

# School Based Behavioral Health Rapid-ECHO<sup>®</sup>



Maine Pediatric  
& Behavioral Health  
Partnership



ECHO SESSION 3 of 4: 11/21/2022

# Presenter: Counseling on Access to Lethal Means



**Sheila Nelson, MSW, MPH**  
Program Director, DHHS  
Adolescent and School  
Health

Sheila Nelson oversees the Adolescent Health and Injury Prevention Program at the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Throughout her career, Sheila has worked to support the health and wellbeing of youth, by promoting access to care, positive youth development, and evidence-based prevention interventions.

In her current role, Sheila supports suicide prevention training and services across the lifespan, youth engagement and leadership, and the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey. For 10 years, Sheila has overseen Maine CDC's School Based Health Center program, and provides support and technical assistance to school health providers across the state.

# *Youth-Centric Lethal Means Safety Training*

---

SHEILA NELSON, MSW, MPH

MANAGER, ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND INJURY PREVENTION PROGRAM,  
MAINE CDC

[SHEILA.NELSON@MAINE.GOV](mailto:SHEILA.NELSON@MAINE.GOV)

# Overview of today's presentation

---

Define *Lethal Means* & examine the data

Introduce *Lethal Means Safety Counseling*

Discuss considerations for providing *Lethal Means Safety Counseling*

Discuss how to have conversations about *Lethal Means Safety* with youth & families

Provide overview of related resources and materials

What is *Lethal Means*?

---





# What is Lethal Means Safety?

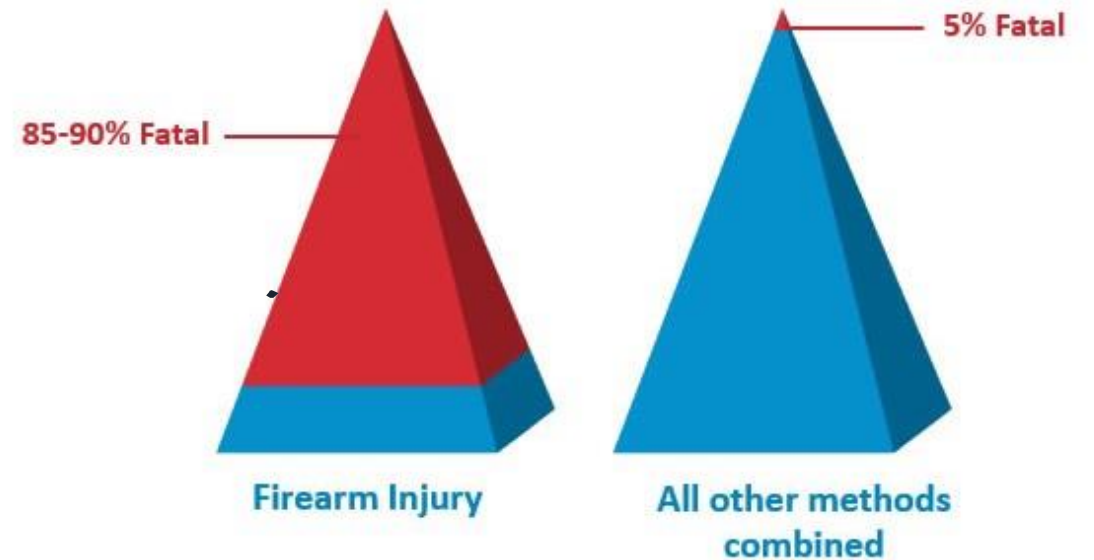
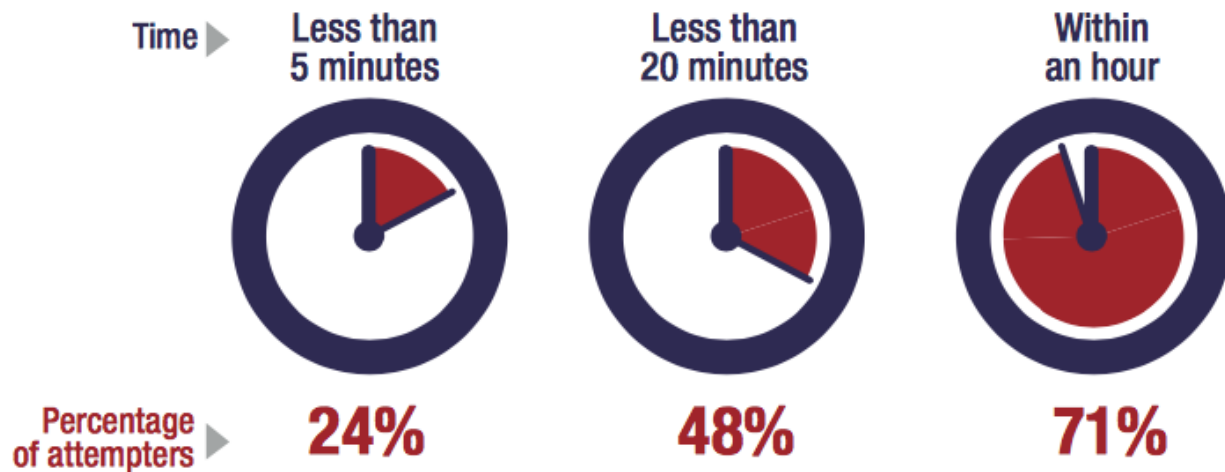
---

In the context of suicide prevention, safe storage of lethal means is any action that builds in time and space between a suicidal impulse and the ability to harm oneself.

Effective lethal means safety education and counseling is collaborative and youth & family-centered. It respects the important role that weapons, and medications may play in family's lives and is consistent with their values and priorities.

# Most Suicidal Crises are Brief

## Time from Decision to Action < 1 hour



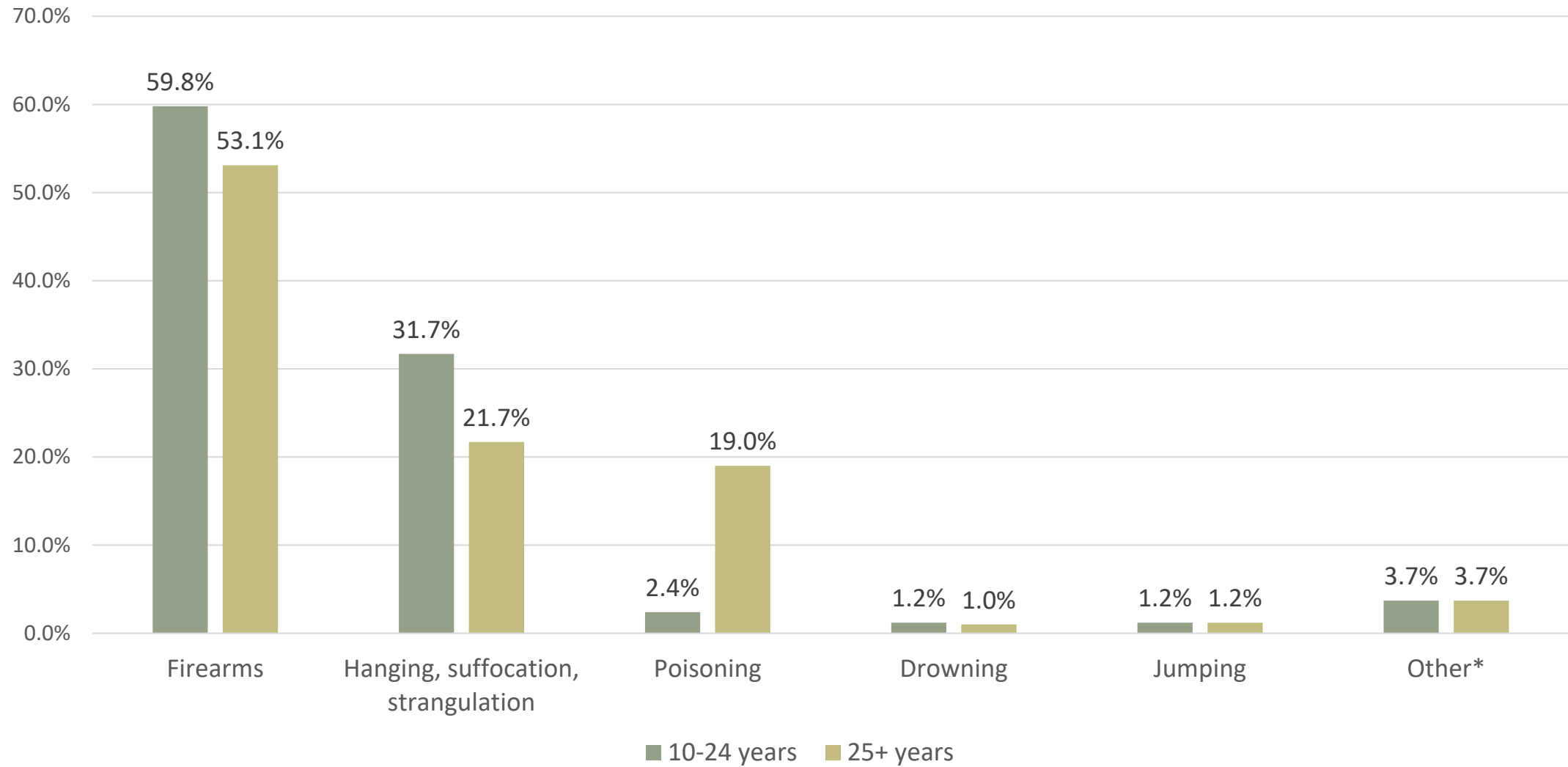
CDC WISQARS: Deaths from death certificate data; nonfatal incidents estimated from national sample of hospital emergency departments

Source: Simon, T.R., Swann, A.C., Powell, K.E., Potter, L.B., Kresnow, M., and O'Carroll, P.W. Characteristics of Impulsive Suicide Attempts and Attempters. SLTB. 2001; 32(supp):49-59.

Source: CDC WISQARS and US Dept. of Veterans Affairs <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/lethalsafety/facts/>



## Proportion of Suicide Deaths by Age and Method, Maine, 2017-2019



\*Other includes suicide deaths caused by explosive material; smoke, fire and flames; steam, hot vapors and hot objects; sharp object; blunt object; lying before moving object; crashing of motor vehicle and intentional self-harm by other specified/unspecified means.



*Lethal Means Safety*  
Interventions

# Factors impacting approach

- Your relationship with the **youth and family/caregivers**
- Your knowledge about their access to weapons/lethal means
- Your knowledge of and comfort with weapons/lethal means
- Urgency of situation
- Reasons for weapon ownership
- Client's willingness to consider recommended changes
- Opportunity for follow up



## Firearm/Weapon Safety

---



## Medication Safety

---



## Supervision

- Start from a common purpose
- Present a menu of options
- Take a harm reduction approach
- Provide problem-solving strategies in advance



# Firearm/Weapon Safety

- Remove from the home and store offsite
- Store in a gun safe
- Use an appropriate trigger lock
- Remove ammunition and keep firearms and unloaded

I know that guns are important to you. Let's work on a plan that will keep you child safe and work well for you.

Sometimes when youth are struggling with their mental health, caregivers will lock their guns/ammunition at home and ask someone they trust to hold onto the keys. Is that a strategy you'd consider?



# Medication Safety

- Remove unnecessary medications, dispose safely
- Use a medication lock box
- Work with pharmacists to keep small amounts of necessary medications
- Remember that any medication (Rx or OTC) can be dangerous

I know that you have medications that are important to your health. Let's work on a plan that will keep you child safe and work well for you.

Sometimes when youth are struggling with their mental health, caregivers will lock their medicines in a cabinet at home or remove any non-necessary medications. Is that a strategy you'd consider?



# Supervision

- Strongly consider having someone with “eyes on” a young person when they are a very high-risk period
- Reminding caregivers that actions taken to end life can happen in a matter of minutes
- Acknowledge that lack of privacy is developmentally inconsistent with the needs/wants of youth
- Critical to include youth in the plan, and strategize expected conflict

Sometimes when youth are struggling in the ways you’ve described, caregivers will make sure that someone is always with their child. Is that a strategy you’d consider?

# Developmentally Appropriate Conversations

Adolescents are rapidly maturing in the “feeling” sections of the brain

Have less “wiring” connecting the feeling brain with the planning/inhibitory brain

May make it especially likely for youth to take actions based on heightened emotional states

Provide context without minimizing or dismissing the lived experience of youth





# Lethal Means Rack Card

<https://www.maineventionstore.com/collections/mental-health/products/suicide-safety-planning-card>

## IF YOU LOVE THEM, KEEP THEM SAFE

If someone you love is struggling with thoughts of suicide, there are some important steps you can take to keep them safe until they're feeling better. Make a plan based on the options below:



Temporarily remove firearms from your home to keep your loved ones safe until they are feeling better.

**SAFEST CHOICE**



Store all firearms in a locked safe, or use trigger locks. Remove access to combinations or keys.



Make sure all firearms are unloaded. Store ammunition safely in another location.



Remove any medications from your home to keep your loved ones safe until they are feeling better.

**SAFEST CHOICE**



Store any medications in a locked box or cabinet. Be sure keys and combinations are in a secure location.



Keep only small amounts of medications in your home. Talk to a pharmacist about what quantities of medication would be safest.



Until your loved one is feeling better, do not leave them alone. Make sure someone has "eyes on" them to ensure they are safe.

**SAFEST CHOICE**



Create a "safety plan" so your loved one knows how to get help at any time. Identify activities that help them feel better, and people they can reach out to for support.



Make sure your loved one knows how to access the 24-hour Maine Crisis Line at 1-888-568-1112.

## STEPS I CAN TAKE

### TO PROTECT A LOVED ONE WHO IS AT RISK FOR SUICIDE

It can feel overwhelming when someone you care about is struggling with their mental health. You can help by creating a plan to keep your loved one safe while they get the support they need. If possible, focus on the safest options – but it's most important that you take some kind of action to protect your loved one until they're feeling better.



Remove or store firearms safely.

My Plan: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Remove or store medication safely.

My Plan: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Stay connected and supervise.

My Plan: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

 **1-888-568-1112**  
**MAINE CRISIS LINE**  
CALL. TEXT. CHAT.





**1-888-568-1112**

**MAINE CRISIS LINE**

---

**CALL. TEXT. CHAT.**