



23 February 2022

Oregon Health Authority
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Dear Oregon Health Authority Suicide Prevention, Intervention, Postvention Team,

The Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide’s Transitions of Care Committee and Firearm Safety/Lethal Means Advisory Group recommend that the 988/MRSS Crisis Support Services program plan include funding for safe storage devices for medications, drugs, and firearms and that providers carry these items and related education materials when responding to community members in crisis.

Suicide intervention strategies show that putting time and distance between the person in crisis and their identified means to attempt suicide can save lives. Many times, the period of suicidal crisis when someone is seriously contemplating attempting suicide, is 20 minutes or less. In fact, research shows that 48% of suicide attempts occur within that time frame, one in four individuals deliberate for five minutes or less.¹ By providing safe storage devices for the most lethal means, we can help reduce deaths by suicide.

Oregon 2020 data on the types of means used to die by suicide mirror the rest of the country, with firearms accounting for almost half of suicide deaths followed by suffocation and poisonings/overdoses.² For individuals aged 10 to 17, suffocation was the number one means used at 48.6%, firearms at 40%, and poisoning at 4.3%. For individuals aged 18 to 24, firearms accounted for 49.8% of suicides, suffocation 31.5% and poisoning 7.2%.³

The 2020 Oregon data supports the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide recommendation that the following safe storage options be offered through the 988/MRSS Crisis Support Services program:

- Firearm cable locks
- Trigger locks
- Discounts for safes
- Firearm lockboxes
- Medication lockboxes

The need and community desire for safely securing firearms and medications was shown when the Association of Oregon Community Mental Health Programs (AOCMHP) partnered with the Oregon Health Authority to provide free short and long gun lockboxes and medication lockboxes to community mental health programs (CMHPs) and other community-based mental health organizations across the state. AOCMHP ran out of firearm lockboxes, specifically the long-gun lockboxes, faster than expected while CMHPs continue to request more of these resources for their communities. Providing these safe storage options through the 988/MRSS Crisis Support Services program will help to meet this need.

¹ <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/duration/>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/suicide.htm>

³ Oregon Violent Death Reporting System (ORVDRS), Mechanism of injury among suicide deaths, by age group and sex, Oregon, 2015-2019
Page 1 of 2



During a crisis, it can be difficult to retain information. The Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide recommends that in addition to safe storage devices, the 988/MRSS Crisis Support Services staff provide information and education materials on how to use the devices, as well as resources regarding suicide prevention, substance abuse, and how to seek help. These written materials will provide support to families and individuals long after the initial crisis has subsided.

The final recommendation is to include community organizations, such as the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide and the Oregon Firearm Safety Coalition, to provide guidance on any Oregon Administrative Rules that may be developed from these recommendations, and to review educational materials that will be provided through the 988/MRSS Crisis Support Services program.

Sincerely,

Galli Murray, Chair, Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide
Ryan Price, Co-Chair, Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide

CC: Transition of Care Committee Co-Chairs, Charlette Lumby & Joseph Stepanenko
Lethal Means Advisory Co-Chairs, Jonathan Hankins, Donna-Marie Drucker, & Pamela Pearce