



Law Enforcement Agencies' Perceptions of Temporary Firearms Storage to Prevent Suicide

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Law enforcement agencies in U.S. Mountain West states perceive few barriers to temporary, voluntary firearms storage to prevent suicide and believe that suicide prevention is consistent with their mission.

Researchers surveyed 448 police chiefs and sheriffs in eight Mountain West states about their agencies' firearms storage practices, willingness to provide storage, and potential benefits of and barriers to providing storage.

Three-quarters of responding agencies reported having provided voluntary, temporary storage of firearms. Agencies that provided intensive, ongoing training to officers on mental health issues were more likely to provide temporary firearms storage. Of the eight participating states, Utah and Montana were most likely to provide temporary storage, while Colorado and New Mexico were least likely.

Most agencies perceived moderate to major benefits to providing storage, including being seen as a positive partner in the community, and having an opportunity to assist health care workers in reducing access to lethal means. Over 50% of agencies felt that lack of sufficient space to store firearms would be a moderate or major barrier to temporary storage. Additionally, over 50% of agencies felt that temporary storage might lead to more community distrust of law enforcement, and saw this as a moderate or major barrier.

Law enforcement can be a willing partner in temporary, voluntary firearms storage efforts and should be engaged in community suicide prevention planning. Helping law enforcement work through potential barriers, including logistics and concerns about negative community perceptions, could increase law enforcement engagement in these efforts.

Brooks-Russell, A., Runyan, C., Betz, M. E., Tung, G., Brandspigel, S., & Novins, D. K. (2019). Law enforcement agencies' perceptions of the benefits of and barriers to temporary firearm storage to prevent suicide. *American Journal of Public Health, 109*(2), 285–288.

Settings: Law Enforcement
Strategies: Reduce Access to Means

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