

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

December 22, 2020

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Gun Violence Prevention and School Safety (PMC-10-22-20-01, -C, -D)

During the *Gun Violence Prevention and School Safety* discussion, Committee members requested the following:

Question C

Regarding Resolution #6 - The Board and the Superintendent direct schools to provide information to students, parents, guardians, and all staff about the use of anonymous reporting systems and other preventative resources, specifically in situations involving firearms, Dr. Docca requested information regarding how this is being handled in light of the numerous languages present in the MCPS community. Are messages and written communications being sent out in multiple languages? If not, can they be translated?

Response

Information is provided to students, parents, guardians, and all staff about the use of anonymous reporting systems and other preventative resources, specifically in situations involving firearms, as indicated in the following ways.

Messaging is communicated and translated via:

- Print media;
- Visual means, via visual electronic communication on Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) webpages and social media, as well as in videos produced for parent/guardian information and training; and
- Oral communication, at school community meetings.

Print Media

The MCPS publication, *A Student's Guide to Rights and Responsibilities*, is translated into all languages for which MCPS provides translation: Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Portuguese,

Korean, Amharic, and French. The publication references the Maryland Safe Schools tip line and suicide prevention crisis line in two instances within the text.

Last school year, bookmarks were distributed to all students publicizing the Maryland Safe Schools tip line and suicide prevention crisis line. The bookmarks were translated into all languages for which MCPS provides translation.

Information cards and posters about the Maryland Safe Schools tip line, designed by the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), were printed and placed in all schools last school year. A new supply for the 2020–2021 school year was printed and currently is housed in the warehouse. The materials provided by MCSS are in English.

Visual Means

Visual electronic communication is provided on MCPS web pages and social media, as well as in videos produced for parent/guardian information and training. The primary electronic access points for anonymous tip line information about the Safe Schools Maryland hotline and the suicide prevention crisis line are located on the MCPS home page and also on the Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement (OSFSE) web page. These hotlines are staffed 24 hours per day/7 days a week, and language assistance and translation services are available using a linguistics service bank.

The Bulletin has publicized the Maryland Safe Schools hotline multiple times (in English). In addition, Facebook and Twitter have publicized the tip line in English and Spanish.

The Signs of Suicide parent/guardian trainings address the Maryland requirements for safe storage of firearms in the home and are produced in all languages for which MCPS provides translation. A variety of OSFSE-produced Waymaking videos are translated into Spanish. The gun safety Waymaking video is not translated in another language; however, families may use the auto-translate feature in YouTube to display subtitles in another language. Dr. Christina N. Conolly, director, Psychological Services, OSFSE, hosts the Waymaking videos and notes that when interviewing a guest who converses in a language other than English, she will obtain a guest host and record an additional version of the Waymaking episode in that language.

Oral Communication

Mr. Edward A. Clarke, chief security officer, Office of the Chief of Staff; Dr. Conolly; School Resource Officers (SROs); and representatives from the Montgomery County Policy Department have collaborated in speaking to school communities about school safety and Maryland requirements for safe storage of firearms in the home. While these meetings primarily have taken place in English,

Spanish-speaking SROs have presented in Spanish, as appropriate, and interpreters at times have been arranged by local school staff. Assessing audience needs for translation and providing interpreters is a growth area that could be improved upon moving forward.

Question D

Mrs. O’Neill requested that staff look into what the LA Unified School district does to handle distributions to households regarding gun safety.

Response

Citing potential safety threats caused by unsecured firearms, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Board of Education unanimously voted on June 18, 2019, to educate parents/guardians about proper gun storage and their legal obligation to safely secure any firearms in their home. The resolution was brought to the LAUSD Board at the request of the Los Angeles Women Against Gun Violence organization.

For the 2020–2021 school year, the letter entitled Information Regarding Parent/Guardian Legal Duties Concerning Safe Gun Storage (Attachment A) was one of six forms requiring parent/guardian signature that LAUSD electronically distributed for the 2020–2021 school year along with the Parent Student Handbook (Attachment B). The handbook and associated forms are available on the LAUSD website in five languages. The letters are to be collected by principals/local school staff, who are responsible for outreach to encourage responses, approximately half of which are returned, according to a LAUSD staff member contacted for this response. There is no consequence for a parent/guardian not returning a letter.

LAUSD staff interviewed in preparing this response provided more detail on this and other efforts to raise awareness of the requirements in the Los Angeles municipal and California penal code regarding storage of firearms. LAUSD staff comments follow.

- The letters to be signed by parents/guardians are done of several approaches used to raise community awareness about municipal and state requirements for firearm storage.
- A flyer (Attachment C) was produced and placed in school locations frequented by parents/guardians, such as office sign-in areas. The flyer is published in English.
- A public service announcement was distributed via Blackboard Connect (the LAUSD messaging system), in multiple languages.
- School “police” (the term they used to describe school security officers) attended town halls to discuss the municipal and state requirements.

If you have questions, please contact Mrs. Stephanie P. Williams, acting general counsel, Office of the General Counsel, via e-mail.

JRS:SPW:smd

Attachments

Copy to:

Executive Staff
Mr. Clarke

Dr. Connolly
Ms. Webb

**LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOS ANGELES SCHOOL POLICE DEPARTMENT**



**AUSTIN BEUTNER
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

**Office of the Chief
125 North Beaudry Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90012
Telephone: (213) 202-4508 – Fax: (213) 202-8676**



**LESLIE RAMIREZ
INTERIM CHIEF OF POLICE**

RE: INFORMATION REGARDING PARENT/GUARDIAN LEGAL DUTIES CONCERNING SAFE GUN STORAGE

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Providing our students and staff with a safe educational environment remains one of our top priorities. We are all aware of incidents of gun violence in our surrounding communities, and across the nation. In California each year, an average of 27 children under the age of 18 have died by suicide with a gun that belonged to someone at home. In the majority of these gun-related incidents, the minor gained access to a lawfully purchased gun from their residence or the residence of a relative. Los Angeles Unified takes steps to ensure that campuses are safe from the threat of gun violence. Any student found in possession of a firearm on campus is subject to immediate arrest, suspension and expulsion proceedings. To further our efforts to protect students against firearms, and as a courtesy to our families, we would like to bring to your attention the legal obligations to protect minors from negligent gun storage. Please see two of the gun storage laws summarized below:

[Safe Storage of Handguns, Los Angeles Municipal Code section 55.21](#)

This City of Los Angeles statute makes it a crime to have a handgun within a residence unless the handgun is stored in a locked container or disabled with a trigger lock approved by the California Department of Justice.

[Criminal Storage of a Firearm, California Penal Code section 25100\(A\)](#)

This State statute makes it a crime to store a loaded firearm on any premises under your control, knowing or reasonably should have known, a child is likely to gain access to the firearm, and the child gains access causing death or great bodily injury.

Feel free to retrieve the full text of the above laws for further details.

Very truly yours,

Leslie Ramirez
Interim Chief of Police

----- CUT HERE AND RETURN TO YOUR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL -----



SAFE GUN STORAGE - ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Please sign below acknowledging receipt of this information.

Student Name (Please Print): _____

Parent/Guardian Name (Please Print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____



LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



DIVISION OF DISTRICT OPERATIONS

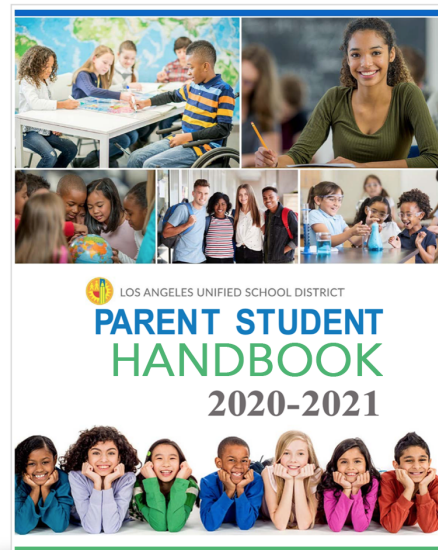
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Emergency Services Publications iSTAR Contact Us

Parent Student Handbook

» Parent Student Handbook 2020-21

- » Parent Student Acknowledgement Form
- » Directory and GPA Information Release Form
- » Notice of Privacy Practices
- » Parent/Guardian Publicity Authorization and Release
- » Annual Pesticide Notification Form
- » Mobile Vision Services Consent and Release Form
- » School Climate Bill of Rights – Elementary
- » School Climate Bill of Rights – Secondary
- » Safe Gun Storage – Letter to Parents - Guardians



» Manual Para Padres y Estudiantes 2020-21 Spanish

- » Formulario De Confirmación Para Padres Y Estudiantes
- » Formulario Para Autorizar La Divulgación De Información (GPA)
- » Aviso Sobre Las Prácticas De Confidencialidad
- » Autorización Y Exención Del Padre/Tutor Para Publicidad
- » Notificación Anual Sobre El Uso De Pesticidas
- » Servicios Móviles Para La Vista – Autorización Y Descargo

- » Declaración De Derechos Sobre El Ambiente Escolar – Primaria
 - » Declaración De Derechos Sobre El Ambiente Escolar – Secundaria/Preparatoria
 - » Almacenamiento Seguro De Armas De Fuego - Los Padres O Tutures
-

» Parent Student Handbook 2020-21- Armenian

- » Parent Student Acknowledgement Form
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-

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-



UNLOAD, LOCK, AND SEPARATE: SECURE STORAGE PRACTICES TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE

Three-year-old Brayden Heath found his mother's handgun in the living room of their home in Anchorage, Alaska. Brayden was playing with the gun when it discharged, shooting him in the head. He was taken to a local hospital and pronounced dead later that day.¹

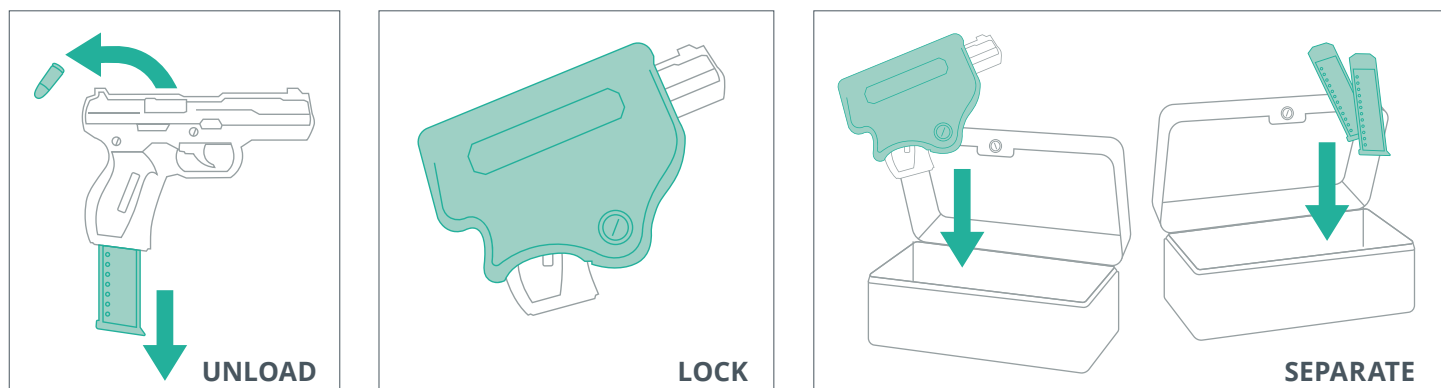
Introduction

There are an estimated 265 million civilian-owned firearms in the United States,² and more than one-third of homes contain at least one gun.³ Gun owners can make our homes and communities safer by storing their firearms unloaded and locked, with ammunition kept in a separate place, to prevent access by children and other people who are at risk of harming themselves or others. Research shows that these storage practices can play a vital role in reducing the risk of gun violence, particularly among children, due to unintentional shootings and gun suicides.⁴

The bottom line is this: Storing firearms unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition prevents access and saves lives.

What is secure firearm storage?

Experts agree: In order to prevent access, firearm storage practices should include three methods employed in combination—unloading the ammunition, locking the firearm, and storing the firearm and ammunition in separate locations.⁵



Unload: Gun owners should remove all ammunition from the firearm, including removing any chambered rounds.

Lock: Unloaded firearms should be secured with a firearm locking device, such as a jacket lock, or in a locked location, like a safe or lock box. Locking devices, safes, and lock boxes are equipped with keys, combinations, or biometric technology that limit access. *Remember: Firearm locks do not prevent gun theft.*

Separate: Ammunition should be stored separately from the firearm in a secure location.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) concludes that the absence of guns from homes is the most reliable and effective measure to prevent suicide, homicide, and unintentional firearm-related injuries to children and adolescents. But if there are guns in the home, AAP notes that storing guns unloaded and locked, with ammunition kept in a separate place, can mitigate the risk of child firearm injury.⁶

Key Findings

Access to unsecured firearms contributes to gun violence among children and teens. Brayden's tragic story is all too common. Every year, nearly 350 children under the age of 18 unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else.⁷ That's roughly one unintentional shooting per day, and nearly 77 percent of these incidents take place inside a home.⁸ Another 590 children die by gun suicide each year,⁹ most often using guns belonging to a family member.¹⁰ Unsecured firearms also fuel gun violence outside the home. In incidents of gun violence on school grounds, 78 percent of shooters under the age of 18 obtained their guns from their own home, a relative's home, or from friends.¹¹

We are all safer when guns are stored unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition. One study found that households that locked both firearms and ammunition were associated with a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries, and an 85 percent lower risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children, compared to those that locked neither.¹² Another study estimated that if half of households with children that contain at least one unlocked gun switched to locking all their guns, one-third of youth gun suicides and unintentional deaths could be prevented, saving an estimated 251 lives in a single year.¹³

1/3

OF YOUTH SUICIDES
AND UNINTENTIONAL
DEATHS ARE PREVENTED
BY SECURING GUNS.

Despite the risks to safety, the majority of gun owners do not secure their firearms. While millions of responsible gun owners follow recommended storage practices, an estimated 54 percent do not lock all of their guns, let alone store them unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition.¹⁴ Gun owners with children in the home are slightly more likely to lock all of their guns,¹⁵ but an estimated 4.6 million American children live in households with at least one unlocked and loaded firearm.¹⁶

Contrary to popular belief, storage devices do not prevent owners from readily accessing their guns. There is a common myth that storage devices negate the self-defense purpose of owning a gun by putting time-consuming barriers between the gun owner and their means of defense.¹⁷ The reality is that there are many affordable options for firearm storage that provide owners with access to guns in a matter of seconds while still preventing access by children and people at increased risk of harming themselves or others.¹⁸ Further, it is possible that unsecured guns may actually *increase* the likelihood of crime and violence through an increased risk of gun theft.¹⁹ Each year, an estimated 200,000 to 500,000 guns are stolen,²⁰ and many are funneled into the underground market, where once-legally-owned firearms can be transferred to people with dangerous histories.²¹

Recommendations

Gun owners understand that with rights comes responsibility, and promoting secure firearm storage is integral to public safety. Community members should work together to encourage recommended firearm storage practices.

Community members and local leaders should encourage secure firearm storage through outreach to gun owners and general public awareness campaigns. Researchers, clinicians, and gun owners should work together to develop messaging and recommend storage options that are relevant to local values and context.²²

Evidence suggests that clinicians who counsel patients can effectively promote recommended storage practices, particularly if storage devices are given away for free.²³

For a full list of citations please visit: bit.ly/35YMIAE