Strategies for the Future

**Strategy 1:** Increase and expand funding for programs and their subsequent evaluation that seek to prevent suicides by firearm.

1. We need greater funding for programs and initiatives focused on firearm suicide prevention. We recognize public funding may be limited to initiatives with a long-established track record. We hope that private, philanthropic funders will consider the below guidance in their work to support firearm suicide prevention efforts:

   - Explicitly emphasize the importance of funding efforts that address the lethality associated with firearms as a method.
   - Include engagement with, input from, and co-creation, where possible, by gun owners from the outset, as well as others with key lived experience, in order to consider the population these efforts aim to most directly impact. We also encourage funders to support partnerships between unlikely allies, where constructive.
   - Further, we encourage funders, whatever their particular views on gun policy, to broaden the kinds of programs and organizations which they fund.

Too often, the debate on public policy has left funders with a limited range of allied grantees, which in turn reduces our collective ability to bring diverse groups with important knowledge together to jointly seek to solve this problem. We believe that this issue is too important and urgent to not work together, even when some areas of strong disagreement remain. Innovative programmatic efforts to prevent firearm suicide merit consideration even when those running such programs may not be aligned with 100% of funder priorities on public policy.

2. We believe funding should cover both promising, innovative efforts built on established principles as well as those with strong evidence-informed track records. This means newer, grassroots efforts rooted in best practices may merit consideration to help them build an evidence base recognizing rigorous evaluation takes significant investment not always available to smaller initiatives. Evaluation of this work and any risk prevention effort is inherently challenging. We need more and better data and a recognition that clarifying which factor or intervention saved a life is quite difficult.
Strategy 2: Highlight current work by firearms groups and others to promote and expand their suicide prevention reach and scope.

1. We recognize the strong existing and emerging work currently being done both outside and inside the firearm community by gun industry and gun community leadership. There are lessons to be learned from these efforts as we call for even more urgent action. This report cites several initiatives our participants either lead or know about.

2. We support, encourage, and want to incentivize gun owners, gun rights groups, and the gun industry to be outspoken in ways that strategically drive behavior change to prevent firearm suicide. We particularly call for efforts that use inclusive language, connect with the values of gun owners, and aim to empower. We want to further normalize safety practices and behaviors that many gun owners already employ so they are more widespread, and ideally universal, when it comes to storage practices.

3. We call on leaders to build unique partnerships to drive change (an example is the AFSP and NSSF partnership described above) and elevate efforts that people and groups outside of the gun community can be a part of to make a positive impact as well. We all have a part to play.

4. We believe in promoting safer in-home and voluntary out-of-home storage opportunities, consistent with state and local laws, to reduce firearm access to individuals at-risk of suicide. Temporarily limiting access to lethal means is critical to preventing firearm suicide.

Strategy 3: Increase and expand firearm suicide prevention research.

1. We encourage funders, public and philanthropic, to study suicide, firearms, and suicide prevention strategies via partnerships with scientists, clinicians, consumers of mental health services, those with a range of lived experience, gun owner-aligned groups, and others.

2. We challenge more funders to enter this space beyond those already involved. We particularly promote research efforts that “improve [our] understanding of the determinants of firearm injury, the identification of those at risk of firearm injury […], the development and piloting of innovative interventions to prevent firearm injury and mortality, and the examination of approaches to improve the implementation of existing, evidence-based interventions to prevent firearm injury and mortality.” Specific focus areas for increased understanding should include, but are not limited to:
   - diverse populations and risk with a focus on equity that contextualizes firearm suicide and gun ownership,
• the language and science of persuasion around personal safety and suicide,
• mental health stigmatization among key populations like gun owners and how to overcome it,
• co-produced research with gun owners and advocates, and
• research into efforts that lead to improved or new programs and thus reduced rates of firearm suicide.

**Strategy 4: Amplify education on lethal means and suicide prevention to drastically reduce the number of firearm suicides in the United States.**

1. We call for education campaigns, including bolstering existing efforts and filling gaps, that do a range of things, including taking account of the complex perceptions of gun ownership that are often dependent on race and ethnicity. These campaigns should include:
   • Specific calls to action for targeted audiences.
   • Credible messengers to deliver campaign messages that authentically resonate with the values of the intended audience.
   • The best expertise in communications science to expand awareness and drive behavior change about guns and suicide.
   • An acknowledgement of the differing means of firearm acquisition, sometimes through non-traditional methods, which will impact interventions.

2. We call on diverse leaders to share existing program information to expand their reach and scale by:
   • Identifying channels to deliver existing program information across interests and value groups—faith communities, neighborhood groups, affinity groups, spaces utilized by gun owners, and others.
   • Clarify the roles leaders in these spaces can constructively play.
   • Deliver existing program information to gun owners and non-gun owners on the importance of interventions due to lethality of firearms when used in suicide attempts and how to get mental health support.

3. We seek to provide information on our findings to legislators, including those who can impact research and funding.
4. Many doctors and mental and behavioral health care providers offer high quality care to a range of populations. We call for an increase in training and competency regarding treatment for those with suicidal ideation and access to guns following best practices so that firearm owners don’t forego care.

**Strategy 5:** Demonstrate that dialogue can occur to rebuild trust, forge stronger mutual understanding, find common ground, and take action to prevent firearm suicide.

1. We will model a different and better conversation about guns in America through public-facing events and an innovative range of communication vehicles reaching diverse audiences. We invite others to join us.

2. We will leverage our own unique networks to tell the story of this dialogue to different types of audiences and promote the specific ideas included here to prevent firearm suicide. Recognizing others possess good ideas and valuable insights, we invite people from across sectors and backgrounds to join us, engage in your own constructive efforts, and work together to prevent these deaths.
Footnotes

Footnote