

Dear local public health officials:

Your role in promoting firearm storage for family and community safety is invaluable. We appreciate your interest in joining Public Health – Seattle & King County in this crucial endeavor. Our *Lock It Up* program, which has operated since the late 1990s, has received funding this biennium from the Washington State Department of Commerce’s Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention to promote safe firearm storage. We are using these resources to share our program model and lessons learned with other local health jurisdictions and to support you in implementing all or part of the program in your county.

This comprehensive toolkit is designed to provide you with the necessary information and resources for implementing the *Lock It Up* program. It contains information about the research justification for safe firearm storage, our program’s history, and tips for implementing each part of our program (law enforcement partnerships, retail partnerships, media work, and device distribution) with strong consideration of racial and geographic equity. To supplement this guide, we’ve created a SharePoint site [here](#)⁷, where you can download design files for materials, access a work plan you can customize for your plans and needs, and share program materials.

We’re thrilled to work with you to protect our communities from firearm injury and theft. Together, we can make a significant difference and look forward to a long, impactful partnership!

To access the SharePoint page, please email karyn.brownson@kingcounty.gov. We are here to support you every step of the way.

Karyn Brownson, Community Safety Manager and *Lock It Up* program lead.



Acknowledgments



Public Health – Seattle & King County is deeply grateful for the invaluable support of the Washington State Department of Commerce’s Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention. Their funding has been instrumental in expanding this program and revising our materials to create this guide.

Many thanks, as well, to the many colleagues who have contributed to developing, reviewing, and designing this guide:

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Introduction: The research case for safe storage

According to a 2020 Gallup Poll, 32% of Americans owned a firearm, while 44% lived in a firearm-owning household.¹ Research over the previous 30 years has shown that the presence of firearms in the home substantially increases the risk of intentional and unintentional deaths due to firearms.^{2,3} Firearms remain the leading cause of death among ages 0-24, with 85% of these deaths among children 0-12 occurring in the home.⁴ Approximately 20% of U.S. firearm-owning households with children do not properly secure their firearms.⁵ Safe storage of firearms is defined as “having firearms locked, unloaded, and with ammunition locked and stored separately”.⁶ This is also known as the “triple safe storage method.”⁷ Washington state [law](#)² defines “secure gun storage” as 1. A locked box, gun safe, or other secure locked storage space designed to prevent the unauthorized use or discharge of a firearm; and 2. The act of keeping an unloaded firearm stored by such means.

These practices have been proven to reduce suicide and unintentional firearm injury, particularly in homes with children and adolescents.^{3,6-9} Therefore, safe storage of firearms is an effective primary prevention strategy that serves as a harm reduction approach by preventing access to firearms in the home.

Storage practices and preferences vary according to the type(s) of firearm owned, the reason(s) for owning a firearm, and the presence of children in the home.^{2,6-11} Storage options for firearms include:

- Cable lock
- Trigger lock
- Lockbox
- Gun safe or vault

Trigger locks and cable locks are often inexpensive and easy to distribute; however, they are frequently underused.^{7,9,10} Cost is often a barrier to using gun safes. However, they tend to fit long guns and more of them, which is favorable for those who use firearms for hunting or recreation.^{9,11} Priorities, including ease of transfer between a vehicle and the home, the ability to store long and short guns with the same device, and the credentials of device-recommending organizations, also influence owners’ storage practices and preferences.^{2,12,13} Frequently cited barriers to safe storage include device cost and perceived ineffectiveness.² However, a prevailing reason for not storing firearms locked is the fear that they will be inaccessible in an emergency.^{2,8,11,12}

Indeed, firearms used primarily for personal protection are less likely to be locked compared to those used for hunting or recreation.^{9,12} “Time to disarm” and “inconvenience” are leading barriers to using storage devices.^{9,11} Among 400 firearm-owning and non-firearm-owning Washingtonians, more than 80% felt that it was “very important” or “absolutely essential” to have the ability to lock and unlock a loaded firearm quickly.¹² Nonetheless, when surveyed about device preferences, the same respondents reported that they “would definitely use [a lockbox] if owned” compared to other storage devices. This was consistent between firearm owners with existing locked and unlocked firearms in the home.¹²

Similarly, a survey of approximately 3,000 attendees at ten community-based firearm safety events across Washington between 2015-2018 found that **fewer than 1 in 4** firearm owners practiced the triple safe storage method.⁷ However, when provided the option for a free storage device, **9 out of 10**

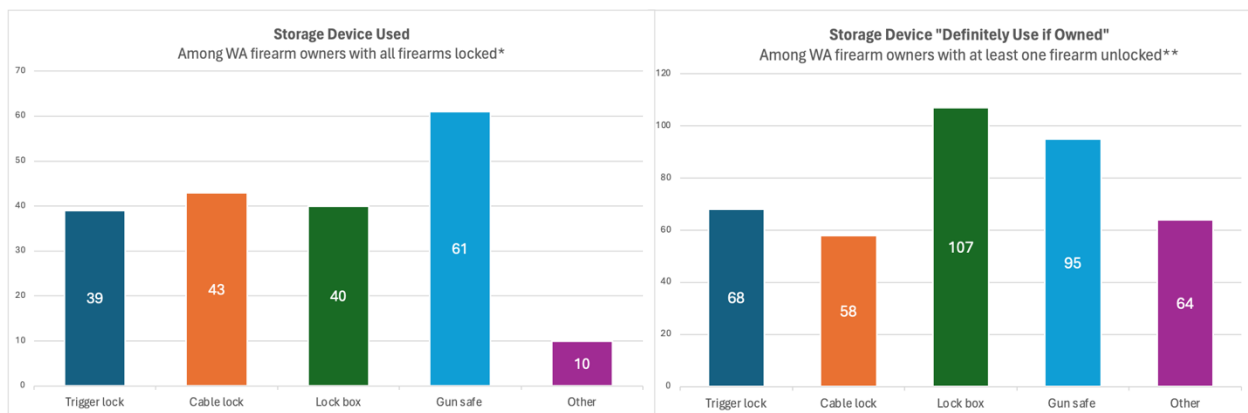


respondents preferred a lockbox, while fewer than 1 in 10 preferred a trigger lock, citing “overall firearm safety” as the reason for this preference, followed by promoting “child safety”.⁷

Among 2,152 U.S. firearm owners in 2022, the leading reason for locking firearms was to prevent child access, followed by preventing theft and keeping the firearm in good condition.⁸ Those who did not store their firearms locked cited the protection of children as the leading circumstance under which they would *consider* locking up their firearms.⁸ While firearms are more likely to be stored safely if children under the age of 13 are in the home, firearm storage practices still vary, especially in rural areas.⁷

Among 57 firearm-owning individuals residing in rural areas of three southern states, the majority perceived the risks of firearms to children as very low.² Overall, respondents were “confident” that their children knew how to handle guns safely and were more concerned with children accessing medications or alcohol as means of suicide, although firearms have a >90% fatality rate compared to other methods of suicide.² (In reality, thorough firearm safety training does not necessarily keep a person safe in a crisis, and suicide losses among well-trained firearm users and their families are common.) Campaigns to address these beliefs should include education about suicide prevention among youth and the associated risks of unsecured firearms while addressing the perceived need to keep guns readily accessible for personal protection.^{2,3}

In rural Alaska, 33 out of 40 firearm-owning households had children under the age of 17.⁹ Thirty-four of these homes kept firearms unlocked in areas of the home, including entryways, bedrooms, and storage rooms, with ammunition in multiple locations.⁹ Notably, 86% of gun safes were found storing firearms locked three months following the distribution of free storage devices.⁹ These findings imply that firearm owners are more likely to store their firearms safely when they have access to their preferred storage method. Increasing the availability of storage devices and understanding reasons for firearm ownership and storage practices will be essential for reducing preventable injuries and fatalities due to firearms.



*n=185, participants could select more than one option

**n=141, participants could select more than one option

“Other” refers to *Life Jacket™* storage devices

Source: Simonetti et al., 2019

Washington state law and secure storage

Safe storage of personally owned firearms is not affirmatively mandated in the state of Washington. However, secure storage is incentivized by 2018's Initiative 1639, codified in Chapter 9.41 RCW. This ballot initiative, which passed with nearly 60% of the vote despite public controversy, created several new firearm policies in Washington. These include enhanced background checks and require completion of safety training for semiautomatic rifle purchases, mandating messaging and safe storage promotion by firearm dealers, and creating an incentive for secure storage. The relevant section of the Washington State Office of the Attorney General's [FAQ¹](#) on the laws changed by this initiative is below.

Does Initiative 1639 require that I keep my firearm in secure storage?

No. The new law doesn't directly require that a firearm be stored in a particular place or in a particular way.

But if your firearm is not in secure storage, and you knew or reasonably should have known that the firearm could be accessed by someone who is prohibited from possessing a firearm, such as a child, under some circumstances, you may be charged with a crime.

Effective July 1, 2019, a person who fails to securely store a firearm could be charged with a felony if a person who is legally ineligible to possess a firearm uses it to injure or kill themselves or someone else.

Effective July 1, 2019, a person who fails to securely store a firearm could be charged with a gross misdemeanor if a prohibited person discharges it and uses the firearm:

1. In a way that shows intent to intimidate someone or that warrants alarm for the safety of others or
2. In the commission of a crime.

The new safe storage requirements are not violated:

1. If the firearm was in secure gun storage or was secured with a trigger lock or similar device or
2. If the person is ineligible to possess because of age but the access is with parental permission and under adult supervision; or
3. In cases of self-defense; or
4. If the person who is ineligible to possess the firearm:
 - Obtains it through unlawful entry, and
 - The unauthorized access or theft is reported to law enforcement within five days of the time the owner knew or should have known that the firearm had been taken.

Does Initiative 1639 require law enforcement to come to my house to ensure I’m properly storing my firearm?

No. The new law doesn’t require that a firearm be stored in a particular place or in a particular way. There are strict constitutional limits on when law enforcement can enter your home.

Does Initiative 1639 make me liable if my firearm is stolen and used in a crime?

No, not if you report it as stolen. The new law specifically provides an exemption from the storage requirement for a firearms owner if their firearm is taken from them:

1. Through unlawful entry, and
2. The unauthorized access or theft is reported to law enforcement within five days of the time the owner knew or should have known that the firearm had been taken.

What is secure storage?

Effective July 1, 2019, Washington [law](#)² defines “secure gun storage” as:

1. A locked box, gun safe, or other secure locked storage space that is designed to prevent unauthorized use or discharge of a firearm; and
2. The act of keeping an unloaded firearm stored by such means.

.....

Additionally, some municipalities have affirmative requirements that firearms be stored securely. For example, there is an affirmative requirement for safe firearm storage in the City of Seattle, but a similar law in Edmonds was struck down. It is important to check the requirements in your area before embarking on a safe storage promotion project. Requirements in your area can be found on your local legislative bodies’ websites.

History of the Lock it Up program

From 2017 to 2021, 680 King County residents were non-fatally injured by firearm, and an additional 984 King County residents died by firearm from 2018 to [2022](#)³. Despite these staggering rates of injury, less than half of King County firearm owners report using the safe storage method of keeping firearms locked and unloaded. According to the Washington State Department of Commerce, from 2018 to 2020, there were 1,462 non-fatal firearm-related injuries in Washington State, and 2,502 fatalities related to firearms in 2019 to [2021](#)⁴. Thus, firearm safety is a top concern statewide; however, cultural barriers around firearm storage make conversations on the topic difficult. In response, Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC) sourced funding, program staff, and firearm safety data and resources to develop the Lok-It-Up coalition, laying the groundwork for today’s *Lock It Up* program to expand statewide.

The Safe Storage Coalition, later renamed to the *Lock It Up* Coalition (formally Lok-It-Up), was established by Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center in 1997. After cuts to health departments' funding for injury and violence prevention, the coalition disbanded, and the work was held by the *Lock It Up* program maintained by PHSKC.

In 2013, efforts to reduce firearm-related injuries prompted King County Executive Dow Constantine to issue an executive order asking our health department to develop strategies to prevent gun violence. PHSKC took this opportunity to reinvigorate *Lock It Up*, which now collaborates with community partners, firearm retailers, the criminal justice system, schools, and families to build community intervention programs that can prevent further tragedies. In 2017, the United States Government Accountability Office published a report that found “free lock distribution efforts influenced behavior to store firearms more safely,” spurring PHSKC to revisit the issue of storage device distribution and add that to our portfolio of work. The program rebranded in 2018 after focus groups and interviews with firearm owners, users, and prevention partners to take a harm reduction-oriented approach and frame a more empowering message to firearm owners.

The key components of the *Lock It Up* program are:

- Partnerships with law enforcement agencies.
- Partnerships with firearm retailers and shooting sports facilities.
- Partnerships with community-based organizations in the prevention space.
- Distribution of safe storage devices as a harm reduction strategy.
- Public education through print, digital, and audio media.

Lock It Up staff work closely with colleagues working on firearm injury and safety data and on state and local policy, but this work is not part of the *Lock It Up* model.

Partnerships

Law enforcement

Most law enforcement agencies issue concealed pistol licenses (CPLs), which are required for people carrying concealed firearms in [Washington](#)⁵. A person with a concealed pistol license may carry a firearm out of view in most places, with exceptions for sensitive places listed [here](#)⁶. Because of these restrictions, CPL holders who carry guns regularly still need a place to store them at home or in their vehicles. Firearm thefts from cars are alarmingly common in Washington since the statute about carrying firearms explicitly allows firearms to be left unsecured in vehicles.

Over the last several years, *Lock It Up*, supported by law enforcement partners, has prioritized safer storage in cars. Law enforcement agencies can be natural partners in promoting safe storage, as safe storage reduces injury and crime and can make officers' jobs easier and safer. In places where local law enforcement has taken a stand against policy interventions for gun safety, it may be difficult to partner with them on safe storage initiatives, but many agencies will be enthusiastic partners in safe storage whether they issue CPLs or not. King County's *Lock It Up* partners distribute safe storage information directly to CPL applicants or recipients and at community events.

PHSKC's *Lock It Up* law enforcement partnerships include a few parts:

- Making *Lock It Up* print materials available to people applying for or receiving CPLs by making brochures available in the lobby or customer service area, handing them directly to customers, or mailing them with CPLs;
- Hanging *Lock It Up* posters where customers can see them;
- Distributing materials at community events (which some agencies that don't offer CPLs still do);
- Delivering a short script promoting safe storage verbally to customers applying for CPLs.

To establish law enforcement partnerships for safe storage, you should start by determining what law enforcement agencies are in your county or region and what relationships your health department already has with them. Law enforcement partners are frequently involved in traffic safety work, child fatality review teams, overdose prevention, and other community safety groups, and those already familiar with public health could be peer champions. It is also useful to check whether there is an umbrella organization where law enforcement leaders in your county or region meet. You may be able to get support from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, which has supported safe storage outreach at PHSKC before. Agency leadership or their designees need to be on board with a partnership, but in some cases, it may be helpful to start with the people staffing CPL distribution first.

Some useful talking points for new law enforcement relationships:

- Promoting voluntary safe storage does not raise Second Amendment concerns and is now a mainstream topic in firearm-owner circles. Even people who oppose safe storage mandates often support responsible storage practices.
- Safe storage reduces theft, suicide, child injuries, and violence, and this makes law enforcement agencies' jobs easier and safer.
- A high proportion of firearms stolen in Washington are stolen from vehicles, and reducing access to unsecured firearms in vehicles benefits everyone.
- Law enforcement agencies are a very credible messenger in many firearm-owning communities and are a good voice for this issue.

It can be helpful to make a written agreement with law enforcement agencies giving you permission to publicize your partnership – if this isn't possible, document a conversation where permission was given instead. In our experience, after initial agreement and delivery of materials and a script, most of the work of maintaining law enforcement partnerships is in re-filling materials, so be sure the people who will be handling program materials have contact information for you for those asks. King County *Lock It Up* mail partners' leadership team a card at the end of each year thanking them for their partnership and including program staff contact information to make this easier. We sometimes have our health department director sign the cards to help increase the visibility of the program.

Retail

Retailers selling safe storage devices and firearms have been a cornerstone of PHSKC's *Lock It Up* program since it began. Engaging retailers allows safe storage messages to reach firearm owners and users where they are with information from a trusted source. It offers an opportunity to build safety habits with new firearm owners, sometimes even before they bring their first firearm home. It gives retailers a role to play in violence and suicide prevention, which we have found is personally meaningful and related to lived experience for many of them. Although in some areas, there may be anti-government sentiment in gun-owning communities, which can be a deterrent to engaging retail partners, many are enthusiastic about the safe storage program. Sharing a thank you letter – sometimes signed by our director - has fostered stronger relationships with partners over time.

PHSKC *Lock It Up's* retail partners:

- Offer a small (usually 10%) discount on some or all of the storage devices in their inventory to customers who mention the program;
- Post and distribute program materials in their stores;
- Discuss safe storage with their customers and encourage safety practices;
- Sometimes participate in other program activities, like advertising or evaluation.

When *Lock It Up* began partnering with retailers, we reached out to federal firearm licensees in our area by telephone. Initial outreach focused on sporting goods stores, firearm retailers who also sold safe storage devices, and safe companies. We visited stores personally to speak to leadership about the *Lock It Up* program and a potential partnership. While some businesses were unwilling to partner with the government, many signed on and agreed to offer a discount on storage devices and distribute information.

PHSKC found that when planning for safe storage device discounts, partnering with small or locally owned businesses was easier than with national chain stores, even though chain stores may have a better selection of safe storage devices. National chain stores could implement a program across local franchises or serve as hosts for events more easily than some smaller businesses, but navigating those partnerships takes more effort.

When working with a chain store with a corporate office out of state, the chain of command may be unclear, and getting approval to offer a discount on devices is more difficult. If you want to work with stores with an out-of-state corporate office, you should plan for extra time and more effort to build the partnership. Small business owners with more autonomy and stronger community relationships will be able to make partnership decisions much more easily. Additionally, we have had great success, including a wholesaler among our partners, making device distribution far easier and less expensive.

You can find a list of licensed firearm dealers and their contact information on the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms' [website](#)⁷, which is updated monthly. If people in your networks are customers or students of a local retail outlet, they may be a good place to start. It is important to emphasize some key points for retailers:

- Encouraging voluntary safe/secure storage is uncontroversial for most people – this has changed a lot over the last five years.
- Most people who purchase a firearm accept that it's best for it not to be stolen or misused. This is a starting point for a conversation about safe storage.
- Retailers care about the safety and well-being of their customers and communities. Storing guns locked up is a point of intersection, even if you may disagree about other approaches to safety.
- Lockbox and safe sales are increasing and can be profitable. State laws encouraging secure storage have boosted sales.
- Retailers are required by state law to make a good-faith effort to prevent firearm misuse, and safe storage promotion is one easy way for them to do this.

Either get a written agreement with each retailer about how you will work together or document a conversation in which permission was given. If you are asking retail partners to offer customers a discount, a written agreement about your partnership is especially necessary. Maintaining these partnerships includes refilling materials, visiting to check in two to four times a year, and communicating about other needs and partnership opportunities (for example, getting recommendations about safe storage devices, finding a retailer to participate in a conversation, or communicating about public health-related community issues like an outbreak or natural disaster).

Materials Development

Existing *Lock It Up* materials were last rebranded and revised at PHSKC in 2018. As part of that process, we conducted focus groups with firearm owners, users, and law enforcement personnel and interviewed program partners and subject matter experts. Other than language translations, we have not made changes to the materials since.

Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJ) partners have access to all *Lock It Up* materials with King County branding removed on our [SharePoint page](#)⁸. You can plug in your own logo or a note about local resources or ask us to use them as they are.

Some findings from the focus groups we conducted with Team Soapbox, an external partner that is a full-service media firm, in 2018 are included here as excerpts from the unpublished project report. These may be useful if you don't have the capacity to do new community messaging research while developing your program.

General Messaging Recommendations

- Take the concerns of gun owners seriously.
- Frame safe storage as a part of the spectrum of protection.
- Highlight ease of use of safe storage devices.
- Empower gun owners who are part of the solution, not framing them as the problem

VALUE-BASED MESSAGING

Audiences value:

Responsibility

- Responsible gun ownership.
- Taking responsibility for protecting yourself and others (personal security, family, general public).
- Doing the right thing and doing good are key drivers.

Readiness

- Having the skills and tools for handling any situation.
- Knowing what to do in a threatening situation.
- Competency and capability.

Ease & Reliability

- Ease of access and quick access to firearms in a threatening situation.
- No hindrance for the owner to access a gun, but reliable enough to keep others from access.

Security & Safety

- Security is a continuum; a firearm is one part of that.
- Family and personal security are key drivers.

Focus on messages of Responsibility, Safety

Authenticity was extremely important to gun owners. In particular, focus group participants were quick to point out if a photo included incorrect firearm handling behavior, an inappropriate type of firearm for a situation, or a subject who did not seem comfortable with a firearm. This led us to identify messengers that would best resonate with the audience whose behavior the campaign aimed to educate.

- Most interviewees saw gun retailers and shooting range employees as the most trusted messengers about safe storage. This is why we created a variety of materials for retailers around the holiday season so that they could speak directly to gun owners about safe storage.
 - Many gun owners felt alienated by stereotypes of gun owners. [Team Soapbox](#)⁹ recommended using images that reflect the self-image of gun owners who portray responsibility and capability. For example, the model we used in our photoshoot was familiar with firearms, and the photoshoot was overseen by a firearm expert to ensure authenticity.
 - Interviewees in the law enforcement and military communities felt that police and veterans would make compelling messengers. However, interviewees from outside these circles felt that these messengers could be alienating to certain communities. We recommended being selective about pairing credible messengers with specific audiences (for example, a military or hunting perspective for conservative radio and a sports-specific ad for sports radio).
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These recommendations led us to develop the materials and messages we use now. We have made the design files for our program materials available for your use and customization, and you can find them on our [SharePoint page](#)⁸.

If a different design for materials would work better in your area, we recommend seeking community input on design choices.

Published Messaging Guidelines

Messaging on issues of gun safety can be tricky. These are some good resources PHSKC's *Lock It Up* program draws on regularly. We share these with journalists before agreeing to interviews on our data or practices.

- Reporting on Suicide has a safe messaging guide, examples of well-done media, and examples for bloggers and other media sources, which can be found [here](#)⁹.
- The Reporting on Death and Grief page provides resources and best practices for journalists and communications professionals reporting on death or grief in general, including managing one's own trauma exposure, which can be found [here](#)¹⁰.
- Everytown For Gun Safety's messaging guide was designed for candidates for elected office but includes concise talking points on firearms and firearm safety that may be useful. The guide can be found [here](#)¹¹.



Developing new program materials

Brochures, flyers, and posters

Pros: Ads can be placed where the intended audience is likely to visit. The per unit cost can be less expensive when produced in bulk. The ad messaging can vary in detail and information.

Cons: Distribution could have limited reach since they are physical documents and could be time-consuming. The use of ink and paper is not eco-friendly. Design space could also be limited in only prioritizing key information.

Steps:

1. Collaborate with your organization's marketing and communications teams.
2. Define your budget, goals, and intended audience.
3. Research and develop content strategy.
4. Identify relevant distribution methods.
5. Create ad visuals and descriptions.
6. Contact printing service.
7. Submit ad.
8. Monitor ad performance metrics.

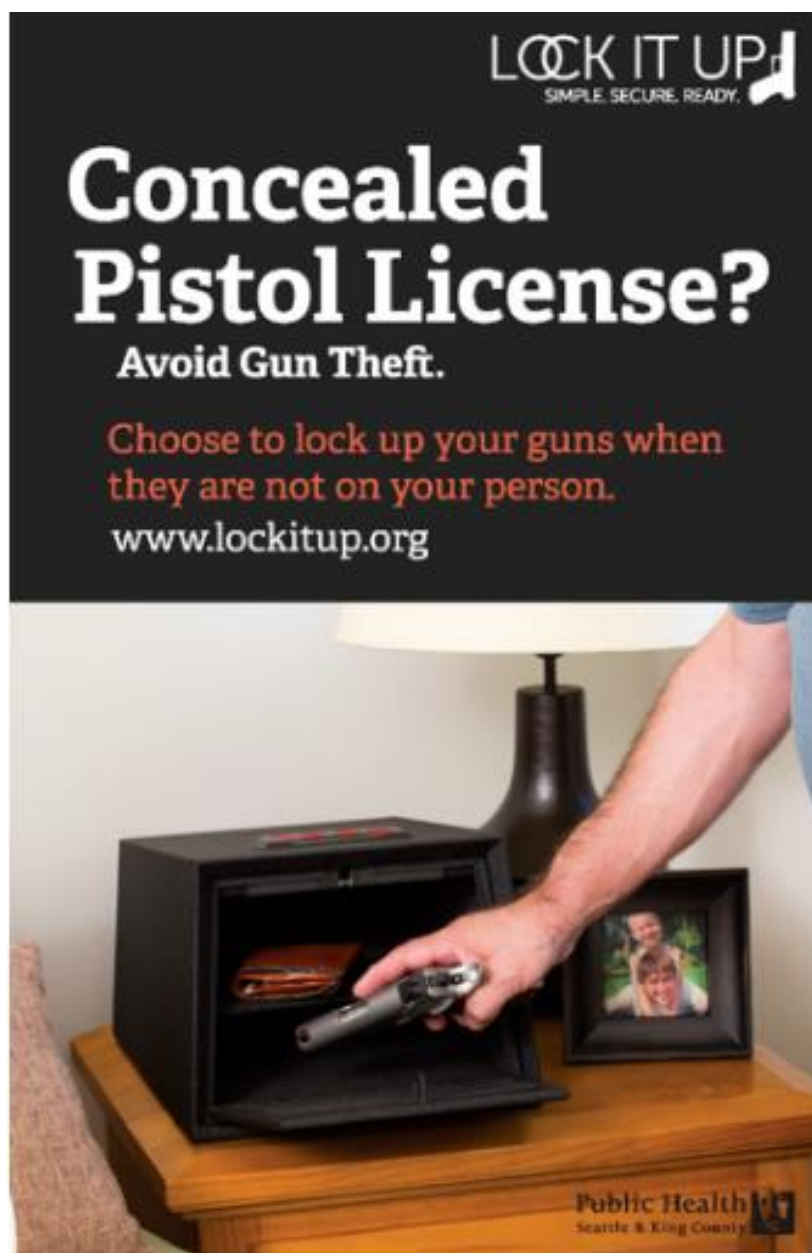
Examples:

The collage displays four different materials for the Lock It Up program:

- Trigger Lock Brochure:** Describes a two-piece lock that fits through the trigger guard. It lists advantages (Affordable, Compact, Accessible) and disadvantages (Not theft-resistant, Doesn't work with all firearms, Low-quality locks may break). Price is listed as \$5 to \$30 or more.
- Why You Should Lock Your Firearms Flyer:** Features a photo of a gun in a car's glove compartment. It states that there are dozens of devices to lock your firearms and that children and unauthorized people should never know your combination or where to find the key. It lists reasons to keep it locked up: prevent theft, prevent children from finding and using the gun, prevent people from dying by suicide, and prevent guns from going to school.
- LOCK IT UP Poster:** Features the logo and tagline 'SIMPLE. SECURE. READY.' and the website www.lockitup.org. It states that locking devices can be purchased wherever guns and accessories are sold, listing gun stores, sporting goods stores, safe stores, hardware stores, and online. It also mentions a discount for retail partners.
- FIREARM LOCKING DEVICES Poster:** Features a photo of a safe and a small framed picture. It asks 'Which one is right for you?' and includes the 'LOCK IT UP' logo and tagline.

[Source](#)¹²





[Source](#)¹³

Public education using media

You can use many types of media for safe storage promotion. Prior to deciding, ask:

- What is your vision for digital engagement?
- Who is your intended audience?
- Why is the proposed media platform the right fit?
- Do you have the resources to maintain the platform's best practices?
- How would the proposed platform help to advance equity?

Digital

Social Media

Pros: Inexpensive for a wide reach, easy to tailor to the population you're trying to reach, can include short messages and links to more detailed materials

Cons: Comments must be managed closely, which can be labor-intensive. We have seen negative comment pile-ons generated by other online communities, which can make safe storage look more controversial than it actually is. We do not recommend doing social media advertising for safe storage during a controversial public campaign related to gun safety – which we learned the hard way by doing it during the process of I-1639 in 2018.

Steps:

1. Collaborate with your organization's marketing and communications teams.
2. Define your budget, goals, and main audience.
3. Research and develop content strategy.
4. Decide the type of post format (static photo, carousel, video) and platform (Twitter/X, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)
5. Create posts in collaboration with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).
6. Monitor social media post comments after posting.


Tips: Refer to past social media post engagement statistics to determine the best media format per platform. Consider comment monitoring strategies.



Examples:

 Public Health - Seattle & King County
September 26, 2018 · 🌐


Be safe. Choose to lock up your guns when they are not on your person.




LOCKITUP.ORG

Learn about safe storage.
Get info about lockboxes and more.

[Learn more](#)

 Public Health - Seattle & King County
September 26, 2018 · 🌐

Concealed pistol license? Avoid gun theft.
When your gun is not on you, choose a car safe.



LOCKITUP.ORG

Learn about safe storage.
Get info about lockboxes and more.

[Learn more](#)

Websites and blogs

Pros: It can reach a global audience 24/7. It can strategize reach based on audience demographics and interests if combined with website ads. Relatively, websites are affordable to create and can provide engagement data.

Cons: Algorithms can impact the success of your website.

Steps:

1. Collaborate with your organization’s marketing and communications teams.
2. Define your goals and priority audience.
3. Research and develop content strategy.
4. Choose a website domain.
5. Design a website on the preferred platform.
6. Create content to feature.

Tips: Research Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Examples:

- [Lock It Up: Promoting the safe storage of firearms - King County, Washington](#)¹²
- [King County Firearm Safety: Lock-It-Up — Team Soapbox](#)¹³
- [How to store firearms safely: Lifesaving information for National Suicide Prevention Month – PUBLIC HEALTH INSIDER](#)¹⁴
- [Household safety during stressful times: Tips for gun owners – PUBLIC HEALTH INSIDER](#)¹⁵

Broadcasted Media

Television

Pros: TV marketing has a broad audience reach across millions of households. There are resources to create high-quality and engaging content. TV is also viewed as a credible source. TV networks could offer a variety of strategic reach options. You can do a video tutorial about how to use safe storage devices in this format.

Cons: TV marketing could be expensive to produce, and audience members could be accustomed to skipping commercials.

Steps:

1. Collaborate with your organization's marketing and communications teams.
2. Define your budget, goals, and main audience.
3. Research and develop content strategy.
4. Identify relevant TV channels.
5. Create ad visuals and descriptions.
6. Contact network service.
7. Submit ad.
8. Monitor ad performance metrics.

Tips: We had great success with a tutorial on how to use a lockbox where media is present. This gave print media an opportunity to repurpose content and share it with their outlets.

Examples:

- [King County launches office dedicated to preventing gun violence](#)¹⁶
- [Public Health hosts gun lockbox giveaways across King County on National Gun Violence Awareness Day](#)¹⁷

Audio Media (podcast interview/radio ads)

Pros: Radios and podcasts have a broad audience reach and can cater to specific demographics, interests, or geographic locations. Channels have existing listener trust, which can help build program awareness. Audio media could convey more information to listeners, and listeners can repeat the messages in a timely manner.

Cons: There is limited visual impact. Listeners could be accustomed to skipping ads. There are limited metrics for listener demographics or episode downloads. Cost can vary based on the host.

Steps:

1. Collaborate with your organization's marketing and communications teams.
2. Define your budget, goals, and priority audience.
3. Research and develop content strategy.

4. Identify relevant channels.
5. Contact channel service.
6. Negotiate terms and pricing.
7. Monitor performance metrics.

Tips: Be intentional about which channels to approach. Highlight the program's benefits. Offer special discounts or promotions. Engage with listeners on social media platforms.

Examples:

- [S3E29 / Lock It Up / Ali Rowhani-Rahbar, Cassandra Crifasi, Jennifer Stuber, Tony Gomez - Just Human Productions](#)¹⁸

Spotify Ads

Pros: Ads can be tailored to reach specific audience demographics, interests, and geographic locations. Data collected from ad engagement can provide insightful performance measures such as impressions and clicks.

Cons: Users could have ad blockers enabled, preventing ads from reaching some online audiences. Some users have a negative perception of tailored ads.

Steps:

1. Collaborate with your organization's marketing and communications teams.
2. Define your budget, goals, and planned audience.
3. Research and develop content strategy.
4. Decide on the advertising platform.
5. Create an ad banner and description.
6. Adjust ad goals.
7. Launch the ad on the platform.
8. Track ad performance.

Tips: Develop eye-catching visuals and persuasive and concise descriptions. Consider mobile optimization. Consider the effectiveness of a male or female voice.

Examples:

MALE VOICE

Sure, you bought your new gun to keep your family safe — but you sure don't want any accidents at home. That's why you need to lock up your gun when you're not carrying it. Do it for your family. Do it for your kids. It's simple, secure — but ready. *Lock it Up*. For more information about safe storage and where to get a discount, go to *lock it up* dot org.

FEMALE VOICE

Are you a mom who carries a concealed pistol wherever you can? You can never be too safe. Let's be honest — your kids are too smart not to know where you keep it at home, and you can't watch them every minute. So lock up your gun when it's not on you. You can grab it when you need it — and the kids can't. Simple. Secure. Ready. *Lock it up*. For more information about safe storage and where to get a discount, go to *lock it up* dot org.

Print Media

Newspaper/Magazine

Pros: Newspapers and magazines have a wide reach, with readers across different demographics and locations. You can also focus your ad with careful consideration of feature sections and editions. Print media has a longer lifespan, is distributed daily, weekly, and monthly, and is traditionally viewed as more credible than online sources.

Cons: Decreased audience due to the rise of digital media and news. The cost of advertisement can fluctuate based on ad size and color. Audience interaction with ads could be limited based on the likelihood of skimming ads and reading more in-depth articles.

Steps:

1. Collaborate with your organization's marketing and communications teams.
2. Define your budget, goals, and main audience.
3. Research and develop content strategy.
4. Identify relevant newspapers/magazines.
5. Create ad visuals and descriptions.
6. Contact newspaper/magazine.
7. Negotiate ad terms and pricing.
8. Submit an ad to a podcast newspaper/magazine.
9. Monitor ad performance metrics.

Tips: Be mindful of ad placement to catch the reader's attention.



Billboards/Banners

Pros: Billboards are typically placed in high-traffic areas, which allows for high visibility with a broad audience and constant exposure. Consistent placement in strategic locations creates a strong presence, leading to brand recognition. Ads can also be placed in locations with the intended audience.

Cons: Prime locations could be expensive. The audience may only have a few seconds to see the ad. If placed in high-traffic areas, there could be competition. Billboards are also typically made with non-biodegradable materials.

Steps:

1. Collaborate with your organization's marketing and communications teams.
2. Define your budget, goals, and audience.
3. Research and develop content strategy.
4. Identify the relevant location.
5. Create ad visuals and descriptions.
6. Contact the billboard/building owner.
7. Negotiate ad terms and pricing.
8. Submit ad.
9. Monitor ad performance metrics.

Tips: Consider locations with the highest traffic.

Examples:



Equity Practices

As a government entity, it is crucial to consider communities' experiences and historical relationships with the government and to acknowledge that some communities may be hesitant to engage with entities that lack a strong relationship or understanding of their community's needs and perspectives. By distributing content through trusted community channels and engaging with community members in their preferred languages, government agencies, and other organizations can improve and heal trust and engagement with diverse populations.

Fostering equity is a vital part of public health. By prioritizing historically marginalized communities, we can bridge gaps in resource access. This approach not only addresses immediate needs but also fosters a more just society with generational impacts. Communities are extremely multifaceted. Breaking down the various community characteristics into smaller manageable categories can serve to simplify the task of strategizing outreach to diverse audiences. Additional guidance on equitable language and anti-racist practices can be found [here](#)¹⁹.

Questions to consider:

- Who is most impacted by firearm injuries and deaths?
- Who has the least access to safe storage devices?
- Who are the trusted messengers for these communities?
- What barriers may the intended community experience in practicing safe storage?
- How can we address gaps in our data?
- How will the program impact racial equity?
- How can we minimize harm?
- How will we address the impacts (including unintended consequences) on racial equity?
- How will you evaluate and remain accountable?
- How does this program address community concerns?

Identities to consider:

- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion/Culture
- Sex/Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Socioeconomic status
- Ability/disability
- Age
- Geographic location

Disability access

When developing outreach media, specifically consider necessary accommodations for people with disabilities. For example, individuals who are hard of hearing or Deaf could face challenges when accessing auditory content such as TV or radio ads. An appropriate strategy to reach hard-of-hearing individuals would be to include text captions on all TV media. By integrating text captions, TV programs become accessible to individuals who are hard of hearing. It enables them to follow dialogue, sound effects, and other auditory elements.

In addition to barriers experienced by people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, numerous other obstacles can impact the ability of people with disabilities to interact with and understand content from media campaigns. The Accessible Communications Guidelines from the American Alliance of Museums provide clear strategies to reduce access barriers in printed materials, websites, videos, and social media posts. These guidelines also provide suggestions for language, symbols, identity, and representation. These guidelines are available [here](#)²⁰. Though these guidelines were developed for the museum context, the information is relevant across settings.

Language access

Language access allows speakers of many languages to access information and resources. When developing these items, it is vital to consider each community's specific cultural norms and preferences. For instance, while some communities prefer information delivered through television or radio, others rely more on print media or digital platforms. Understanding these preferences and adapting communication strategies accordingly can significantly enhance the effectiveness of language access initiatives.

If you have local resources, translating print materials and audio scripts into at least the most common local languages is a helpful practice. *Lock It Up* brochures are currently translated into Amharic, Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Marshallese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tigrinya, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. They are available on our SharePoint page. You may need to translate the main messages for ethnic media. If you are in the Local Health Jurisdictions of King, Pierce, Kittitas, Okanogan, Grant, or Chelan/Douglas Counties, please contact your communications lead or language access liaison. They will inform you about the support that King County's Language Access Team provides.

Bilingual colleagues and language interpreters are very helpful for in-person outreach presentations or video outreach. Live interpretation may require a longer presentation but is very useful for attendees who do not speak or understand English confidently. Your communications team likely has contacts who can connect with a language interpreter.

Accessibility for rural communities

Individuals from rural areas - and other marginalized and underserved communities - might be hesitant to engage with “outsiders,” especially when discussing the issue of firearm ownership and storage. Community members will best receive information about safe storage if it comes from a trusted source(s) within the community. Examples of locations where information could be displayed or distributed might include local businesses and firearms ranges, churches, libraries, or other common gathering spaces. Trusted community members who might help distribute materials may include healthcare providers, local government officials, and other trusted service providers or prominent community figures.

Device distribution

We know that low-barrier public health interventions are the most successful in changing behavior. Health promotion activities that include distributing tools for healthy behavior can work. With this in mind, we began exploring how to distribute firearm storage devices best. Three possible routes for device distribution are putting on public giveaway events, including distribution in other events like tabling at health fairs, and directly giving storage devices to clients, patients, or program participants.

Giveaway events

King County *Lock It Up* has piloted standalone giveaway events through a partnership with our colleagues who do on-the-ground community violence intervention programming. These events have been popular and successful, and we are currently evaluating them to better understand their impact on safety behavior. Steps to set up an event like these are listed below and laid out in t.

Our events have been small, based in neighborhood centers, and co-hosted with a community-based organization with a presence in the neighborhood.

Purpose of event:

- Raise Awareness of community organization’s mission
- Acknowledge Key Partners and elected officials who safe firearm storage
- Distribute gun safety equipment, including lockbox/trigger locks, to the first 100 residents at each location

Gun Lockbox Giveaway Check-List

Host Organization

- ☐ Secure a space and choose a date and time for the event and notify LHJ as soon as possible
- ☐ Make sure storage devices and materials will be available on time
- ☐ Work with LHJ to identify speakers
- ☐ Secure tables, chairs, tents, etc.
- ☐ Share marketing graphic across departments and networks and draft a media release if needed
- ☐ Draft proclamation (*if needed*)

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- ☐ Order gun lockboxes & educational materials to be delivered in time for the event (order one to two months ahead of time)
- ☐ Print Gun Lockbox Tutorial handouts
- ☐ Create Gun Lockbox Giveaway graphic and share it with host org
- ☐ Create and implement gun lockbox giveaway outreach plan a month before the event
- ☐ Review proclamation draft (*if needed*)
- ☐ Provide Numbers for lockbox handouts

Risk Management

Different LHJs may have different appetites for risk. If your LHJ has written a risk appetite statement, reviewing it before making a case for device distribution through your program is good. If not, consider the possible risks of distributing storage devices (such as controversy, product recalls, or resale of distributed devices) and the benefits (reductions in violence and injury, positive presence in the community, raising the profile of your program) of doing so.

When King County did this, we weighed our tolerance for risk against the benefit to individual and community safety of improving safe storage practices in our communities. We decided that the benefits far outweighed the risks, and at the time of this writing, we have been distributing devices without incident for four years.

Conclusion

Safe storage promotion is a cost-effective, lifesaving primary prevention practice in public health, and we're excited to build a community of colleagues across Washington State on this important work!

This is a fruitful opportunity to think creatively about strategies to promote safe storage practices in your community. If you have other locally appropriate ideas, please use our model as an initial launching pad! For example, Seattle Children's has developed [a guide](#)²¹ on how to support a safe storage program in clinical settings.

This guide is a living document that will grow and change over time as we learn more together. We hope it has been helpful as you consider how to best do this work in your region. Thank you for your commitment to reducing the burden of firearm injuries in our communities.

Full links to sources

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2. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=9.41.010>
3. <https://kingcounty.gov/en/legacy/depts/health/data/firearms/data-dashboard>
4. https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/ofsvp.community.safety/viz/OfficeofFirearmSafetyandViolencePreventionDashboard/Story_OFSVPDataReport
5. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=9.41.070>
6. <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/state-laws/location-restrictions-in-washington/#:~:text=Washington%20prohibits%20the%20open%20carry,feet%20of%20a%20permitted%20demonstration.&text=Open%20carry%20is%20also%20prohibited,on%20the%20state%20capitol%20grounds>
7. <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/listing-federal-firearms-licensees>
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9. <https://reportingonsuicide.org/>
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11. <https://www.everytown.org/documents/2020/04/2020-gun-sense-candidate-messaging.pdf/>
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13. <https://www.teamsoapbox.com/our-work-blog/2019/10/28/king-county-firearm-safety>
14. <https://publichealthinsider.com/2020/09/21/how-to-store-firearms-safely/>
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17. <https://youtu.be/EpJjFyvFcUw>
18. <https://www.justhumanproductions.org/podcasts/e29-gun-violence-in-america-lock-it-up>
19. <https://cdn.kingcounty.gov/-/media/king-county/depts/dph/documents/about-public-health/equity-community-partnerships/phskc-equitable-language-guide.pdf?rev=884cf1320d124c7a94cb96c5e35b1567&hash=97E975791A88F572859C1FB2FDC4C607>
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21. <https://www.seattlechildrens.org/health-safety/gun-safety/>
22. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?dispo=true&cite=192-100>

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Frequently Asked Questions

***The term “reasonable” could be a challenge when talking to people about firearm storage. Please refer to [this guide](#)²² if necessary.*

1. Will locking up my gun put me in danger if someone comes after me/breaks into my home?

Talking points: A three-number combination lock is quick to open—it can be opened faster than a person can climb a flight of stairs. It is a **simple** safety strategy that keeps your gun **secure** from unauthorized use and **ready** if you need it.

2. I heard this device is really easy to break into; is that true?

Talking points: The devices we have here are approved by the California Department of Justice, which approves devices based on rigorous safety standards. Some lower-quality devices are less secure. No practice is infallible, but California DOJ approval is the highest quality standard.

3. The gun in our house belongs to my spouse; how do I talk them into using it?

Talking points: Has your spouse said they don’t like the idea of safe storage? If not, they may be more open to it than you think, and it’s worth bringing up. If they are resistant to it, have they said why? What motivates them – family safety, responsibility, protection, freedom of choice, something else? Let’s talk about how safe storage might be compatible with their priorities.

4. I’m really worried about my kids having access to guns in others’ homes; what can I do?

Talking points: Before your child visits, ask how firearms are stored in the home. This can be an awkward conversation, but it’s worth having! A good time to bring this up is when you’re talking about other issues like food allergies, pick-up times, or parent supervision. If you are concerned about your child’s safety after hearing the answer, you can always ask to move a play date or sleepover to a different location.

5. I have a disability; what are my storage device options?

Talking points: Ask what accommodations the person usually needs for their disability. For example, a person who is blind might have an easier time using a touch-activated or push-button lock than a combination lock, and a person with limited mobility may be unable to move a heavier or more bulky device from place to place.

6. My kids know not to touch my guns, and they do what they're told; there's no reason to lock them up.

Talking points: It's great that you've talked with your kids about gun safety. But all parents know kids sometimes get curious about what will happen and cross a line. Cause and effect is abstract for kids, and in addition to the safety conversations you're having, keeping them from accessing your guns is a good way to keep them safe.

7. My teen has taken a ton of gun safety classes and/or hunter safety and owns her own gun; there's no reason to lock our guns up.

Talking points: It's great that your teen is well-trained in gun safety. Unfortunately, we've seen tragic situations where a young person who knew all about responsible firearm use used their own or a family member's gun in a suicide or to harm someone else. Teens sometimes act impulsively, and a firearm is the most dangerous thing your teen could have available in a moment of crisis. Locking up your guns could prevent a tragedy.

8. I live alone; there's no reason to lock my guns up.

Talking points: We appreciate that this feels less urgent if you live at home. But an unsecured firearm in your home could endanger people who visit you or enter your home to do work or make repairs – you can't know how everyone who comes to your home is doing. Also, the trafficking of firearms stolen from homes or vehicles is a growing problem in our state, and most of us would hate for our firearms to be stolen and resurfaced, being misused in community violence.

9. Can I use this with a loaded gun?

Talking points: The absolute best practice is to store firearms and ammunition separately. If that doesn't work for you, please keep in mind that cable locks and trigger locks can't be used with loaded firearms. If you feel you must lock up a loaded firearm, put it inside a lockbox or a larger safe.

10. Can I use this in my car?

Talking points: Trigger locks – are small and portable and can be used anywhere; the only drawback is they don't prevent someone from walking off with your firearm, even if it can't be fired. For lockboxes – Yes, this device is great for safe storage in cars. It comes with a cable that can be wrapped around a permanent fixture and tucked under a seat out of sight. The model one size larger comes with pre-drilled holes so it can be bolted down, and you'd have to have holes drilled to do that with this one.

11. How do I keep the LOCKBOX from getting stolen?

Talking points: This lockbox comes with a cable that can be wrapped around a permanent fixture or piece of heavy furniture and tucked out of sight. The model one size larger comes with pre-drilled holes so it can be bolted down, and you'd have to have holes drilled to do that with this one.

12. Why are you telling me what to do with my property?

Talking points: We're not here to tell you what to do but to discuss some actions you could take. You can try one of these devices for free.

13. Here is lots and lots of information about my firearms and how I use them.

Talking points: Validate that the person is sharing this information with you, but feel free to thank them for talking with you and move on to the next person.

14. It's none of your business whether I have a gun or not.

Talking points: We appreciate that privacy is important to you! You don't have to share anything you don't want to with us, and people can take a device for themselves or give it to someone else.

15. Are you here because of (any number of state laws people have big feelings about)?

Talking points: No, we're not. We're here to promote voluntary safe storage of firearms, which many of us agree on. This work isn't about any policy. Are you interested in learning what we have available today?

16. I really care about gun safety; how can I get involved?

Talking points: Before your event, it's a good idea to have information available about local groups promoting gun safety, if there are any, and online resources where people could learn more. You could also discuss individual actions like talking to friends and family about safe storage or tabling at a safety fair.

Appendix B

Tabling Strategies

Materials to have:

- Lockboxes and/or trigger locks to distribute

Note: A box of lockboxes weighs about 30lb, so plan accordingly!

- A sign explaining what you're distributing and how many
- Safe storage brochures in the languages relevant to who's coming

Note: if someone at your table speaks one of these languages, put up a sign telling people so!

- A paper where people can report zip codes and – if you want to ask – other info
- Fun giveaways
- If relevant, little activity kids can do while you talk to their family about gun storage (remember, teens might need this information too).
- Writing implements, tape, some kind of tablecloth, and other supplies
- Beverages and nourishing snacks for the people tabling

Initial engagement tips:

- Make eye contact if you/they are able and comfortable
- Say hello
- Use welcoming body language
- Consider engagement to draw in folks if they're not stopping on their own

Elevator pitch:

Note: If you're uncomfortable talking about firearms, have lived experience with firearm violence or injury, or get angry at people with lax safety practices, practice these talking points a LOT, including projecting comfort, confidence, and a nonjudgmental stance!! This can be especially hard if you're carrying trauma related to firearms; if you are, we urge you to make a self-care plan that works for you after the event.

We're here to talk about secure gun storage, and we have lockboxes and trigger locks to give away! How are firearms stored in your home? *(Note – many people who own guns have multiple firearms, so use the plural until they tell you not to. Some people bristle when asked directly if they have a gun, and people who don't will tell you so when you ask this way.)*

IF THEY SAY ALL THEIR GUNS ARE ALWAYS SECURED AT HOME:

- That's great! If you sometimes need to leave a gun behind in your vehicle, this lockbox/trigger lock is a great option, so you're still welcome to take one. A trigger lock is a good thing to throw into your range bag in case you forget to bring something else.

IF THEY SAY THEY LEAVE ONE OR MORE GUNS UNLOCKED AND/OR LOADED:

- It's really understandable that some people want a firearm readily available to feel safe. What's your current strategy for keeping the guns available out of the wrong hands? (Validate they're trying if they have any strategies at all.)
- IF THE PERSON IS IN THE MILITARY AND LIVES IN BASE HOUSING – gently remind them that secure storage and storing firearms unloaded are a requirement and you don't want an unsecured loaded firearm to be discovered in an emergency or inspection.
- You might be surprised at how quickly a lockbox or trigger lock can open in an emergency. (demonstrate) You can unlock a lockbox like this faster than a person can climb a flight of stairs or break into a window, and a lot of people practice the combination regularly to keep it in their muscle memory.
- Even if everyone in your household is well-versed in gun safety, an unsecured loaded gun becomes really dangerous if a family member or visitor is having a hard time with mental health, if small kids are around, or if a thief breaks in. We've heard terrible stories about people thoroughly trained in gun safety losing their lives to suicide in an impulsive moment, for example. Stolen guns often resurface in community violence, which we want to stop happening.
- The devices we're giving away today are free. Would you be willing to try one and see how it feels?

IF THEY SAY THEY DON'T HAVE GUN YET AND ARE CONSIDERING GETTING ONE

- Before you bring your first firearm home, this is the perfect time to start thinking about safe storage. If you know what type of gun you're considering getting, we can help you find the device that's right for you.
- *Remember to ask if they'll bring it from place to place a lot – carrying concealed, using a range they have to drive to, etc. and talk about storage in cars if appropriate.*
- *Then, talk them through the options and see if a lockbox or trigger lock will meet their needs. If they'll be shopping for a device, make sure they take a brochure.*
- Ask if they want a lockbox or trigger lock
- Demonstrate in detail how to use it and give them the [Children's one-pager](#)²¹
- Get their zip code, thank them, and send them on their way

###