



FIREARM SUICIDE PREVENTION:

A nascent approach to
preventing suicide
in rural, southeast Missouri



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Learning Objectives:

- Participants will:
 - Gain insight into the novelty inherent in a learning grant specifically designed to explore innovative methods for integrating lethal means safety practices into a comprehensive public health strategy for preventing suicide.
 - Detail the process of collecting qualitative data to evaluate and analyze the evolving mental frameworks of stakeholders actively engaged in firearm suicide prevention efforts.
 - Elaborate on the insights acquired from developing messaging and media campaigns for addressing sensitive topics, with a focus on the lessons learned in effectively navigating complex subject matter.
 - Recognize the insights garnered, obstacles encountered during implementation, and the proactive measures adopted to convert challenges into opportunities, thus reshaping strategies accordingly.





**Missouri Foundation
for Health**
a catalyst for change

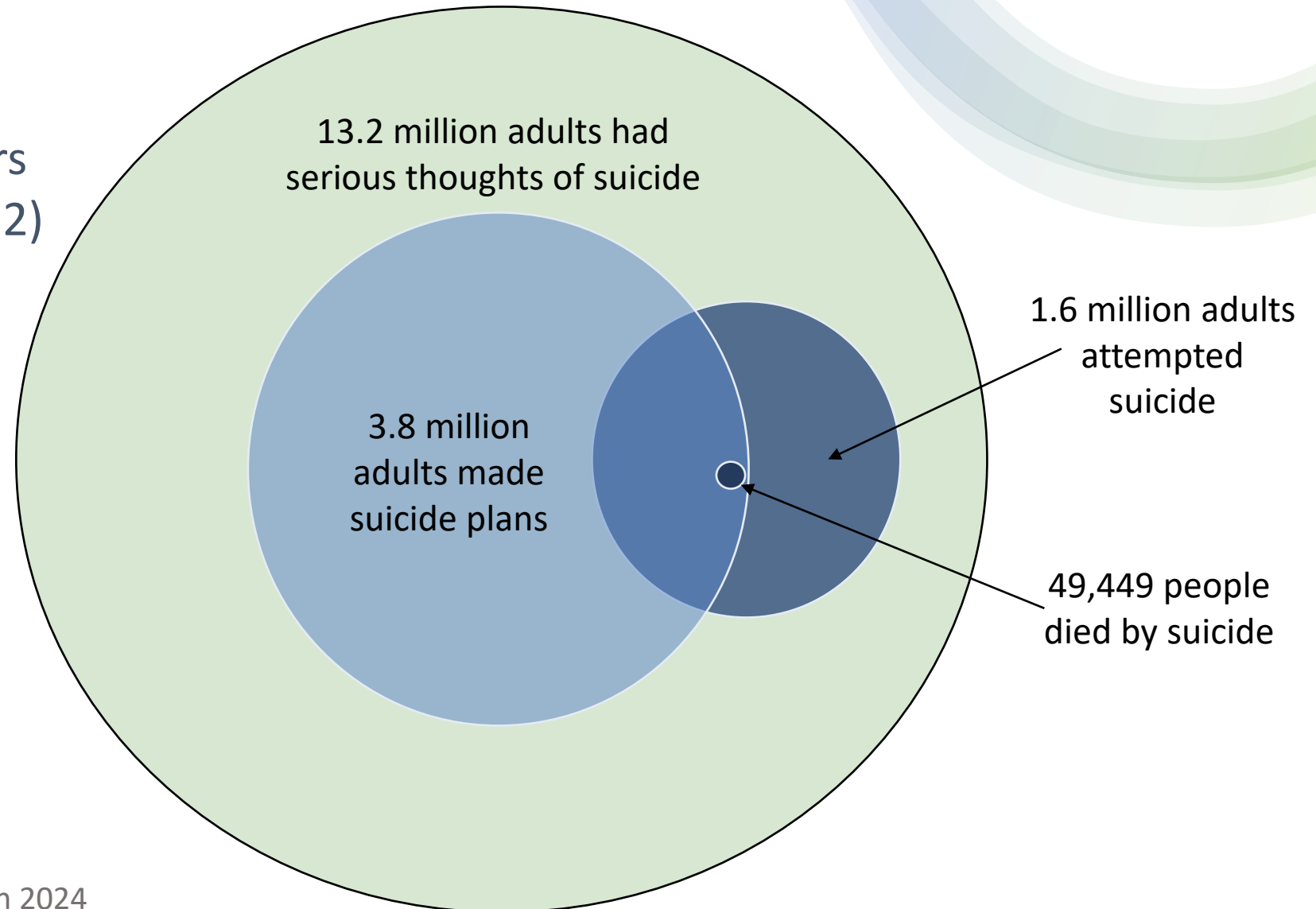


SAFER HOMES
COLLABORATIVE



Why this is Important

Past Year Suicidal
Thoughts and Behaviors
Among U.S. Adults (2022)



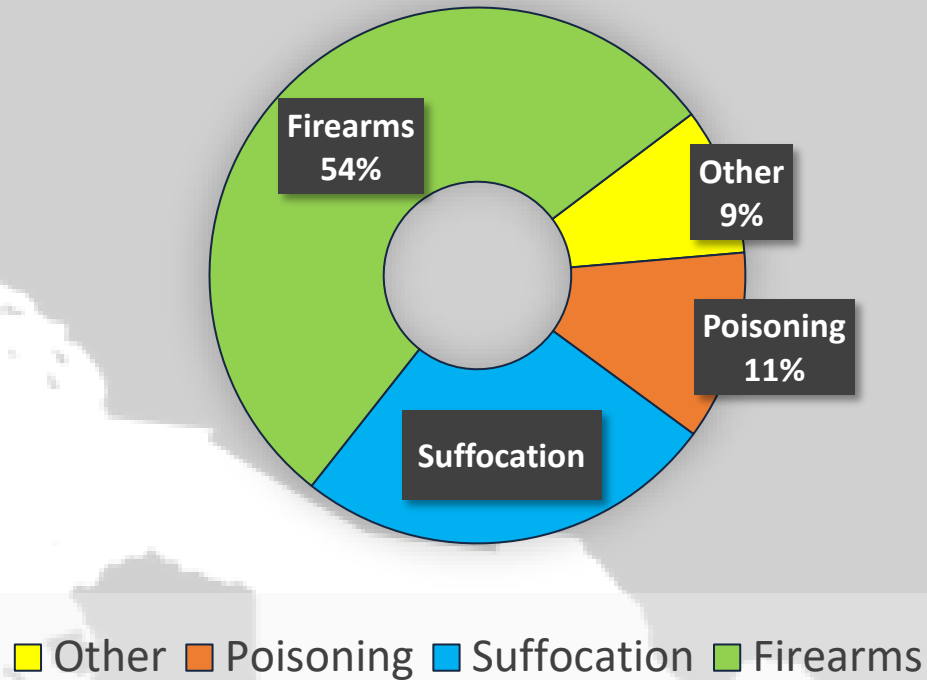
Why Firearm Suicide Prevention?



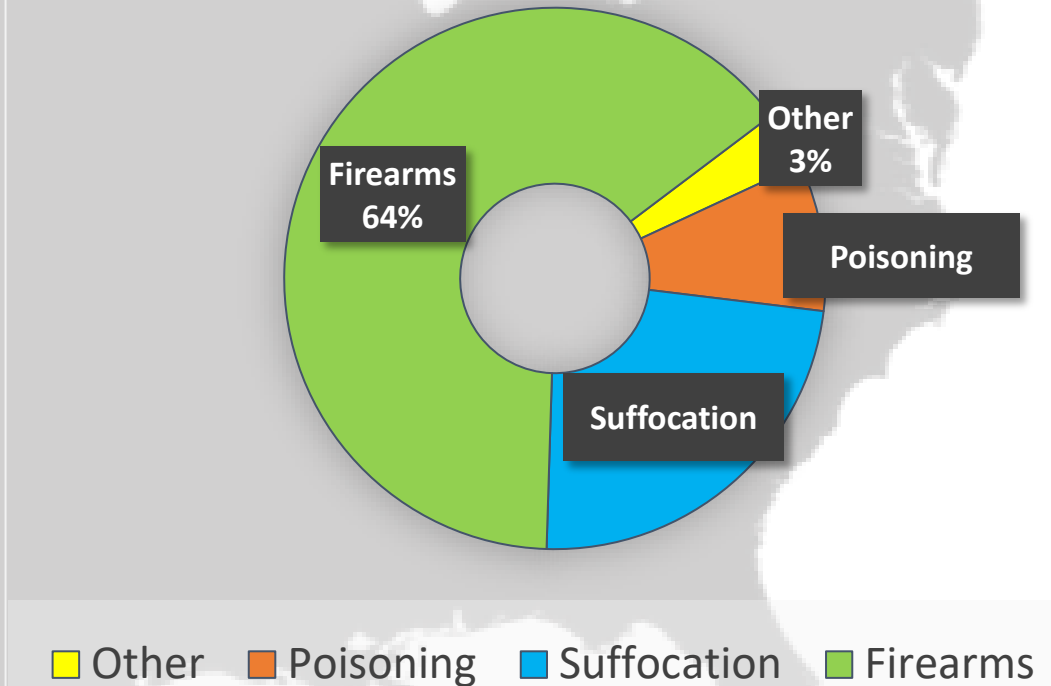
Means Matter

More than half of all suicide deaths are with a firearm, but less than 5% of all self-harm episodes involve a firearm

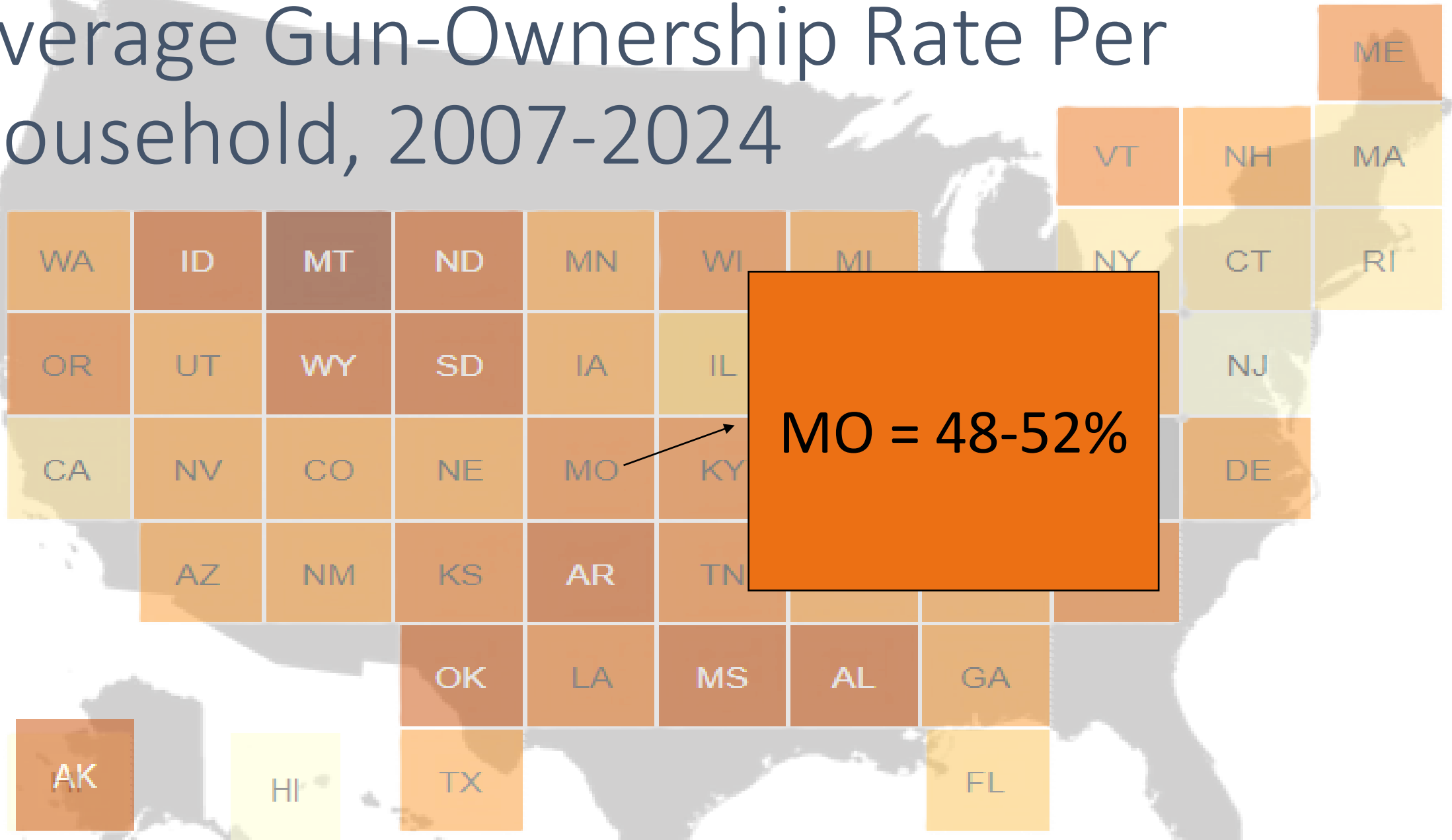
2021, U.S. Suicide Methods
(all genders, all races, all ages)



2021, Missouri Suicide Methods
(all genders, all races, all ages)



Average Gun-Ownership Rate Per Household, 2007-2024



Gun ownership per household in Missouri averages between 48% (Data Pandas, 2024 & Rand, 2016) and 52% (MFH, 2020)

Laws and Policies Matter

Correlational effect when Permit-to-purchase (PTP) laws were enacted in Connecticut (1995-2017) and repealed in Missouri (2007-2017).

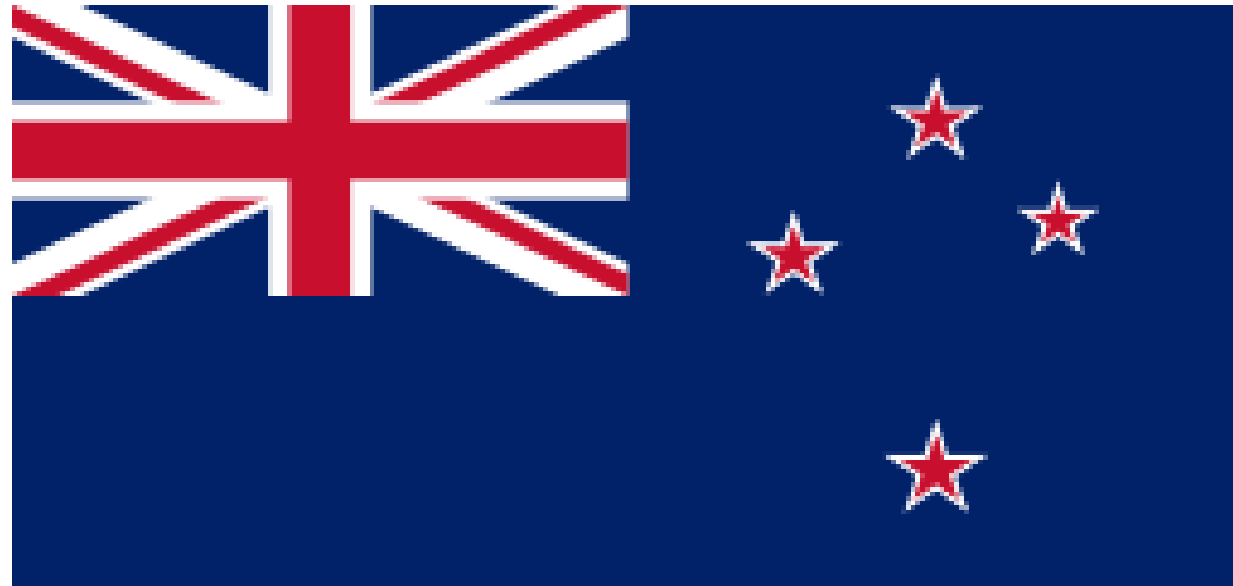
2007 repeal of PTP law in Missouri associated with an increase in firearm suicide rates (23.5%) by 2017.

A decrease in firearm suicide rates (40.5%) was associated with the 1995 implementation of Connecticut's PTP law.

Access to Lethal Means Matters

Reducing access to highly lethal and commonly used suicide methods is correlated with a 30-50% decrease in mortality rates.

New Zealand

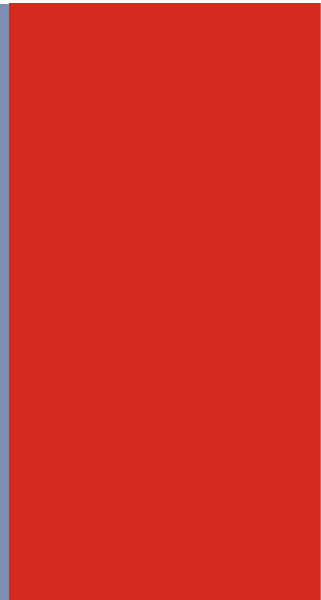


Firearm owners must be licensed. License issued after applicants pass a test on firearm regulations, use, safety, and storage, and a police interview and safe gun storage home inspection. Rates of **firearm suicide reduced by 66% in adolescents and 39% in adults.**

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New Zealand



Canada



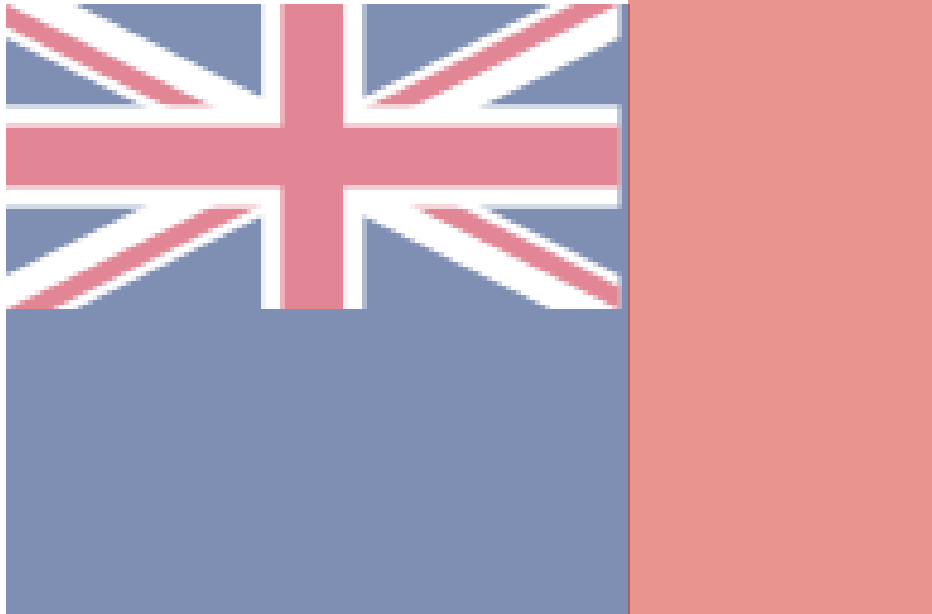
Bill C-17 required that applicants complete a safety course, undergo background checks, and undergo a mandatory 28-day waiting period.

Percentage of **firearm suicides decreased from 31.2% to 24.5%.**

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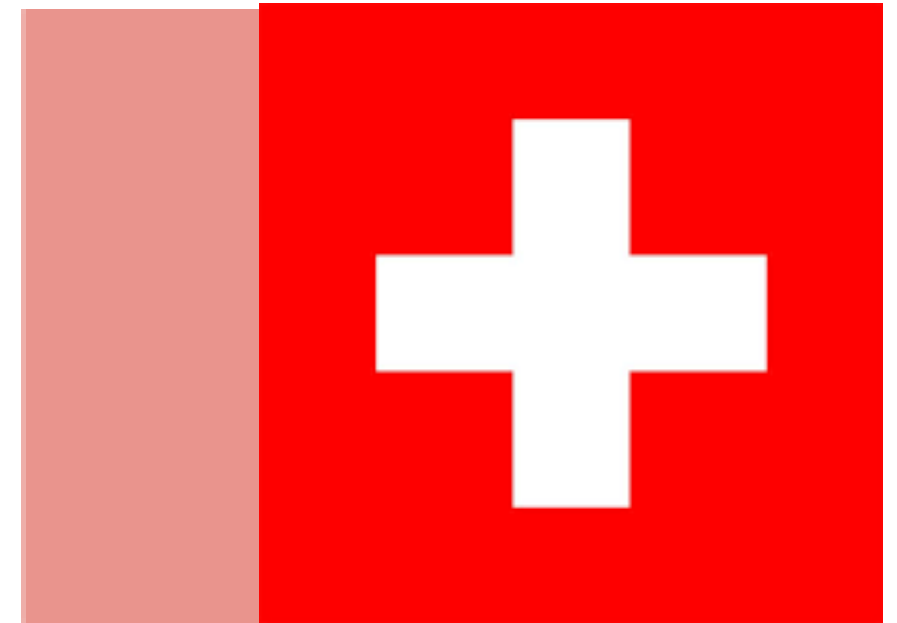
New Zealand



Canada



Switzerland



Swiss reduced the army by half, increased fees for retaining guns after military service, and required ammunition storage at armories. **Rates decreased by 27% for firearm suicide in the** affected demographic group (men ages 18–43).

Benefits of a 2-Year Planning Grant



- Time – to understand the community
- Dream Big – narrow focus
- Informed Approach – readiness for firearm suicide prevention
- Select the Target Audience
- Build Trusting Relationships – MIMH & FCC, FCC and prevention community, FCC and faith leaders, FCC & employers
- Identify Stakeholders – who is missing from the table
- Piloted Project – Suicide Prevention Specialist
 - QMHC vs. CMHL
 - Practice the approach
 - Develop the pitch
- Develop Data Collection Processes

Drawbacks of a 2-Year Planning Grant

- Shift thinking from “doing” to “planning”
- Communicating with stakeholders
 - - Planning vs. doing
- Didn't follow the normal grant award process. Get funded – go do it
- Unclear expectations
- How to use Openfields – what are we supposed to be doing if we're not implementing?
- Shift from quantitative evaluation to learning evaluation
- Leveraging partnerships in the cohort
 - - What are you proposing?
- Trusting outside communications strategists





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Openfields

media
berkeley studies group

Mental Health Coalition

Suicide Prevention Coalition

- Reconvened defunct coalition
- Narrow focus
- Addition of another coalition/meeting




Mental Health Awareness Coalition

- Active Coalition
- Broad focus
- Looking for a new focus



Merging an old idea with a new brought the new focus!



Firearm Suicide Prevention Grant

Implementation – Years 1
& 2 of a 5-Year Process



Community Outreach

Year 1

Suicide Prevention
Specialist Levels

Licensed Provider/Certified
Peer Support Specialist

Division by Catchment

Focus: Faith Based Leaders

Year 2

Suicide Prevention
Specialists

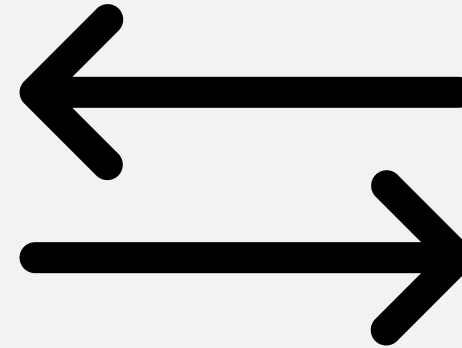
Division by Focus

Focus: Expanded beyond
Faith Based Leaders to
encompass Construction
and Manufacturing

Move away from direct
provision of services

- Leadership Changes
 - Impact on project
 - Lose momentum?
 - Lose cohesion?
 - How long to get new leader up to speed?
- Suicide Prevention Specialist Changes
 - Onboarding of 2nd SPS was slow—3 months delayed to backfill position
 - 1st SPS gave notice, rescinded and then gave notice and left
 - New blood arrives (yay, Kate!)
 - Expanding to a 3rd SPS

Changes in Staff



Change always has negative and positive impacts. Hope is that the positive outweighs the negative!

Data Collection

- Change in focus: EHR to Narrative
- Narrative tracking challenges
- Change in strategy





QPR & CSSH Train the Trainers

Building capacity for stakeholders and target populations to implement suicide prevention and firearm suicide prevention training within organizations and congregations.



Year 1 Takeaways

- Project must be fluid
 - Adapting is key
- Become comfortable with ambiguity
 - How do you prove a negative?
- Ongoing assessment of readiness
- Bringing stakeholders to the table
- Making internal system changes
 - How to define success
- Meeting the audience where they are
- Hiring challenges
- Target audience must be defined
 - But sometimes we must think outside the box



Looking to Year 2

- Learning Evaluation Plan
 - Take measure of where we are
 - Determine where we want to be
- Ask the questions
 - Do we need to change the approach?
 - Do we need to change the division of community outreach?
- Competencies that need improvement
- Moving away from direct services
 - What will we lose without an LPC?
- Include a new target area?
 - Reynolds County—less conservative, would they be more open to the message?





Success Stories

- Faith Leaders in Dunklin County
- Tackle the Talk
- Train the Trainers
- Lived Experience Participants

Call to Action

- Lethal Means Safety is a part of a public health approach
- Conversations done at the closest point to the person at risk
 - Anyone can be a gatekeeper
- Gun owners are empowered to make safe decisions
- Gun owners must be included in efforts for success
- Stepping into this conversation may be a sidestep...everyone agrees with suicide prevention...use that to move to a talk about firearm suicide prevention

Time

And

Distance