

TIPS for Wisconsin Firearm Retailers and Range Owners

Your vigilance could save a life!

The leading method of suicide in Wisconsin is firearms. Recent findings suggest that often impulsive, crisis-driven suicides occur with guns purchased within that same week, usually within *hours*. Using your knowledge and expertise as a retailer you can often spot when a sale does not feel right, and that could reduce the odds that a gun bought at your store today is used in a suicide tomorrow.

Signs that a potential buyer could be suicidal

Note: None of these signs clearly indicate someone is suicidal, but if any are present (especially if more than one is present), use extra caution in deciding whether to proceed with the sale.

- No knowledge about guns AND no interest in learning; asks no questions
- Doesn't care which gun s/he purchases/rents or seem unresponsive to your questions about the purchase
- Gives unconvincing response when asked what s/he intends to use the gun for, or about prior experience or training
- No interest in firearm instruction, maintenance, safety or safe storage
- Mentions recent crisis, such as a divorce, job loss, or other setback
- Makes comments that could suggest suicidality (e.g. "I don't need a lot of ammunition; I won't have the gun for long.")
- Looks anxious, avoids eye contact, conveys a sense of hopelessness
- Appears distraught (shaking, fighting back tears) or under influence of alcohol

Options for responding to a potentially suicidal buyer

- Notify store owner or manager (if applicable) if at all uncomfortable with a prospective sale or rental
- Urge customer with little firearm experience to seek training or a class before buying
- Ask the customer why s/he wants a firearm and how and where s/he plans to use it
- Suggest the customer take some more time to think it over before buying
- If s/he claims to be buying for self-defense, offer to sell pepper spray instead
- Ask person directly if s/he is suicidal (it is well proven that asking about suicidal intent does not spur the thought, and it is well proven that asking about suicide intent and offering help saves lives); if yes, offer National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number (1-800-273-TALK [8255]) and stop the sale
- Notify nearby dealers that someone you denied a sale to may go to their store; notify police who can check welfare later
- Trust your instincts, you are an expert in this field; you are under no obligation to sell a gun to anyone

"What else can I do?"

- Display a suicide prevention hotline poster in your store
- Distribute firearm safety brochures to buyers (The 11 Commandments) that include information about recognizing suicide warning signs and keeping firearms away from suicidal or depressed family members
- Always sell or inquire about a gun locking or safe storage device at point of purchase
- If you are a firearms instructor, consider discussing suicide prevention in your classes. Safe Community can provide you with links to information to meet your curriculum.
- Spread the word. Ask other dealers you know to visit our website to request our free materials.

Thanks to Safe Communities Madison-Dane County

Promoted by Wisconsin gun shops and the Captain John D. Mason Veteran Peer Outreach Program on behalf of the Southeastern Wisconsin Suicide Prevention Taskforce and BeThereWis.com (3/4/21)