

**LIMITING ACCESS TO LETHAL MEANS:**

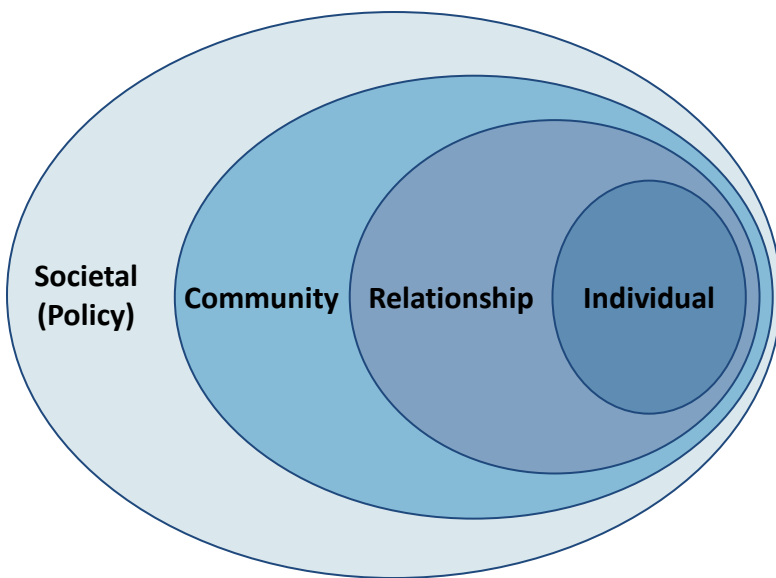
***Applying the Social Ecological Model for Firearm Suicide Prevention***

**OVERVIEW**

The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence recently published a paper in *Injury Prevention* that outlines a novel application of the social ecological model for firearm suicide prevention. It focuses on four levels of intervention (societal, community, relationship, and individual) to reduce access to firearms, a practical contributor to the capacity to attempt suicide, from individuals when they are at an elevated risk for suicide. There is substantive research linking easy access to firearms with an increased risk of firearm suicide. Suicide prevention interventions that address access to lethal means are critical components of a comprehensive suicide prevention strategy.

**INTERVENTIONS**

Potential interventions using the social ecological model framework include: at the policy level - extreme risk laws, voluntary self-prohibition policies, and policies that reduce the availability of firearms; at the community level - gun shop projects; at the relationship level - lethal means safety counseling and assistance in safer storage; at the individual level - safer storage. Taken together with upstream interventions, such as increased access to mental health services and substance use treatment, a multi-level approach for suicide prevention that addresses access to firearms can save lives.



<b>Firearm Suicide Prevention Interventions</b>	
<i>Level</i>	<i>Intervention</i>
Societal	Extreme risks laws
	Voluntary self-prohibitions
	Policies that reduce availability of firearms
Community	Gun shop projects
Relationship	Family/friends holding onto firearms
	Lethal means safety counseling
Individual	Safer storage



## FIREARM SUICIDE PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS:

### *Addressing Access to Lethal Means*

#### SOCIETAL

- **Extreme risk laws**
  - Allow law enforcement, and in some states family and household members, to petition a judge to temporarily limit an individual's access to firearms if they are at risk of harming themselves or others
- **Voluntary self-prohibitions**
  - Allow individuals to place themselves on a do-not-sell list, which would put their name into the National Instant Criminal Background Check System and prohibit them from purchasing firearms
- **Other policies that reduce the availability of firearms**
  - Universal background checks with permit-to-purchase laws
  - Mandatory waiting periods for firearms purchases
  - Policies to support or incentivize interventions at other levels of the model (e.g. a policy that provides funding to train healthcare providers on lethal means safety counseling)

#### COMMUNITY

- **Gun shop projects**
  - Provides retailers, instructors, and customers of all experience levels with firearm suicide prevention educational materials

#### RELATIONSHIP

- **Family/friends holding onto firearms**
  - Family or friends who recognize that a loved one may be at risk may intervene and offer to store the at-risk individual's firearms for the duration of the crisis if they can do so safely and in accordance with applicable firearms transfer laws
- **Lethal means safety counseling**
  - The process through which healthcare providers ascertain if an at-risk individual has access to lethal means of suicide and work with the individual and their family or friends to reduce access until the risk of suicide decreases

#### INDIVIDUAL

- **Safer storage**
  - Storing firearms unloaded and locked, with ammunition locked separately
  - Giving family/friends key to the safe with firearms
  - Removing firearms from the home

**Source:** Allchin, A, Chaplin, V, and Horwitz, J. June 2018. Limiting Access to Lethal Means: Applying the Social Ecological Model for Firearm Suicide Prevention. *Injury Prevention*.