

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.





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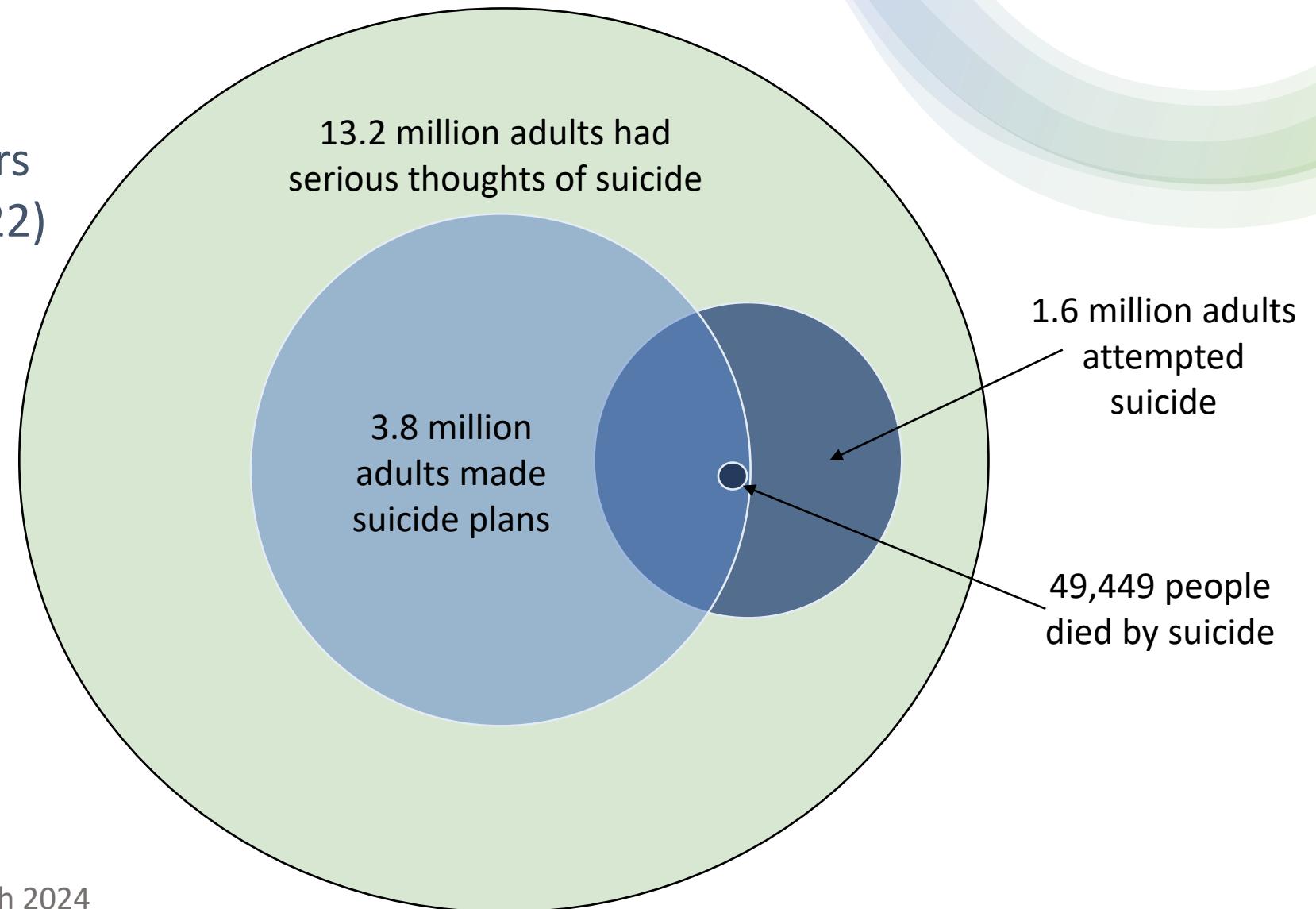


SAFER HOMES
COLLABORATIVE



Why this is Important

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



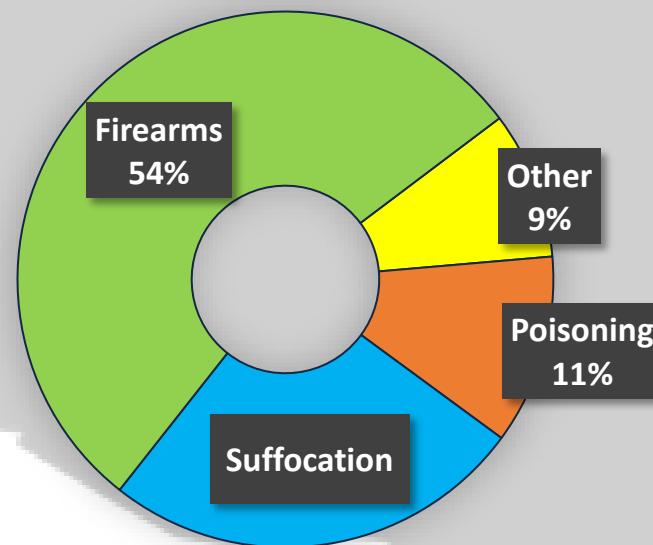
Why Firearm Suicide Prevention?

90%

Means Matter

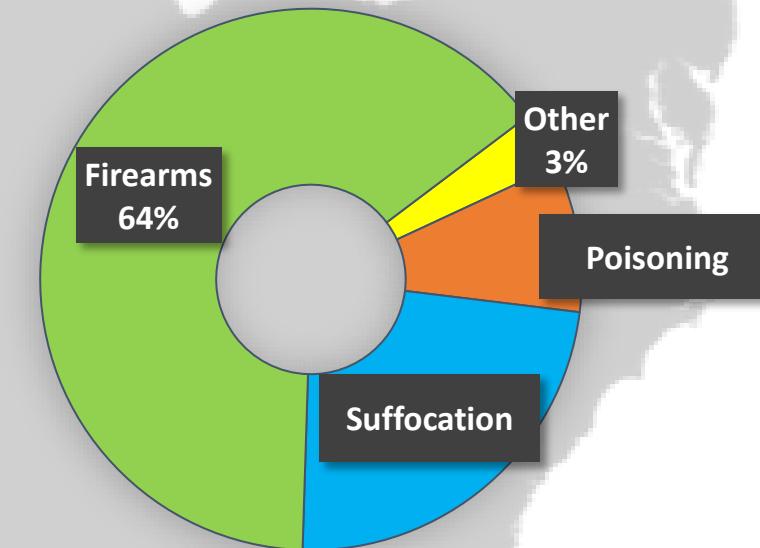
More than half of all suicide deaths are with a firearm, but less than 5% of all self-harm episodes involve a firearm

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



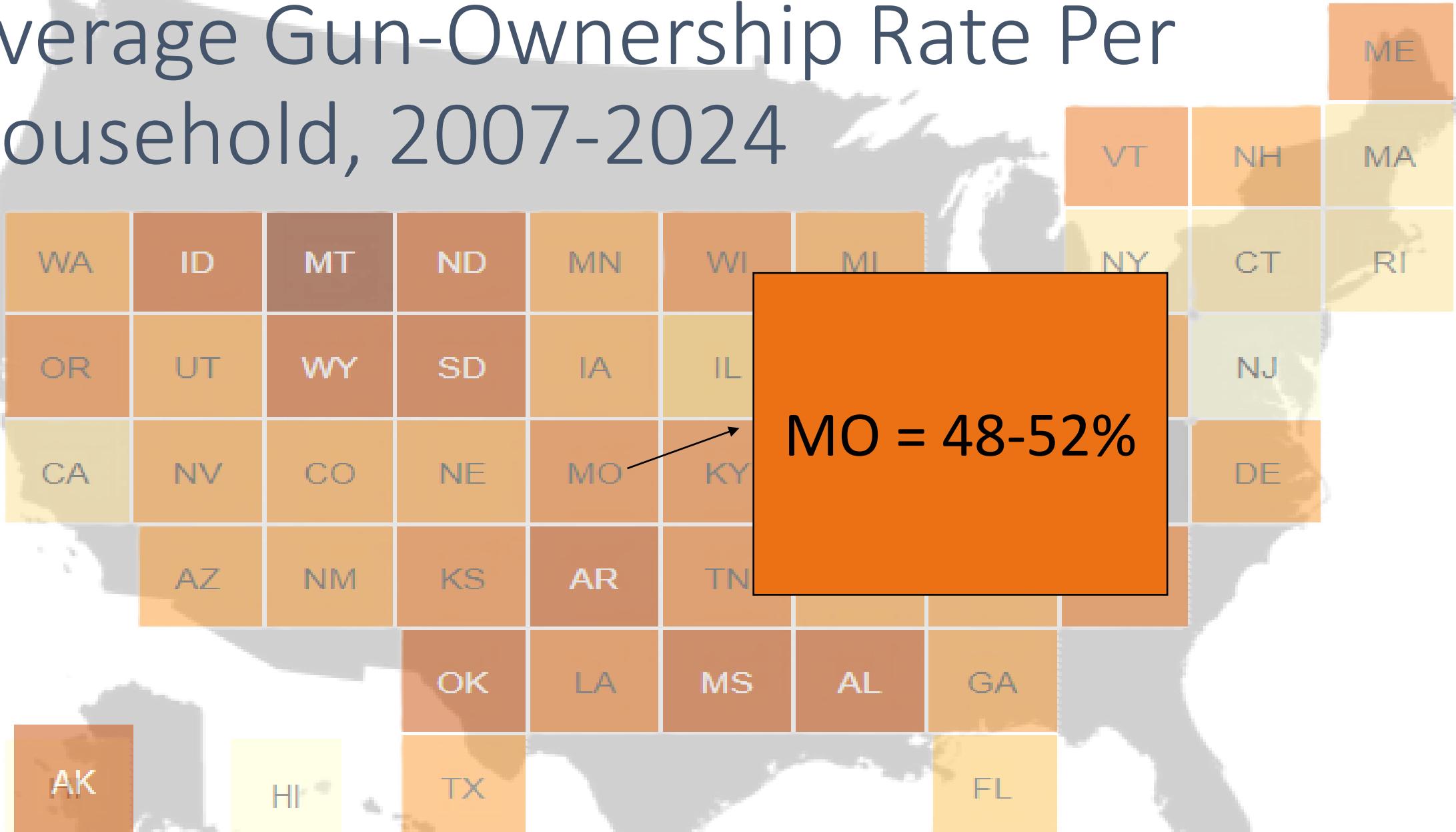
■ Other ■ Poisoning ■ Suffocation ■ Firearms

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



■ Other ■ Poisoning ■ Suffocation ■ Firearms

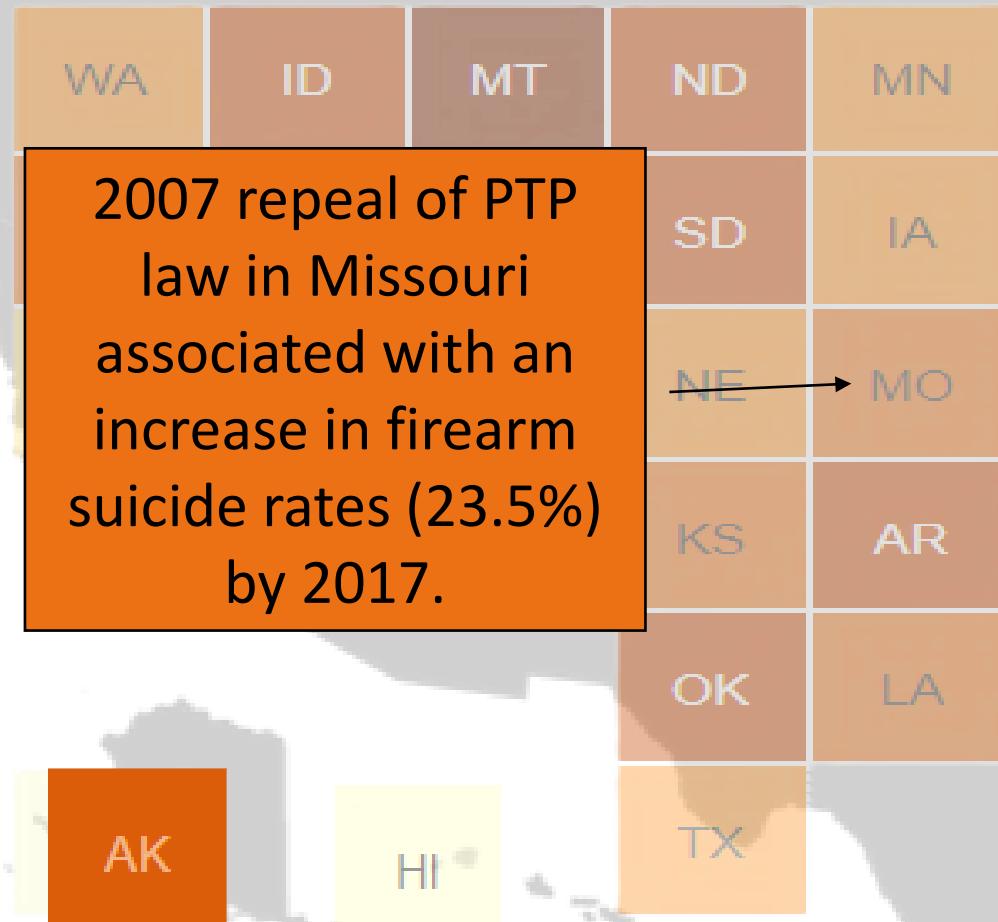
Average Gun-Ownership Rate Per Household, 2007-2024



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).

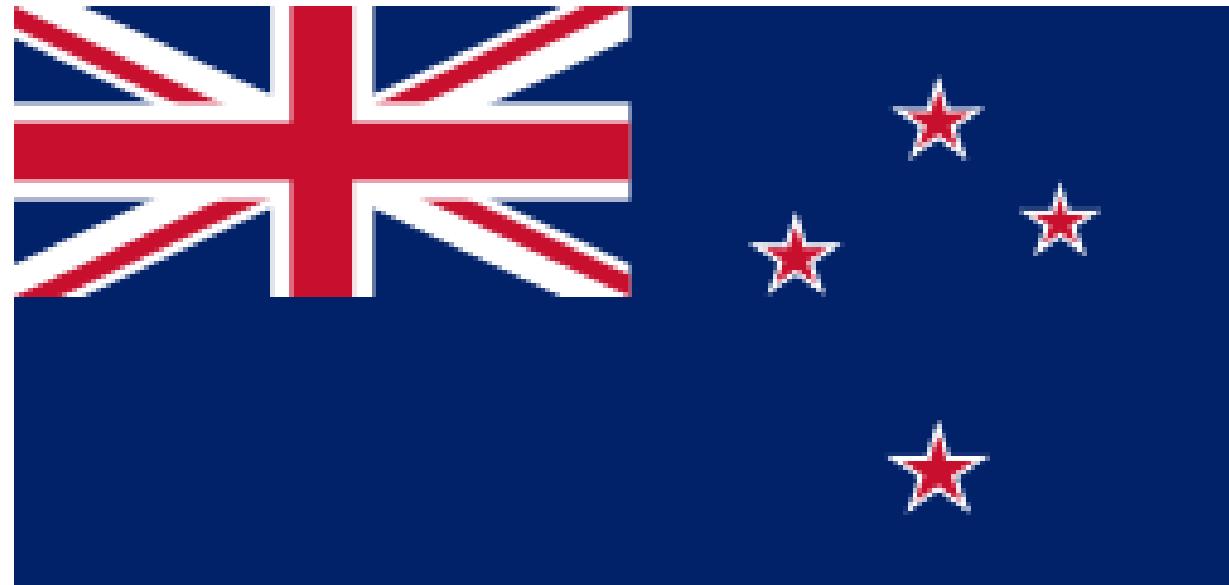


A decrease in firearm suicide rates (40.5%) was associated with the 1995 implementation of Connecticut's PTP law.

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

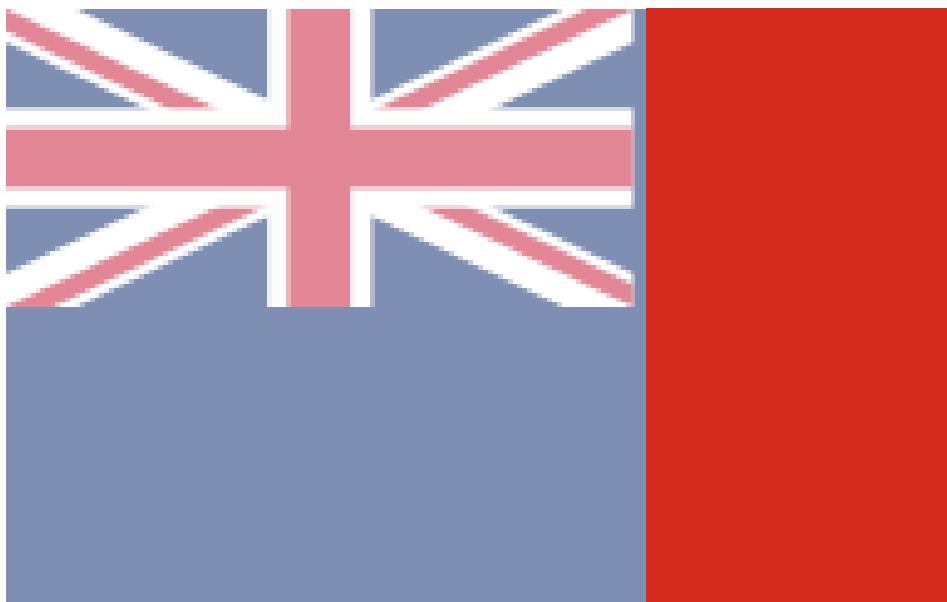


Firearm owners must be licensed. License issued after applicants pass a test on firearm regulations, use, safety, and storage, and a police interview and safe gun storage home inspection. Rates of **firearm suicide reduced by 66% in adolescents and 39% in adults.**

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New Zealand



Canada



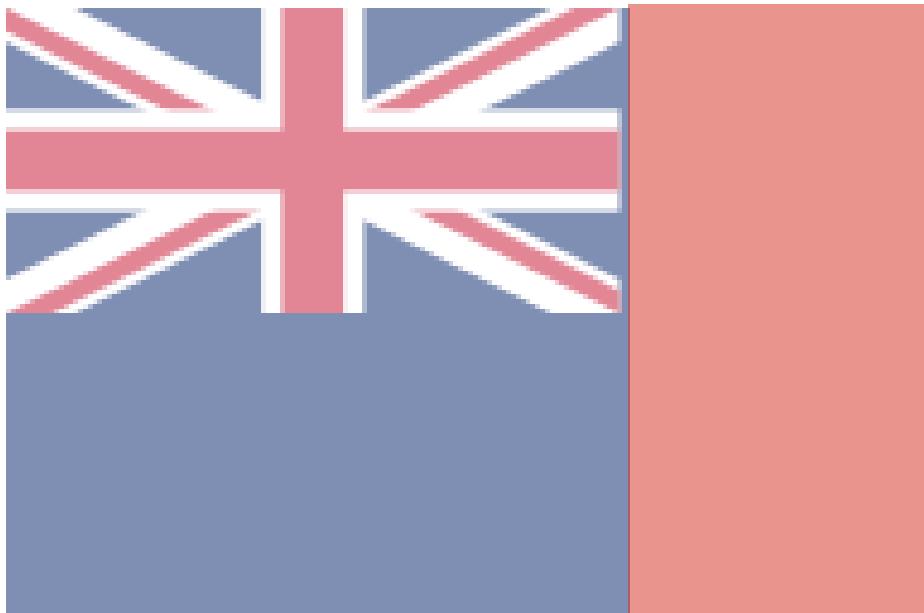
Bill C-17 required that applicants complete a safety course, undergo background checks, and undergo a mandatory 28-day waiting period.

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

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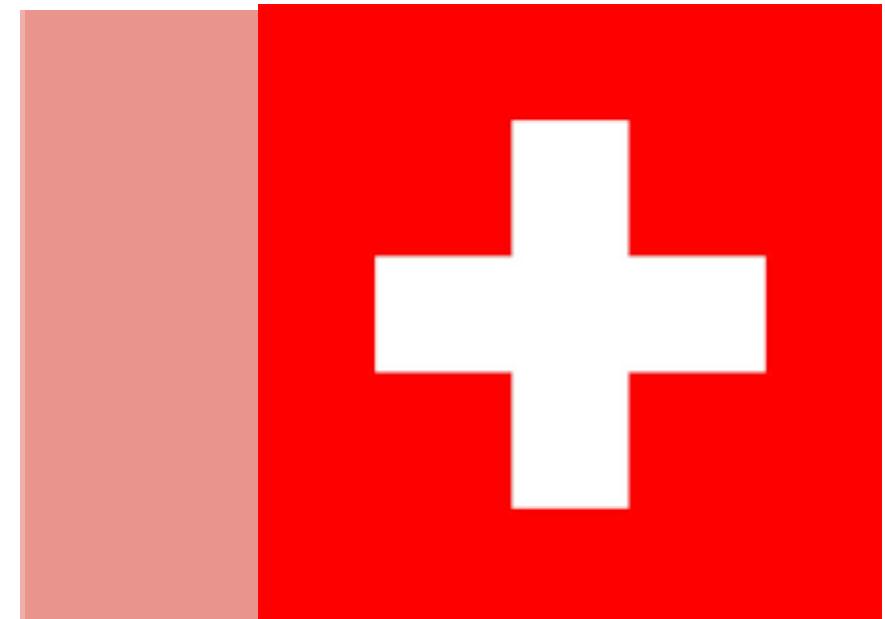
New Zealand



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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berkeley **media** studies group



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Openfields



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

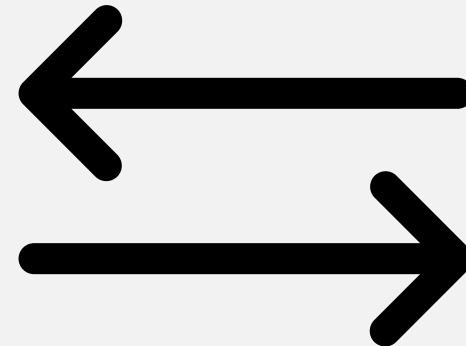
Suicide Prevention
Specialist Levels
Licensed Provider/Certified
Peer Support Specialist
Division by Catchment
Focus: Faith Based Leaders

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

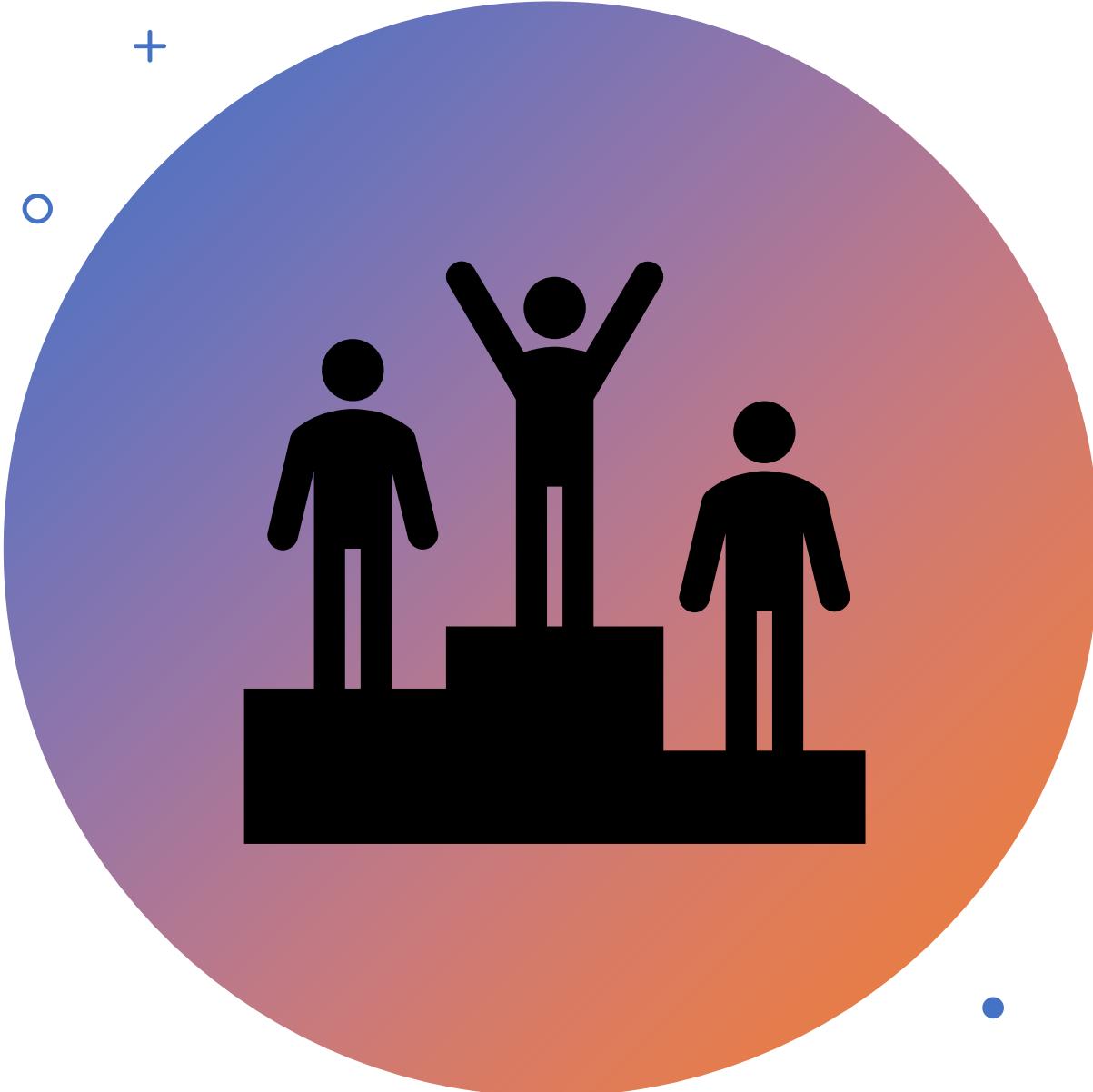
- Project must be fluid
 - Adapting is key
- Become comfortable with ambiguity
 - How do you prove a negative?
- Ongoing assessment of readiness
- Bringing stakeholders to the table
- Making internal system changes
 - How to define success
- Meeting the audience where they are
- Hiring challenges
- Target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