of youth firearm injuries and deaths could be prevented by storing firearms more securely.<sup>9</sup> **Minutes matter.**

### Theft

- A firearm is stolen every 90 seconds.<sup>10</sup>
- 25% of stolen firearms are stolen from personal vehicles.<sup>11</sup>
- Firearms are three times more likely to be stolen when brought out of the home.<sup>10</sup>
- Stolen firearms may be sold illegally and used to commit a crime.<sup>11</sup>
- Keeping firearms unsecured, even for personal safety, increases the risk of danger in our communities.





# A Secure Storage Plan

## How to Develop a Minutes Matter Secure Storage Plan

Use the **Minutes Matter Secure Storage Plan** (Page 12) to identify all the possible combinations of options for securely storing firearms.

**STEP 1** includes places where a firearm may be stored. They are listed, from bottom to top, from the least to most amount of time it would take to access a firearm. In-home storage is often preferred and there are many options for this choice. Some, such as a gun safe, require more time to access than other options, like a nightstand. Out-of-home storage (ex: with a friend, at a retailer) provides the most time and distance. It is a great option when there are concerns about the safety of those in the home. It is essential to be familiar with local laws and ensure Veterans or their family members are also aware of the laws.

**STEP 2** includes additional ways to delay the use a firearm. This is especially helpful when in-home storage methods are chosen. For example, one could store ammunition in a closet separate from the firearm; the firearm unloaded and without the firing pin in a nightstand; and the firearm's firing pin in a hard to reach place.

**Note:** Options in Steps 1 and 2 can be combined for single or multiple firearms owned. Use as many options as needed. The plan can be filled out online or on paper by checking the appropriate fields. If multiple firearms are owned, use separate sheets for each, or assign different numbers, initials, or colored inks to indicate the storage option for each firearm.










**STEP 3** includes space to write the plan for securely storing firearms. This includes selections from Steps 1 and 2. It can also include future steps toward secure storage, like talking about storage with family or saving for an expensive option like a biometric safe. You can also note reasons to change storage plans (ex: when grandchildren visit) and list people who can help carry out these plans (ex: spouse, parent).



# MINUTES MATTER

## OPTIONS FOR SECURE FIREARM STORAGE













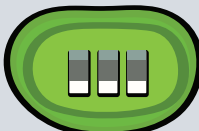
**STEP 1.** Pick a place to securely store your firearm(s).

STORAGE PLACE		
<p>Longest</p> <p>↑</p> <p>TIME TO ACCESS</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Shortest</p>	<p><b>Firearm retailers or ranges</b> (check state and local laws)</p>	
	<p><b>Family member or friend</b> (check state and local laws)</p>	
	<p><b>Personal storage unit</b> (check state and local laws)</p>	
	<p><b>Detached garage/shed</b></p>	
	<p><b>Gun safe or cabinet</b></p>	
	<p><b>Lock box/locked hard case</b></p>	
	<p><b>Difficult to reach place</b> (ex: attic, garage, high shelf)</p>	
	<p><b>Private room</b> (ex: under pillow, nightstand, closet)</p>	
	<p><b>On person</b> (ex: holster, bag)</p>	

# MINUTES MATTER

## OPTIONS FOR SECURE FIREARM STORAGE

**STEP 2.** Add time to access with extra safety measures.

DISASSEMBLE THE FIREARM		ASK SOMEONE ELSE	
Remove firing pin	Disassemble	Give key/code to others	
			
REMOVE AMMUNITION			
Unloaded	Chamber flag	Separate ammo	
			
USE DIFFERENT LOCKS FOR LOCKBOX, CABINET, OR SAFE			
Biometric	Keypad	Combo	Key
			
STORE WITH REMINDERS		LOCK THE FIREARM	
VCL number	Safety plan	Cable lock	Trigger lock
			

# MINUTES **MATTER**

## OPTIONS FOR SECURE FIREARM STORAGE

### **STEP 3.** My plans to securely store firearms:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What might change about this plan:

---

---

---

Who will help me with this plan:

---

---

---

# MINUTES **MATTER** OPTIONS FOR SECURE FIREARM STORAGE

**STEP 1.** Pick a place to securely store your firearm(s).

## STORAGE PLACE

**Firearm retailers or ranges**  
(check state and local laws)

**Family member or friend**  
(check state and local laws)

**Personal storage unit**  
(check state and local laws)

**Detached garage/shed**

**Gun safe or cabinet**

**Lock box/locked hard case**

**Difficult to reach place**  
(ex: attic, garage, high shelf)

**Private room**  
(ex: under pillow, nightstand, closet)

**On person**  
(ex: holster, bag)

Longest



TIME TO ACCESS

Shortest



**STEP 3.** My plans to securely store firearms:

1.

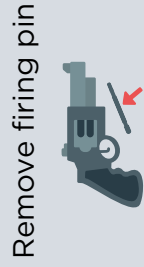
What might change about this plan: \_\_\_\_\_

2.

Who will help me with this plan: \_\_\_\_\_

**STEP 2.** Add time to access with extra safety measures.

## DISASSEMBLE THE FIREARM



Remove firing pin



Disassemble



Give key/code to others

## ASK SOMEONE ELSE

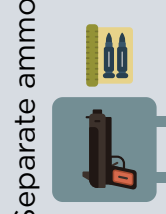
## REMOVE AMMUNITION



Unloaded



Chamber flag



Separate ammo

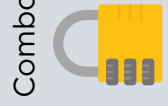
## USE DIFFERENT LOCKS FOR LOCKBOX, CABINET, OR SAFE



Biometric



Keypad

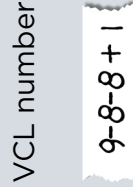


Combo



Key

## STORE WITH REMINDERS



VCL number

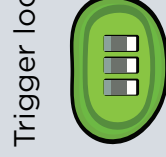


Safety plan

## LOCK THE FIREARM



Cable lock



Trigger lock



# Resources for Veterans

## Firearm Storage Devices and Alternative Storage Locations

Type	Description
VA Resources	<b>Cable Locks</b> Available from your local VA, many police stations, and many local safety coalitions <b>Request a free cable lock from a local VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator:</b> <a href="https://www.va.gov/find-locations/">https://www.va.gov/find-locations/</a> .
	<b>Cable Locks*</b> Available from your local VA, many police stations, and many local safety coalitions <b>Project Child Safe free safety kit:</b> <a href="https://projectchildsafe.org/get-a-safety-kit/">https://projectchildsafe.org/get-a-safety-kit/</a>
Other Resources	<b>Chamber Flags, Trigger Locks, Lock Boxes, Safes, and Gun Cabinets*</b> Available from local firearm retailers, sporting goods stores, and sometimes large retailers
	<b>GunSkin*</b> <b>FREE (for Veterans) vinyl wraps</b> with images of loved ones that can be applied to pistol grips <a href="https://covermeveterans.org/">https://covermeveterans.org/</a>
	<b>Voluntary Out-of-Home*</b> <b>Maps to find firearm retailers</b> and, in some states, law enforcement locations that offer temporary out-of-home storage services National: <a href="https://pausetoprotect.org/secure-storage/##ss-outofhome-options">https://pausetoprotect.org/secure-storage/##ss-outofhome-options</a> Louisiana: <a href="http://www.armoryproject.org">www.armoryproject.org</a> Colorado: <a href="https://pausetoprotect.org/secure-storage/##ss-outofhome-options">https://pausetoprotect.org/secure-storage/##ss-outofhome-options</a> New Jersey: <a href="https://gunviolenceresearchcenter.rutgers.edu/nj-firearm-storage-map/">https://gunviolenceresearchcenter.rutgers.edu/nj-firearm-storage-map/</a> Washington: <a href="https://fiprp.uw.edu/tools-dissemination/resources/">https://fiprp.uw.edu/tools-dissemination/resources/</a> Maryland: <a href="https://mdpgv.org/safestoragemap/">https://mdpgv.org/safestoragemap/</a> Mississippi: <a href="http://mikeanestis.weebly.com/ms-gun-storage-map.html">http://mikeanestis.weebly.com/ms-gun-storage-map.html</a> New York: <a href="https://rockinst.org/blog/new-york-firearm-storage-map/">https://rockinst.org/blog/new-york-firearm-storage-map/</a> Wisconsin: <a href="https://www.betherewis.com/firearm-storage-online-map/">https://www.betherewis.com/firearm-storage-online-map/</a>

\*not an endorsement or VA Resource

# Resources for Veterans

## Additional Education about Secure Firearm Storage

Type	Description
VA Resources	<p><b>Storage Education and Conversation Tips</b></p> <p><b>A Veteran's Guide to Discussing STORES: Secure Storage to Reduce Suicide Risk</b> – designed to help Veterans talk to other Veterans about secure firearm storage for suicide prevention</p> <p><a href="https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/a-veterans-guide-to-discussing-stores.asp">https://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/a-veterans-guide-to-discussing-stores.asp</a></p>
Other Resources	<p><b>Storage Education and Conversation Tips*</b></p> <p><b>Worried About a Veteran</b> – helps individuals identify potential firearm storage options and offers guidance on how to have a conversation about firearm storage with a Veteran</p> <p><a href="https://worriedaboutaveteran.org/">https://worriedaboutaveteran.org/</a></p>
	<p><b>Storage Education and How to Install a Cable Lock*</b></p> <p><b>Project Child Safe</b> – helps individuals identify potential firearm storage options</p> <p><a href="https://projectchildsafe.org/securing-your-firearm/">https://projectchildsafe.org/securing-your-firearm/</a></p>
	<p><b>Storage Education*</b></p> <p><b>Lock2Live</b> – tool to help make decisions about temporarily reducing access to firearms</p> <p><a href="https://lock2live.org/">https://lock2live.org/</a></p>
	<p><b>Storage Education and Conversation Tips*</b></p> <p><b>BulletPoints Project</b> – helps identify potential firearm storage options and offers guidance on how to have a conversation about firearm storage with patients</p> <p><a href="https://www.bulletpointsproject.org/">https://www.bulletpointsproject.org/</a></p>
	<p><b>Firearm Culture Education*</b></p> <p><b>Walk the Talk America</b> – course and other resources to help mental health providers (and others) learn about gun culture and suicide prevention</p> <p><a href="https://walkthetalkamerica.org/classes/">https://walkthetalkamerica.org/classes/</a></p>

*\*not an endorsement or VA Resource*

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