

## Reducing Access to Lethal Means, 2145P Exhibit E

If someone you know is suicidal, get help immediately by calling 911, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or the Crisis Text Line (text "HOME" to 741741).

**Why Reduce Access to Lethal Means?** You are receiving this information sheet because someone close to you may be thinking about suicide. For people facing suicidal thinking or actions, suicidal thinking can come up quickly and unpredictably and can lead to suicide attempts without those around the person having advance notice. We recommend reducing access to items and situations commonly used in suicide attempts – reducing access to lethal means.

**What are Lethal Means?** Lethal means are those that are most likely to cause death when used by someone feeling suicidal.

- Suicide attempts most often involve **pills**; Suicide deaths most often involve **firearms**
- Most attempts happen at home, are decided on quickly, and involve readily available methods
- Unlike most other methods, firearms do not allow for a change of mind or for rescue

### How to Reduce Access to Lethal Means

**Firearms:** Over 70% of gun deaths in King County involve suicides. Over 34% of adults in Washington report having firearms in or around their homes, and about half of those individuals (46%) report firearms in their homes are unsecured. Unrestricted access to firearms, including lack of safe storage practices, are known risks for firearms violence, including suicide.

- **BEST:** Store all guns away from the home. This is the most effective way to reduce access – kids often get around hiding and locking in the home. This can include having a family member or friend safely store guns away from your home or other offsite storage options such as a gun shop/firing range, self-storage unit, or asking the police department for storage, disposal, or locking options.
- **Next Best:** Store firearms locked and unloaded using a gun safe, gun lock box, or a chamber lock. Store and lock ammunition in a separate place
- King County's Lock It Up campaign promotes the safe storage of firearms with the goal of reducing unwanted access to firearms and provides details on the different types of locks and where to buy them [Lockitup.org](http://Lockitup.org)

### **Medications, Toxins, and Alcohol**

- Dispose of all expired/unneeded medications, especially prescription pain medications and any other drugs commonly used for recreational use
- Prioritize locking and putting out of sight; prescription pills – especially pain pills, over the counter pain pills, and prescription or over the counter sleeping pills
- Lock and put out of sight household cleaning products, pesticides, solvents, and other potential poisons
- Do not keep alcohol around the home or keep only a small amount at a time. Keep alcohol out of sight

### **Suffocation/Hanging**

- Suffocation/hanging is a leading method of suicide death for those of all ages. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to eliminate access to means for this method
- If hanging is a concern, obvious means should be removed or made inaccessible
- Close supervision (physical and emotional) of the individual should be prioritized

### **Sharps/Cutting**

- Sharps/cutting do not often result in suicide deaths but are often used for emotional regulation
- Reducing access to sharps – particularly in private spaces, is indicated to prevent cutting behaviors
- Take special care to reduce access to sharps if the at-risk person has indicated cutting may be a method they have considered.

### **Other Methods**

- If the at-risk person identifies other means they have thought about, such as using a vehicle or jumping from a high place, steps should be taken to prevent the person from having access to these means, such as not allowing them to drive, or not allowing trips to high places in the community