



Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am writing to you about **gun safety** because this is an important way to improve the health and safety of everyone in our school community.

The risk of gun violence is even higher during COVID-19 because of continuing isolation and the lack of usual organized activities that students normally have access to. In addition, adults may be distracted while trying to navigate family and work life during the pandemic. If you have guns at home, assume children can find them. Under California law, parents and guardians are responsible for protecting children through safe firearm storage. Gun owners are criminally liable if they store a loaded gun where a child is likely to gain access to it. Safe gun storage also reduces the risk of suicide by slowing down what is often an impulsive act, providing more time to get help.

According to a national nonprofit organization, Brady United Against Gun Violence, research finds that an estimated 4.6 million children live in homes with access to unlocked loaded guns, resulting in 8 injuries or deaths of children every single day. Younger children tend to use unsupervised guns accidentally. Even toddlers are strong enough to pull the trigger, but they often have to point the gun at themselves to use their thumb with tragic consequences. Older children are more likely to kill themselves or others intentionally.

We want to raise awareness and stop tragedies before they happen by asking you to follow these guidelines:

- Lock up guns safely, unloaded, with the ammunition locked, separately;
- Ask about the presence of unsecured guns in other homes (playdates, friends, neighbors);
- Recognize the risk factors and warning signs of depression and suicide and speak up.

For more tips on gun safety including ideas for how to talk to friends or family about guns before you or your children or grandchildren visit their home, visit the [Brady United, End Family Fire webpage](#).

- The Marin County Sheriff's Office has teamed up with [Project Childsafe](#) to provide **FREE Gun Locks**. You can learn more about obtaining a free gun lock [HERE](#).

If you are concerned about a friend or family member in crisis, please ask for help, especially if there is a gun in the home. Suicides are around 60% of the 40,000 annual gun deaths in America. A gun in the home makes it 300% more likely that someone living there will die by suicide. Without guns, less than 5% of suicide attempts are fatal, and most survivors never attempt suicide again. Guns don't give people a second chance.

- For a suicide crisis, call the 24/7 Marin County Suicide and Crisis Hotline, 415-473-6666 or text HOME to 741741. Learn the warning signs of suicide by familiarizing yourself with the [NationalSuicidePreventionLifeline.org](#).
- For domestic violence, in an emergency, text or call 911. Or call the 24-hour Marin Domestic Violence Hotline, 415-924-6616 [CenterForDomesticPeace.org](#).

Removing a gun can make a home safer. Temporarily, a person may want to store their gun locked safely with a family member or friend (not a prohibited person). If a gun is no longer wanted, it can be turned in to the local police (anytime) or a gun buyback. Learn more about how to turn in unwanted firearms of ammunition [HERE](#).

Lastly, if someone is a danger to themselves or others, an option is a Gun Violence Restraining Order (GVRO), a court-ordered civil procedure. Sometimes a child might post threats on social media including images with guns. GVROs also block future purchases to prevent a potentially violent or unstable person from buying weapons. I can help you liaise with the police who remove the guns and store them safely until they can be returned to the home. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REMOVE WEAPONS YOURSELF**. If you contact a police officer and they're unfamiliar with GVROs, ask for another officer, or contact the Chief of Police. Learn more about [GVROs HERE](#).

Thank you for helping to keep our children and schools safe. Remember that the easiest and safest way to comply with the law is to lock unloaded firearms in a case or safe with ammunition locked separately.