



## End Family Fire Campaign: Veteran Suicide Prevention Launch Messaging October 2021

### Key Messages

- **In a nutshell:** Veterans are more likely to die by suicide than other American adults, and the majority of Veteran suicides involve a firearm. By storing all guns in the home securely, we can help put time and distance between a person in crisis and a weapon.
- **Why it matters:**
  - Guns are by far the deadliest method of suicide: 90% of suicide attempts with a gun are fatal.
  - Veterans are more likely to die by suicide than other American adults—and the majority of Veteran suicides (69%) involve a gun.
  - Nearly half of all Veterans own at least one firearm, and access to a firearm in the household triples the risk of a suicide death for those considering suicide.
  - Most suicide attempts are undertaken during moments of temporary crisis. By storing all guns in our homes securely, we can help put time and distance between a person and a deadly weapon decreasing their likelihood of suicide.
- **What We're Doing About It:** The national *End Family Fire* campaign from the Ad Council and Brady launched “Service Never Stops” to encourage Veterans to store guns securely – locked, unloaded, and away from ammunition – to protect their loved ones and themselves from family fire.
  - “Family fire” refers to a shooting involving an improperly stored or misused gun in the home that results in death or injury. Unintentional shootings, suicide, and intentional shootings are all forms of family fire.
- **CTA:** As a Veteran, your call to service never stops. Help stop suicide by storing your guns securely – locked, unloaded, and away from ammunition. Learn more at [EndFamilyFire.org](https://EndFamilyFire.org).

### Key Soundbites:

- If we want to prevent Veteran suicide, we need to talk about the role of guns.
- Putting time and space between a person in crisis and a deadly weapon could save their life.
- Veterans can protect themselves and their loved ones by storing guns securely: locked, unloaded, and away from ammunition.
- Incidents of family fire – including suicide – can be prevented.
- Safe storage saves lives.
- Get tips to make your home safer at [EndFamilyFire.org](https://EndFamilyFire.org).

### Supporting Statistics for our Key Points

- **We need to talk about Veteran gun suicide – so we can talk about how to prevent it.**
  - Every day, about 17 Veterans die by suicide. On average, 12 of these deaths involve a gun. ([Source](#))



- While Veterans make up about 8% of the U.S. adult population, they account for 14% of the nation's gun suicide deaths. ([Source](#))
- Roughly 7 in 10 Veteran suicides (69%) involve a gun, compared to about half (48%) of suicides among the rest of the U.S. population. ([Source](#))
- **Safe gun storage is an essential part of suicide prevention. Even when we own guns for protection, they can put us and our loved ones at risk.**
  - Guns are by far the deadliest method of suicide: 90% of suicide attempts with a gun are fatal. ([Source](#))
  - Nearly half of all Veterans own at least one firearm and access to a firearm in the household triples the risk of a suicide death for those considering suicide. ([Source](#))
- **Veterans storing guns securely help protect themselves and their families.**
  - Most suicide attempts are undertaken during moments of temporary crisis. ([Source](#))
  - Increasing time and distance between a person in crisis and an available firearm—by storing guns unloaded, locked, and separately from ammunition—can help prevent a suicide attempt.
  - The vast majority of people who survive a suicide attempt – over 90% – do not go on to die by suicide. 70% never make another suicide attempt. ([Source](#))
- **This safe storage message is more critical than ever, as gun sales and mental health challenges increased dramatically during the pandemic.**
  - Americans purchased a record **22.8 million guns** in 2020, a 64% increase over 2019, and sales this year continue to outpace 2019 levels. (Based on estimates from FBI background checks for gun sales or transfers.) ([Source](#))
    - Many Americans are struggling with their mental health amid the stress and uncertainty of the ongoing pandemic. In 2021, an estimated 10.7 million adults in the U.S. report serious suicidal thoughts - an increase of **nearly half a million people** (460,000) compared to 2020 ([Source](#)). If you are in crisis, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or text HOME to 741741.

### **Watchouts & Guidelines**

- Messaging should always be empathetic and respectful, and without judgment toward gun owners or guns. Many people own guns out of a desire to protect their families—something we can all empathize with.
- *End Family Fire* is a non-political campaign that takes no stance on policy. The campaign is a public health program with a message that focuses on increasing the safe storage practices of firearm ownership. The campaign focuses on safe gun storage, not policy changes or laws.
- How to talk about mental health and suicide:
  - Don't say "committed suicide," instead say "died by suicide"
  - Don't say "successful" suicide attempts, instead say suicide or death by suicide.



- Likewise, don't refer to "unsuccessful" suicide attempts; instead just say suicide attempt
- Don't say "mentally ill people," instead say "people living with mental illness" or "people in crisis"

Don't Say This	Say This
committed suicide	died by suicide, took their own life, ended their life
"unsuccessful" attempt  "successful" attempt  "suicide death"	just say "suicide attempt"  suicide death  Suicide, death by suicide
<i>don't describe a method or specific attempt in detail</i>	<i>OK to provide statistics about different kinds of methods (with language caveats above)</i>
<i>don't suggest that suicides are due to a single cause or precipitating event</i>	<i>do note that warning signs may be hard to recognize, that suicide is multi-determined and complex.</i>
<i>suggest that suicide is inexplicable</i>	<i>Research is teaching us more everyday about what contributes to suicide risk.</i>
<i>directly link the increase in stress/anxiety amid COVID to an increase in suicide risk</i>	always include suicide treatment and prevention resources whenever discussing suicide:  National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255  Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741.  <i>[Can include specific resources as appropriate as well e.g. Trevor Project for LGBT and Veterans Crisis Line]</i>
More people die of suicide each day than have died in the deadliest mass shooting in the U.S.	More people die of suicide each day than from firearm murders and unintentional shootings put together.
Guns are the most lethal method of suicide <i>[without directly connecting to a safe storage CTA]</i>	<i>[for example]</i> Guns are the most lethal method of suicide. That's why storing firearms securely is an established, evidence-based method of suicide prevention.



Mentally ill people	Those living with mental illness; people in crisis; people “living with a mental health condition or “experiencing mental health struggles”