



Take Control of Your Child's Safety

How to Talk About Firearm Safety with Other Parents & Caregivers

Just like you talk about food allergies, pets or who is going to be home, asking about guns or firearms in the place your child is visiting should be a normal part of planning. It's not about judgment—it's about keeping kids safe.

Let's normalize this conversation, together.

For Toddlers and School-Age Children

Why These Conversations Matter

If there is a firearm in your home or a place your child visits, chances are your child knows about it and can find it. Most kids in households with guns know where they are (even if parents don't think they do). If children find them, most kids will try to handle them. Children are still learning - they cannot always tell the difference between a toy gun and a real gun! Education is important, but kids can be impulsive. We teach kids to look both ways to cross the street, but we still hold their hands at an intersection.

Easy Ways to Start the Conversation With Other Parents & Caregivers

- “Thanks for having Mia over! She has a nut allergy. I also always ask, do you have any guns at home? If you do, how are they stored?”
- “Before we schedule the playdate, I like to ask: Are there any unsecured guns in the home?”
- “We both want to keep our kids safe. If you have firearms, how are they stored?”
- “I know this can feel awkward, but I ask every family—just so I can feel confident that the environment is safe.”



For Adolescents



Why These Conversations Matter

- Guns are now the leading cause of death for children and teens.
- In households with guns, 1/3 of adolescents say that they can access a loaded gun in under five minutes, and half could do so in an hour.
- Most child gun suicides involve a gun belonging to a family member.
- Safe storage—locked, unloaded, ammo stored separately—saves lives.

Easy Ways to Start the Conversation With Other Parents & Caregivers

People have firearms in the home for many reasons, and it is important to talk about firearms in the same way as you would other safety issues for teens. Start with questions about:

- Who is driving and if their child has a license. Make sure kids are wearing seatbelts.
- The presence of alcohol in the house and how it is stored.
- Then ask about guns in the house and how they are stored. Safely stored guns are locked and unloaded with ammunition stored separately.

If You're Not Comfortable with the Response

- ✓ Offer to host at your home.
- ✓ Suggest meeting at a public space like a park or library.
- ✓ Postpone or cancel if you don't feel comfortable—your instincts matter.

If you have a firearm in your house, normalize the conversation and lead by example:

"Hey, I have a list of things that I want you to know that I've thought about before your kid comes to my house. I will be home for the whole time. Does your child have any allergies? We have a pool outside, but it's fully fenced off. We own a handgun, but it's kept in a locked safe, unloaded, and we keep the ammunition in a separate locked safe."

It Gets Easier with Practice! Let's Build a Culture of Safety!

- Talk about gun safety like you would any other home risk.
- If it's easier, send a message or text instead of having the conversation face-to-face.

**You're doing the right thing.
These conversations SAVE LIVES.**



Funding for this project was made possible by funds received from the Office of Health Promotion, through the Illinois Department of Public Health.